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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE IMPORTANCE OF ASCERTAINING THE HISTORICAL TRUTH CONCERNING JESUS . . .	5
II. THE HISTORICAL IDEA OF JESUS . . .	19
III. THE RECORDS	26
IV. SELF-CONSECRATION	43
V. SECLUSION	57
VI. FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE AS A TEACHER . . .	62
VII. NAZARETH	86
VIII. THE LEPER	91
IX. THE PARALYTIC AT CAPERNAUM	101
X. STORM ON THE LAKE	108
XI. THE MANIAC OF GADARA	116
XII. CHARGES AGAINST JESUS	130
XIII. THE WOMAN CURED BY TOUCHING HIS CLOTHES.	140
XIV. THE LITTLE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS	147
XV. THE MOTHER AND BROTHERS OF JESUS . . .	153
XVI. FALSE WONDERS	164
XVII. PURPOSE AND METHOD	170
XVIII. THE RELATION OF JESUS TO MANKIND . . .	177
XIX. CLOSING SCENES	187

I

THE IMPORTANCE OF ASCERTAINING THE HISTORICAL TRUTH CONCERNING JESUS

THERE can be but little hope that an end will ever come to the existing confusion of thought respecting the position and authority of Jesus, until the positive historical truth concerning him is fully and distinctly settled. So long as this continues undetermined, so long as his name stands, as it does now with most, for a formless mist, there will be no limit to the diverse representations of him that Fancy, having ample room and verge enough, will create, or to the Theological speculations which these representations will be conceived to authorize.

Although it is generally held that Jesus stands to the world in a peculiar relation, such in kind as is borne by no other man that has ever lived, a relation other than that of a purely historical person, yet what grounds there are for this idea of him can be decided only by inquiring what are the historical facts concerning him.

There is, however, no possibility of ascertaining what of historical truth there is in the literary notices of him, that have come down to us, except by a method which, at the very outset, precludes the supposition of anything out of the course of Nature in his case, which may be without precedent, but must still be conformable to natural laws. No inquiry into the truth of history can proceed a single step save upon the presumption that all true events are, actually or probably, within the sphere of the laws and order of Nature and in unison with them. The prevailing idea of miracles, as departures from the natural course of things, can have here no place. Reported facts, that are professedly outside the laws of Nature, cannot be matters of historical investigation, for the plain reason that, such being their character, the inquirer has no means of testing their truth, no means of distinguishing them from fictions. They are not capable of proof.*

* The reluctance to admit the inviolability of the laws of Nature arises from its seeming to imprison man in a huge, unalterable mechanism, forbidding him to regard himself personally as an object of the Infinite Care, rendering Prayer, and direct access, and a sense of intimate relationship, to the Highest, impossible. But all such inferences are obviated by the fact that such is the nature of man as a moral and spiritual creature,—so does his immaterial being stand related to all that is, that nothing can befall him which he may not so use, if he will, that it shall serve him as effectually as if it were directly ordered for the purpose. All things, notwithstanding and

Whatever, therefore, is thought of the relation of Jesus to the world, in order to find out what is historically true in regard to him, we must deal with the accounts of him that we have in the Four Gospels as we deal with all other historical writings, as accounts of a man, of a man in his origin and condition like other men, and as accounts, moreover, which, composed in a, comparatively speaking, rude age, require, for a right understanding of them, that careful allowance shall be made for the peculiar forms of thought and language belonging to the time when they were written. Dealing with them thus, we are to discover how much can be gathered from them that, by being consistent with itself, with all the circumstances of the case, and with truth, nature and probability, will be shown to be true beyond all question.

even because, they are inviolably obedient to law, are tributary to the soul, awakening and feeding the inborn thirst for the True and the Good, which is both the spirit and the answer of Prayer. There is no room for the idea of an interposing Providence, for there is no need of it. To the soul every event is a special Providence. Nothing but man's own perverted will ever stands in the way of his drawing near to the Highest and of the Highest drawing near to him. All things are so constituted that there is no possible position which they may take in conformity to the order of Nature, that will not open the way for the least to the greatest. Of the countless myriads of spiritual existences, every individual is central to the Universe.

This method is necessary for two reasons. First, for the reason just stated, because the only way of satisfactorily establishing the truth of any alleged fact is by showing it to be in harmony with all admitted facts. Everything true is in unison with the true.

And secondly, because it is beginning to be demanded that all truths shall be established in this way. It is a want of the time. Formerly it was, and with many it still is, otherwise. So long as the presence and agency of the Unknown were perceived only in the strange and extraordinary, it was required that any one, claiming to come direct from the Supreme, should be shown to be in his being or working, or in both, above the order of things as they are, which is equivalent to his being out of that order. So only, it has long been thought, could Jesus be shown to have any authority. But now, and it is a noteworthy revolution in the history of human thought, directly the reverse is becoming the demand. Since, at every step,—and during the present century what numerous and great steps have been taken!—Science discovers, as an all-pervading characteristic of this Universe of things, an order exact, invariable (which is, in fact, the special witness of an omnipresent Intelligence), whatever now claims to be true,—of God, can make good the claim only by showing itself to be in conformity with the universal order. And accordingly

there is a decided tendency, in the advocacy of Christianity, to rest its claims upon its consentaneousness with human nature and of course with all nature. Thus also, it is beginning to be felt, must the historical truth concerning Jesus be established, if it is to be established at all. Only so far as the notices that we have of him are consistent with the truth and nature of things can they now be received as true.

But by very many the attempt to discover what is historically true respecting him is given up as hopeless. Not a few, among the thoughtful and learned, perceiving that the origin of other religions is hidden in the mists of fable, have long since come to the conclusion, that Christianity is no exception to this fact, and that scarcely anything can now be satisfactorily settled about Jesus beyond the actual existence of the person so named, and hardly even that. And this conclusion is confirmed by the imperfect character, and certain obviously fabulous features, of the ancient writings that profess to tell us about him. Despair of obtaining any certain truth, together with the fact, as the case stands, that such ideas prevail in regard to the authority of Jesus as tend to fetter the minds of men rather than set them free, appears to be leading some to regard Jesus as no longer a help but an obstacle, and to think that it would be better if the world were well rid of the whole subject, and to endeavor,

for their own part, to take a position outside the sphere of Christian thought.

The strong presumption that there is against every religion which dates its origin far back, resulting from the fact that the primitive histories of religions always partake largely of the fabulous, must be admitted.

But, in the present case, this presumption is not so strong as to overcome the obligation to examine the accounts of Jesus, and see whether the origin of Christianity, like that of other religions, be indeed hopelessly lost in fable. Imperfect as the Four Gospels are, they certainly present some features that look like history. They are eminently circumstantial. They abound in references to persons, and places, and thus virtually challenge the application of historical tests to their statements. And unless we have lost faith in man's native sense of truth, in his ability to distinguish truth, which is of God, from fiction, which is of man, Nature from Art, we cannot despair of being able, sooner or later, if we look with a single eye and an unconquerable faith in the ultimate success of the inquiry, to discriminate between the fables and the facts in the accounts of Jesus, and determine the proportion of each.

The arduousness of this inquiry lies mainly in the difficulty of neutralizing the influence of inherited modes of thought that cleave to us like our flesh and qualify

the trustworthiness of our conclusions, and of reaching that high point of view, whither no interest shall pursue us to divert us from seeing the case exactly as it is. That stand-point has never yet been occupied. The history of Jesus has been studied with great industry, but always either for dogmatic purposes, or under the bias of a scepticism equally fatal to a perception of the truth. But we must not despair. We can approximate the right position. As that is approached, the pure historical facts concerning Jesus, be they many or few, that can be gleaned from the Gospels, will begin to stand out as distinguishable from whatever is fabulous or mythical in them, as mountains are from the clouds by which they are surrounded.

Having been long interested in this very inquiry, in the endeavor to ascertain what, and how much, can be certainly known respecting Jesus, while I do not presume to think that preconceived notions have not unconsciously affected the singleness of my aim, I am emboldened to say that the result of my studies, such as they have been, is a steadily growing conviction that this is by no means a hopeless inquiry. It promises rich fruits, worth all the time and labor. I believe that it is entirely possible to arrive at a perfectly satisfactory conclusion, not only that there was such

a person as Jesus, who led a thoroughly human life, but that, from an historical point of view, he is distinctly seen to be a person of such original and extraordinary greatness as renders him of necessity a cardinal fact, an enduring power in the religious education of the human race; and, moreover, brief as the accounts that we have of him are, colored, moulded, as they are, by the ignorance, the love of the marvellous, the prejudices and superstitions of the period when they were written, that still facts can be obtained from them, numerous and significant enough to illustrate him as a man of unrivalled force and elevation of character.

Holding this result of an historical inquiry into the Life of Jesus to be possible, believing that we have, in the Four Gospels, accounts of such a person, and that it can plainly be made to appear that they warrant the representation which I give of him, I repeat what I began with saying. When the historical truth in regard to Jesus shall be made clear, an end will come to the theological speculations and to the theories of Supernaturalism, which so confuse the thoughts of men, and are so fruitful of doubt and denial. In the Person of Jesus will be found qualities at once thoroughly human and truly divine, if there is aught divine in this Universe of things, qualities, that render the speculations and theories, just referred to, superfluous

and nugatory. In him we shall have an object, which, by the constitution of human nature, awakens and exercises the sense of truth, inspiring confidence and veneration, and creating new ideas of the True and Good, and of a Life imperishable. The sentiment which Jesus, when rightly apprehended, inspires is, to all the purposes of duty and consolation, identical with faith in God and in the immortal nature of man. And what, in the way of religious faith, can we need more? We may not be able otherwise to define our faith than as faith in Jesus personally. To the speculative intellect, God and Man and Immortality may still be incomprehensible and continue so forever. But in the trust in Truth and Goodness, in the insight which we have into the true life, in the revelation that is made to us of the transcendent possibilities of our nature, when once there dawns upon us the inspiring Idea of Jesus, we shall possess in ourselves an all-sufficing consciousness of the Greatest and Best, of the sacredness of our being, and of a Life that the changes of mortality may nourish, but cannot destroy; although, as I say, we can find no words, no forms of thought, to express this consciousness, and it can be represented only in the life.

And we shall then know, too, what is meant by the Authority of Jesus. We shall see that it is an authority naturally and necessarily inhering in such a man

as he was: the authority of Character, of personal truth and virtue.

Here, I apprehend, is where a great mistake is made, namely, in resting the claims of Jesus chiefly upon his office as a Teacher rather than his character as a Man. It is not by teaching by word of mouth that an individual acts with the greatest power upon others. As the highest cannot be put into words, it cannot be communicated by words. Whatever can be thus communicated is limited, definite, and, as no limit can be assigned to human progress, it must sooner or later be outgrown. The best, therefore, that the wisest of teachers can do for us is so to help us as to render himself obsolete. There is a greater than the power of speech, the power of Being—of Life. Speech is of man, Life is of God. Herein is the power, the authority of Jesus, and it is in truth divine. He is a forever Living, God-given Fact. With the boundaries of knowledge always widening and always demanding new modes of speech, Jesus does not so much instruct as inspire us, educating the sense of truth, so that, as our views are enlarged, our ability to distinguish the True and the Good will ever keep abreast with them, and we shall be able ever more adequately to formulate our knowledge and advance to ever worthier philosophies of Being and to a purer Religion. This influence of Jesus is indestructible. It is active at this

hour, and in none oftentimes more vitally than in those who would fain account him unnecessary.

The relation that Jesus thus sustains to his race, not primarily as a teacher, but far more intimately as an inspirer, as a perpetual giver of faith and love and immortal hope, is not altogether peculiar to him. Every great and good man, every good deed, every friend whom we revere, every holy memory that we cherish, is a spring of moral inspiration. But the better the life of Jesus is understood, the more plainly does it appear that, in the greatness of his being, he stands so high above all born of woman, that we are instinctively prompted to place ourselves reverentially at his feet. I do not presume to limit the resources of the Infinite, and say that it can go no farther, that a greater than Jesus cannot be. But to me, he is beyond comparison with any who have ever lived. In the personal power which he manifested and in the entireness and native grace of his self-abnegation he stands by himself among men.

That this high position is not universally accorded him is not surprising. Hardly had he disappeared from the world, before thick clouds of mysticism and superstition, generated by the Imagination which the vision of him had raised, began to envelop his person and history; and that figure, strange only in its consummate naturalness, became so distorted as to render

any distinct and credible idea of it impossible. Not yet are those clouds dispelled. They cluster heavily about him still. Or they have been scattered only to be succeeded by the mists of a scepticism which allows hardly the faintest outline of him to be visible. What wonder is it then that even thoughtful men are not only insensible to the peculiar power of his character, but have long ceased to have any interest in him? He is unknown. He has been studied, it is true, through all these centuries, and whole libraries have been written about him. But it has all been done, as I have said, in the interest of this or that system of theology, and not for the sole object of discovering the pure historical facts respecting him. Or, where there have been no dogmas sought to be substantiated, the study of the Life of Jesus has been pursued under the bias of a scepticism equally fatal to the attainment of the simple facts of the case.

But it will not always be so. Against the strongest sceptical tendencies, against the authority of all our theologies, the Spirit of Truth is bound to win its way and become the all-commanding incentive in all investigations, whether scientific or religious. And then it will be seen that no pride of opinion, no private or party interest, can afford any satisfaction to be compared with the delight of seeing things as they are. And then the great Life of Jesus will command the

most earnest attention, since the whole field of human study presents no subject more profoundly interesting.

I find no slight hint of the greatness of Jesus in the very remarkable character of the Accounts of him that have come down to us. Fragmentary, rude as they are, they stand in certain striking respects by themselves. Where in all literature is there anything like them? Granted that there is an obvious admixture of fable in their contents, that they show on every page the impress of the ignorant and superstitious age in which they were written, only the more wonderful is it that, at the very first sight, upon the most cursory reading, there break upon us, here and there, from these artless stories glimpses of a person surpassingly great and venerable. Public as most of the events related are, it is found to be none the less, but most emphatically, a private, personal life with which we are brought acquainted. The particulars related show us the very quality and soul of a man, of a man thoroughly genuine, real. In the most trying circumstances as upon the commonest domestic occasions he is as artless, as unconstrained, as natural as if he were alone in his closet. Crowds thronging around him, their eyes gleaming with wonder, do not affect the singleness of his aim or the simplicity of his manner. He is equal, and more than equal, to every

emergency that arises. Not a loophole is afforded for the suspicion to lurk in, of a possible difference between what he appears on the spot and what he is in secluded moments. What but the extraordinary force of a great personality could have created for itself such a record? The truth is that, wherever he was, however he was placed, even when arraigned and executed as a criminal, Jesus was always absolute master of the situation, and by word or deed made himself felt so powerfully that men could no more help giving report thereof than they could help breathing. Coherently or incoherently the story of the Life of Jesus was bound to be told. It mattered not at all who they were who chanced to be present as witnesses, wise or simple, competent or incompetent. Simple were they and incompetent? Only the more impressively does that strain of heavenly music sing itself through all the discords of their recitals. Only the more strikingly does it appear that the Gospels are the necessary effects and consequences of a character of unparalleled power, being due, not to human art, but to the personal force of him of whom they tell.

II

THE HISTORICAL IDEA OF JESUS

THE idea which may be obtained of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph and Mary, from the accounts that we have of him in the New Testament, historically dealt with, is briefly this: that he was a man of a singularly great nature, of rare religious genius, of a wonderfully commanding moral sense. The inscrutable, immaterial Life, existing in every man, was manifested in him in unparalleled fulness. The difference between him and other men was a difference not in kind but in quantity.

As his being, however great, was not beyond the possible scope of Nature, as he was strictly human, neither was the order of the Eternal Providence departed from, in regard to the conditions under which he was born, and grew. He came into life as all come, was subject to like limitations with us all, and concluded with all born of woman in the same mystery of Being. So obviously was this the case with him, as appears from the Records rightly understood, that these statements would be needless, were it not for the

exaggerated representations that have been made of his nature.

So clear and commanding was his native sense of truth, in other words, such a naturally inspired man was he, that, with the same intuitive faith with which other men assent to any self-evident truth, he saw the central, heart-truth of things, the true character of the Sovereign Power, and the relation of the human soul to that, and to all souls. It came to him as it comes, more or less dimly, to all: through his own being and the things that are. He lived to learn, and grew by the experience of life. The aspects of the visible world were full of meaning to him beyond words. The sunshine and the rain told him of an Impartial Bounty presiding over all. *He, least of all men, needed special or miraculous communications.* The greatest truths lay legible to his eye in the commonest things. The falling sparrow made known to him the Eternal Providence, as the falling apple is said to have revealed to Newton the law of gravitation.

The most sceptical generally acknowledge Jesus to have been a teacher of great wisdom and humanity. He was indeed that. But he was more than that, because he was more of a man than a teacher, because his being was in advance of his teaching. What other teacher is there of whom directly the reverse is not true? The teaching of others is in advance of their

being. Jesus was a great teacher. But what was peculiar to him is not the superior wisdom of his utterances, remarkable as they were, considered by themselves, apart from him, but the fact that there was more of truth in his being than his words express, or any words can. Moral precepts, pure and wise like his, may be found in the writings of other teachers and of other religions. Still, he takes precedence of all, in that the man was immeasurably greater than his word. What he taught was no mere conclusion at which his fallible understanding had arrived. It was his personal life articulated. His wisdom was the very heart of him. Truth flowed, warm and living, upon every occasion from his lips or his act, just as the blood comes when the flesh is pricked ever so slightly.

This representation of Jesus is authorized by the fact that his utterances were seldom or never abstract and general. They were not the fruit of study, but, suggested by circumstances, they bear every mark of being occasional and ejaculatory, breaking forth spontaneously from an unfathomed deep of wisdom. It is true he often appears to be enunciating abstract propositions. But the universal terms which he employs are found, in so many instances, to have been prompted by deep emotion, produced by some particular incident, that it is fair to infer that when there is nothing in the narrative that explains this mode of speech as the lan-

guage of passion, it is because the occasions, moving him thus to speak, are not reported.* He was a teacher, as Nature is a teacher, without being didactic, and all the greater teacher for not being so. Many of his most striking truths were given in the form of stories drawn from life, showing that what he taught was so entirely his own that he was able in a manner to play with it, and put it at once with admirable grace into any shape that the most sudden and unlooked-for emergency might require. Truths discerned by the rest of the world at a distance, familiar enough but shadowy abstractions, were throbbing in his heart and hand. He arrested every circumstance and made it the herald of his thought. So that it seems now as if, as he moved through life, all things around him were instantly organized to embody his being, such was the affinity between him and truth and nature.

He is styled the Founder of Christianity. But Christianity, so called, sprang from him. He did not found it. He did not name his followers Christians, nor did they adopt this name. It was given them some time after his death by others, and in derision.

* Thus the Sermon on the Mount, which, of all the utterances of Jesus, approaches nearest to a general discourse, is probably made up, in part at least, of things said by him on particular occasions and called forth by circumstances.

Christianity was a growth. And its character has been formed in great part by other influences than his. He told upon the world, in the first instance, not by his words abstracted from him, not by any system of theology, but by his person, by that in him, which was none the less powerful because it was undefinable, and which wrought through his air, his manner. And this influence was undesigned, involuntary, unconscious, as inseparable from him as its fragrance is from the flower or light from the sun. Only so far as the world has caught the spirit of his nature, is it really of his religion, directly moulded by him. Not by institutions, catechisms, creeds, nor by formulas of any kind is his influence mainly propagated. It is continually reproducing itself, and by a certain contagion that can no more be fenced in within any conventional limits than the light or the air.

Should certain things, told of him, prove to be, not legends, fables, or myths, but historical facts, such as, for example, the disappearance of disease at his word, the return of his friend Lazarus to life at his summons, and his own reappearance alive after his death on the cross, and should it be found, moreover, that these extraordinary things are susceptible of being placed in such a light as to be seen to accord with the laws of Nature as naturally as the shining of the sun, and, so

far from impairing, to increase our sense of his greatness, illustrating and rendering more complete the portrait of him, few are there, I apprehend, who, whether they assent to what I say of him or not, would not acknowledge that he is not to be classed as merely one among the famous wise and great men of the world. Such facts, as I have just referred to, once admitted, set him by himself, above the highest among men. Not that they imply any mysterious peculiarity in his nature, but only this: an extraordinary fulness of spiritual power, a force of character, a wealth of life, a quantity of being, such as has appeared in no other. He was a great, eminent fact in the natural history of our race, opening to us a new and loftier idea of Man and creating faith, as nothing else does, in the reality and victorious energy of the Life hidden in us all.

While the special greatness of Jesus consisted, not in what he said but in what he was, still, were it not for our long and blinding familiarity with his words, we should be impressed far more deeply than we are with the abundance of wisdom, with the quantity of admirable sayings, which this wondrous Jewish youth is recorded to have uttered. Trite as they are now regarded, they still shine in their broad, deep truth, great lights in the firmament of thought, especially when we

observe how even in this age of boasted advancement, fanciful speculations and sanctified phrases and childish artificialities have possession of the minds of men. What pearls were they that fell from those lips, trampled under foot though they be by a sensual world given over to the worship of externalities! Think, for instance, of that splendid definition of greatness, uttered by him too so incidentally—by the way-side! “*Whosoever will be great, let him serve.*” What a world of wisdom is here! A lesson to be conned by princes and nations and by every domestic circle no less.

III

THE RECORDS

WHEN, having gathered this idea of Jesus from the Four Gospels, we examine them more particularly, and, bringing distinctly before our minds the various scenes and incidents therein described, perceive, for the most part, how consistent they are in themselves, with one another, and with truth and nature, how strikingly they are impregnated with his powerful personality, and how naturally withal even the fables and exaggerations, which they contain, arose, the origin and character of these Writings are laid bare to us. They are found to be just such compositions as were bound, under the circumstances, by the irresistible force of truth and nature to appear. They give us, not indeed the exact figure of Jesus, but just such an image of him as must needs have been reflected from the rude mirror of his time. No plant ever sprang into being and took shape more naturally than these Writings. Such things as they tell could not be let die out of the memory of mankind. *Non nōrunt hæc acta mori.* They had to live, live in the letter as well as in the spirit, as surely as they were real.

But then, such was the limited culture of the time and place, the story of the Life of Jesus is told imperfectly,—in fragments. It could not then have been told otherwise or better. No portrait of him is given or even attempted. Facts only, oftentimes very slightly or not at all connected, are stated; and fables and exaggerations are mingled with them. And of the facts, sketches only are given,—only prominent points mentioned, and much has often to be supplied in order to render the story in any degree more complete. Still, fragmentary, imperfect as they are, these Writings bear the impress, deep and sharp, of the very form and body of Fact and Nature.

Jesus himself never wrote a word, nor did he so much as suggest that others should prepare a record of his sayings and doings. He made no provision, in the way of writing, to perpetuate the memory of his life. He had no need.

And, moreover, his immediate friends were of a humble class, unlettered persons, who cannot be supposed to have taken readily to the art of writing. And even if they were competent to the work of putting on record what they had seen and heard, the time never came to them, when they might have conceived the design of such a work; or it came to them only very late, only when “*many*” accounts (Luke, i. 1),

more or less fragmentary, were found to have already gotten abroad. So that when the idea did come to them, they did hardly anything more than put together the written materials already existing. We may well doubt whether they gave much time or any special care to the work. Of the Four Gospels that we now have, it is a significant circumstance that only two bear the names of personal friends of Jesus: Matthew and John, and of these, the first is the name of a disciple by no means distinguished, and although the other is the name of the disciple who is recorded to have stood nearest to Jesus, it is a question, to say the least, whether John had any direct hand in the composition of the Gospel that bears his name.

And further, it requires no very critical examination of these Writings to be satisfied that they are but little more than compilations of documents previously existing, the first three especially, the so-called Synoptics. The Fourth Gospel differs in a most marked manner from the others. It has a peculiar, decidedly dogmatic character, and was avowedly written for a purpose (John, xx. 31), to establish a certain official or theological representation of Jesus. In a word, it shows strong marks of having been composed after those opinions concerning him were beginning to take form, which were early imported into the Christian Church from the philosophy of the East, and which

afterwards assumed such extravagant shapes and rose to so great an authority. Still, this Gospel, as truly as the others, but not equally with them, manifests traces of being, in important parts, made up of materials purely historical.

That our Gospels should have the origin which I have indicated, that the substance of them should have been written by other than the immediate friends of Jesus, will be seen to be very natural, when it is borne in mind that after his death his personal disciples were fully possessed with the idea that the world was shortly to come to an end. It is true, Jesus had disappeared. His mortal life was terminated. And it has been taken for granted that their first thought must have been to record his sayings and doings. But he had left them, as they believed, only for a little while. He was to come back, certainly in that generation, and he might reappear at any moment, and with circumstances of preternatural grandeur which would throw the Past, the events of his brief mortal career, utterly into the shade. In the attitude of absorbing expectation and in the full belief that the end of the world was close at hand, how could it ever have presented itself to their minds that it was necessary to make a record of the Life of Jesus for the information of those who should come after them? There were none to come after them. They

were, so they believed, the last generation. Jesus himself was coming. He would take charge of all things.

While the personal disciples of Jesus were, for this plain reason, the last to think of writing about him, the incidents of his life were nevertheless of so remarkable a character, that nothing can be more natural than to suppose that, among the multitudes who witnessed his career or had information concerning it, there were persons, ranking neither with his avowed followers, nor with his determined enemies, uncommitted either way, persons, who were so struck by the extraordinary wisdom and greatness of his words and his bearing, that they were moved to make records of things so wonderful. It was, I conjecture, to persons of this description that the 'many' accounts which Luke alludes to as in existence when he wrote, and of which our present Gospels were mostly composed, owe their origin.

Luke himself was not a personal disciple. He was a friend of Paul, and neither was Paul personally acquainted with Jesus. That Luke was moved to prepare an account of Jesus, notwithstanding the many accounts which he says were already in existence, implies that he regarded those accounts as having been made by persons whose opportunities he had no reason for supposing to be as good as his own, or, at

least, that those accounts had not the authority of any well-known names among the first disciples of Jesus.

At all events, by whomsoever written, whether by uncommitted lookers-on, or by constant attendants upon Jesus, these ante-Gospel documents came into existence before his followers were formed into a strictly defined body, before there existed anything more than the rudiments of the great organized movement that grew out of that Life, before the disciples had any but the vaguest notions of what they were to do as his disciples,—before, in fine, the first, fresh, powerful sentiments of wonder and admiration which the incidents of his life inspired, were alloyed by partisan or official considerations.

The interest, the powerful interest that Jesus awakened while he was living, was not confined to the humblest of the people, nor to those only who attached themselves to his person. We are told of travellers from a far country, Greeks, who, visiting Jerusalem when he was there, were curious to see him (John, xii. 30). Nor were all the teachers of the Law and Pharisees alike bigoted. We have mention of more than one individual of these classes, who manifested an interest in him.

The conclusion, therefore, is, that certain, comparatively speaking, ingenuous persons, most probably outside the more intimate circle of the disciples, were

moved by a simple and strong sense of the extraordinary character of the things said and done by Jesus to prepare those original accounts which afterwards went to make up the Gospels that we now have.

These earliest records were probably made in the first instance with no distinctly conceived, ulterior purpose, for private satisfaction merely, or for the information of friends, as Luke prepared his Gospel, not with a formal view to publication, but for his friend Theophilus.

As no art of Printing then existed, and none of our modern facilities of publication, there could have been (happily for the simplicity of these writings) none of those factitious motives so active now in the production of books. It may even be doubted whether it occurred to the authors of these primitive records, when they were engaged in the work, that their writings would ever be copied.

These original accounts of Jesus were in all probability very fragmentary,—separate relations of one or more passages of his life.

But when once they were composed, and especially when copies of them came to be taken, there would naturally arise a desire to render them more complete.

Their authors then, or others, into whose hands these writings passed, would, in order to obtain further

information, seek acquaintance with those who were best informed, with the immediate friends of Jesus especially, and learn what they could from them; and the disciples were thus led to relate what they knew, not for the sake of making converts, but simply to gratify curiosity. And this, probably, was the way in which the original records grew and came at last to take the shape of our present first three Gospels.

Thus it was that the numerous writings of which Luke speaks (ch. i. 1) came into existence. It was, as he expressly states, on account of these many records already in circulation that he was led to prepare his Gospel. His introduction creates the expectation of a wholly original work from him,—the story of the life of Jesus told over again and in a new form. It needs, however, but a slight examination to satisfy us that Luke himself made use of these previously existing accounts, adopting such as he had good authority for knowing to be true, and putting them together, obviously, at times, with very little regard to the right order and connection.

The same original writings appear to have been used in the composition of all the first three Gospels, which accounts in part for the fact that, with all their circumstantial variations, they often relate the same things in the same words.

The characteristic of the first three Gospels, which

indicates that such was their origin, is the appearance which, in the main, they present of having been written with a singular freedom from, even an allowable, partisanship. No design is discernible to make out a case. No anxiety is betrayed to guard Jesus against misconstruction. They tell what is apparently against him just as they tell what is for him. They relate things of the significance of which they evidently had but a very inadequate appreciation. It is evident that Jesus was far greater than they were aware of. They never stop to make explanations. Indeed, so obviously careless, so entirely off their guard are these writers that, if what they tell were not substantially true, nothing could be easier than to expose its fictitious character. Thus the Gospels have the appearance of owing their existence, in substance, to the pure force of the truth which they tell. Had their authors had a thought of anything else, had they had an eye to effect of any kind, it is not possible that these writings should have the artless, unconstrained character which marks them so strongly. Any other purpose than to state what they knew, and believed to be facts, would have been sure so to bias their minds that its influence would be at once visible in the features of their work. In fact, to a certain extent we perceive obvious traces of influences which actually alloyed the pure sense of truth in their

minds. While the first three Gospels show, in substance, that their authors thought only of telling what was true, yet we can see how they were biased by their Jewish predilections, which made them view things in a peculiar way. How much of the Gospel ascribed to Matthew is a mere compilation of previously existing documents, and how much was composed by the Apostle himself, it is impossible now to say. But if the hand of Matthew is anywhere visible in it, it is in the color given to one and another incident by quotations from the Jewish Scriptures, evidently to accommodate the story to Jewish modes of thought.

The Fourth Gospel, as I have said, has a very peculiar character. It stands by itself. I am inclined to the belief that it was written, not by John, but by some highly spiritually-minded friend of his, much younger than he, and holding the Apostle in great veneration. From John, the writer received directly most of the facts which he states. But he has told the story after his own fashion. And, neither willing nor able to separate his own highly-wrought amplifications from what he actually received, he has given the whole credit of the work to his revered friend, not for the sake of securing for it an authority which it would not otherwise have, but because the writer honestly thought that it owed all its value to the

Apostle. He had found all that he writes, so he believed, in what he had received from John.

That the three other Gospels, by the way, exhibit no features of a like kind with those of the Fourth Gospel, furnishes significant evidence that they must have been written very early. They show no traces of those peculiar modes of thought in regard to Jesus, which began to germinate very soon after his death.

That Luke prepared the Gospel which bears his name, and that Matthew and Mark had more or less part in the composition of the Gospels respectively attributed to them, may be considered pretty certain, since, if these names had been given to these Gospels arbitrarily, it is difficult to understand why names of higher authority, such as Peter and James, were not chosen instead.

Supposing, now, that such was the way in which the Gospels came into existence, there are two things that we must keep carefully in mind, if we would ascertain the precise facts which they contain.

First. The nature of the facts related.

Second. The probable character and culture of the narrators.

Upon these two points we have no knowledge but what is furnished by these writings themselves.

1. As to the nature of the facts related. While they

were, for the most part, easily to be apprehended, visible, palpable, standing out in broad sunlight, they were also novel, extraordinary, and consequently very exciting. They were of a character so to inflame the passion of wonder, that the faculty of calm and accurate observation could not but be more or less disturbed. Care must be taken that due allowance is made for this disturbing influence, which, while it must qualify the correctness of these writings, is, nevertheless, so essential a consideration in any attempt to ascertain their contents, that no degree of accuracy in them could compensate for its absence. Hardly any amount of circumstantial discrepancies in the Gospels could prove more damaging to their credibility than the non-existence in them of any marks of the influence which the facts stated, supposing them to be true, must have had upon those who witnessed and recorded them, and consequently upon the manner in which they are recorded. It is in this very respect, by the way, most particularly, that the Gospels bear the inimitable stamp of truth. They give evidence throughout, altogether undesignedly, of the existence of precisely that state of feeling which the events related, supposing them actually to have taken place, must have produced.

2. And then, again, we must take into account the probable character of these writers and what was their degree of culture. A cursory examination of the first

three Gospels gives us the impression that their authors were men of much simplicity of mind, not what might be called educated men, so devoid of art is the structure of their compositions. More critical study deepens this impression, and satisfies us fully that the Gospels were written by persons of such simplicity of purpose that it is not for a moment to be suspected that they have ever deliberately stated anything that they themselves did not believe to be true. In a word, the story of the sayings and doings of Jesus, so far as it is told by them, is told pretty much as children would tell it, with no appearance of art or constraint.

The manifestly unsophisticated character of the narrators, while it is inconsistent with fulness or special accuracy of detail, is a satisfactory warrant that they were altogether too simple-minded to have fabricated incidents at once so natural and so original, and sayings so wise, as these that are found in the Gospels. Where they relate what it is impossible should have occurred as they represent it, it is not because they are inventing what they tell, but because they saw things with eyes dilated with wonder, or were unconsciously prevented by some preconception from seeing things as they were, or, it may be, that they tell the story correctly enough and we fail to understand them from not making due allowance for their peculiar modes of speech. Writing, or rather,

observing under the influence of some state of mind, the nature of which we can easily surmise, they give us faithfully the impressions made upon beholders thus affected. They tell the story as persons thus influenced would naturally tell it. We can almost always discover the biases to which they were exposed, and measure the extent to which they depart from the exact truth, as the form and height of an object may be inferred from the shadow which it casts.

Although what the eye sees paints itself on the retina with photographic precision and completeness, yet it is not in any man's power to transfer the picture in words to paper with equal exactness. Much must always, and of necessity, be left untold. Nothing, moreover, is a whole by itself. To write the complete history of an atom, one must write the history of the Universe. All that with reason can be expected in regard to the knowledge of events with which we can become acquainted only through the reports of others, is that what is told of them, be it much or little, shall be so told as to show the unmistakable impress of truth, that is, it shall admit, without any forcing, of being so understood as to be seen to be consistent in itself, and with all else that is true and probable. A more satisfactory idea may oftentimes be obtained of some past event, from the very brief

sketch of one reporter than from the more elaborate account of another, for the simple reason that the statements of the one are, consciously or unconsciously, modified by some prejudice, while the other has a single eye to the facts of the case.

The more I have studied the Four Gospels, the more deeply have I been impressed with this characteristic of them, a characteristic which they could not have, were they not, substantially, written in all honesty, namely, this: they give us, not always the most important particulars of an incident, but what struck their authors most at the time. In other words, they tell and they omit just what they might be expected to tell and to omit, supposing what is related to be true, and to be related by just such persons as these writers appear to have been.

And, furthermore, while these narratives are very brief and give us but scanty direct information, so that many questions arise to which they furnish no answer, yet what is told and the way in which it is told are very often such as imply and involve, entirely unconsciously, much that is not expressly stated, thus enabling us to supply many details, and this too without any straining. Could fictitious narratives ever be thus woven into the web of truth, nature, and probability, and be corroborated thereby

In fine, the story of the Life of Jesus, as we have it in the Four Gospels, resembles a sketch, very slight but true, as far as it goes, of some object in Nature or Art, a noble statue, for example. We have no one feature or limb fully drawn, only a dash or a dot here and there, only the fragment of a hand or a foot, no shading, hardly a complete outline anywhere. But still what is given is so truly in place, that, by care and patience and a due observance of the character and direction of such lines as appear, and of the relative position of the several parts given, we are able to supply in a considerable measure what is wanting and to render the sketch a comparatively finished portrait, which, admirable as it may be felt to be, is, after all, not so admirable as the original sketch, which admits of this result, and admits of it without any violence done, any forcing of the original lines and points. That, out of bare lines and dashes made at random, a somewhat similar result might by great ingenuity be obtained, and something rudely resembling a human figure be made to appear, is not impossible. But, that out of a chance-medley, the noblest figure and the most symmetrical in all history should in this way be produced,—this, I conceive, is utterly incredible. And yet, according to the sceptical theory, the Four Gospels are only rude compilations of fables and myths.

Considering the Gospels to be such as I have described, we come to the question: To what extent is the impress of truth visible on them? In other words, what are we authorized, by the marks and signs of truth and probability which they present, to receive as indubitably true concerning Jesus?

This question I shall attempt in the following pages to answer, but only in part; sufficiently, however, I trust, to vindicate the claims of these writings to our confidence as compositions of a substantially historical character.

Some of the passages, which I select to illustrate my purpose, I have endeavored to elucidate in previous publications. But they are invested, to my own mind, with quite a new interest, and I trust they will be so to others, read in the light of the new view which has opened to me, in regard to the nature and origin of the extraordinary power of Jesus.

IV

SELF-CONSECRATION

THE Life of Jesus, according to the Gospels, may be divided into two periods,—a private, and a public period, the former extending from his birth to his thirtieth year or thereabouts; the latter, of uncertain but not very long duration, not more than a year or two in length.*

Of the private period, scarcely anything is known. The second and fourth Gospels make no mention of his birth and early years. They begin with the time when he was about thirty years of age. The other

* When we take into view the character of the ruling classes of that day, on the one hand, their fierce bigotry and the jealousy with which they guarded their power, and, on the other, the bold and unsparing terms in which Jesus spoke of them, and his growing influence with the people, we perceive that his public career could not have been very long. He could not have been long tolerated in the course which he pursued. That his public life lasted any length of time is due to the fact that it was spent in far-off Galilee. The instant he appeared in Jerusalem, the enemies that he had made rose against him. They crushed him at once,—that is, so far as his mortal life was concerned.

Gospels, in one or two introductory chapters, undertake to give us some account of his birth and early childhood, but what they relate is made up of dreams, visions, hymns, with a mixture of Persian astrology, —just such fables as naturally appear concerning the origin of extraordinary men after they are dead and their lives have shown them to be extraordinary.

One anecdote of his childhood is given which may be true. It is related that when he was twelve years of age, he went with his parents to Jerusalem upon the occasion of one of the national festivals, and that, when they were about to set out on their journey home, the boy was missing, and found in the Temple, surrounded by a group of the teachers of the Law whose attention he had attracted by the reverential interest which he manifested in the place and by the intelligence of his questions and answers. It is further related that, when his mother gently reproached him for the anxiety he had caused her and his father, he expressed surprise at her not knowing that he could be nowhere but there, where they found him, in his Father's house. This incident excepted, there is nothing purely historical in the stories of his birth and early years that may not be inferred from the accounts of his public life. That his parents were named Joseph and Mary, that they dwelt in Nazareth, where he was probably born, and that, as he grew up,

he grew in the esteem of all who knew him and in the graces that betokened the Divine favor,—so much as this we should know, even if the first and third Gospels, like the second and fourth, began with the appearance of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus ; and we should know it none the less satisfactorily, because we should learn it incidentally, by way of inference.

The authentic history of Jesus commences, then, with the public period, when he was about thirty years of age, with his first public act, his Baptism. All before this is wrapped in obscurity and fable. Then it is that he comes distinctly into view. The reality of his appearance on that occasion is established by the most satisfactory testimony, by the unwritten credentials of Truth and Nature.

While, by its perfect keeping with human nature, and with all that we can learn of the personal character of Jesus and of his relation to the time, this event, his Baptismal Self-consecration, is seen to be natural and necessary, there are certain indubitable laws of the mind unconsciously illustrated both by the fact itself and by the manner in which it is described, that disclose to us here a pure piece of biography. Truth and Nature thus testify far more convincingly to the reality of this event than could any number of sworn eye-witnesses.

Let this passage and all that it involves be thought-

fully and candidly considered. That Jesus was no ordinary person, that he was endowed by nature with rare moral power and insight, may safely be inferred,—putting these ancient writings that tell us about him entirely out of sight,—from the vast and enduring consequences that have resulted from his life. No common life could have so told upon the world.

Now is it to be conceived that such a man, or indeed, any man whatever, would undertake the work of teaching his fellow-men,—would quit the position and manner of life to which he had been born and accustomed from youth to manhood, and go forth upon a new and untried path, without long and careful thought about it beforehand? Is it to be supposed that the great purpose of Jesus was not conceived until the moment that he commenced to put it into execution? Are we not rather required to believe, by every law of reason and human nature, that, years before he appeared in public, he saw with ever-growing clearness, and was moved more and more deeply by the sight, the abject moral and religious condition of the people around him, the fierce bigotry, the spiritual pride, the formalism and hypocrisy, which had usurped the authority of Justice and the Love of God, and by which the mass of the people were kept in the grossest ignorance and wretchedness? Does not the whole tenor of his subsequent public utterances show how thor-

oughly he had studied the ruling classes, how familiar he was with their corrupt practices? Seeing what was around him, he early saw also with equal clearness that the nation was going to ruin, that its downfall was inevitable. He needed no special spirit of prophecy to discern that, no supernatural communication to assure him of the fact. He read it in the signs of the time. It was this approaching doom to which both Jesus and John the Baptist referred when they announced the coming of the kingdom of God. A crisis (judgment) was approaching, so entirely had dead forms, the paying of tithes of mint, anise and cummin, taken the place of those great principles of Righteousness and Humanity which alone can save men and nations from destruction. John saw only the coming "Wrath." But Jesus saw beyond the impending ruin. In his own conscious rectitude of mind and purpose he had the prophecy and the pledge of a better state of things to succeed. And this better state was comprehended in his idea of the coming kingdom of Heaven.

It is interesting to observe, by the way, that in all that he subsequently said about the coming kingdom, it was the moral government of God which was to be established, upon which he dwelt. The imagery in which he clothed his thought was the popular language of the time. Some indisputable moral truth is always the centre and heart of all his representations of the heavenly kingdom.

It is true, the sphere, in which his life was spent until he was about thirty years of age, was so private and obscure that no direct information concerning him during that period has come to us. But we are not under the necessity of supposing that he held no communication with the outer world during all that time. There are abundant reasons for believing that he was a keen-sighted observer of Nature and Life. His subsequent teachings bear impressive witness to it. And, on the other hand, it is impossible to doubt that such a character as his must have made itself felt by those with whom he held intercourse. That he and John the Baptist were more than ordinary acquaintances, that John had sufficient knowledge of Jesus to be profoundly impressed by his promise and greatness, may be fairly inferred from the manner in which John received Jesus, when Jesus came to him to be baptized: "I have need to be baptized of thee," exclaimed the Baptizer, "and comest thou to me!" And the allusion that John makes to "one coming after him," "to one then standing among the people, the latchets of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose," points to a previous knowledge of Jesus, and breathes the deepest personal reverence. As Jesus was thus more or less known and revered before he appeared in public, it follows that he, on his part, could not have been ignorant of what was going on in the world around

him, or insensible to the moral and religious condition of his country.

It is not otherwise to be thought, then, than that it was years before he became publicly known, that the purpose was formed within him to forsake house and home and go forth into the world and give utterance to his ever-deepening convictions, to enlighten and warn and comfort the ignorant and suffering poor, expose the false pretensions of the religious leaders, and publish the truth concerning the loving Father of all, and the fraternal duty of man to man. He beheld his countrymen lying crushed under a far heavier yoke than that of Rome, and he longed to go to their rescue.

To suppose that a purpose of this kind was of late or sudden growth is in accordance neither with reason nor human nature. Long before he appeared teaching in the synagogues, the aims, which he subsequently put into execution, were steadily becoming more distinct and earnest. His purpose grew and hardened, as all great purposes do, through doubts and mental conflicts, until he felt that it was his God-ordained work to do what that purpose commanded.

As he saw with what ferocity the existing corrupt state of things was upheld, he could not be blind to the mortal peril of speaking boldly out against it and in condemnation of its supporters. If he dared

to speak, he must dare to suffer and die. That he saw. His cherished aspirations therefore had to struggle up into shape and power against the weakness of his mortal nature, against the instinctive dread of the suffering he must encounter, in following out his secret promptings.

The mental conflicts in which he was thus involved, long before he quitted the seclusion of his early life, were not rendered any the less severe by that tenderness of nature, which the pervading spirit of his teachings leads us to ascribe to him.

He might well have hesitated,—he might well have been dismayed at what he must encounter in surrendering himself to the voice within. His meditations, his struggles could, however, have but one result. They did but strengthen him in the conviction of his great duty. It was God speaking, and come what must, he must obey. And so the hour came when he could no longer delay, when he must enter the path, which lay plainly before, though it led directly to certain death.

It was not until he was about thirty years of age that his mind was fully made up.

And then, so arduous did he feel the work to be, to which he gave himself, that, in order to commit himself to it irrevocably, and that there should be no possibility of retreat, his first step into the new and

perilous career, to which he was summoned, was a public, solemn, unutterably religious act of self-purification and self-consecration.

The occasion that decided him was the appearance of John the Baptist. That was an event that startled the country far and wide. Everything pertaining to John, his garb, his austere manner of life, his fearlessness, his adoption of the sacred language of the ancient seers,—all united to set the Jewish imagination in a blaze. Crowds from all quarters flocked to the river Jordan, on the banks of which was seen this wild apparition, and this voice was heard heralding the approach of the Lord, the coming wrath of Heaven. So powerful were John's appeals that great numbers, confessing their sins, were bathed by him in the river, in token of new and cleansed lives.

To Jesus, this great popular movement must have been profoundly interesting. Such a universal excitement of religious feeling took with it his earnest sympathy. The public mind, thus powerfully turned in a religious direction, summoned him to cast aside all delay, all mortal weakness and give himself at once and unreservedly to his great work.

Accordingly he went with the people to be baptized, to signify, by the symbol of the purifying water, his renunciation of whatever might allay the singleness, or weaken the strength, of his purpose.

It is not for a moment to be conceived that it was merely in conformity to the popular feeling that he observed this religious form. In devoting himself to his idea of duty and a true life, he deliberately devoted himself to a life of danger and suffering and to an early and certain death. It must needs have been to him, therefore, an occasion of indescribable emotion. His whole being was stirred to the inmost as never before. In thus transmuting his great thought into an act, in giving it new life, it filled him at once with an exalting consciousness of being one with the Highest and the Best, of which he had never before had so intimate an experience. It is of the very essence of a high and pure purpose, when thus converted into act, to produce a satisfaction, a peace, of which, until this conversion takes place, it is not possible, in the nature of things, for the mind to be more than faintly aware of. As honey is sweet to the taste, so is Truth, when thus made living, sweet to the inner sense. When Jesus made this first actual movement towards realizing his great aim, this rich spiritual experience broke upon him in extraordinary fulness. Then rising to the loftiest self-renunciation, above all mortal weaknesses and fears, he was possessed of the Highest, and his consciousness, at this new era of his spiritual life, was nothing less than ecstatic.

And how was he to express the ineffable con-

sciousness that then filled his whole being? Express it he must. He could not keep it to himself. He must speak and tell that new and transcendent experience. But how was it to be told? "The highest," or the deepest, "cannot be expressed in words." And yet the stronger the feeling that moves the soul, the more urgent the impulse to give it verbal expression. What, then, is to be done? Only one thing is possible. Such forms of speech must be employed as the Imagination, kindled, inspired by the ineffable, creates. It is always so. For every strong feeling, there flashes up in the mind some vivid figure of speech. And the boldness of the figure measures the depth of the emotion that suggests it.

In the exaltation of his mind at that moment, when he rose to such a height above Self, there opened upon him such a sense of light and strength and peace that it seemed to him as if he saw directly into heaven. "The heavens were opened to him."

And when, as he was coming up out of the baptismal water in this state of ecstasy, a dove, the recognized emblem of love and peace, chanced to come within the sphere of his uplifted vision, it was instantly transfigured—as almost any object, however familiar, would have been, that might have arrested his attention at that high moment—into a glorified omen and symbol of the present God. It seemed to

him no common dove, appearing at that instant. It was "in bodily shape" a dove, it was "like" a dove, but to the raised imagination of Jesus, it was the spirit of the Highest, coming down to him visibly out of heaven.

And then, too, how exquisitely and all unconsciously is it in accordance with the laws and experience of the mind that the words of the ancient Scripture: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," so expressive of the consciousness which Jesus then had of intimate, confiding, filial union with the Highest, should have suddenly come to him—as such passages often do, at great critical moments—without any conscious act of his own will, and that so coming, they should appear to him and be represented as spoken by a voice!

I have repeated more than once the foregoing exposition of the Baptism of Jesus, because I am very greatly impressed, both in the fact itself and in the way in which it is related, by the wonderful illustration, which it gives us, of the laws of the human mind and of the personality and position of Jesus.

To such insight as I have obtained into this passage of the Life of Jesus, I have been helped by a humble personal experience, an experience, which, in common

with others, I was called to pass through in the old Anti-Slavery times, some thirty years ago and more. Not a jot of credit do I deserve for the position which I was then driven, against my weak will, to take. I ought never to have delayed, but have flown to the help of the weak against the mighty. But I did not. For a long time I hid myself from the summons of Humanity, for I was afraid, afraid of the anger and alienation of friends, and perhaps the loss of bread for my children. But I could not hide myself forever. I could not be deaf to the cry of the slave, the awful voice of Almighty God. Yet what struggles had I before the truth overcame me and I had to speak or die! And when I resolved to speak for the Right, what a plunge in the dark did it seem to me, so far as every earthly interest was concerned! When, however, I had committed myself to the great Cause, there came a new and wonderful content. It was through that experience that I caught a new vision of the true meaning of the Baptism of Jesus, and I understood, as never before, what was meant by the heavens opening, and the descending dove, and the voice speaking.

How far off are we wont to look for the peace that comes from obeying the truth! An honest conviction, a high purpose realized has in it the essence of all sweetness. All delicious tastes, scents, sounds, sights,

only feebly symbolize the joy in the heart when it is one with the Right. Nay, the boldest forms of thought that the mind can create, opening heavens, descending doves, unearthly voices, are all inadequate to tell that supreme joy. I only touched, in great fear and trembling, the hem of her garment, and with what a peace did Truth visit me, all unworthy as I am! How transporting, then, must have been the pure consciousness of Jesus, when in the spirit of the most entire Self-renunciation that the world has ever witnessed, he voluntarily surrendered himself to so black a fate for so generous a purpose!

V

SECLUSION

To the season of exaltation, succeeded solitude, depression, and temptation. Nature could not long be sustained at so lofty a height, nor endure but for a little while so beatific a vision.

Here again, in what immediately follows in the accounts of Jesus, underlying the peculiar modes of thought and representation belonging to the time when these Writings were composed, the same basis of fact is disclosed, the same testimony of nature and human experience that we have found in the story of the Baptism.

Having taken the first, irrevocable, public step in actualizing his high ideal, committed once for all to the work which he had long meditated with ever-increasing interest, having had transporting testimony in his own consciousness to the perfect truth of his purpose, Jesus saw himself and all things in the light of this new experience. His condition had undergone a great change. He was born into a new life. What he had long revolved in the secrecy of his own being

as a thought, called up and dismissed at will, had now become the actuating force of his life, his inmost self. In the new emotions of which his heart was full, he could not remain in his narrow sphere and keep his old place there. To compose his mind, to understand and command himself, he fled to the solitude of the desert. He was "driven of the spirit," that is, moved strongly by an impulse within.

Many of the reveries into which he fell in his retirement were, doubtless, of an inspiring character. His good thoughts refreshed and strengthened him. But there came hours of gloom, disturbing suggestions, especially after he had been for some time alone, and his physical nature was worn down by abstinence and mental excitement. Then came conflicts with himself, the spirit struggling with the flesh.

It is not necessary to suppose that these dark seasons occurred in the precise order that the brief and simple records seem to imply, or that they were of such short duration as they appear. Only the substance of these mental conflicts is given, the assault and the repulse. It is more likely that Jesus fought long with tempting thoughts before he succeeded in stripping them of their speciousness.

It is stated that he spent forty days in the Desert. Bearing in mind the loose, popular character of the accounts, we are under no necessity of believing that

his seclusion was complete during that time, or even that the duration of the period spent in the Desert is given to a day. It might have been longer or shorter.

His kindred and friends, we may suppose, were not without knowledge of his whereabouts. He was not a person about whom they could be indifferent. They probably visited him occasionally and took food to him. But he ate so little and so irregularly that, in the popular style of the Gospels (which, since such is their character, is never to be pressed to the letter against truth and probability), he is said to have eaten nothing. He had then as always food which the world knew not of. His thoughts fed him.

It was possibly upon the occasion of these interviews with one or more of his friends that he spoke of his experiences in the Desert. A difficulty is made of the fact that we have no hint of the way in which what passed when he was alone came to be known. But here is precisely one of those particulars, which, not being singular or noteworthy, the authors of the Gospel narratives, intent only upon telling what appeared extraordinary to them, never thought of mentioning. In the study of these Writings, we have frequent occasion for this remark.

It is interesting to observe how naturally the evil thoughts, with which Jesus had to contend, arose in his mind. As the story is told, they were presented

to him in so many words by the Evil One. But since the world began, no child was ever tempted by the Devil in person. All the difficulty that is felt in accepting this representation vanishes when it is considered that this mode of representing the temptations of Jesus was peculiar to the country and the time, and took its shape from the popular belief of that day, namely, that evil thoughts are the suggestions of an Evil Spirit who takes delight in luring men to their ruin. Whence came this idea, by the way, whether from man's desire to have a scape-goat to bear the blame of his own misdoings, or from the consciousness of a nature, so made for good that evil seems due to an influence external and foreign to it, we cannot tell. But certain it is, that the existence of this faith created the mode of speech in which temptation was in those days described. I have no idea that Jesus, in relating his trials, meant to convey the impression that the Devil came to him in visible shape, or even that such an impression was received. So it was that the fact of temptation was conceived of and represented in that day.

But, although the account of the temptations of Jesus comes to us in this form, it is not difficult but easy and interesting to see how the evil thoughts arose and took the shapes mentioned,—at one time, from the stones lying in his path as he wandered, lost in

thought, in the Desert, and assuming to his imagination, distracted by the gnawings of hunger, the form or color of loaves of bread,—at another, from a passage of Scripture (Ps. xci. 11, 12), “He will give his angels charge of thee, and in their hands they will bear thee up lest at any time *thou dash thy foot against a stone,*” a passage brought to the mind of Jesus, I imagine, by his stumbling as he walked in the rugged wilderness ;—and yet at another time, from his reaching some eminence whence a broad stretch of country opened upon his view.

These temptations could have become known only by being told by Jesus himself, who shrunk not, it appears, from laying bare to others whatever weakness was involved in this exposure to temptation.

V I

FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE AS A TEACHER

By meditation and prayer in the wilderness, through various severe mental conflicts, coming to see clearly the falsehood of the suggestions that would divert him from his true aim, Jesus quitted his retirement and "returned into Galilee" in the power of the spirit," that is, full of moral power, strong in the conscious rectitude of his purpose.

And here we come to a passage in his life, his first appearance in public as a teacher, the importance of which seems never to have been appreciated. It was fraught with great consequences. If I do not greatly err, it furnishes a clue to the right understanding of much that occurred afterwards, and that now causes embarrassment and difficulty: the so-called miraculous portion of the history.

That Jesus, when he left the Desert, went first to Capernaum on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and that there his public career began, is stated in the second Gospel, wherein it is related also that, having

spoken there, he left the place the next morning, declaring that he must visit other towns, which implies that no other place had then been visited. At first sight, Luke appears to say that Jesus went from the Desert to Nazareth, but it is evident from Luke's account of what Jesus said in the synagogue at Nazareth, that he had previously been at Capernaum, although what happened upon his first appearance there, Luke proceeds to relate as having occurred subsequently to his visit to Nazareth; which shows, by the way, with what little regard to the order of events the materials of Luke's Gospel were put together. Truth only could afford to be thus careless.

It may reasonably be supposed that Jesus was not altogether a stranger in Capernaum. It appears to have been almost a home to him. Although up to this time he had lived in a private station, probably, as the tradition is, working with his father who was a carpenter, yet, as I have already sought to show, it is not likely that he was wholly unknown out of the circle of his kindred, during those thirty years. In Luke's Gospel it is said that, as he grew to manhood, he grew in favor with man as well as God. Such a light, steadily increasing, could not have been hid all that time. It is not improbable that there was a circle in Capernaum, greater or less, in which the force of his rare qualities was felt. The friendship, which, we are told, existed

between him and Lazarus of Bethany and the sisters of Lazarus, and which appears to have been peculiarly of a private nature, dates, I imagine, from a time far antecedent to his public life, and intimates that the period before his public appearance was not one of absolute seclusion.

When, therefore, he spoke for the first time in the synagogue in Capernaum, the people were curious and eager to hear him. Of what he said, no report has come to us. It is not impossible that some of the passages which now form a part of the Sermon on the Mount were uttered by him on this occasion. One reason possibly why what he said was not noted was the startling incident that occurred by which the meeting was disturbed.

In the assembly there happened to be a man, who, from diseased nervous excitability, was unable always to control his mental operations and command himself, and was accordingly thought by himself and others, in accordance with the universal belief of the time, to be under the influence of an evil spirit. When not exposed to any exciting circumstances, he was, we may suppose, quiet and to all appearances entirely sane. In this condition was he, when he went that day with the people into the synagogue. Had he been otherwise than composed, he would hardly have been disposed or allowed to enter the place. But the ex-

traordinary power with which Jesus spoke, and his impressive and commanding manner so affected this man as to bring on a paroxysm of his infirmity. So awe-struck was he by the looks, tones, whole air of this new teacher, that his agitation became uncontrollable. Finding himself fast losing all self-command, he was at once seized with the conviction that the foul spirit had returned and got possession of him. Giving way utterly to the insane delusion, no longer able to control his thoughts or his actions, fancying himself no longer himself, imagining the overpowering awe, with which Jesus inspired him, to be the emotion of the affrighted demon in the presence of so holy a person, he cried out, "Let us alone! Why do you trouble us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy one of God!" That the whole congregation, already deeply stirred by the speaking of Jesus, was startled by the strange and sudden outcry, cannot be doubted. The first impulse of all present, upon recovering from the shock, must have been to take the man away, such a violation was it of the decorum and sanctity of the place. Before anything, however, could be done, Jesus himself, so far from being disconcerted by the interruption, instantly spoke to the man, and, in tones to which his native consciousness of power gave a resistless authority, bade the foul spirit quit the man, which was precisely the same

as bidding the man hold his peace and be still. Even had Jesus been wanting, which we cannot suppose, in a just self-reliance, the deferential terms in which the man addressed him, must have been an assurance to him that the man would be submissive to his word. The man, hardly knowing what he had done, and wholly unprepared for being thus directly spoken to, and in such a commanding tone, by the person for whom he had conceived such awful reverence, overcome with terror, fell down with a shriek in a convulsion—“*And when the unclean spirit had torn him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.*” The spasm ceasing, left the man silent and calm.

With the ideas which the people had of demoniacal agency, they could have but one view of the case, namely, that the evil spirit was expelled, although with a violent struggle, and that the man was permanently relieved; as, in all likelihood, he was, the idea of Jesus, the recollection of that hour, serving always afterwards, whenever the man was threatened with a return of his infirmity, to reinforce him against the dangerous delusion. Nothing is so effective with hypochondriacs as a powerful impression made upon the mind, and this man, in fancying himself possessed with a demon, was of that class.

That this incident in the synagogue created the

greatest sensation, and that the news of it spread at once through the town and in all the neighboring country, is evident, first, from the fact that at sundown on that Sabbath day, when the Sabbath was at an end, a crowd of diseased persons, supposed, for the most part, to be the victims of demoniacal possession, were collected around the house where Jesus was,—it is stated, indeed, that “the whole city” was gathered around the door (Mark, i. 33),—and from the further fact, that, when Jesus visited Nazareth, where he spoke in the synagogue the next Sabbath, the knowledge of what had taken place in Capernaum had reached Nazareth before him (Luke, iv. 25). How naturally and altogether without design, by the way, are we given to perceive that exactly that state of things was caused by what occurred in the synagogue of Capernaum, which we should justly look for, supposing that incident to have actually taken place!

The excitement, produced by the occurrence in the synagogue, we may reasonably conclude, then, was very great. From the synagogue, Jesus went with his four attending friends to the house of one of them, Simon. That a crowd followed him, and that others, known to Simon and his family, went in and filled the house, may also be supposed. The mother-in-law of Simon was lying ill of a fever. That she became aware of an unwonted commotion and was told in

accents of breathless wonder of the strange thing that had happened in the synagogue, and that she caught the universal excitement, are also particulars that may be inferred. When it was mentioned to Jesus that she was sick, he went to see her in the chamber where she lay, and took her by the hand, and such, in the excited state of her mind, was the effect of his presence, of the touch of his hand and of his friendly greeting, that she felt herself inspired with new strength, and rose from her bed, and was able to take part in the preparations,—prompted by the time-honored hospitality of the East,—that were made for the refreshment of the company. This was certainly very surprising, and to the people present, in the then state of their minds, it was all of a-piece in wonder with what had just taken place in the synagogue. But it is not difficult to see how entirely natural it was that it should so appear, the circumstances being duly considered, the intense excitement that prevailed. Wonder ruled the hour. The recovery of this woman added greatly to the popular feeling. It was new fuel to the flame.

At sunset, when the Sabbath was over, it is related, as I have just mentioned, that a number of persons, believed to be the subjects of malign spiritual influences, with a great crowd, were gathered around the house where Jesus was. The 'whole city' seemed to be there.

The first Gospel says that he "*healed them all.*" The language of the third is, "*he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.*" But, according to the second Gospel, only a portion of the diseased were healed, "*many,*" it is said,—an indefinite expression,—not all. And indeed, if only a few comparatively, persons highly susceptible, from a peculiarly sensitive state of their nerves, of being wrought upon by the bare sight of Jesus, were relieved, it would suffice to account for these loose, exaggerated reports, which are precisely of the character we should look for under the circumstances: faithful transcripts of the common belief and excitement of the hour. Wherever and whenever an individual appears and works in some novel manner only a limited number of surprising cures, the talk of the time and place is just like these accounts in the Gospels; it is said by one to another, "Have you heard of the wonderful man who has appeared, and who is curing right off all kinds of disease?"

The next morning, "*rising up a great while before day, Jesus went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said to him, All men seek thee: And he said to them, Let us go into the neighboring towns that I may preach there also; for to this end*

have I come forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out spirits."

Thus ended the first appearance of Jesus in public as a teacher, which took place in the synagogue of Capernaum.

Here certain very important and deeply interesting considerations present themselves.

1. It is strikingly noteworthy that there is not a syllable in this portion of the history intimating any thought, on the part of the narrators, of ascribing to Jesus any peculiar or extraordinary office. Discharging our minds of our hereditary and ecclesiastical ideas of him, we perceive that all that is stated is, that he entered the synagogue in Capernaum and taught, and that his hearers were struck, not by what he said, but by the way in which he said it, by the air of authority with which he spoke, unlike the regular teachers of the day (Mark, i. 22). Nor is there a hint that Jesus himself laid formal claim to any peculiar official position. It was nothing of that sort, but it was that which showed itself unconsciously, his manner, his commanding manner, that impressed the people. And this is easily understood and naturally accounted for, when we take into consideration, what is apparent from all his utterances, that he spoke, not from hearsay and tradition, as did the established

teachers, repeating what had been handed down to them and horror-struck at the heresy of deviating a single letter therefrom, but from the profoundest personal conviction. Not by book, but from his own heart he spoke. This it is that gives to the oldest and most familiar truths the sound of immediate revelations, and to a man's voice the ring of a more than kingly authority, and robes his presence with a dignity far, far beyond the imperial purple.

Such, I conceive, so far at least as we have now come in the history of Jesus, was the secret of his power and of the remarkable effects that attended his first speaking. Certainly there is nothing so far to tax the faith, but everything to command the assent of the most incredulous. Upon his first appearance as a teacher, Jesus spoke with the force of personal conviction which, it is now natural to infer, must have characterized the speech of one, so many of whose sayings have sounded through the world ever since. The people were not accustomed to hear anything like it. They were all profoundly moved. And, when one of his hearers, an individual suffering from nervous weakness, was so powerfully affected by this new speaker that he could not command himself but cried out and was instantly silenced by Jesus and relieved of his infirmity, caused, as it was believed, by an evil spirit, the people were only the more excited.

"*What a word is this!*" is the recorded exclamation, what extraordinary speaking! "*He commands the foul spirits, and they obey him!*" No definite opinion was expressed or formed about Jesus. He was simply a great wonder that had broken upon them. They were filled with astonishment, especially at the influence he exercised over the insane, or, as they thought, the possessed man. This was, in their eyes, the great miracle of the hour. And so it has been represented to this day. But the real miracle that was then and there wrought, and a perfectly natural miracle it was, was the effect which Jesus produced on the whole assembly by his manner of speaking, by the whole air of him.

This, I say, was the special miracle of that occasion, the power with which he moved the people present, and through them and what happened there, the whole city, so that a crowd of persons suffering under the maladies then ascribed to evil spirits instantly rushed to him for relief.

When once the influence of his personal presence, of his eye and his voice, is rightly appreciated, all that is here related, the effect upon the lunatic, the instant recovery of the woman sick with a fever, the gathering at sunset round the house where Jesus was, and, when he showed himself, the probable curative effect experienced, perhaps at the mere sight of him, by

some peculiarly nervous persons in the crowd,—all these things are seen to have resulted as matters of course; and it is seen also that the story is told, just as it should be told, the facts and the reporters being such as they were.

2. The restoration of the insane man in the synagogue and of the mother-in-law of Simon are among the so-called miracles, those works, which, in our theologies, Jesus is represented to have done, and to have been preternaturally empowered to do, in order to attest his divine mission. But what is there thus far in the history to authorize this representation? There was nothing formal or deliberate in the production of these remarkable effects. They were obviously the merest incidents. There is no reason to believe that, when Jesus entered the synagogue that Sabbath day, he had any idea of being interrupted by a madman. And afterwards, at Simon's house, he did not know, until he was told, that Simon's mother-in-law was ill. These things were quite incidental. And his action, in both cases, was instinctive, unpremeditated, in no respect other than a natural mode of proceeding. It was the inflamed imaginations of the by-standers that caused what he did to seem so astonishing. Astonishing they were,—those sudden physical effects. But, the circumstances fairly con-

sidered, they are plainly within the range of Nature and human experience. There is nothing related of Jesus on these occasions that suggests the idea that he himself was aware that he was doing anything at all out of the usual way. Not a syllable is there in the narrative inconsistent with the entire simplicity of his manner and his motive.

And, moreover, it is striking to observe that the incidents that raised such a tumult of public feeling were not only unlooked for by Jesus,—they disturbed, and, in a manner, they distracted him. How else shall we account for his rising *early*, the next morning, *long before day*, and quitting Capernaum, and retiring to a solitary place, away from the people and the town, and there giving himself to prayer, and when Simon and others went after him, and, having found him, told him that everybody was inquiring for him, refusing to return to Capernaum, declaring that he must go elsewhere, to other towns, and preach, for that, he said, was the purpose for which he had come forth in public?

In truth, it was a purely moral work that alone Jesus was thinking of. He wanted to teach his poor, benighted countrymen, to awaken their consciences and stir their hearts. But the incident in the synagogue and what followed thereupon had given a

sudden and unlooked-for turn to things, a quite unexpected character to the impression that he made. The effect had been, in a certain respect, more intense and exciting than he was prepared for. Circumstances had all at once created far and wide the strongest belief that he could instantaneously cure bodily diseases. The attention of all men had suddenly been riveted in this direction. And by no means without reason. Certain very surprising physical effects had really followed immediately upon his word and his action. His mind was disturbed therefore. How was he to meet this new state of things that had unexpectedly arisen? He could not sleep after that eventful Sabbath. Long before day the next morning he quitted his bed and the town and went away by himself to compose his mind by meditation and prayer. And the result of his retirement was, that, when his friends discovered his retreat and told him that the people were all asking for him, he refused to return to Capernaum, saying that he must go to the neighboring towns and teach there also, for that it was for which he had come forth, thereby implying that it was not to his purpose to become an exorcist and healer of bodily diseases. He had a far more radical aim.

Is there anything, by the way, forced or far-fetched in this construction of the sudden withdrawal of Jesus

from Capernaum ?* It is true, not a hint is found in the record pointing to such an explanation of his conduct. The explanation is all the more interesting on this account, since it is so strikingly justified by the facts stated. The record is thus shown to contain more truth than it states.

It does not appear, then, that Jesus began his public career with any thought of producing those remarkable physical effects which attended his presence and preaching. What his purpose was, he early declared in the synagogue at Nazareth, when he selected and read the passage from the prophet Isaiah: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim glad tidings to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim a joyful year of the Lord.* He had no idea of exerting any but a purely moral influence. It was not the physically diseased, but the morally diseased that he would cure. The surprising physical effects, that followed upon his speech or his action, came at first altogether unexpectedly to him. He shrunk from them in the

* First suggested by Dr. Schenkel (*Das Charakterbild Jesu*), although he does not appear to have been fully aware of its bearing upon the subsequent course of Jesus.

first instance. He would not remain in Capernaum where they first occurred. He was impatient of the popular avidity for the marvellous. "*Except you see signs and wonders,*" said he upon one occasion, "*you will not believe.*" It is, indeed, the one characteristic of the wonderful things attributed to him, distinguishing them in the most marked manner from all other so-called miracles, that they were done by him, not as wonders, not for the sake of the wonder that they caused, but as pure offices of humanity. The wonder was an incident that he would fain have avoided.

His bearing in relation to these remarkable accomplishments of his career is especially interesting for the insight which it gives us into the far more remarkable strength of his character and unalloyed purity of his purpose. I do not know that there is anything in all his history that creates in the mind a deeper sense of his moral greatness. He appears to have looked at these things and seen them precisely as they were, neither overvaluing, nor undervaluing them.

1. He did not overestimate them. Dear as were the purposes that he had at heart, all prepared as he was to lay down his life for them, it never once occurred to him to take advantage, for the furtherance of his great aims, of the sudden popular enthusiasm in his

favor which these wonders kindled, plausibly as he might have done so. They never tempted him to make pretensions to any peculiar, preternatural gift. He never stirred a step out of his way to produce them. He showed no solicitude to appropriate them to himself as exclusively his works. His they were unquestionably, in a certain plain and obvious sense. They never could have happened had he not been there. And yet many of these wonders, so far as he was concerned, may be said to have happened of themselves, or rather, they occurred, not because he sought occasions for them, or planned them, or contrived in any way that they should take place, but because an extraordinary condition of mind existed all around him, a condition of mind, which, it is true, he had produced, but he produced it, not by deliberate forethought or design, but all unconsciously, by means which he could not help, namely, *by simply being what he was*. It was the natural, involuntary, undesigned consequence of his original and powerful personality. It was due to that influence which is native, in every variety of degree, to all persons by virtue of their being persons.

And, as unconscious of anything peculiar in his being as he was of any peculiarity in his breathing, he was not aware of any exertion of personal force in the production of these sudden and most remarkable phe-

nomena. What struck him most in these cases was the faith of the individuals who were so surprisingly affected. That it was that took his attention, and to which, as the active and efficient cause of the effects wrought, he invariably directed the attention of others. "*According to thy faith be it unto thee.*" "*Thy faith hath saved thee.*" "*Believe ye that I am able to do this?*" "*Why ask me if I can? Believe. All things are possible to him that believes.*" Such was his language.

And it may well command our most thoughtful consideration that even in the case of those wonderful effects that were wrought, in which we find it all but impossible to trace the working of his extraordinary personal influence, as in the restoration of Lazarus, for example, still it is faith to which Jesus ascribes the great result, and in language so impressive that the world can never let these wonderful words die: "*I am the Resurrection and the Life, whoso believes in me, though he were dead, yet will he live, and he, who lives and believes in me, never dies.*"

2. Neither did he undervalue these astonishing effects. While he took no exaggerated, self-magnifying view of them, and never sought opportunities for them, he accepted such occasions as came and as could not be disregarded without inhumanity. And, moreover, the faith of the persons relieved being proved by its

effects to be no illusion but a vital fact, he recognized it as such. No caprice of the fancy could have been followed by such consequences. The deepest and most vital sentiments of human nature must have been aroused into lively play.

Here a question arises of deep interest: How was Jesus himself affected by these singular phenomena? How they impressed others we know. They filled them with astonishment and admiration, increasing the faith, through which they were produced. But what was their effect upon Jesus? They were not things to pass over such a spirit as his as lightly as a summer cloud. Who was ever quicker than he to catch the significance of facts? Truths of the grandest import flashed upon him from the most familiar objects. The birds of the air sung to him of the Infinite Providence, and so too did the lilies of the field. The leaven hidden in the meal, the small grain of mustard-seed told him of the progress and triumph of Truth. Could he, then, be unmoved by those novel and wondrous experiences? That he put upon them no self-flattering interpretation is evident, as I have said. It cannot be, however, but that they must have been to him, far more than to others, most luminous signs that Nature and God were with him, that a higher will than his was working with him and through him.

Indeed, I think it is evident, from the peculiar and

emphatic manner in which he speaks of faith, that the effects of it which he witnessed impressed him very deeply. There is no figure of speech too bold for his use, when he gives expression to his sense of its power. Naturally strong as he was in the conscious truth of his aims, these extraordinary events, that came without design of his, gave him, I cannot doubt, new inspiration, and added greatly to his personal power. Seeing these things, he naturally became more and more conscious of the great deep of life and power which they disclosed in his nature. In a word, these experiences were revelations to him of what was in him and in our universal human nature, revelations of that which he named Faith, and which, rightly defined, is the awaking in the soul of man of the highest known force.

As his personal consciousness thus grew deeper, there was born, or developed in him, an intuitive and irresistible sense of the power by which he not only overawed the insane, but restored sight to the blind, in two or three instances awoke the very dead, and came himself to life again.

Such, I conceive, was the character and genesis of his unparalleled personal power. It was no preternatural gift. It was the necessary property of his great personality. It was native to the man that he was.

If, as I have represented, the remarkable effects attending his presence came unexpectedly to Jesus in the first instance,—took him by surprise, then it could not be otherwise with him than as I have said. They must have taught him much and inspired him greatly. It was only natural that he should be thus affected by such experiences. And thus we have here a striking illustration of the unconscious way in which the Gospels give us to understand that the facts related had the influence which we justly look for, supposing them to be true.

It is interesting to note, and it is in entire consistency with the account which I have given of the surprising effects attendant upon the appearance and teaching of Jesus, that they were confined at the first to persons afflicted with nervous disorders, the class of persons obviously most disposed to be affected by the kind of influence which he exercised, by the moral power of his teaching and manner. These persons were peculiarly susceptible of mental impressions. They flocked to him, because the first exciting rumor that went abroad concerning him was that he had cast out an evil spirit. He never went in search of them, never coveted opportunities of showing the power which he had over them. The universal excitement of faith and hope, and the imagination, caused by the

occurrence in the synagogue in Capernaum, wrought greatly to exhilarate the mentally diseased. Hardly a limit can be imagined to the idea which the people suddenly conceived of the power of Jesus, or to the healing influence of his simple presence, of his eye, of the tones of his voice, or of his bare proximity, though unseen, upon this class of persons, an influence, be it remembered, inseparable from the native and commanding greatness of the man.

Individuals, believed and believing themselves to be under demoniacal influence, disregarded all the rules of ceremonial cleanness. They were careless about touching dead bodies, eating the flesh of swine, or eating with Gentiles, or with unwashed hands. Hence the spirits, supposed to possess them, were styled unclean. They seem to have been met with by Jesus extraordinarily often. But it must be recollected that there were no asylums then for those unfortunate people. They were left pretty much to themselves, partly, perhaps, from the superstitious fear of them which was probably caused by the belief that the spirits supposed to possess them were cunning and powerful to do mischief. Then, again, the belief in malign spiritual agencies must have wrought powerfully, as popular superstitions always have done, to produce the insanity for which it undertook to account. And, finally, as I have remarked, the first exciting

report that went abroad respecting Jesus was that he had cast out an evil spirit under imposing circumstances. It is natural, therefore, that he should have been believed to be a mighty exorcist. Of course, it was this class of diseased persons principally that were brought oftenest to his notice.

[I have not forgotten that the Fourth Gospel states that the first miracle wrought by Jesus was *the turning of water into wine* at a marriage-feast. But as my desire is to render visible the impress of Truth and Nature upon the Gospel narratives, I have omitted any allusion to that statement for the reason that, while the first three Gospels, and particularly the second, appear to have been in the main composed before there had come to be entertained any theory, any speculative idea, or theological representation of Jesus which would have inevitably biased their authors and led to the coloring, magnifying, or possibly even to the inventing, of facts in order to illustrate and confirm it, the Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, is manifestly moulded by such a dogmatic bias, by modes of thought and language of a later date than the time of Jesus. These are visible in the Proem, and throughout the first chapters, according to which Jesus was recognized by one and another as the Messiah and King of Israel from the very first;

whereas the other Gospels represent that as a conclusion in which the disciples of Jesus were confirmed only gradually. As to the turning of water into wine, to say nothing of its comparatively trivial character, and the representation of Jesus as exercising preternatural power over an inanimate object, the wonderful effect is said to have "manifested his glory" and led the disciples to believe on him. The whole style and air of the story in the Fourth Gospel has, compared with the second Gospel, an apocryphal character, and is glaringly inconsistent with the impression which that gives us, that Jesus sought to avoid the reputation of a thaumaturgist.]

VII

NAZARETH

THE next place that Jesus visited, when he left Capernaum, was Nazareth, the town in which he was born, or where, at all events, so great a part of his early life was spent, that to distinguish him from others of the same name, he was called Jesus of Nazareth.

As he quitted Capernaum on the first day of the week, he probably reached Nazareth, which was not far from the former city, some days before he spoke in the synagogue there, as is related (Luke, iv.). During those days, so little interest comparatively, from obvious causes, was shown in him, that, after the exciting time in Capernaum, Jesus was surprised at the popular insensibility, on account of which, it is related—and it strikingly corroborates the representation, given in the foregoing chapter, of the power of Jesus—that no very wonderful effect was produced there. He *could* not—was *not able* (ὄχι ἠδύνατο) to do any mighty work in his native place (Mark, vi. 5, 6).

But as the report of the wonders that had hap-

pened in Capernaum had reached Nazareth, when he appeared in the synagogue on the Sabbath, it was filled, we may suppose, with people curious to hear him. Although they were too familiar with his person and antecedents to expect anything very wonderful from him, yet, when he rose in the assembly, thereby intimating that he wished to speak, and there was handed him the roll of the prophet Isaiah, and unrolling it, he found and read the passage: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to proclaim glad news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim deliverance to captives and a return of sight to the blind, to set at liberty the oppressed, to proclaim a joyful year of the Lord,"—as he read these words 'the eyes of all present were fastened on him,' and all confessed the grace with which he spoke. Having read the passage from the prophet, he sate down, as, according to the custom among the Jews, the teachers taught, seated.

He evidently selected these words of Isaiah, as descriptive of his own purpose, and thus virtually he assumed no position different from that which the prophet took when he made this declaration. He had, as the prophet had before him, in his own sacred convictions, the testimony of the spirit of the Lord, his Anointing. So solemnly bound did he feel himself to be to proclaim the truth which was to comfort the

people and give them sight and liberty and bring in a joyful era, that he held himself appointed for the purpose. His language does not require us to understand him as pretending to any preternatural commission. Whenever a man becomes so interested in any object that he is impelled to sacrifice everything for it, he naturally feels himself born, consecrated, anointed, to do that one thing.

It is not to be supposed that Luke (ch. iv.) gives us a full report of what Jesus said on this occasion. Only one or two of the most striking things that he uttered are recorded. He said the people of his own town would be sure to put to him the incredulous proverb, "Physician, heal thyself: Do here at home what you have done where you are not so well known." But a prophet, he reminded them, had but little recognition among his own people. His townsmen fancied that they had a special claim upon him. He quoted the Scriptures, however, to show that more than once the descendants of Abraham, the peculiar favorites of Heaven as they held themselves to be, had been passed by, and Gentiles, despised Gentiles, had been made the objects of extraordinary favor.

How large his thought! Far in advance of his countrymen. But what a bold and offensive thing to say in a Jewish synagogue! What a profanation of the sacred Scriptures, every letter of which taught

that Israel was the chosen of the Lord, to attempt to prove from them that God could neglect his own people and bestow his favor upon vile Gentile dogs!

When it is recollected what a desecration it has been considered, even in this our late day, of the Bible and the Church and the Sabbath, to quote the Bible in the pulpit in order to show that the African slave is entitled to the rights of humanity, we find no difficulty in perceiving why it was that the whole synagogue in Nazareth was kindled into a flame of wrath at these citations from the Holy Scriptures. The people were for laying violent hands upon the bold speaker, who had the effrontery thus to outrage their most sacred faith. It was even proposed to hurl him headlong from the brow of the hill, on which the town stood. But before, in the confusion, there could be any concerted action, Jesus passed through the crowd and slipped away. He left the town.

Whither he turned his steps, when thus forced to leave Nazareth so suddenly, we are not informed. It is only stated generally that he visited different places in Galilee, speaking always in the synagogues, those Jewish churches, and everywhere causing a great sensation by the unwonted air of authority with which he bore himself, and which struck those who heard him, as distinguishing him from their established teachers.

This impressive manner of his was due, as I have said, to the fact that his speech was inspired, as his whole being was, from within. He spoke, not professionally, not what he had been told by those who had gone before him, but what he himself knew,—from deep personal conviction. And that the people were greatly moved, was but the natural consequence. Such a kindling and flaming forth was there of wonder, admiration, faith, that the reins were flung to the imagination, and no limit was put, in the popular estimation, to the power of Jesus, preceded, as doubtless he everywhere was, by startling and exaggerated reports of the wonders attendant upon his presence and teaching.

VIII

THE LEPER

So far as the story of the life of Jesus has been told in the foregoing pages, it is so obviously in accordance with all that is natural and probable, the very signature of truth is so distinctly visible upon it, that now, when we come to an incident unlike anything that precedes it, the candid inquirer, however sceptically inclined, will carefully consider the case, and not dismiss it at once as a fable, strong as the presumption may be felt to be that exaggerations and fables are to be looked for in such a history as this.

Hitherto the instantaneous physical effects, consequent upon the career of Jesus, have been confined to individuals suffering from diseases of the nerves, diseases highly sensitive to a personal influence such as he, for the most part involuntarily, exercised. It is now related that a cutaneous disease, of a most loathsome character, instantly disappeared at the word and touch of Jesus.

As he was going from place to place, he chanced to fall in with a leper, who flung himself at his feet

(“*worshipped him*”), and in accents of beseeching earnestness declared that, if Jesus would will it, he should be well. Jesus, it is stated, laid his hand upon the man, saying “I will. Be clean,” and the disease vanished. Jesus charged the man to tell no one how he had been cured, but to go and obtain from the priest, as the Law required, a certificate that he was free from leprosy,—in a word, a clean bill of health.

Here the clue to an explanation of the manner in which the curative effect was produced, supposing it to have been real, appears to be lost. It is difficult to conceive how a mental or moral influence could have wrought to overcome a disease which was of the body only. But it ought not to be hard thus to account for the cure of the leper, if we hold to the philosophy of many of the wisest men, which teaches that the mind, instead of being the accident of the body, is its creative, organizing life. And, moreover, cutaneous disorders are intimately connected—are they not?—with the condition of the blood; and that the action of the blood is powerfully affected by the emotions of the mind can be questioned only by those who do not know what it is to blush.

The unfortunate persons upon whom fell the terrible affliction of leprosy were, on account of its contagious character, not permitted to remain in the towns. They were excluded almost entirely from human

intercourse. People shrunk from them with loathing and dread. How greatly their sufferings were aggravated by these circumstances may be readily conceived.

Secluded as the leper, mentioned in the Gospels, was, still one or more of his kindred, we may suppose, commiserated his unhappy condition, and provided for his necessities. Through them, or from chance persons whom he met, and who, in stopping to speak with him, took care to avoid all contact with him, he had heard the wonderful reports, with which the country was ringing far and wide, of the extraordinary man from Nazareth, at whose presence and word foul spirits shrieked and fled. We can only faintly picture to ourselves the intense earnestness with which the poor leper listened to these stories. Told in the impressive accents of perfect faith, they were received by him with a faith equally implicit, sharpened as his sense was by the severity of his affliction. It took no effort on his part to render it the profound conviction, the fixed idea, of his mind, that, could he only see Jesus, and if Jesus would will it, he would be relieved of the leprosy.

It is not said how he happened to meet Jesus or how he came to know him. Here again we must bring to mind what we often have occasion to remark. The particulars just referred to, in all probability, not

being at all extraordinary, or unusual, are just the things which the authors of the narrative, thinking only of relating what appeared wonderful to them, never dreamed of mentioning.

It was probably in the open country that Jesus, accompanied by only a few friends, or he may have been alone, came across the leper, who, when he saw Jesus, and knew that it was he, fell down at his feet, and with his voice and whole frame trembling with emotion, in imploring accents exclaimed, "Sir! if you will it, I shall be well!" The appeal, made with overpowering feeling and under so piteous circumstances, went straight to the heart of Jesus. He was "*moved with compassion.*" He had no thought of practising thaumaturgy. One only impulse prompted him, pity. "From the high ground of his low estate," that wretched creature pleaded with a resistless authority. Jesus saw and revered the profound faith of the man,—saw that it was no delusion but a faith working mightily in him, convulsing his whole being. Jesus did the man's bidding, obeyed the sacred impulse of nature, and, with a faith one with the leper's, exclaimed in reply, and with equal earnestness, "*I will! Be clean!*"

With the insight that Jesus had into the extraordinary state of the man's mind, seeing how he was moved to the very centre of him, Jesus had an intui-

tive conviction that it needed but a word of his lips, but a touch of his hand, to render the faith of the leper decisive. The action of Jesus in the case was not the result of any reasoning. It was divinely instinctive. 'A reason above reason' moved him. The bare presence of Jesus, his eye suffused with sympathy, his accents thrilling the soul of the hearer with the subduing authority of perfect sincerity, searched the inmost being of the leper. And when Jesus stretched out his hand and boldly laid it upon that diseased flesh, fearless of the dreaded contagion, the effect was nothing less than electric! Veneration and Faith,—faith in the True and the Good,—the central forces in human nature, the hidden springs of our vitality, were so powerfully stimulated that a new and healing energy darted through the blood, purifying the vital current and sweeping away the disease. The joy of the man—could it have been less than ecstatic? Jesus bade him go and show himself to the priest and do what the law prescribed, in order that the reality of his cure might be certified, charging him, moreover,—but it was more than the man could do,—to tell no one how he had been cured.

The injunction of silence imposed upon the leper,—is it not in striking consistency with the representation which I have given of Jesus in relation to these sudden and astonishing effects following upon his

presence and action? Does it not confirm that representation? Evidently he did not desire,—he took marked pains to avoid,—the reputation of a worker of wonders and healer of bodily maladies. Is it not a fact to be noted that these singular cases were never of his seeking? In the instance of the leper, it was the suffering condition and earnest appeal of the man and a pure impulse of compassion that moved him. And after the effect was realized, he would fain have nothing said or known about it. And it was always so; until towards the last, when it became in a manner understood that he was not a mere healer of bodily diseases. When he could not disregard these applications without being insensible to the impulses of humanity, he made so little account of these wonderful things, he so studiously avoided magnifying them, that he not only kept his own high moral aim from any admixture of lower motives, he saved himself from being regarded by the people at large as a mere thaumaturgist. The astonishing effects that broke forth so abundantly at the beginning of his career, as he took no pains to multiply them, appear, certainly not to have increased, if they did not actually decrease, as time went on. At all events, his character as a teacher and healer of the spiritually diseased maintained the ascendancy.

The view which I offer of the extraordinary facts in

the history of Jesus is much obscured by narrow and dogmatic definitions of Faith, or, at least, by crude notions of its nature. It was no random freak of the imagination. It was not a state of mind that one could have merely by saying or fancying that he had it. It was not produced by any arbitrary act, or by any act whatever, of the will. It was simply the implicit confidence, which a person so thoroughly true, so pre-eminently great as Jesus, naturally commanded. It was faith in a great Fact, faith in that in Jesus and in every true man, which is not of man's creation or acquisition, but of God, and of which a man may become conscious as his most intimate self, but not as of a thing of his own will or making. Jesus recognized in the faith of those who sought his help a natural, God-inspired force. It was demonstrated right before his eyes over and over again that the mental or spiritual state of these sufferers was perfectly competent to work the desired physical change, that it required but the touch of his hand or a word from his lips, to render its influence decisive; and sometimes not even these were necessary, as, in some instances, individuals were powerfully affected by him, who were at a distance from him, and with whom he had only indirect communication.

Two cases, at least, of this description, both children, the Centurion's boy and the Syro-Phœnician

woman's daughter, are mentioned, both of whom were relieved through sympathy with their parents, who, it is noteworthy, were both foreigners, and the faith which they had in Jesus was shown to be in each case, in a peculiar way, singularly strong.

So great was the reverence which the Centurion had conceived for Jesus, that, having sent some of his Jewish friends to solicit the aid of Jesus in behalf of his child who lay "sick of the palsy" greatly suffering, upon hearing that Jesus was coming to him, went to meet him and to assure him that it was needless that he should take so much trouble, he needed only to say the word, and the boy would be well. A confidence like this, astonishing Jesus himself, I find it easy to conceive, could not have failed to have the greatest effect upon the suffering boy, when expressed by the Centurion directly to the child or in the child's presence.

The story of the Centurion and his boy is particularly interesting for the instance it affords us of the instinctive quickness with which Jesus caught the significance of events. The faith of this foreigner, superior to any that he had met with among his own countrymen, was to Jesus a window suddenly flung open, from which he looked forth into the Future and saw multitudes coming from the remotest quarters, far beyond the boundaries of Judea, to the

communion of the true and the good, to the kingdom of God.

The story of the Syro-Phœnician woman (Matth. xv. Mark, vii.) is that she followed Jesus, importuning him to have pity upon her daughter, lying sick at home under the influence of an unclean spirit, and that he paid no attention to her, saying to his disciples, who were with him, and who begged him to grant her request and bid her go away, that he was sent only to the house of Israel, to his own countrymen. The woman would not despair, but fell down at his feet, exclaiming, "Sir, help me!" But he told her that it was not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. Humbly admitting what he said, she suggested that dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Struck with the faith that the woman thus touchingly manifested, Jesus bade her depart, assuring her it should be to her as she desired. He saw, I conceive, that such faith as hers must have the wished for consequence.

The harshness and Jewish exclusiveness with which Jesus appears to have treated this Greek woman are somewhat extenuated by the result. Although he virtually classed her with dogs, he treated her, in the end, with his characteristic humanity.

But some light is thrown upon his conduct on this occasion by the representation which has been given,

in the foregoing pages, of his position in regard to these sudden physical effects that attended him. If, as I think we have reason to believe, they took him by surprise in the first instance, and disturbed him, if he shrunk from them, or, at least, never sought occasions for them, if he was desirous of avoiding the reputation of a mere exorcist and wonder-worker, and if, moreover, the immediate object that he had at heart was the helping of his own countrymen, he must have been particularly anxious that such a mistaken idea of him should not go abroad into the neighboring regions. He had much to do to keep down the excitement among his own people. It appears that at the time the Syro-Phœnician woman came to him he was particularly anxious to avoid public notice (Mark, vii. 24). It would never have done to have had crowds of foreigners flocking to him merely for the sake of physical relief. It would have impeded his work very seriously. And therefore it was necessary that he should discourage any such movement, even at the cost of a harsh word or two.

IX

THE PARALYTIC AT CAPERNAUM

AFTER visiting different towns, speaking in the synagogues, drawing together great crowds wherever he appeared, awakening everywhere the greatest wonder and enthusiasm, and acting with extraordinary power especially upon diseased minds, Jesus returned to Capernaum. The popular feeling there, it appears, was by no means diminished. It had been kept up and increased by the reports that came of his sayings and doings in other places. As soon as it was known that he had arrived, the house in which he was was filled, and a great crowd was collected at the door.

As he sate within, talking with the people around him, suddenly a litter, upon which lay a poor, trembling paralytic, was lowered into the room where he was.

We are not sufficiently acquainted with the construction of the house to be able fully to understand how this was done. We only know that, like all the houses of the East now, and then, the roof was flat, and easily accessible from the roofs of the adjoining

dwellings; or there may have been an ascent to the roof outside the house. However this was, the crowd around the street door was so great that it was found impossible to take the man into the house that way. And so he was carried through one of the neighboring houses to the roof; whence he was lowered into the presence of Jesus.

How naturally did this mode of proceeding evince the strong and simple faith of the people, and of this suffering man and his friends especially! They had no misgiving, not the shadow of a doubt, could they only get the paralytic into his presence, that Jesus would show himself both willing and able to restore him.

Jesus himself was evidently touched by this manifestation of confidence in him. He addressed the man by the affectionate appellation of "Son," and instantly assured him that his sins were forgiven.

In the mingled emotions of fear, hope, veneration, and self-abasement, with which that wasted frame was trembling, Jesus read the heart of the paralytic,—saw his humility and penitence. And, in the eye of Jesus, such a state of mind and Forgiveness were one. Possibly the infirmity under which the man was suffering was the consequence of sinful excesses. Whether it were or not, he doubtless felt that it was, as it was a common belief among the Jews that bodily

diseases were punishments of some sin committed. So we learn from the Fourth Gospel (ix. 2), where the disciples of Jesus are said to have asked him concerning the man born blind, which had sinned, the man or his parents, that he was born blind.

The extraordinary rumors about Jesus, and the popular excitement he was producing, having spread far and wide, drew into Galilee from distant places, and even from Jerusalem, certain persons, teachers of the Law and members of the sect of the Pharisees, who came down into the country to see the strange man from Nazareth and to learn what he was doing. His great and increasing popularity had awakened their jealousy. They suspected him to be, if the truth were known, a demagogue, having heretical and seditious designs, and misleading the people. The suspicion was quite natural on their part. He had made no acknowledgment of their authority, nor sought their countenance. He had not been bred in their schools. If report spoke truly, he was saying some very severe things about them. They regarded him, therefore, with great distrust, and were in a frame of mind to put the worst construction upon his proceedings.

Some of these orthodox persons from the capital and elsewhere were present on this occasion. And when Jesus told the paralytic that his sins were for-

given, they were, or they affected to be, horror-struck at his blasphemous arrogance. Who but God had authority to pronounce sin forgiven?

Jesus read their thoughts in the looks which they cast upon him and exchanged among themselves. He turned to them and asked why they had such thoughts, and which they considered the easier, to pronounce the man's sins forgiven, or to bid him rise up and walk. That they might know, however, that he had said nothing that he was not authorized to say, he turned to the paralytic and bade him rise up and take his bed and walk home.

Whereupon the man instantly rose to his feet, seized his bed and went! Thus the punishment, as it was held to be, ceasing, proved his sins to be forgiven.

The crowd around the house, already wound up to the highest pitch of curiosity and wonder, were amazed beyond measure when they saw the man, who a little while before had been borne on a litter by four men into the adjoining house, now issuing forth, pressing through the throng, carrying his bed. "*They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it in this fashion,*" says one account. "*When the multitude saw it, they marvelled and glorified God, who had given such power to men,*" is the statement of the first Gospel. "*And they were all amazed and they glorified God and were filled with fear, say-*

ing, *We have seen strange things to-day,*" says Luke's Gospel.

Taking these things to be told in all honesty, where can we find room for the slightest suspicion of delusion? Bear in mind the commanding air which invested the person of Jesus, the authority of his voice and his eye, keep in view the profound emotion of the paralytic, upon whom such powerful influences were concentrated, his suffering condition, his self-humiliation suddenly relieved by the kindness, the reassuring tone of Jesus, his hope, his veneration,—think too how all these emotions must have been intensified in him by the sympathy throbbing all around him, and you will find little to task your faith in the sudden, renovating effect wrought on him. Instantly, like a flash of lightning, the conviction was born in him, that what Jesus commanded could be done and must, and he did it. He could not help doing it. He leaped from his prostrate position, seized his bed with convulsive energy and went, the crowd giving way before him. Have not similar sudden developments of vital energy been witnessed again and again in persons enfeebled by what were regarded as incurable maladies, when instincts, far less powerful than those which were quickened into activity in this man, were suddenly and mightily appealed to,—the love of life, for example, the instinct of self-preservation?

The popular feeling, consequent upon this incident and upon all that preceded it, became so strong, such crowds were drawn around Jesus, that, at times, he and his immediate attendants could hardly find a moment for their necessary meals (Mark, iii. 20). When he appeared in public, the people rushed to see him, "*pressing upon him to touch him, as many as had plagues.*"

On account of the great numbers coming from all quarters, he kept for the most part on the borders of the Sea of Galilee; and he directed his disciples to have a small vessel kept constantly in waiting (Mark, iii. 9), "*because of the multitude lest they should throng him.*" He could thus pass from one part of the shore to another and so escape the crowds.

But he was not always successful in thus freeing himself from them. Wherever he landed, it instantly became known who he was, and the people came hurrying to him from the surrounding country, "*bringing their sick in beds, wherever they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered into villages or cities or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch, if it were but the borders of his garment, and as many as touched him were made whole*" (Mark, vi. 55, 56).

Here again the popular character of the Records must be borne in mind. They are, by no means, to be

taken to the letter. Allowance must be made for the exaggerating effect of the wonder which filled every mind. If there actually occurred only a few instances of the sick brought and laid by the wayside where Jesus was to pass, in order to be cured by him, and of individuals healed by touching his clothes, they would amply suffice to give rise to such loose, general reports as these.

X

STORM ON THE LAKE

ONCE, when Jesus was crossing the water, there suddenly broke upon the Lake one of those violent gusts, to which the Lake is said to be peculiarly exposed, and which very soon expend their violence and subside as suddenly as they rise.

A large number of boats were out on the Lake at the same time. No explanation of the fact is given or hinted at in the Records. It is only briefly so stated. But the probability is, that the boats were full of people, following Jesus, bent upon not losing sight of him.

The wind, suddenly rushing down upon the Lake with great fury, threatened to swamp the vessel in which Jesus was. The people who were with him were seized with a panic at the suddenness and violence of the blast. Losing all presence of mind, they turned to Jesus in the greatest fright, imploring him to save them from the impending death. But he was asleep.

The crowd had been too much for him. It was, in

all probability, because he was worn out by the fatigue of having had to do with a multitude of people, "coming and going," crowding around him day after day, at all hours, allowing him not a moment's rest, that he had come off upon the Lake to escape from so much excitement.

At the cry of those around him, he awoke. And, as no danger, however sudden and imminent, could for an instant shake his implicit trust in the good God, or so much as disturb his equanimity, he awoke calm and self-possessed. Under the Providence, without which, as he once said, not even a sparrow falls to the ground, he knew no fear.

His companions in the vessel could not divine the secret of his perfect composure. They could not enter into the elevated state of a mind like his. Impressive as his calm bearing, when we picture it to ourselves, is to us now, it must have been immeasurably so to those men, looking up to him from the great depth of terror into which they were suddenly plunged.

To account, therefore, for the mysterious absence of all apprehension in his manner, terrified as they were, they rushed, in their simplicity, to the conclusion that there must be an understanding between him and the wild elements, especially as, in a few moments, the wind suddenly went down and a perfect calm suc-

ceeded, and he, having shown no sense of danger, of course showed no sense of relief at the change.

They were in no condition to think justly. What with the magnifying influence of the passion of fear by which they were carried away, and the vague and awful sense which they had of the power of Jesus, and which so many recent events had created in their minds, they were disposed to see everything in a wonderful light. The storm upon the water, sudden and violent as it was, was but a faint picture of the powerful and quick-succeeding emotions upon which their minds were tossed. Lifted all at once by the sudden subsidence of the gust from the depths of mortal terror to a rapturous sense of deliverance and security,—how natural was it that they should instantly conceive the thought that he, who was so perfectly composed through it all, no more relieved by the calm than disturbed by the storm, and of whose extraordinary power they had had so many proofs, must have quelled the raging winds and waves! Such was the obvious, instantaneous, and most confident inference of those simple-minded men in the wild excitement of that hour. So only could they explain the composure of Jesus. What they thus confidently believed, they had no hesitation in stating as a fact.

Only one of the three narratives of this incident reports Jesus as having said, "Peace! be still!"

The others say only that he *rebuked* the storm, just as two of the Gospels say, in the case of Peter's mother-in-law, that Jesus *rebuked* the fever, while the Gospel of Mark states simply that he took her by the hand. As she immediately left her bed, the inference was that her sickness had departed at his rebuke. If he actually uttered the words, 'Peace! be still!' it is much more likely that they were addressed to the shrieking and distracted ship's company than to the senseless winds and waves. The fearless and commanding behavior of Jesus, in strong contrast with the uproar of the storm and their own fright, seemed to these men as significant a rebuke to the elements as any words; and it could hardly have been otherwise than that the calm that came over the Lake, and the preceding and persistent calmness of Jesus, should be connected in the minds of the terrified persons about him as effect and cause. It must have seemed to them as if the winds had recognized their master and retreated.

To ascribe to Jesus the power of hushing the wind at his will by a brief word of command suggests the question how it happened that a person, possessing so mighty a power, should have been so exhausted by fatigue. Could not one who could control the winds have repaired his own strength? But this is not by any means the only difficulty. The main objection to

the supposition that he possessed such a power is that, although at first sight it appears to exalt him, it does in fact destroy the moral greatness of his attitude in those circumstances of extreme peril. If he possessed preternatural power over the wind so that it instantly ceased at his bidding, what becomes of his fearlessness? It loses at once its lofty moral character. There was no extraordinary strength of mind manifested. For, in that case, there was no sense of danger to which his faith rose superior. Take a man out of his usual relations, it has been said, confront him with strange circumstances, and then what he shows himself to be, that is he. The men with Jesus on this occasion, suddenly thrown into an alarming and untried situation, lost—every one of them his head. They were what he called them, men of little faith, cowards. But he, although suddenly awakened from sound sleep to imminent danger, showed himself invincible in his self-possession.

If it be asked why Jesus did not correct the erroneous idea of his credulous companions, the answer is, that it is not likely that he was aware of it. They whispered it to one another, but the awe, with which he inspired them, kept them silent towards him.

This passage of the history strikingly illustrates the characteristic of the Gospels, which, as I have said,

could belong only to writings historically true; namely, that, although their narratives are very brief, yet the particulars which they mention are such as imply what is not told and what, altogether undesignedly, attests their naturalness and consistency.

It is stated that Jesus had a small vessel kept in waiting, and the reason of this is also stated. It was because such crushing crowds gathered round him, as many as were suffering from diseases eager to get near him and touch him. Shortly afterwards, it is related, but with no allusion to the reason of his so doing, that he entered his boat to go to another part of the Lake, that there were many other boats out at the same time, and that he fell asleep. And his sleep, by the way, was so deep that neither the noise of the gale and the waves, nor the tossing of the vessel, but only the shrieking appeals of his companions to be saved from perishing, awoke him. These facts are mentioned, be it observed, but not a syllable is added of explanation, not a hint given of any connection between them. Nothing is said of the reason of them. And yet a moment's thought suggests that he was compelled to go out upon the Lake to escape the importunity of the increasing crowd, and that as soon as he got into the boat, other boats, filled with people, determined to keep him in sight, put off at the same time. Furthermore, does not his falling so heavily

asleep intimate how utterly he was worn out by the excitement of seeing and dealing with such numbers, all wrought up to the highest enthusiasm of wonder and admiration? Did ever history breathe so with the very life of truth? What is told implies what is omitted in the most natural manner possible, without any forced or far-fetched construction, and yet without a hint from the narrators to help us to our inferences.

This is not a solitary passage in which these reporters thus show themselves to be telling what is true. It is their pervading mode of narration, and in no respect is it more remarkable than in relation to the characters of the persons who figure in the scenes related. So remarkable indeed is it in this respect that, while there is not the slightest reason for supposing that the writers ever thought of telling what sort of a person, for instance, the early disciple of Jesus, Peter, was, yet everything related of him is in such perfect keeping with the idea of him which is unconsciously implied, that if the name, after being once given, had always afterwards been left out, and it were merely stated that one of the disciples said and did what is ascribed to Peter, we should at once recognize that one disciple as readily as we recognize any familiar acquaintance. This happens, not because it ever entered into the minds of the narrators to inform us what sort of a man Peter was, but because, the

incidents they relate concerning Peter being real, his character must necessarily be made to appear.

For my own part, I can conceive of no proof more decisive of the actual occurrence of any reported incident, like the storm upon the Lake, than that, unconsciously on the part of the reporter, it illustrates human nature and is in perfect accord with truth and probability. Adopting as true, the account which I have given of this passage, we necessarily accept as true, not only that such a person as Jesus did actually exist, but also that he was there, in a boat, upon the Lake, and that the particulars of the incident are facts. Let those to whom I may seem to be explaining away the contents of the Gospels consider how necessarily this alleged process of explaining away implies and involves the recognition of the primary and essential facts of the history.

Many subtle and profound correspondences with truth and nature are found in Shakespeare, but critics all recognize them as due to the intuitions of his wonderful genius. But who can for a moment suppose that the authors of the Gospels were at all aware of the correspondences of a like character discoverable in their narratives, correspondences, not only found in one or another Gospel, but resulting oftentimes from a collation of the different Gospels?

XI

THE MANIAC OF GADARA

WHEN, after the storm upon the Lake, Jesus landed upon another part of its shores, he was met by a raving maniac.

One of the three accounts states that he was met by two men of this description. But this is a probable exaggeration. Had there been two men, it is not likely that two of the narratives would mention only one.

Here again nothing is said of the way in which the maniac came to know Jesus. The omission is very natural, since, under the circumstances, there was, in all probability, nothing unusual in this particular, and the narrators, as we have frequent occasion to remind the reader, relate only what was, in their eyes, extraordinary. The maniac had doubtless heard about Jesus. The whole country was agitated by the stories told concerning him. And when he landed, and the men from the other boats came running towards him, and he was immediately the centre of a great concourse of people, the maniac saw that it could be no other than the extraordinary man from Nazareth.

The madman, it is stated, was exceedingly violent. He had been repeatedly confined and chained, but he had broken away and gone raving among the tombs, and people were afraid to go near the places which he was known to frequent.

As soon as he saw Jesus, he ran and threw himself down on his knees before him, and, overmastered by the delusion of his disordered brain that he could do and say only what was prompted by the foul fiends that possessed him as he thought, he spoke, not in his own character, but in the character of the evil spirits, who, of course, as he believed, could regard Jesus only as their mighty enemy and tormentor.

The exorcising of evil spirits was, in those days, followed as a profession. There were those who made it their business. They used various arts, incantations, and magical formulas, by which they terrified and overawed those who were supposed to be possessed, and, thus obtaining a certain authority over them, inspired them with the will to resist and overcome their nervous weakness. Those exorcists were the most successful who had the advantage of a commanding presence and eye, and perfect self-possession. In the book of Acts (ch. xix.) mention is made of certain exorcists, who endeavored to drive away evil spirits by adjuring them to depart in the name of

Jesus, using his name as a magical power or charm. But the patient, upon whom the experiment was tried, resisted, and assaulted them with such ferocity that they fled the place with clothes torn, and bleeding with wounds. But sometimes, we may imagine, the exorcists inspired the possessed with fear, and were regarded and addressed by their patients as designing to torment them, or rather the spirits supposed to have possession of them.

It must be kept in view that what the man said to Jesus was not said by evil spirits, but by the maniac himself uttering the wild promptings of a deranged mind. It was not a spirit or a legion of spirits, as the man insanely imagined, but it was the crazy man who spoke.

Jesus asked the man (not the evil spirit) his name. He answered, "Legion." This reply shows how very insane he was, how entirely he was impressed with the belief that he was the victim of malign spiritual influences. Not one evil spirit, nor yet seven evil spirits, but a whole troop of them, he wildly fancied, a 'legion,' possessed him.

One of the accounts states that the foul spirits (speaking through the man) begged that they might not be sent out of the country. According to another account they entreated Jesus not to send them into the abyss.

These were the ways, probably, in which the professional exorcists were wont to dispose of evil spirits, pretending to send them hither and thither. Some one or more of the regular practitioners had, in all likelihood, tried their power upon this man, and had commanded the evil spirits to quit the country, or return to the abyss whence they came, a command which had had no result. And therefore the man did not want any such unavailing threats and adjurations to be attempted again upon him.

All three accounts agree in stating that the evil spirits petitioned to be sent into a herd of swine, feeding a little way off.

And here again, we must not lose sight of the fact, that this request was, like all the rest that was said by the maniac, the suggestion of a man stark mad, of a man whose mind had become utterly deranged by the popular superstition respecting evil spirits, by the idea that a troop of these spirits had taken up their abode in him. This idea had seized upon the man with more than ordinary tenacity. Consequently he was not so immediately and powerfully impressed by the personal influence of Jesus as other deranged persons had been previously. The case was a very obstinate one. The extraordinary strength of this man's delusion is shown by his supposing that there was a legion of evil spirits in him, by the frenzy to which he

was driven, and by the mad request that the spirits might be permitted to go into the swine.

This request, however, insane as it was, betrays the characteristic cunning of insanity. In the presence of Jesus, the maniac had become comparatively composed, but he was still under the delusion that there were evil spirits in him. He wanted to have ocular proof of their leaving him, visible evidence of their presence elsewhere. And the maniac secretly congratulated himself, I fancy, upon having hit upon a shrewd way of getting rid of the spirits, when he proposed that they should be permitted to enter the swine. The swine were unclean animals, and it was in character for unclean spirits to make them their habitation.

It has been supposed that the insanity of the man was instantly transferred from the maniac, at the word of Jesus, to the swine, since the swine rushed into the Lake and perished. But again, we must not forget that the idea of sending the spirits into the swine was an absurd idea, the proposition of a madman. The thought of Jesus was not to send the spirits anywhere, but to restore the man. It is not to be supposed that Jesus contemplated any effect to be produced upon the swine.

And here I take occasion to say that, in regard to the general subject of demoniacal possession, it is not

necessary to suppose that Jesus was in advance of the common notions of the time. But I do consider it highly probable that he neither had any positive opinions of his own on the matter, one way or the other, nor were there any reasons why he should have them. Numbers there always are of the more intelligent, who, in relation to the popular superstitions of their time, occupy this position, namely: they do not think of calling them in question, and as little do they think of according them a deliberate assent. It never occurs to them to bestow any thought on them, especially if they are preoccupied with more important things. Besides, popular superstitions are not the conclusions of the understanding. They are, for the most part, the creations of the passion of Fear; and the strength of this passion varies greatly in individuals, and is a matter of temperament. Consequently upon some persons superstitions, devoutly cherished by the many, have very little influence. They may take them for granted, but, constitutionally, they are incapable of being much affected by them. This, I apprehend, was the position in which Jesus stood in regard to the popular belief in demons and demoniacal possession. He recognized as simple matters of fact the phenomena popularly accounted for by demoniacal agency and represented as its effects. He took for granted the common understanding of them. There was no need

or reason why he should do otherwise. Other and important things engrossed him. The unfortunate persons, who came to him, seeking relief, and supposing themselves and supposed by others to be under the influence of evil spirits, were suffering greatly, and his only object was to relieve them. The philosophy of their maladies was of no interest to him. His sole concern was to help the sufferers.

At all events, when the imaginary spirits implored him not to send them out of the country, or into the abyss, but into the swine, it is not to be conceived that they were so real to him, that he had so lively a faith in their actual presence, there in the man, that Jesus was moved by their entreaties, and compassionately allowed them to go where they wanted to go. It was not the evil spirits, but the poor, suffering fellow-man, right before him, whom alone he thought of. And when this mad request was made, and in reply he bade the spirits depart, his sole purpose was to deliver the man from his suffering condition. Jesus exercised no injurious influence, no influence whatever, upon the swine.

What followed, the destruction of the herd, was not the work of Jesus, nor is he to be held responsible for it. It was either the work of the maniac, who, the instant Jesus bade the evil spirits depart, rushed towards the swine with loud cries and frantic gesticu-

lations, as the spirits were not to be supposed to give up their chosen human habitation without a struggle, or it was the unwonted crowd of people, that startled the herd. The affrighted animals, running wildly away, leaped from the precipitous shore into the Lake. If we knew the exact locality, we might find, perhaps, that there was no apparent way of escape but that which they took. The abruptness of the bank probably hid from sight the water below, into which the foremost of the herd may have been forced by those crowding behind. Animals, like men, are liable to be panic-struck, and so to lose what little wits they have, and rush headlong into the jaws of death.

It is related that the whole herd perished in this way. But so it might have been stated, under the natural and magnifying influence of the wonder that filled all minds, even if only a portion of the swine leaped into the water and were drowned.

With the notions then universal concerning evil spirits, the people could have but one view of the case, and that was, that the swine were the victims of demoniacal agency, of which their destruction was so appalling a demonstration that the inhabitants of that neighborhood, and among them the owners of the swine, were so terrified that, as we read, they begged Jesus to depart out of their coasts. They were afraid

of him, such a fearful power did he seem to possess. And, if they were Jews, their terror was probably heightened by the consciousness of transgressing the Levitical Law, which forbade the use of swine's flesh. So terror-struck were the people of the vicinity that Jesus re-embarked for another part of the shore. This he did, not chiefly, we may suppose, in compliance with the entreaties of the people, but because he saw that the effect of the cure of the maniac, attended by such startling circumstances, and producing so great a sensation, would cause a popular excitement and a gathering of people in no wise less than that which he had just crossed the Lake to avoid.

The maniac, seeing the destruction of the herd, and how powerfully they were affected, was satisfied that the evil spirits had left him. Filled with gratitude for his restoration, he would fain have attached himself to Jesus. Jesus, however, told him to go home, but he laid no injunction of secrecy upon him as to the manner in which he had been cured, for the obvious reason that that had taken place so publicly that it was vain to think of keeping it concealed.

It is interesting to observe upon this occasion, as upon many other occasions, how indifferent, notwithstanding his supreme devotion to the truth which he published, Jesus was to the securing of partisans. To the anxiety which, ever since his day, his professed

followers have manifested to make proselytes, he was a stranger. Had he been a wonder-worker, intent upon making people believe in his preternatural power, would he not have yielded to this man's solicitations, and suffered him to accompany him, as a living evidence in his favor, to tell the story of so extraordinary a cure? As it was, he forbade the man to follow him and directed him to go home.

Indeed, we have here an illustration of one of the most original and interesting traits of the character of Jesus. Dear to him as was the great purpose for which he had solemnly consecrated himself to live and die, yet so far was he from being solicitous to swell the number of his personal adherents that again and again it seems as if he sought to intimidate individuals from joining him. Certain it is that he took special care that no one should unite his lot with his without knowing what he was about. He warned those who crowded around him and appeared disposed to follow him to count the cost. To follow him in truth, father, mother, husband, wife and children, and life itself must be resigned. His true follower was to be as unmoved by the dearest things on earth as if he hated them. He must be prepared not only to part with life but to part with it under the most frightful circumstances. He was to account himself under sentence of crucifixion, beyond all hope of

reprieve, and on the way to execution, carrying the cross on which he was to be hung. No one could be faithful in publishing the truth, as Jesus was publishing it, save at that appalling price. And Jesus suffered no opportunity to pass of having this understood. He said not a word to conciliate the strangers who came to him, one after another, proffering their service. The rich youth, whose ingenuous air touched his heart, he sent chagrined away.

The narrative of the maniac of Gadara, which I have endeavored to elucidate, has occasioned a great deal of difficulty and no little ridicule. Rightly understood it gives occasion for neither.

The one vital thing, be it remembered, in the Four Gospels which I would rescue from all misunderstanding, and, if I may, help to place in its true light, is the personal character of Jesus. In this, rightly appreciated, and in no so-called doctrine or doctrines, orthodox or liberal, lies the distinguishing and essential worth of Christianity to the world.

It is in its bearing upon the character of Jesus that the way, in which the so-called miracles told in the Gospels are explained in these pages, is most especially important. It shows us plainly how entirely Jesus was above the weakness of seeking to startle,

astonish, and overawe men's minds, even when circumstances were constantly offering him most tempting opportunities of playing upon the wonder of the people. He manifested no inclination, but a strongly marked disinclination, to the repute of a thaumaturgist. Amidst immense throngs at first for marvels and ready to make miracles out of ordinary incidents, Jesus was wholly unmoved. Those sudden and surprising effects, which followed upon his first speaking in public, took him, as we have seen, by surprise. After that first eventful Sabbath he could not sleep. He fled from Capernaum, where these things occurred, the next morning, early, long before day. And never after did he seek or make occasions for like occurrences. They were caused, I reiterate, not by design on his part, but by the indefinable power inseparable from so strong a nature, by the influence inherent in all persons in greater or less degrees, but latent in most, and, when active, always becoming so under conditions, and in the first instance, as in the case of Jesus, always undesignedly, and to the surprise even of the person in whom it is called forth.

One of the conditions necessary to the manifestations of this power is an aptitude to be affected by it in those who come within the sphere of it. In the time and place, in which Jesus appeared, this condition, favorable to the effect of his extraordinary per-

sonal power, existed in an eminent degree in the state of the people among whom he went teaching. They were a people—if we may take the immediate attendants upon Jesus as representative of the population at large—of a rustic simplicity of character, strongly disposed to be moved by wonder and veneration, and were thus peculiarly open to his influence. When we observe his great popularity in these earliest scenes of his public life, we are inclined to think that, could he have remained in Galilee without exciting the hostility of the ecclesiastical authorities, he might have moulded that people as he pleased.

Furthermore, the countrymen of Jesus were looking with passionate expectation for an extraordinary person to appear. When Jesus, therefore, appeared, and instantly impressed them by the unwonted air of authority with which he bore himself, and when, upon the very first occasion of his speaking in a synagogue, he was suddenly accosted in terms of reverence and fear by a man out of whom spake, as was believed, a spirit, a being belonging to the invisible world, and Jesus, so far from being disconcerted, instantly awed the spirit into silence, the flood-gates of wonder and faith flew wide open, and all men's minds were carried away by the torrent of public feeling, and all men's nerves were strung to a state of excitability, upon which, especially in the cases of the infirm and dis-

eased, the eye, the voice, the bare presence of Jesus, could not fail to act with power.

Thus viewed, the remarkable facts related in his history are found to be instances of the action of natural spiritual forces. They are traceable to the vital elements of human nature. And should like circumstances again occur, should the same conditions coincide, given an extraordinary person like Jesus, and a period as susceptible as that in which he lived, like effects would again take place, and by a law of our nature as sure as that by which the grass grows.

XIII

CHARGES AGAINST JESUS

JESUS allowed himself hardly less rest than the people allowed him. He went from place to place, not knowing in the morning where he should lay his head at night, publishing that kingdom of heaven, which is not in any outward organization but in the heart of man, and the great laws of that kingdom, which enjoin righteousness and the love of the supremely good, and condemning the false religion which had superseded the sacred obligations of man's natural duty. Everywhere large crowds gathered, so curious to see him and get near to him that they trampled upon one another in their eagerness (Luke, xii. 1).

He appears, at first, to have confined his public teaching to the synagogues on the Sabbaths, talking, on other days, with all classes of people, as occasion offered, sometimes attending feasts to which he was invited,—these feasts being held occasionally on the Sabbath,—sometimes encountering teachers of the Law and members of the sect, reputed pre-eminently pious, the Pharisees. Little is told of his teaching

in the synagogues. But of what he said in private dwellings, or by the wayside, in familiar talk with friends and strangers, we have interesting notices. What is related of him is mostly anecdotal.

Very soon the people came together in such numbers that no synagogue could hold them; and then he took to speaking in the open air, upon a hillside, or from a boat cast off a little way from the shore.

It is interesting to note the charges that were brought against Jesus by the orthodox of his day, interesting, first, because we learn from them what little respect he paid to the social and religious conventionalisms of his time, and what a Radical he was, whose authority has since been invoked for centuries to justify the most dogged conservatism; and, secondly, because, in a few brief words, he met these charges in so triumphant a manner, showing how fully he commanded the truth and was commanded by it. The obstacles thrust in his way he instantly turned into stepping-stones. Every objection made to him was an opportunity for a new success. His opposers had better have held their tongues. Their rage "concentrated upon him, served only to illuminate,—it could not consume him." Nothing could disturb, everything attested, his presence of mind. He met every emergency, however sudden and unlooked for, as admirably as if

he had been, all his life long before, specially preparing himself for it.* What has been said of another, may be said of him with far more significance: to object to him was like thinking to resist the lightning with a weapon of steel. It only concentrated his force and brought down the thunderbolt.

The first fault found with him was that he kept bad company.

Next, it was objected that he did not require of his disciples any special religious observances,—that he imposed no fasts upon them.

Then it was charged that he countenanced them in positive violations of the holy Sabbath, and that he himself was constantly doing things on that day which it was not lawful to do.

Once more, he gave offence by his disregard of the time-honored traditions of the fathers.

With what crushing power did he dispose of these charges! To those who murmured that he sate down at table with people of no character, odious tax-gatherers and outcasts, his vindication was that he came to invite not the virtuous but the vicious to repentance. And he bade his objectors go and learn the

* The words of Livy which a recent writer applies to Shakespeare find pertinent application here—*sic pariter ad omnia fuit, ut natum ad id unum diceres, quod cumque ageret.*

meaning of the scripture, "*I will have mercy and not sacrifice,*"—humanity before religious forms. It was to the charge made against him on account of the company which he kept, that we owe the immortal parable of the Prodigal Son, and the great declaration that the good Shepherd will go after every lost soul until he finds it, and bring it back to the fold.

The second charge he answered in a manner equally striking. At the moment the question was put to him, why he did not require his disciples to fast, like the Pharisees and the disciples of John, he was surrounded by throngs in a state of the greatest excitement. His immediate attendants were beginning to dream that he was himself the Messiah, or, at all events, that the magnificent personage, whom all Israel was looking for, was coming, and they were intoxicated with the wildest hopes. All was going merrily with them as a marriage-bell. They were momentarily expecting they knew not what marvellous things, and were as little fitted for the formal austerity of fasting as guests at a bridal. It was well enough for John and his disciples to fast, for they were thinking only of the coming wrath. But the disciples of Jesus were full of joyous hope. The reply of Jesus, therefore, to his questioners was to this effect: "You ask me why I do not bid my disciples fast. Can the guests at a wedding-feast fast in the very midst of their fes-

tivities and when the bridegroom has reached the house of the bride and is among them? There is a fitness of things to be observed. People cannot fast when they are feasting. To require them to do so would be as incongruous as to put new wine into old wineskins, or new cloth into a worn-out garment."

This answer, by the way, is remarkable for the allusion which it contains to his own fate, of which he was, as I believe, fully aware from the very first, and of his presentiment of which this passage gives evidence all the more touching because incidental and obscure. The allusion could not have been understood by any one at the time. "Can the guests at a wedding fast," he asks, "while the bridegroom is with them? But," he significantly adds, "*the time is coming when the bridegroom will be taken away, and then will they fast.*"

One of the first occasions upon which the third charge—breaking the Sabbath—was brought against him was when he passed through a field of grain on that day, and his disciples, without reproof from him, broke off the ears of grain and rubbing out the seeds with their hands, ate them, which was accounted a violation of the day, so punctiliously was it observed. Then it was that Jesus uttered the truth, which, simple as it is, the nineteenth century has not learned! "*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for*

the Sabbath. Man is master of the Sabbath." It is a noteworthy fact that Jesus never mentioned the Sabbath but to condemn that superstitious observance of a day which continues to this time notwithstanding men profess to bow to his authority as supreme. Upon another occasion, he justified his manner of using the Sabbath by the great saying: "My Father has never ceased working, and I work," virtually denying, by the way, the Rest of the Creator, which the ancient Scripture tells of, and of which the Sabbath was declared to be the memorial. There was, indeed, no respect in which he gave more frequent offence to those who were accounted specially pious than in regard to the Sabbath.

And here he constantly appealed, with a silencing effect, to the great tribunal of Nature, to the natural sense of humanity: "What man of you, having an ox or an ass fallen into a pit, will not instantly pull him out on the Sabbath-day?" "How much more valuable is a man than these!"

There is no characteristic, by the way, of the teachings of Jesus more striking than the deference which they pay throughout to man's native sense of right, since so greatly disparaged. He submits even the Divine ways to human judgment: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven

give his own blessed spirit to them that ask it!" The parables of the lost sheep, of the lost piece of money, and of the Prodigal Son, are all appeals to this same native sense of right. And this it is in every human breast that Jesus recognized in so many words when he said that "that servant who knew his master's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, will be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, will be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him will be much required: and to whom *men* have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

But to return. On one occasion there was present in the synagogue, in which Jesus was teaching, a man who had lost the use of his hand, probably from nervous debility. How the case was brought to the knowledge of Jesus is not stated. His compassion was, doubtless, appealed to in the man's behalf. And he was, in all likelihood, the more disposed to listen to the appeal when he saw that there were those present who were on the watch to see whether he would cure the man, with the manifest design of accusing him of breaking the Sabbath. It was not his power, be it observed, that he wanted to prove, but it was the right and the duty of discharging the offices of humanity on that day equally

with other days, that he sought to assert. His foes had seen before that he did not hesitate to do things on the Sabbath which, by the sensation that they caused, broke in upon the usual monotonous formality of the day. So bitter was their hatred of him that these narrow-minded and bigoted sticklers for the letter and the forms of religion would gladly convict him of sacrilege and compass his death.

Jesus bade the man with a withered hand stand forth. Is it to be imagined that the man took the required position without emotion? Did he not stand there all in a tremble in that moving presence, with all those eyes upon him, not knowing what was to be done next?

Having bidden the man to take his place where all might see him, Jesus turned to the men who were watching him, thirsting for his life, and asked them, "*Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or to do evil, to save life, or to kill?*" that is, "Which is violating the Sabbath, I or you; I, who would do this man a service, or you, who would destroy me?" They answered never a word. How could they? Casting on them a look of indignation and sorrow, he turned to the man and said, "Stretch out your hand!" and instantly out went the hand.

Observe, Jesus did not touch the enfeebled limb, or make any application to that. He addressed the man

himself. And with that tone of authority which came from the extraordinary strength of his convictions, and by which the people were so much struck, commanded him to extend his hand. And the man himself it was who moved the withered limb. Overpowered by the awe in which he stood of Jesus, hardly knowing what he did, and not knowing at all how he did it, but conscious only of a sudden and irresistible conviction that he could move his hand, he obeyed, and could not help obeying, the command of Jesus.

Thus publicly did Jesus confound and put to shame those fierce religionists, who, when they found they could make no way against him on the score of religion, went and sought alliance, so it is related, with a party whom they hated only less than they feared and hated him: the Herodians, the adherents of Herod Antipas, who derived his princely authority from the Imperial Government at Rome, and whose partisans, consequently, acknowledged the Roman Emperor as the lawful head of the Jewish nation. By the help of this party the Pharisees hoped to entangle Jesus politically, and cause him to be suspected and arrested as a seditious disturber of the public peace.

Once more Jesus was charged with disregarding the traditions of the elders, in that he took no care that his disciples should wash their hands before eat-

ing, which was accounted a positive religious duty. This charge he met with an overwhelming retort, flinging back upon those who cavilled at him thus, the accusation of violating the most sacred commandments of God by their traditions. "The command of God is," said he, "Honor thy father and thy mother, but you say, following your traditions, that if a man will devote to the service of religion the money wherewith he might supply the necessities of his parents, he shall be freed from his filial obligations. Thus do you put human inventions in the place of divine laws."

It was when he was thus brought into collision with the traditions handed down from a past generation,—which, ministering to the superstitious dread of personal defilement from the mere external contact with certain persons and things, enjoined the scrupulous washing of hands and dishes and all the needed utensils before eating,—that Jesus uttered those words of wisdom in which he warned the people that it is not what enters into us but what proceeds from us that defiles us. What enters into a man passes away. But from a man proceed evil thoughts and all manner of iniquity, and these it is that defile him.

XIII

THE WOMAN CURED BY TOUCHING HIS CLOTHES

It is related, as we have seen, that persons suffering from disease were restored to health by merely touching the garments of Jesus. If only one or two instances of this kind occurred, they would amply suffice to give rise to the loose, general reports found in the Gospels. It may reasonably be questioned whether cases of this sort were numerous, since, great as the popular faith was in Jesus, it is not likely that the number was very large of those who were of a temperament so keenly sensitive to his influence as to be cured in this manner.

In fact, only one case is reported with any particulars. And this case is peculiarly interesting, not only in itself, but because it illustrates in a remarkable manner the natural and artless character of the Gospel narratives. The case was this :

A woman, who had been suffering for years from an infirmity which was wasting her life, and her living also;—as she had, at great expense, consulted many physicians without obtaining relief,—conceived

the idea that, could she only get near enough to Jesus to touch his clothes, she would be well. A wild fancy, it seems to us. But consider the extraordinary state of things at the time, what wonders were happening, what stories were told of the power of Jesus, how great and universal the consequent excitement was, and how long years of suffering had sharpened the sense of this woman, and made her quick and eager to believe in any means of relief that might occur to her. She had seen Jesus, doubtless, and listened to him, and been thrilled to the inmost by his looks and tones, penetrated by the profoundest reverence for his person. It surely needs no great effort of the imagination to appreciate the probable state of this woman's mind, and to see how naturally she conceived the idea of being healed by touching him.

As the infirmity under which she was suffering was unclean in the eye of the Levitical Law, she shrank from publishing it. She would fain be relieved without telling her sickness. She trusted to be cured without its being known. The crowd was so great that it was difficult for the weak woman to get near Jesus. Nevertheless, it was a matter of life and death to her, and, consequently, she threw her whole soul into the effort to approach him. And when she succeeded in getting within arm's length of his person,

moved as she was by so extraordinary and powerful a conviction, is it to be supposed that she contented herself with merely timidly and uncertainly touching him with the tip of her finger? Clutching for life, she grasped his garments with a quick, convulsive twitch, and instantly felt the touch thrilling and energizing her whole frame, and knew that she was cured.

Jesus was aware of something peculiar in the movement. He felt that some one had pulled at his clothes. And he surmised what it meant,—that it was some one who expected a healing influence in this way. He stopped and insisted upon knowing who it was who had seized hold of his garments. This he desired to ascertain, because, suspecting the purpose of the unknown, he wished to correct the mistaken idea that there was a medical virtue in his person, and to assure whomsoever it was that it was his or her own faith that could alone cure. His disciples wondered that he could be so bent upon knowing who had touched him when such a crowd was pressing upon him. The woman, greatly frightened at what she had done, because she was self-convicted of having stolen the power which, as she imagined, had effected her instant cure, finding she must be discovered, came forward all in a tremble, and confessed the truth, and told her whole story. Jesus listened to her, addressed her by the affectionate appellation of “*Daughter,*”

bade her be of good heart, and assured her that *it was her own faith that had cured her.*

Could we enter fully into the state of this woman's mind, and sympathize with the veneration which she felt for Jesus, and which was deepened beyond measure by her long and weary sufferings, we should find but little difficulty in crediting the story of her instantaneous restoration to health. The vital forces of her nature were stimulated into extraordinary activity.

This passage of the History illustrates in a very satisfactory manner the artless and popular character of the Gospel narratives. The story is told by all the first three Gospels, with variations, however, which admit of being accounted for in a very natural way.

The first Gospel relates the incident very briefly. It states that when the woman touched Jesus, he "*turned about, and seeing her, said, Be of good courage, daughter! Your faith has made you well.*" Nothing is said here about his inquiring who touched him.

The second Gospel says that upon the woman's touching him, Jesus, "*immediately perceiving within himself that power had gone out of him,*" turned to the crowd and asked who had touched his garments.

Here it is to be observed that the narrator undertakes to explain how it was that Jesus knew that some one had touched him. The narrator, like the woman, supposed there was a medical virtue in the person of Jesus, by the departure of which he was physically conscious that it had been drawn away from him. Such was the inference of the people around Jesus. But that it was a mistaken inference, that there was no such curative power in his garments, and, of course, that it could not have been by perceiving it go out from him that he became aware of some one's having touched him, is evident from the fact that Jesus told the woman that it was her *faith*—not any healing virtue in his clothes—that had made her well. It was, I conceive, for the very purpose of correcting in the person, who had touched him, the error of supposing the power of curing disease to be in his garments, that he stopped and insisted upon knowing who it was that had touched him.

In the third Gospel we have another version of the story. There it is stated that, when Jesus turned and inquired who had touched him, he said in so many words that he felt the power go out of him. This he could not possibly have said, for the reason already stated, because it contradicts what he told the woman immediately afterwards, namely, that it was her *faith* that had cured her. And it was for the very pur-

pose of giving the person concerned this assurance that he paused to inquire into the case. And besides, it is easy to see how the words, "*for I perceive that virtue has gone out of me,*" came to be put into his mouth. The by-standers had no other thought than that his knowledge of some one's having touched him came to him in this way: by his feeling power go from him. When the story was once told as it stands in the second Gospel, and it was stated that Jesus, as the by-standers inferred, felt the departure of power from his person, the impression was readily and naturally taken that this inference had his authority, and that Jesus had himself said that he felt the power leave him.

That the incident should be related in these different shapes is altogether natural. The way in which these variations arose is manifest.

They show, moreover, that there was a truth in the incident, a meaning in the few words said by Jesus to the woman, which was not understood at the time. And thus the reality of the scene is attested altogether without design.

Since these accounts are so popular in their structure, and are never to be taken to the letter against what is true and probable, it is not necessary to suppose that Jesus, when he turned round, uttered the

precise words given: "*Who touched me?*" He may have used a different form of inquiry, such as: "Who pulled my clothes?" As the *touching*, however, was the essential and prominent particular, it may have modified the story as it was subsequently told.

XIV

THE LITTLE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

WHEN the woman pressed through the crowd to touch him, Jesus was on his way to a house whither he had been entreated by a man in great distress to go, Jairus by name, and restore to health his little daughter, twelve years of age, then lying dangerously sick. Word was brought to him on the way that she had breathed her last, and it was suggested that it was needless for him to go to her, as she was past cure. He persisted, however, and when he reached the house, it was resounding with lamentations over the dead. He bade the people hush their cries, saying that the child was not dead but sleeping, and, not permitting any but her parents and two or three of his disciples to accompany him, went into the room where she lay and took her by the hand and called to her to rise up. And "her spirit came again," it is related, and the child arose, and he gave her to her parents, bidding them give her food, and charging those present to tell no one what was done.

Now, whatever difficulty there may be in believing

that the dead child actually came to life again, we cannot but be struck with the conduct of Jesus on this occasion. So far from pretending to exercise any preternatural power, he affirmed that the child was not dead; an assertion which he might well make, for to him she was not dead, if, holding death, as I believe that he did, to be a state of life, a sleep, he was strong in the conscious power to awaken her. He took no pains to summon disinterested witnesses. And when the little girl revived, he directed that nourishment should be given her, and he enjoined it upon those present to tell no one what had been done.

The behavior of Jesus in this case, so entirely simple and direct, so impressively marked by the absence of everything like artifice, parade, or self-consciousness, so accordant with all that we have thus far perceived in him in relation to the singular physical effects by which his public course was attended, gives this passage a claim to thoughtful and candid consideration, incredible as the central fact, the restoration of the child to life, may appear.

1. On this, as on every previous occasion of a so-called miracle, Jesus, be it observed, made no application of any mysterious power to the body. He addressed himself to the mind. He spoke directly to the child.

2. But how could there be any action of Faith in

this instance? Can the dead have faith? Unanswerable as this query may be thought to be, to affirm that they cannot is begging the great question. Jesus, it would seem, took it for granted that they can. He evidently did not regard death as the extinction of conscious personal existence.

3. Is it impossible to conceive that between children,

“—Over whom *their* Immortality
Broods like the Day,”

and him, who held them in such reverence that he said that of such is the heavenly kingdom, there may have existed hidden, vital sympathies, which justified Jesus in the faith that the little girl, though dead, could hear and obey his voice, and by means of which she did hear it, and reanimate her body? Have we penetrated the meaning of Wordsworth's inspired Ode?

4. Hitherto, in order to account for these extraordinary physical phenomena, we have not been under the necessity of supposing any peculiar, wonder-working gift in Jesus. Nor is there any need of the supposition in this case. The effects produced by him have been thus far explicable by reference to the extraordinary state of mind in the people at large and in all suffering persons especially, caused by the commanding presence of Jesus inseparable from the in-

born greatness of his character. But how is it conceivable that any influence of this kind could have wrought to bring the dead child to life?

Although we may not be able to apprehend how her faith—the native, unconscious faith of childhood, one with its essential being—could have been active after death, yet it may have been so, nay, it was so, if, as Jesus taught, faith is the property and act of that within us which never dies. And, moreover, may not any deficiency of the vitalizing power in her have been made up for by the profound faith of Jesus? His faith *in* Faith, strong as we may believe it was,—how could it be, as I have already intimated, but that it was quickened and deepened beyond measure by the many and imposing manifestations of the power of Faith that he was daily witnessing? He must have been enlightened and impressed by them far more than any one else, because he saw far deeper into things than the people around him. And as his faith thus grew, there was naturally developed in him an intuitive and irresistible consciousness of power to recall the child to life. Certain it is that he resorted to the boldest forms of speech to give expression to his sense of the power of Faith. “Let a man have faith,” he said, “only as a grain of mustard-seed, and he can overturn mountains.” Again he said, “All things are possible to him that believes;” that is, All things possible in

their nature are possible to Faith. We forget the pre-eminent wisdom of him of whom we are speaking, if, neglecting to limit these universal terms as we are bound to do, we understand him as meaning to say that any wild dream of fancy, any whim of a childish love of power, or self-display, is possible to Faith. Fancying one's self to believe is not believing. We do not necessarily believe because we say or think we believe. It is not in our power to have faith in what is not an object or cause of faith. What Jesus affirmed is, that to faith which *is* faith and no delusion, in other words, to a conviction of mind, which is in consonance with reason and the nature of things, all things are possible.

Now in the case of Jesus at the bedside of the dead child, what mark is there wanting of such a faith, and of the absence of all that betokens self-reference or a false state of mind? He makes of no account his own agency in the revival of the little girl, and does all that he can to conceal it, and this in the directest and most natural manner conceivable. And as to the faith of so powerful a person as he in his ability to call her back to life, who shall presume to say that it was inconsistent with the nature of things? The things concerned were Life and Death. How much do we know of the nature of these mysterious things? Assuredly not enough to authorize

us to assert that, from the nature of Life and Death, the restoration of the dead child was, under the circumstances, impossible. We may know more. We shall know more. We shall have knowledge of the nature of Death unspeakably cheering when we penetrate the significance of the Life of Jesus. And then, too, we shall see that the child awoke at his voice from the deep sleep of death as naturally as, when in health, at the call of her mother, she awoke in the morning from the lighter slumber of the night.

XV

THE MOTHER AND BROTHERS OF JESUS

THE family of Jesus, his mother and brothers, as it appears, were alarmed and made anxious by the course he was pursuing.

The anxiety of his near kindred on his account, by the way, is one of the proofs of the fabulous character of the stories told about his miraculous birth, stories, which did not come into existence until after his death, when the wonderfulness of his life gave rise to such fables, and rendered them credible. Supposing them to be true, we look in vain in his history for traces of the effect which such extraordinary things as they relate ought to have had. He himself never intimated that he came into life in a peculiar and preternatural manner. He never made any allusion to his birth at all.

And his mother and brothers, had they known that there was anything out of the order of nature in regard to his birth, would hardly have ventured to question the wisdom of his conduct, nor would they have suspected that he was out of his mind (Mark, iii. 21).

Indeed, it is said in the Fourth Gospel that his brothers put no faith in him (John, vii. 5).

As it was, he had lived with his kindred so long in their humble sphere, occupied with the same homely affairs that made up their lives, that now, when he had forsaken his home, and was going about the country, followed by great crowds, they knew not what to make of it. They had doubtless long seen that he was not like them. But, singular as his words and his conduct had often appeared, they were not prepared for the sensation he was making far and wide. They did not understand him, and feared that he was "beside himself," and would get into trouble. When they found what powerful enemies he was raising up,—how his course was condemned by teachers of the Law and persons of eminent respectability, they were still more alarmed on his account. In order to save him from the dangers which they saw threatening him, and of which, as it seemed to them, he was not aware, they determined to go after him, hoping, I suppose, to withdraw him from that tumultuous life and induce him to return home with them. They found him with a great crowd collected around him. They could not get near him.

The circumstances of the occasion are so interesting in themselves, and for the truthlike manner in which they are related, that I cannot deny myself the pleas-

ure of dwelling on them here, although I have little or nothing to add to the exposition of this passage of the history, which I have given elsewhere. But if the original narrative may be read over and over again with interest, shall not a fuller elucidation of it bear to be repeated, especially since it will directly help the purpose of these pages: to establish the Historical truth of the Accounts of Jesus?

There had just been brought to Jesus a man who was suffering from some nervous weakness that deprived him of the power of speech, and he was consequently believed to be under a malign spiritual influence (Matth. xii. 22-50). Brought into the presence of Jesus, beneath the eye and at the voice of this extraordinary person, the object of universal wonder and veneration, the man instantly recovered the use of his tongue, whereat the crowd that was gathered round was filled with astonishment.

Among the exclamations that broke forth, the question was bruited, "*Is not this the son of David?*" the descendant, so ardently expected, of that illustrious Prince, the very Messiah. Certain Pharisees present, hearing this idea suggested, were transported with rage. "What! this miserable Nazarene, whom nobody knew anything about, this associate of the vilest of the rabble, this wine-drinker, this despiser of the sacred Sabbath, the son of David!" It was

not to be endured. True, the dumb man had been made to speak. The fact could not be denied. But how was it done? In their desperation, they could see only one explanation. He must be helped by the Devil. He must be in league, not with any ordinary evil spirit, but with the very prince of evil spirits, with Beelzebub himself.

In thus accounting for what Jesus had just done, those Pharisees virtually confessed that the power which had been shown was above the known power of man, and by ascribing it to the greatest of the evil spirits, they betrayed what they thought, that it was far beyond any power of man known to them.

But since it was a power for good and not for evil, beneficent and not hurtful, Jesus was shocked and indignant to the last degree at the base calumny, at the incorrigible depravity evinced in pronouncing evil what was only good, confounding and reversing the plainest and the most sacred distinctions, calling God Beelzebub. He repelled the charge with the greatest warmth, piling argument upon argument to show its outrageous absurdity.

“Every kingdom,” said he, “every city, every house, which is at discord within itself, is brought to ruin. If Satan cast out Satan, he is fighting against himself, and how can his kingdom stand? If I cast out spirits by the aid of Beelzebub, by whom do your children

(that is, those whom you patronize, the professional exorcists of the day) cast them out? They shall condemn you. But if I cast out spirits by the power of God, then has the kingdom of God come close to you. How can one enter and plunder a strong man's house, unless he has first overpowered the strong man? The common proverb, 'He that is not with me is against me,' might teach you better: I am not *with* Satan, I am not doing his work, and therefore I am *against* him. You might say anything against me, a man, and it would be pardonable. But when you call the manifest beneficent power and spirit of good, evil, when you speak evil of the very spirit of God, you blaspheme, and you are unpardonable. When in the plainest good you can see only evil, there is no hope of you now or ever. There is no forgiveness for you,"—no forgiveness because no repentance.

Such I conceive to be the purport of his indignant protest against the gross perversity that could stigmatize a plain act of humanity as the work of the Evil One. He expressed himself with intense earnestness. Using the strong, unqualified language of deep emotion, he is not to be understood as speaking to the letter, and as if he deliberately intended to assert that there is a sin which, being forsaken, will not be forgiven, or that there is any sin that may not be repented of. He was full of the particular case before

him,—shocked above measure at hearing the work of God ascribed to the Devil. Strong feeling never pauses to make exceptions or qualifications. It leaps at once to the use of general and universal terms.

In the mind of Jesus, as we may learn from more than one passage (Mark, ii. 5 ; Luke, vii. 47), Repentance and Forgiveness are one, different names for the same thing. In the Penitent he beheld the Forgiven. And when he pronounced those past forgiveness who brought this shameless charge against him of being assisted by the Evil One when he was doing good and good only, it was because they seemed to him, shocked as he was at such inveterate depravity, to be hopelessly impenitent. How could they ever be moved by good thoughts when they thus blasphemed the Holy Spirit from which alone all good thoughts come?

So overwhelming was his reply to this blasphemous charge that it appears to have touched the hearts of these Pharisees, hardened as they were. For, as is related, immediately after, some of this class, approaching him in tones of respect, giving him the honored title of Teacher, spoke and said that they desired *a sign* from him.

This desire for a sign has a peculiar significance. It was not a mere miracle that was wanted. It appears to have been the expectation of the Jews

that, when the Messiah should come, he would do some act that would be a sign, or signal, whereby he might at once be identified as the Messiah beyond the possibility of mistake. What precisely the expected sign was to be does not appear, and, probably, was not known, except that it would be some act conformable to the popular idea of the Messiah as a military and kingly personage and confirmatory of that idea. "*The Jews*," says Paul (I. Cor. i. 22), "*require a sign.*" And Jesus was once asked by his disciples what *the sign* would be of the coming of the Messiah (Matth. xxiv. 3).

When, therefore, the Pharisees desired a sign from Jesus, it would seem to imply that they were so much impressed by what he had just done and said that all that was then wanting to their full satisfaction was that he should give them a sign. It was as if they had said, "Teacher, you certainly have done and said wonderful things. Only give us now a sign, and we will believe you." But as he was not the Messiah that they had set their hearts upon, he could give them no sign such as they wanted. And so he told them. He could give them no sign but the sign of the prophet Jonah, to whose preaching in Nineveh he compared his own preaching to that generation.*

* The allusion in the second and third Gospels to the prophet Jonah makes no mention of the resurrection of Jesus. It

And then he proceeded to describe the well-known case of a possessed man or maniac. When any one was subject to fits of nervous excitability the popular belief was that he was the victim of an evil spirit, who came and went with these periodical attacks. When the disease grew worse and the paroxysms became more violent, it was supposed that the number of foul spirits, possessing the man, was increased. These familiar ideas Jesus employed to illustrate the moral condition of that generation as represented by those Pharisees who charged him with being in league with the Devil. This charge showed that they were possessed by the evil spirit who sees evil in good. When, with altered tone, they addressed him respectfully and asked for a sign, the evil spirit appeared to have left them. But the appearance was delusive. The spirit had quitted them only for awhile and gone away to the arid deserts, the supposed home of demons. The sanity of their victims was but for a season. The foul spirit would return, bringing with him seven other spirits worse than himself. The un-

is simply a comparison of the position of Jesus to that of Jonah : as Jonah appeared warning the people of Nineveh, so Jesus was warning that generation. The reference in the Gospel of Matthew to the likeness between Jesus in the grave and Jonah in the belly of the whale, looks very much like a gloss.

belief of these men would return with sevenfold strength, and their last condition would be worse than the first.

It was while Jesus was thus talking to the people with the greatest earnestness, with his whole mind and heart in what he was saying, that he was abruptly broken in upon, as we read (Matth. xii. 46), by a voice calling to him that his mother and brothers were there, outside the crowd,—“*the people were gathered thick together*” (Luke, xi. 29),—wanting to speak with him.

So absorbed was he in what he was saying that for an instant he forgot himself and all that belonged to him. He was lost in the Truth. Have we not here an exquisite touch of Nature? The soul has stronger affinities than those of blood. It is from such a passage as this that M. Renan draws the inference that Jesus was insensible to his natural ties! Only they know how to love their kindred truly whose love of God is supreme. They would love father and mother less if they did not love Truth more. It is as natural as it is conceivable that the most loving of sons and brothers should be so given, heart and soul, to the Highest and Best, as, occasionally, for brief moments, to lose all thought of everything else. Thus was it with Jesus on this occasion.

If, in his devotion to the high and dear purpose of

his life, he, for an instant, forgot his mother, he remembered her afterwards in an hour of agony so severe that he might well be pardoned if he had had then no thoughts but of himself.

How well, by the way, does this incident show what Jesus meant when he said to the people who were following him, that if a man would truly follow him he must rise above all private and personal considerations and be as insensible to his dearest ones and to his own life as if he hated them! Truly he meant what he said, and he required nothing of others that he did not practise himself.

In the account which I have thus given of this passage in the Life of Jesus I have followed the first Gospel. The second tells the story substantially in the same way. But in the third, the coming of his mother and brothers after him is told in another place, not in this connection. No mention is made of them in Luke's narrative of the cure of the dumb man and the blasphemy of which the Pharisees were guilty. But it relates that as Jesus "*spake these things*" a woman in the crowd "*lifted up her voice,*" i.e. cried aloud, "Blessed is the mother that bore thee, and the breasts that gave thee nourishment?" Does not this incident imply the mention which, according to the other Gospels, was made on this occasion of his mother? It was because her ear caught that notice

of his mother by some one in the crowd that this woman was prompted thus to exclaim, as if she had said, "Your mother! What a happy woman the mother of such a son must be!" By this exclamation, breaking almost involuntarily from her lips, she virtually continued the interruption, and, as is interesting to note, with the same annoying effect upon the mind of Jesus, as is apparent from his reply to her benediction upon his mother. "*Blessed rather,*" he exclaimed in return, "*are those who hear the word of God and keep it!*" The form of this utterance betrays his emotion. It is general, universal, the very language of deep feeling. As he said these words, I cannot help thinking, he turned towards the woman from whom had come that well-meant but unseasonable ejaculation. She took his reply, general as it was in its terms, it is equally natural to suppose, as aimed directly at herself. She shrank back covered with confusion, feeling herself rebuked. The keen eye of Jesus read her soul; and, therefore, when he turned and pointed to his disciples, saying, "*Behold my mother and my brothers!*" in what he adds he introduces the *sisterly* relation,—"*for whosoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my mother and sister and brother.*"

XVI

FALSE WONDERS

As there are not a few who, under the lead of Strauss, have come to look upon the whole story of Jesus, contained in the Four Gospels, as a collection of myths, I have sought to make visible its historical features, to show that, in substance, it has the full warrant of reason, nature, and probability. And I know not what better vouchers for its truth than these can be demanded for any history.

I do not, however, question that there are legends, myths, or whatever they may be named, in the Gospels. The stories of the birth of Jesus I believe to be of this character.

The existence of fables in these writings is far, however, from authorizing the presumption that the whole history is fabulous. It suggests directly the opposite inference. The imagination is not stimulated to the creation of fables, or to credit fables when invented, unless something extraordinary has occurred to excite it. So invariably is it the case that real wonders give occasion for a multitude of false ones, that I should

consider the actual history of Jesus to be lacking in most important evidence of its truth were there no fables and exaggerations mixed with it. Where there is the fire of truth there must be the smoke of fable. Such stories of the birth of Jesus never would have been suggested or found credible had not his life been so extraordinarily great as to give color to the idea that he could not have been born as other men are. Neither he himself nor any one else during his lifetime ever alluded to his birth as extraordinary. The story of it, as we find it in the first Gospel, evidently did not come into existence until after his death.

There are several things told of him which it is difficult to accept as they stand. They are not in keeping with him, or with reason or probability. They are either fictions or ordinary occurrences exaggerated. In either light, they do not affect our idea of him or lessen his greatness.

In the story, for instance, of his telling Peter to go and catch a fish, and in the mouth of the fish a piece of money would be found wherewith to pay the Roman tax, I find nothing like Jesus. The story has an apocryphal sound. Whether it is a pure fiction or an ordinary incident magnified, I do not know.

So also the manner in which upon two occasions Jesus is related to have fed some thousands is so re-

lated as to give the impression that it was done by a preternatural multiplication of a few loaves and fishes; although, if such were the case, there is hardly a hint of the effect upon the minds of the people,—of the astonishment which such an act must have produced. It is not likely that the numbers present, five thousand at one time, three thousand at another, should be stated with precision. It is related that when Jesus told his disciples that the multitude needed to be fed, and inquired what food there was to supply the demand, the disciples knew of only one individual, a young man, who had brought food with him. Is it likely that they could have known whether or not others, in that large multitude, had brought food also? Or is it probable that only one person, and that a young man, was provident enough to have brought bread with him? There seems to have been plenty of baskets for the fragments that were collected after the people were fed. The real state of the case, possibly, was, that when Jesus had got the multitude arranged in some order, seated on the ground in groups of fifty each, his example in distributing the loaves and fishes among those immediately around him led such as had refreshments with them to share their supplies with others in like manner. But whether this was what took place, or how the story is to be understood, I cannot tell.

There are various incidents in the Gospels which are represented to have taken place in express fulfilment of ancient prophecies. But the passages of the Old Testament, cited as predictions of the occurrences related, have only a fanciful application to them, and there is no ground for believing that they were regarded as having a prophetic significance until after, and some time after, the events to which they are applied took place. So that what are represented as prophecies fulfilled are mere parallelisms, such as are constantly occurring in human affairs, or fanciful coincidences which the authors of the Gospel narratives, being Jews, and holding their Sacred Scriptures in idolatrous veneration, as the depositaries of all knowledge, were led to represent as verifications of Old Testament prophecies.

The first Gospel states, for instance, that Jesus rode into Jerusalem upon an ass, "*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass.*" The Fourth Gospel quotes the same passage from Zechariah, and makes the same application of it (ch. xii. 14, 15). But the writer naïvely adds, "*These things understood not the disciples at the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him,*" thus furnishing us with a key to the manner

in which these quotations from the Old Testament were applied. They were after-thoughts.

Again, passages are adduced as prophecies from the ancient Scriptures having reference to Jesus, which, in their original connection, obviously have not even the form of predictions: as, for example, where it is said that Jesus spoke in parables, "*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables,*" etc. (Matth. xiii. 35). So that it would seem that whatever occurrences in the life of Jesus admitted of being described in the language of the Old Testament, the writers of the Gospels represented as happening, for the express purpose of verifying that language.

It is curious to note that the particulars described as answering to ancient prophecies are, for the most part, comparatively speaking, of a trivial character. It is almost always some little accident of the scene that is represented as verifying a prediction of the old prophets, which shows very strikingly that the substance of the Life of Jesus, the main facts, were too stubbornly original to be bent and accommodated to the Jewish prophecies. Only here and there comes some little circumstance that admits of being described as the carrying out of an Old Testament prediction, and this the Jewish authors of the Gospels seize upon eagerly. It is true, Strauss would fain make it appear

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that the whole history of Jesus was, in a manner, suggested by the Old Testament. For every fact he finds a parallel and precedent in the Ancient Scriptures. Were it so, the writers of the Gospels, who catch at every circumstance that appears to fulfil the language of the old prophets, would hardly have left it to an acute German of the nineteenth century to point it out.

XVII

PURPOSE AND METHOD

WE cannot determine the order in which the events related to have taken place in Galilee, occurred. Nor is it at all important, as Jesus does not appear to have been engaged in the execution of any definite plan. He organized nothing, gathered no church. He never baptized any one, nor did he require any formal adhesion to his person or the observance of any initiatory rite, as preliminary to all else that was required. He bade seekers of truth and life, who came to him, to keep the Commandments, to imitate the humane Samaritan. He had friends whom he loved, such as Lazarus and his sisters, who took no formal, public part with him; neither does it appear that he expected them to do so. It was not personal followers that he was bent upon collecting around him, but the spirit of self-sacrifice and fraternal love which he sought to inspire and diffuse. While he expressed his own sense of truth in terms and with an air of the highest authority, never did teacher pay such homage as he to the reason and consciences of men. And all his

utterances go to make every man judge for himself what is right.

A great, prominent purpose of his appears to have been to arouse the attention of his countrymen to the Crisis in the condition of the nation, which, with his clear insight into the indications of the time, he saw to be impending. He did not consider himself called to go beyond the boundaries of his own country. He chose twelve, and again seventy, from among those who attended him most faithfully, to go abroad, two by two, over the land and warn the people of the approach of the so-called kingdom of heaven and summon them to amend their lives; and he gave these messengers rules of eminent prudence to be observed in the discharge of the duty which he laid upon them.

To the popular mind the kingdom of heaven signified the coming of a prophet and king, specially appointed by the God of Israel to fulfil the glowing predictions of the ancient seers and deliver the nation from the power of Rome and raise it to a state of unprecedented greatness. It was this vision that inflamed the hearts of the people and their spiritual leaders. Accounting themselves the chosen of Heaven and all other nations but as dogs in comparison, they were stung to the quick by the humiliating consciousness of national subjection. They thirsted for vengeance upon their Gentile masters, and indulged in the wildest

dreams of temporal prosperity. It was the proud, fierce temper of the nation, causing it to chafe against the Roman authority, that was sure to bring on a collision with that mighty power by which it would be ground to powder. This Jesus plainly foresaw. To his prophetic vision, the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem was to become a ruin, not one stone left upon another.

The only salvation for the people, collectively and personally, was in a temper directly the reverse, in a spirit of patience which no suffering nor injuries could exhaust, and in a humanity that acknowledged an example to be followed in the despised Samaritan. It was this spirit that breathed from the words and the person of Jesus. To his large vision, the kingdom of God was within, in those affections of the soul which attest the moral government of the world, those divine laws, which were about to be signally demonstrated in the downfall of Israel, and in the introduction of the better state of things to follow the cleansing and enlargement of the hearts of men, and the germ and prophecy of which he carried, as I have said, in himself.

He is recorded to have declared that God alone knew—he did not—at what hour the doom of his country would be consummated. In fact his prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled about thirty years afterwards.

If he appears to have anticipated, as immediately to succeed, a better state of things than has yet, after the lapse of nineteen centuries, been realized, it ought not to lessen our admiration of his far prophetic sight. We may well be astonished, not that he did not see farther into the future, but that he saw so far. With his profound faith in Truth and his inspiring consciousness of its power, was it not natural that he should expect its speedy and complete triumph, especially when the iron wall of Jewish pride, which, naturally enough must have seemed to him the one great obstacle in its way, should, with the idolized Temple, be humbled to the dust; although, who ever recognized more fully than he the fact that Truth, however mightily enforced, must wait for its influence over men until they choose to receive it?

In himself, the great kingdom of Righteousness had already come, and to extend its empire he devoted himself unreservedly. How irrevocably he had made up his mind to accept the fearful fate that awaited him, how clearly, with the same insight with which he foresaw the ruin of his country, he foresaw also that the course he was pursuing could have but one ending,—an early, violent and ignominious death,—is evident in more passages than one. Once (we have already alluded to this incident in a different connection), at a comparatively early period, when his popu-

larity was at its height and a great multitude was following him, he warned them that whoever really meant to follow him must take the vile and cruel cross upon his shoulders and consider himself as on the way to execution. Unquestionably he was aware that this was his own position at that very moment. Remember his instant reply to the two of his disciples who, when he was on his way to Jerusalem, asked that they might have the seats on the right and left of the throne, which, in their simplicity, they believed he was then going to the capital to set up: "Can you drink of the cup that I am to drink of, and endure the flood of suffering which I am to pass through?" At another time when all were filled with wonder at what he had done, and he seemed to be carrying everything before him, he bade his disciples let his words sink into their ears: he was about to be delivered, he said, into the power of men who would put him to death. And what shows his deep moral insight, not only did he know that he must come to a violent and shameful end, he saw, with equal clearness, that it was necessary to the effect and success of his life, as necessary as that the seed should fall into the ground and die that it may be productive.

He had no method but the method of nature, and that he followed with an unconscious, filial faith. He

resorted to none of the instrumentalities without which no man nowadays can lift a finger. He made no appeal to the rich to aid him with their money. He told the wealthy young man that if he would join him in the cause of the world's regeneration he must first dispose of his possessions elsewhere. He availed himself of the simple means and opportunities which the hour and a good Providence offered, and which wait in such abundance upon every earnest purpose, that it seems now, in his case, as if he had enlisted all Nature and all Life in his service. He went not merely at certain times to certain places, but he went about daily, doing good, speaking words of truth and love as occasions offered. Most especially was he interested in the neglected and the outcast. He came, he said, to seek and save the lost—those who had lost themselves. These had his heartiest sympathy. No thought of appearances or of the mutterings of bigoted Pharisees ever deterred him from going among them as a friend, or receiving them kindly. Of “publicans and harlots” he had more hope than of those whose hearts were eaten out by spiritual pride. When he went through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, out of all the crowd that were collected to see him, he chose for his host an odious tax-gatherer who had climbed into a tree to get sight of him as he passed,—and whose diminutive stature, by the way, was an additional

cause, doubtless, for public contempt and ridicule,—so that people exclaimed, “He has gone to be the guest of a man of bad character!” What scene is there in his history, full as it is of striking incidents, more touching than that presented at the Pharisee’s table, at which the instant Jesus took the customary reclining posture, an outcast woman came behind him, and, flinging herself down at his feet, began kissing them over and over again, wetting them with her tears, and wiping away the tears with her hair! Uncompromising as was the truth that he uttered, severe as was the language in which he spoke of the Scribes and Pharisees, his manner must have been singularly attractive, since women gathered around him, and children went to him without fear.

Could the thick crust of superstition and familiarity which has grown over these artless Records be removed, language would afford us no terms that would not be all inadequate to express the sense we should have of the greatness and beauty of this most extraordinary character.

XVIII

THE RELATION OF JESUS TO MANKIND

MOST of the passages which we have noticed in the foregoing pages are accounts of very remarkable incidents. It would seem that an extraordinary number of remarkable things occurred in the life of Jesus. So numerous are they indeed, that, at first sight, some color is given to the suspicion that these Writings are but the offspring of the rude love of the marvellous. But when we examine these accounts one by one, we find that, such was the great character of Jesus, while the incidents related are as natural as they are remarkable, they could not well have been other than they are, since so extraordinary a person was there. Whatever he touched he made to breathe, to speak, to shine.

It is not to my present purpose to go through the whole of the Four Gospels, and set forth all the historical truth which, it is clear to my mind, they contain. In a little volume recently published, entitled "*The Unconscious Truth of the Four Gospels,*"

I have endeavored to indicate the marks of truth which may be found in the narratives of two of the most important facts in the history of Jesus: the Raising of Lazarus, and the Resurrection of Jesus himself. To that work I beg leave to refer such of my readers as are interested in the present inquiry.

My desire, in these pages, is simply to show that, whatever appearances of a fabulous, legendary, or mythical character these Records present, there is, running through them, underneath these appearances, underneath the modes of thought and language peculiar to the time and country in which their authors wrote, a pure piece of biography, a history, which, far as it is from completeness, gives us the idea of a person of most original and yet natural greatness, a person, so rich in every quality that commands confidence and inspires reverence and love, that, in becoming acquainted with him as one of ourselves, we are unconsciously learning to have faith in the highest Ideal, and a new sense is formed within us of the worth and sacred destiny of the race which has produced such an instance of what it may become.

It is because we have in the Personal Character of Jesus an all-inspiring revelation of what *is*, of what is in the nature that we all share with him, it is because in sympathy with him, faith and love and hope spring

up unbidden, like plants in the light and air and rain,—it is for this reason that to see him just as he was, is of all things most interesting. It is not from any theological propositions, however logically sound, it is not from any verbal precepts, however wise and pure, that we can draw the strength that we greatly need amidst the impenetrable mystery of Life. It is in the being of Jesus that the saving power of our Christianity dwells.

There is no religion that is of any value, however venerable its doctrines and its ceremonials, that is not rooted deep in faith in human virtue, that does not create an ever-growing trust in rectitude, in unselfishness, in whatever is good and noble. There can be no faith in God unless there is faith in Man. If we do not hold our brother sacred whom we see, how can we revere God whom we do not see? There is no Divine goodness for us if we do not believe in human virtue.

It is hard, however, to believe in man, seeing what we see, and daily conscious how pitifully we fail to realize the Right in ourselves,—hard, in the presence of the weakness and depravity that we witness and in which we share, to believe that the world of mankind is ever to be raised to any high moral position. What complaints are heard every day of the wickedness of men, of the wide lack of common honesty, the

inveterate self-seeking, the hardness and sensuality that abound, and especially of the absence of all principle in the civil and political concerns of life!

The amount of moral corruption is, doubtless, great. But I cling to the belief that, however abundant the evil that exists, good is still more abounding. This we must believe so long as we believe that Good is infinitely mightier and more active than Evil.

The fact is, the Evil that exists fills the whole sphere of our vision and the Good passes uncomputed, unnoticed, because the Evil is working in a world not made for Evil as it is made for Good. Consequently, with all its cunning and although it would fain do its work without attracting observation, yet having to go against the grain of things, it must needs make a great noise and dust, and these fill our ears and eyes, so that we see not the good which Heaven, never idle, is doing, and doing silently because everything is made to its hand—not a whisper breaks on the ear—it is all a matter of course and therefore it goes unnoticed.

But however this may be, the worst evil of the time or of any time is when men lose faith in human virtue, in human nature. When faith in man is gone, farewell to faith in God, farewell to the possibility of religion! If, notwithstanding its utmost degradation, marred, scarred, polluted as it is, this human nature of

ours is not sacred, then is there nothing sacred. If the Highest does not shine upon us through Man, it shines nowhere. All is darkness impenetrable. Man alone of all known existences can give us any idea of moral good, of the sanctity and beauty of the spirit.

The more degraded, therefore, men appear to be, the more gloomy the prospect, all the more vital to the salvation and elevation of the race is such a Life as that of Jesus. Let us once have an intelligent appreciation of that exalted virtue, a settled trust in that realization of all that is good and true, and then let the mystery of Being grow deeper, as it will with the advance of Science, let Iniquity abound and the very elect go astray, still we shall never despair. We shall still be of good cheer, for Life, with all its mysteries and all its agonies, has been overcome. In Jesus, Humanity, notwithstanding all its weaknesses, is crowned lord and king.

Thus is Jesus the life of life, and the imperishable hope of an unimaginable greatness. He is the pledge of a final triumph over all moral obstructions as complete as the ascendancy which man is every day gaining over the physical world. Because he reigned, we shall reign also. In him we have full assurance of a power in our nature, to which, when once it asserts its prerogative, what seem hindrances become helps, and to the presence of which the trust and ven-

eration that Jesus inspires are witnesses, whose testimony, written in every man's consciousness, it is impossible to question.

It is not, then, in any peculiarity of his nature, nor in any mysterious relation that he sustains to the Supreme, nor in any official position that he holds as the alleged Messiah, or Christ, of the Jews, but in the moral power of his Great Character that the incalculable worth of the Man of Nazareth consists. This it is which, commanding the reverence of mankind, imperfectly as it has been felt, is the hidden force that has thus far upheld the Religion built upon his words and his life against all assaults, and notwithstanding the gross abuses with which it has been loaded.

I have no thought, as I have already intimated, of claiming for Jesus that he alone holds this vital relation to mankind, although he is pre-eminent in this respect. Heaven has not stinted its bounty in sending the great and good to inspire the weak with the strength that every soul of flesh needs in the struggle of life. The most orthodox authorities—St. Augustine, for example—have acknowledged that there is no religion without some truth in it. All religions spring from the great ones of our race, who, whatever have been their defects, have always been inspired by some commanding truth. What shall we say, for instance,

of the religion of Buddha, the religion at this hour, as is computed, of nearly half a million millions of human beings, a religion, however fanciful its theology, venerable for its morality, teaching that all human goodness has its root in good will, charity? Is such a religion to be stigmatized as a mere superstition, or its author to be thought of otherwise than with reverence, without blaspheming the Providence that is over all? To exalt Jesus, must we disparage all other guides and helpers of the world? Or is it to be supposed that the beneficent Power that has made provision, abundant and universal, for the physical wants of man, has left his higher and better nature without witness of the same bountiful care?

The word *Christ*, being not the name of Jesus but a Jewish official title, we ought, to speak properly, always to say, Jesus *the* Christ. The dropping of the article has given, however, a mixed significance to the word, and it has become the name of the person as well as a title of office.

To Jews it was a matter of great interest to recognize the promise of a Messiah fulfilled in Jesus. But are we Gentiles bound to be Jews, familiar with Jewish prophecies and Scriptures, before we can become disciples of Jesus? To us he is far more than the prophet of one people. The desire of all nations is fulfilled in him.

It was because the first disciples, all Jews, had so constantly on their lips this word *Christ*,* i.e. the Anointed (the title is derived from the Jewish custom of consecration by anointing), that some one, outside the associated disciples,—it was at Antioch this happened,—hearing this word reiterated again and again, without caring to consider what it meant, nicknamed this new company, in derision, *Christ-ians*. The title took the popular ear, and went abroad, a term of ridicule and reproach, standing in public estimation for what was looked upon as a new and deadly superstition,—for, indeed, downright atheism. The most enlightened Romans regarded the designation Christians as another name for enemies of the human race.

The word *Christian* occurs only three times in the New Testament: once in I. Pet. iv. 16, where the connection shows that it was a badge of suffering; and twice in the Book of Acts, first in ch. xi. 26, where it is stated that the disciples were first called *Christians* in Antioch, and again in ch. xxvi. 28, and here it is used by King Agrippa, the significance of whose exclamation, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a *Christian!*” as expressive of the powerful im-

* In the first ten verses of I. Cor. i. the word Christ occurs ten times.

pression made upon the king by Paul's eloquence, is missed, if it is not borne in mind what an opprobrious thing it was then to be called a Christian. So obnoxious indeed was the name, that even Paul, in his reply to the king, quick as a flash though it was, instinctively shrank from taking it upon his lips: "I would to God," exclaimed he, "that not only thou but all who hear me this day were both almost and altogether"—he does not say, Christians, but—"such as I am!" Perhaps, if he had had time to think, he would not have evaded the odious title. Paul was not a man to be afraid of words.

I wonder what the first friends of Jesus would have called themselves if this title of Christians, derisively given them in the first instance, had not clung to them, and become in time so popular that, whereas it was a shame and peril at first to bear it, it was subsequently disreputable and dangerous not to be so called. Their distinction was that they were lovers of righteousness, freedom, and peace. Would they not have chosen a name representative of these things invisible and eternal, and comprehending among the friends of Jesus every one who loves his fellow-men, regardless of all other distinctions? But, considering how the plainest language, the explicit words of Jesus himself have been perverted, it may well be doubted whether they could have taken any name that would not very soon

have been made symbolical of the most un-Jesus-like exclusiveness. By whatever names men may call themselves, or be called by others, all that they can do is to render their designations synonymes of whatsoever things are pure, honorable, and just, and then there can be no question of their being friends of Jesus.

XIX

CLOSING SCENES

I HAVE endeavored to make evident the handiwork of Truth in the early part of the history of the public life of Jesus.

The closing scenes of the narrative, beginning with his final journey from Galilee to the metropolis, are, if possible, still more strongly characterized by the marks of a true history.

After travelling about in Galilee, speaking words of warning and wisdom as opportunity offered, seeking to arouse the attention of his countrymen to the coming doom of the nation and to the need of a new life, he felt himself bound to go to Jerusalem, the seat of that spiritual despotism which was hurrying the people to destruction by fostering their proud and vengeful passions, and imposing on them human traditions and dead formalities in the place of Justice and the Love of God.

As he declared in the most explicit manner when on trial for his life, it was the purpose for which he was born, to bear witness to the Truth. But to bear this

testimony in Jerusalem, in the very presence of the spiritual leaders whom he had denounced, to lay bare their false pretensions at the centre of their power and to their very faces, was certain and swift death. Of this he was fully aware. This he told his disciples, when he turned his face towards the capital, must be his fate.

But he saw with equal clearness that his death, under the circumstances, would, by the impression which it would make, be the strongest testimony possible that he could bear to the power of the Truth. The best service he could render it was to die for it.

He went to Jerusalem, therefore, into the thick of his enemies, without hesitation or fear, choosing for the time of his visit the occasion of the great national festival, the Passover, when the city would be full of strangers, people from the country, and so a large opportunity be afforded for the publication of truth.

On a certain day, he made a public entry into the city. As he had been charged with seditious designs, he rode in upon an ass, the emblem of peace. He was comparatively but little known to the inhabitants of the capital. They had only heard rumors of his sayings and doings in distant Galilee, and of that recent wonder in their immediate neighborhood, the recalling of Lazarus from the grave. He was accompanied by a great crowd of country people, men, women, and

children, waving branches of the palm tree and filling the air with their acclamations.

Unmoved by these imposing demonstrations of popular favor, when he reached the descent of the Mount of Olives, where the city with its magnificent Temple broke upon his sight, tears filled his eyes, and there burst from his lips the pathetic ejaculation: "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often have I longed to gather you as a hen gathers her young under her wings, and ye would not!"

If, in all the Holy Land, there is a spot upon which a vision of the Man of Nazareth beams through the mists of ages, and comes distinctly before us, it is there, on the road from Bethany over the Mount of Olives, where Jerusalem opens fully on the sight, and where fell those immortal tears.

Upon entering the city, he proceeded directly to the Temple, whose sacred precincts he found encroached upon by tables and booths set up there by traders whose business it was to exchange the coin of strangers, coming from a distance, for the currency of Jerusalem needed to pay their Temple dues, and to provide those who purposed to present offerings and sacrifices, as prescribed by the Levitical law, with the necessary animals, oxen, and sheep, and doves. He ordered these traders instantly away. And, as he

was attended by a great throng of people, and as this act of purifying the sacred place by ridding it of these greedy money-worshippers fell in with the popular feeling, they fled at the first intimation of his will, and with such precipitation that the tables and benches were overturned in the confusion.

The whip of small cords with which he is stated to have provided himself to drive the traders from the place was probably made on the spot, of a cord found lying there, belonging to some one of the owners of the animals, and used by him, if used at all, to drive the latter away. But the fact, just referred to, that Jesus was backed by the populace in this evidence of his respect for the sanctity of the Temple rendered any violence on his part unnecessary. The traders dared not make any resistance, and hastily retreated at the first word, well knowing that they had no right to be there.

There were, doubtless, many circumstances that came to the knowledge of Jesus, not mentioned in the Gospels, which fully disclosed to him the deadly hatred which he had provoked, the machinations of his powerful enemies, the meditated treachery of one of his disciples, and the certainty that his death by crucifixion was resolved upon.

Thus convinced that the end was at hand, he had

a natural and strong desire, it is stated, to spend a few hours in private with the little company of personal friends, who had all along been devoted to him (Luke, xxii. 15). But when the opportunity was afforded him, and they all assembled the evening before his arrest, the occasion was far from being what he had anticipated. Things occurred that, instead of comforting him, depressed him greatly.

When they had taken their places at table, the breaking of the bread, and the flowing red wine, suddenly suggested images of suffering and horror to his mind already overshadowed by the near approach of death. It was characteristic of him to see correspondences between visible objects and his own thoughts. It was in accordance with this habit of mind that he pointed the company to the resemblance between the broken bread and the red wine on the one hand, and his lacerated body and streaming blood on the other. That the resemblance struck his own mind with great force, and that he perceived it with a shudder, may be fairly inferred from the manner in which he indicated it: "It is my body!" "It is my blood!" The material objects, the bread and wine, for the instant vanished from before his eyes. He beheld only his own tortured body and flowing blood. It may well be doubted whether he ate a morsel of the bread. He would not taste a drop of the wine. It

would have seemed to him like drinking his own blood.

And then, again, he was wounded to the quick by the fact, for some time suspected but shortly before brought in one way or another fully to his knowledge, that one of his friends, one who had been wont to eat at the same table with him, was about to prove false to him, and was in communication with the Priests. He held it necessary to let his disciples know, in order that their faith in him might not be shaken, that he was aware of the contemplated treachery, that he was not about to be taken by surprise (John, xiii. 19). But he communicated the fact to them with evident reluctance, treating his false disciple with the greatest magnanimity, forbearing to mention his name, pointing him out only to the best loved of them, and to him only in a whisper, unheard by the rest, and making no allusion to him after he had left the room. He referred to the fact once or twice remotely before he declared it in so many words, thus showing what an effort it cost him.

Once more. It must have saddened him not a little to see his disciples, after all his teaching, wrangling, as the third Gospel states that they did, for precedence, contending which of them should be first.*

* Luke, xxii. 24. Luke states that there was a dispute among the disciples at the last Supper, but he connects with

The nature of the strife that arose among them then may be inferred from the remarkable way in which Jesus reproved them. They crowded and elbowed one another for the highest seats. To show them how wholly out of place these mutual jealousies were, he, their Master, as they called him, performed for them the humblest service of such an occasion, the office of a menial. He took a basin and towel and knelt down and washed their feet! That was a lesson never to be forgotten to their dying day.

So deeply was Jesus moved on that evening, so profound was the sadness that oppressed him, that then, for the first time, as it appears, his disciples became fully possessed with the idea that something terrible was about to happen,—that they were really about to lose him. Although he had told them long before, in the plainest terms, of his inevitable fate, yet always before they were so engrossed with their splendid Messianic visions and he had been surrounded by such admiring multitudes, that they could give no place to such dark thoughts. They could not bring themselves to believe that his language really had the dreadful meaning which it seemed to express.

the mention of it what Jesus said, or what he had been understood to say, on previous and different occasions.

But now no longer in their familiar Galilee but in the great crowded city, where they felt themselves strange and alone, when he, for whom they had forsaken their homes, and to whom they had looked to realize their brilliant dreams of wealth and honor,—when he was so sad, they caught the infection of his deep sadness, and mourned and wept, so that he, who, of all, stood most in need of comfort, put aside his own great sorrows to soothe theirs.

The report of the consolations which he addressed to his weeping friends is given only in the Fourth Gospel. It has the appearance of having been written at a period after the death of Jesus when the Past was seen through the sacred halo which invests the departed, and consequently it is, in all probability, greatly amplified, and it aims to give, not so much the exact words as the spirit of those immortal consolations, and that it has done with great effect, as myriads of sorrowing ones will attest. Jesus bade his disciples trust in God and trust also in him. He assured them that there were many rooms in the house of his Father, that there would come to them, in his place, another comforter, who would never leave them as he was about to do, but would dwell with them always, and teach them everything and enable them to understand all that he had said: the Spirit of Truth in their own minds.

After awhile, they rose from supper, and he led them to a garden outside the city, which, it is stated, was a favorite resort of his. He must have been there many times, it would seem then. But this is the only visit to the place that is mentioned, which only shows how brief and imperfect these four Accounts of Jesus are.

At the garden gate, he dismissed all but his three most intimate disciples. With these he went in, and to some retired part of the place, which, I suppose, he particularly loved.

And then there occurred a scene, the knowledge of which I do not believe would ever have come down to us if the narratives of it in the first three Gospels had not been written very early, long before those ideas of the metaphysical nature of Jesus had begun to germinate, with which this scene is so entirely at variance that it can only be reconciled with them by an explanation as absurd as it is revolting.

Of the reality of this scene I cannot doubt. The manner in which it is related stamps it as true. Not only is no explanation of it given or even hinted at, there is no conceivable reason why such an apparent exposure of weakness in Jesus should have been made but that it was a fact. The narrators have nothing to say about it except to state briefly what took place. They as certainly give no sign of having had any pre-

conceived ideas to the support or elucidation of which such things as are here related might be supposed to be necessary.

With the dogma of the divine nature of Jesus, this passage of the history is, I repeat, utterly inconsistent. But it overflows with the truth of nature when we take it as an account of a man like ourselves.

In order to bring this scene in the garden into accord with his being the very God, recourse has been had to the incredible idea that his agony was caused, not by any infirmity of nature, but by his having the sins of the whole world laid upon him. There is a distinct figure of speech here, which may satisfy those who need only words. But beyond this, there is no meaning that does not outrage every idea of right. These old and barbarous notions, however, are so rapidly dying out of mind that it is needless to dwell on them. Rather let us try to read this passage in the life of Jesus by the light of truth and human nature.

Consider first how the whole tenor of his teachings indicates the depth and tenderness of his sensibilities. A Religion of so eminently an affectionate character as Christianity never could have sprung from the man of iron which Jesus must have been not to have been moved in so terrible a situation.

Think too what a laborious life he had been leading,

with what exhausting emotions he had been harassed that very evening,—how he had postponed his own burden of suffering to comfort those poor afflicted men around him.

Bear in mind the lonely place, the silent midnight hour, and the fact that he was momentarily expecting to be seized and dragged away to a death of torture and shame, forsaken by every friend, and feeling that not a soul on earth appreciated his purpose or his position. Has there ever breathed a man in so profound a solitude? How the suspense of those last hours was tasking his strength, we may infer from what he said to his betrayer at the supper: “*What you do, do quickly.*”

When all the circumstances are duly pondered, is it any wonder, that in that dark, silent, solitary place, his emotion for awhile overwhelmed him? Would it have been consonant with the tenderness of his character, with his appalling situation, or with human nature, if in that lonely garden, at that lonely hour of night, he had experienced no revulsion of feeling, if he had not been overpowered for awhile by the horrors of his position?

Wonderfully true to human nature are the particulars of the story that is told of that hour. He wanted to be alone, and yet could not bear to be alone. Dismissing all but three of his disciples, upon reaching some retired part of the garden, he bade these three

stay where they were, while he went apart by himself, begging them to keep awake and on the watch, as he was every moment expecting to be arrested, and would not be taken wholly unawares. He told his three friends that his distress was so great it seemed to him as if he should die. (*"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."*)

He went from them but a short distance. They saw him throw himself prostrate on the earth. They heard him ejaculate a few brief words expressive of the mental conflict by which his soul was wrung. And then those poor, bewildered men, worn out by the excitement which they had undergone, yielded at that late hour to the exhaustion of nature, and fell asleep.

When he came back and found them sleeping, an exclamation of reproach escaped from him: *"Could you not watch with me one hour!"* But instantly, with characteristic magnanimity, he suggested, as an excuse for their unseasonable slumbers, what he was doubtless conscious of in his own case, that the spirit was willing but the flesh weak. And full of meaning too, as wrung from his own agonizing experience at that moment, were his monitory words, *"Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."*

Three times did he leave his three friends and return to them, turning, like one distracted, from earth to heaven and from God to man.

So deadly sick was he at heart that, as he bent over his disciples to waken them, the sweat, pouring from him, fell upon them in drops so thick and heavy that one of them,—Peter, it is most likely,—only half awake, and perturbed by vague imaginings of coming violence and suffering, fancied that it was drops of blood that he felt. He could not possibly in the darkness have distinguished any color. Hence grew the report of the bloody sweat.

Out of this temporary weakness, came a new and victorious strength. So calm and entirely himself did he become that his disciples could not otherwise think than that angels had been with him. Not in vain was he plunged into that black deep. He rose from it fully prepared for the fearful hour. When he caught sight through the trees of the lights borne by those who came to seize him, and heard the sound of their approaching steps, and the suspense was over, all conflict with mortal weakness was at an end also. He was himself again. By a natural law, his mind recovered its habitual tone.

So far from dreaming of escape or retreat, he went to meet the men who were sent to lead him to his death.

They were armed with swords and clubs. Coming to this lonely place under the black shadow of night upon an unusual errand, to get possession of the

person of a man rumored to possess preternatural powers, they doubtless kept close together. There was everything in the circumstances to awaken their superstitious fears and render them liable to be panic-struck by any unlooked-for occurrence.

When, therefore, suddenly emerging from the deep shades of the garden, the man whom they sought stood right before them in the full light of their torches, and demanded whom they wanted, and upon their answering, "Jesus of Nazareth," declared himself to be that person, they were startled as by an apparition,—so awe-struck by his fearless and commanding presence that they were thrown into confusion and the foremost, starting back, overthrew those who were close behind them.

Is it not in impressive keeping with the inborn dignity of the character of Jesus,—the sense that he showed of the contumely with which he was treated in being thus seized in secret, and by a band armed with swords and clubs? "Do you come after me," said he, "as if I were some miserable thief? You might have taken me at any time in the Temple where I have taught daily. But you did not dare to lay hands upon me then. The night—darkness, is your fit season."

He was led first to the house of the High Priest,

where were already gathered members of the Jewish ecclesiastical Council, waiting for Jesus to be brought before them.

And here one is struck with the difference between him then and there and the most distinguished of the Apostles, Paul, upon a like occasion. When, upon the High Priest's questioning him about his teaching, Jesus replied, that whatever he had said had been said not in secret, but publicly, in the Temple, where the people gathered, and that it was not he, but those that had heard him, who were to be asked what he had taught, some one of the retainers of the High Priest, standing by, slapped Jesus in the face, exclaiming, "Is that the way you answer the High Priest?" "If I have said what is false," was the calm and dignified reply, "show it to be so, but if I have spoken only the truth, why do you strike me?" When Paul afterwards was brought before the same High Priest, and that dignitary bade one of the by-standers strike him on the mouth, Paul broke forth with fiery indignation: "God will strike you, you whited wall! Do you sit there to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?"

The narrative of the arraignment of Jesus before the Procurator, Pontius Pilate, and of his crucifixion

following immediately thereupon, is marked all over with the features of a true history.

There is not the shadow of a reason for supposing that it was the intention of the narrators to depict the character of the Procurator. And yet, not Tacitus himself, 'the profound historian,' had it come in his way to describe that magistrate, could have given us a more lifelike portrait of the man than is undesignedly presented by the incidents related in the Four Gospels.

And what is still more interesting, the great character of Jesus also, the extraordinary manner of man that he was, is portrayed in the same unconscious way, with like consistency and wonderful vividness.

Remarkable as this is, it is no more than we have a right to demand in a true history. The facts stated being true, the illustration of the characters of the persons concerned comes of itself.

When individuals are placed in such fearfully unprecedented positions as both Jesus and Pilate were,—the one, summoned, in the Providence of Heaven, to sit in judgment upon the most extraordinary person that has appeared among men and to hold that great life in his hands; the other, to confront instant death, alone, with no friend on earth, with every circumstance attending that could add to the horror of the situation, it must needs be that the inmost quality and

stuff of the two should be laid bare in every gesture and syllable. No falseness, no weakness, could stand such severe and searching tests without being at once glaringly exposed, as the case of Pilate most plainly shows.

A man of the world, asking, What is Truth? and indifferent to the answer,*—a sceptic, I imagine, as to the gods, and yet seized with a vague, superstitious apprehension that here might be some deity in disguise, when, utterly at a loss to comprehend the silent composure of the prisoner in such terrible circumstances, he was told that the man had called himself the Son of God, and word also came to him in the judgment-hall from his wife bidding him beware how he condemned the person standing before him, as she had had a remarkable dream about him,†—in his embar-

* The reason, probably, why Pilate went out without waiting for an answer (John, xviii. 38), was, because, restless and uneasy in the dilemma in which he found himself, he was in no mood for the consideration of so general and abstract a question. Whatever was the state of his mind, he evidently put the question to Jesus superficially, as a man of the world might, without really any strong interest in it at any time, least of all, then.

† Nothing is more likely than that rumors of the wonderful incidents that marked the career of Jesus and of his great sayings should have penetrated the palace of the Procurator and reached the ears of his wife, upon whose mind such an impression was made that it suggested and shaped her dreams.

rassment catching at the weakest and most discreditable subterfuges to evade the responsibility of sentencing this inscrutable person to death,—willing all the time that Herod or the Jews should do the deed, if he might only escape doing it himself,—made blind by his selfish fears to common justice, pronouncing Jesus innocent and ordering him to be scourged in the same breath, in the vain hope that something less than the fatal Cross, the scourge, would appease the Priests, when, as a concession on his part, it would be sure to whet their appetite for blood,—poorly hiding under a ridicule of the alleged royal pretensions of Jesus, which we may well suspect to have been affected, his terror at the representations that would be made to his imperial master at Rome, the most suspicious of despots, should he let a man go free, charged with making himself a king,*—in attempting to force Jesus

* It was not until after the Priests had told Pilate that he was no friend to Cæsar if he let Jesus go, that Pilate sought to cast ridicule upon the idea of Jesus being a king. The instant his loyalty was questioned, the Procurator took his seat as if to proceed to judgment. To cover the alarm with which this accusation inspired him, which had hurried him to the judgment-seat, and which, in so doing, he was probably conscious of having betrayed, he said, sneeringly, to the Priests, "Look at your king!" To this they shouted in reply, "Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate, persisting in his banter, asked, "Shall I crucify your king?" When to this question, the answering cry was, "We have no king but Cæsar," all

to tell whence he came, betraying his weakness by vaunting his power,—overcoming at last his vague awe of Jesus by his more definite dread of Cæsar,—yielding Jesus up to be crucified, flattering himself that he could cleanse his conscience of innocent blood as easily as he could dash water from his hands,—and, finally, for the humiliating straits to which he could not avoid being conscious of having been driven by the hated Jews, meanly revenging himself upon them, after the very manner of a small, weak nature, by causing to be affixed to the Cross, over the head of Jesus, an inscription, of which he refused to allow any alteration, written in Greek and Latin as well as in Hebrew, so that it might be read by all, foreigners as well as natives, and the ridicule be cast upon the proud Jewish people of having a miserable man, covered with the ignominy of crucifixion, for their king,—such was the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate, as we learn from the Gospel narratives. Every act and every word ascribed to him are in perfect consistency with the idea of a weak man suddenly called to meet an occasion to which he was altogether unequal, a man, not naturally cruel but rendered so, in the circumstances, by cowardice and utter want of moral strength and principle.

power to keep up a strain of levity died away in sickening fear whitening the cheek of the Procurator, as the dread name of Cæsar again smote his ear.

In like manner, I repeat, is the character of Jesus represented.

If there is any one thing, the perception of which helps more than anything else to harmonize the various details of the Gospel narratives, and breathe into them a living soul of historical truth, it is the peculiar personal force of Jesus, the native power of the man. A great fact, undesignedly implied throughout. But it has never been brought fully forward and allowed its due weight,—far from it. And yet it explains and accredits so much!

This one fact, making all else plain, illumining and vivifying the whole history, has been completely hidden by the errors so long and widely prevalent concerning the nature of Jesus, errors, that leave even in the minds of those who have renounced them the greatest reluctance to study him fully and fairly as a man. Shrinking from the possibility of finding human weaknesses in him, we have missed seeing the extraordinary personal power which becomes visible only in connection and contrast with the weak nature over which it triumphed so signally.

And when this key to the whole history is wanting, the Gospels become open to all manner of disparaging criticism, and are as explicable upon the theory of Strauss as upon any other, and we can look for nothing better than the thin, fanciful *Vie de Jésus* of M. Renan.

Only once is this pregnant fact directly referred to in the Gospels, and that is where the first appearance of Jesus in public as a teacher is related. Then it is said that his hearers were struck not by what he said, but by the air of authority with which he spoke,—in other words, by his manner; and the manner of a man is the natural expression of the man himself. The style is the man. That this characteristic of Jesus, due, as I have said, to the commanding strength of the convictions to which he gave utterance and in which he lived and moved and had his being, is not elsewhere alluded to in the Gospels, is because it is a power inseparable from the person himself, as unconsciously felt as it is unconsciously exercised, like the air that we breathe without thinking of it, just one of those things that unpractised writers like the authors of the Gospels, not at all of an analyzing habit of mind, were the last to think of attempting to define, or even of noting.

That the extraordinary personal power of Jesus made itself felt deeply, however, there is abundant evidence of the most impressive character. It is traceable throughout the Gospels. The Gospels themselves are the effects of it.

But nowhere does it appear so strikingly as in the accounts of the Trial of Jesus. For there it is manifested not so much in any act, or in any word

then spoken by him, although every word of his then and there breathes the native greatness of his mind, as in the unbroken silence that he observed in that fearful situation, as to saying anything in his own defence. From the beginning to the end, not a syllable did he breathe in protestation of his innocence. Not for an instant did he descend to self-exculpation.

What word, what act has ever spoken as that Silence spoke and still speaks ! It tells not merely of un murmuring resignation to the inevitable, but of a conscious rectitude, of a self-respect, of a noble pride of virtue, of an indomitable magnanimity, to which I know not where to look for a parallel. He would not hear the Priests. No self-concern, no dread of the gathering horror, could move him to pay any heed to their accusations. And why ? Because he saw things just as they were,—saw that the Priests were sworn to take his life,—saw that their charges against him were the merest pretexts, as idle as they were false, and that, let them be refuted ever so triumphantly, it would not make the slightest difference. To reply to them, therefore, would be a waste of breath, which, of all times, that supreme hour was no time for. He was better occupied with his own thoughts. His blood,—that was his only answer. He might as well have trifled away those last moments in talking to the senseless stones. Seeing this with a clearness of

vision which no fear could dim, above every provocation to open his lips, calmly, without effort, he held his peace, and, strong in the full possession of his own perfect mind, stood there mute before his ferocious accusers ready to endure any injuries that their falsehoods might inflict on him.

And after Pilate, having declared him innocent, had caused him to be scourged, showing thereby that he, Pilate, was as little to be moved as the Priests by justice and humanity, Jesus refused to speak to him also. When to compel him to speak and tell whence he came, Pilate threatened him with his power, then he spoke, but not to answer the question that was put to him, but to tell the Procurator that he had only so much power over him as had been given him "from above,"* in other words, that it was not in him,—it

* "*From above*" (John, xix. 11). Was it because Pilate was a Roman, a Gentile, not recognizing the Power above by any title by which Jesus would designate it, and likely, if Jesus had referred to his heavenly Father, to understand him to mean Jupiter, or some other of the heathen gods, that Jesus used this comprehensive form of speech, "from above," alike intelligible to Jew and Gentile?

The answer of Jesus to Pilate is obscure. I have stated what I understand to be the purport of it. When Pilate boasts of his power, Jesus virtually tells him that he has no power in the case whatever, that he could not have any, unless it had been given him to be a different man from what he was. As Pilate, therefore, had not the moral power to protect Jesus, the greater the sin of him who had put Jesus

was not given him,—to act independently, that he was only an instrument of those who had delivered him, Jesus, into his hands. All the greater was their guilt.

Is it any wonder that Pilate was overawed by Jesus? How was it possible that it could be otherwise? Was it for a weak, superficial, worldly, selfish man, like Pilate, to penetrate through the forlorn surroundings of the prisoner before him and discern the transcendent greatness of mind which that silent, self-possessed behavior betokened? Could Pilate have caught sight of that, all would have been plain and simple enough in his eyes, seen in that great light; and weak as he was, I think he would have been ready to defy the Priests and brave the reigning Cæsar himself, and to suffer any death rather than that a hair of the head of Jesus should be harmed by his allowance. But it was not given to the ill-fated Procurator to see this. He could only perceive that the manner in which Jesus bore himself was most strange. He had never met with the like before. He could not solve the secret of that silence. And accordingly the prisoner was to his judge only an impenetrable and disturbing mystery.

into Pilate's hands. By that act, by whomsoever done, Jesus was condemned and crucified.

According to the custom, Jesus was compelled to carry the Cross on which he was to be hung to the place of execution. But what with all that he had gone through, the torture inflicted by the scourge, which ancient writers pronounce horrible, and the rough treatment suffered at the barbarous hands of the soldiers to whom he had been given up to be put to death, he was too weak to bear that burden. When this became apparent to his executioners they relieved him of it, and compelled a man whom they met to carry the Cross, a stranger, coming from the country, without any present who knew him and who might interfere and create disturbance and delay. This relief they granted Jesus, not, I imagine, from any prompting of compassion, but from the apprehension that, when they reached the place of execution, he might be so far gone that they would lose the barbarous sport, which they promised themselves, in witnessing his agonies under crucifixion.

Through the streets of Jerusalem, which a few days before had resounded with the shouts of the people welcoming him to the capital and to his throne, moved the grim procession, followed by a crowd, and among them were women who wept at the sight of his sufferings and at the thought of the horrible scene to which he was going. "Daughters of Jerusalem," he said, "weep not for me, weep for yourselves and

your children, for the days are coming when it will be said, Happy those who never bare, and the breasts that never gave nourishment!" The horrors that encompassed him could not hide from him the woes which, to his prophetic vision, were about to be poured out on the doomed city.

Upon arriving at the place of execution, a drink was offered him, which was customarily prepared for those who were condemned to be crucified, and was intended, with some touch of humanity, to deaden their sensibility to the torture to which they were to be put. But Jesus refused all such alleviations.

He was stripped of his principal garments, which were seized by his executioners as their perquisites.

The torture of being nailed and bound to the Cross could not wring from him any shrieking appeal for pity, but there burst from his lips, in his mortal agony, the prayer that bears immortal witness to the invincible magnanimity of his nature, "Father! Forgive them! They do not know what they are doing!" a prayer which has been commonly understood as referring to his enemies in general, but which, it is more natural to suppose, as the connection suggests, had immediate reference to his executioners, the Roman soldiers, as ignorant as they were barbarous. While they were tearing his flesh and their coarse hands were dripping with his blood, he was pleading for them with the Infinite Mercy.

He is related to have spoken at intervals several times in that excruciating position on the Cross. And I cannot doubt the truth of the record. Every syllable murmured by so extraordinary a person in so frightful a situation must have burned itself like fire into the memory of many there present. And besides, the ejaculations, reported to have burst from those parched lips, are all in pathetic harmony with the tender and great nature of the Sufferer.

It is stated that he caught sight of his mother, standing a little way off with his beloved disciple, John, and, notwithstanding the torture that he was suffering, his heart yearned towards her, and, in one or two brief words,—his fearful posture admitting not of more,—he called to her, “Woman! Look! Thy son!” and to John, “Look! Thy mother!” And they interpreted these words to mean, as he, doubtless, intended, that John was to be a son to her, and she a mother to John.

At another moment, so severe was the suffering, he is recorded to have cried, “*My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?*”

So despairing a cry never would have been put into his mouth without a word of explanation had he not actually uttered it.

But while it is the wail of human weakness, it, none the less but all the more, impresses us with the

entire naturalness of the character of Jesus, and satisfies us that his strength, more wonderful than his weakness, was due to no stoical insensibility real or affected. It enables us to appreciate his fortitude by revealing to us the sharpness of his agony, for terrible must it have been to wring such a cry from faith like his.

This paroxysm of despair found expression in the language of the 22d Psalm, of which it is the beginning, a Psalm, a portion of which is so very appropriate to the situation of Jesus at that hour, that it is only natural to suppose, although in his agony he was only able to gasp out the commencing words of it, yet that the whole Psalm was present to his memory: "I am," so it runs, "the reproach of men and the scorn of the people. All who see me scoff at me. They open wide the lips, They shake the head. He trusted in the Lord, Let Him help him. Let Him deliver him, since he delighted in Him. Thou art He that didst bring me into the world. Thou didst make me to lie secure upon my mother's breast. Upon Thee have I cast myself from my birth. Thou hast been my God from my earliest breath! Oh, be not far from me, for trouble is near. For there is none to help."*

Teachers of the Law and chief Priests, the clergy

* Noyes's Translation.

of the day, stood at a little distance, looking on with stony hearts, enjoying their triumph. It was not in them to make allowance for the extreme torture which he was suffering, but when they heard this cry, seizing upon it as a confession that God had indeed forsaken him and that his trust in God failed him at last, one of their number, whose frontlet and phylacteries were, doubtless, not the least conspicuous, and who had all Scripture at his tongue's end, seized upon a passage from the very Psalm, the first words of which had burst in piteous tones from the lips of the Crucified, and, responding to his cry in bitter, exultant mockery, and in accents half sneering and half the sanctimonious intonation of the synagogue, shouted, "*He trusted in the Lord! Let Him deliver him!*"**

* It is true, the Scribes and chief Priests are stated to have taunted Jesus with these words, before he uttered the cry, "*My God! My God!*" etc. But, as we have seen throughout, the narrators are very careless about relating things in their due order. It is not likely that the mocking cries, with which the Priests assailed Jesus, were uttered all at once, precisely as they are given in the narrative (Matth. xxvii. 42, 43). They were heard at intervals, but the narrator, in telling the story, puts them all together.

The words, "*He trusted in the Lord. Let Him deliver him,*" mentioned among the derisive cries that rose around the Cross, appeared to me to lack pertinency, until their connection with the cry of Jesus, by which they were suggested, disclosed itself.

It is by tracing these undesigned moral relations existing

Among the last words of Jesus was the exclamation, "It is ended!" The common disposition to find a significance deeper than that which meets the ear in the last utterances of the dying has led to the understanding of this ejaculation as having reference to the completion of the whole great work of Jesus. But it is much simpler and more natural to interpret it as equivalent to, 'It is past!' or 'It is over!' and as referring to the acute agony which Jesus was enduring, and which ceased as the merciful lethargy of death stole over him.

It was, as ancient writers report, not uncommon for the sufferings of the crucified to be protracted for two or three days before death came to their relief. Jesus, however, expired a few hours after he was fastened to the Cross. Pilate, it is stated, when informed that he was dead, was surprised that he had died so soon.

There was a wide difference, I imagine, between the physical organization of Jesus, and that of the men who ordinarily suffered death by crucifixion, men of hard, animal natures. The exhausting scenes which he had previously gone through, and a circumstance, presently to be noticed, fully account, I conceive, for his expiring so soon after he was nailed to the Cross.

between the facts recorded that the truth of the history is made to appear, and we are enabled to harmonize the incidents narrated.

As the next day was a day of special religious observance among the Jews, the ecclesiastical authorities, with a scrupulous regard for the outward decencies of religion entirely consistent with the utter absence of any regard for truth and humanity, unwilling that that holy Sabbath should be defiled by the ghastly spectacle, requested Pilate to order the legs of the crucified to be broken and the bodies removed. It would seem that when the lower limbs were broken, death speedily ensued. This order was executed upon the two criminals who were crucified with Jesus. But Jesus was found to be, to all appearances, already dead. It was, therefore, unnecessary that his legs should be broken. To make certain, however, the fact that he had breathed his last, a spear was plunged into his lifeless body. And "*immediately there came out blood and water,*" that is, watery blood or bloody water, water more or less discolored by blood.

The mention of this circumstance, that the legs of Jesus were not broken but that his body was pierced with a spear, is found only in the Fourth Gospel, and there,—and nothing of the same kind occurs anywhere else in these Writings,—it is accompanied by an earnest asseveration of the truth of the witness of the fact: "*And he who saw bears testimony, and his testimony is true, and he knows that he speaks the truth.*"

The only reason that appears why the narrator

should thus pause in this particular place to assert the truth of the witness is that the facts that the legs of Jesus were not broken and that his body was pierced struck him as a wonderful fulfilment of the passages of Ancient Scripture, which he immediately cites: “*For these things were done,*” he says, “*that the Scripture might be fulfilled, ‘A bone of him shall not be broken,’ and again another Scripture which says, ‘They will look on him whom they have pierced.’*”*

As to the appearance of the water discolored by blood (it may have been only very slightly so), it is a well-attested fact that, although pure blood never flows from a dead body, yet when intense agony has been endured, there is, sometimes, a sudden and extraordinary accumulation of water, either in the *pericardium* or in the part affected.† Such, in all probability, was the fact in the case of Jesus. And may it not be that the water, suddenly collected in an unusual quantity around the heart, impeded its action, and was thus the immediate cause why he expired so soon after he was hung upon the Cross? At all events we can discover no reason for the mention of the flowing of water from

* Exod. xii. 46; Numb. ix. 12; Zech. xii. 10. The reader has only to turn to these passages to see how purely fanciful was the use which these Jewish writers make of their Sacred Writings.

† For striking cases in point, see *American Med. Journal*, New Series, vol. xiii. pp. 85, 365.

the opening made by the spear but its truth. It does not appear to have been a circumstance that fulfilled any prediction of the Old Testament.

Two of the Gospels state that, at the death of Jesus, the veil in the Temple that hung before the Holy of Holies was found rent in two from the top to the bottom. The first Gospel adds that the earth shook, and that rocks were cleft, and tombs opened, and many bodies of saints that slept, arose, and came out of the graves after the resurrection of Jesus and went into the city and appeared to "many" (Matth. xxvii. 51-53). It is also related that from the sixth hour to the ninth, *i.e.* from twelve, noon, to three P.M., there was darkness over all the land.

There is no mention of these occurrences in the Fourth Gospel. All the other three Gospels mention the darkness. The third Gospel notices no other of the startling concomitants of the Crucifixion which are found in the first Gospel.

This passage of the history occasions no little difficulty. But it requires but a moment's thought to perceive that rumors, such as these, are just what we should look for. It is hardly saying too much to affirm that they are necessary to the credibility of the history.

It is well known how, upon occasions of great

public excitement, when the minds of men are carried away beyond the bounds of reason, and even of their bodily senses, by some strong passion, wonder, or fear, or hope, and the imagination bears sway, what strange and extravagant rumors arise and gain instant credence. Then the most ordinary incidents give birth to the most exaggerated reports.

These stories, therefore, of the strange things that accompanied the Crucifixion of so extraordinary a person as Jesus, under such circumstances of horror, are in full accord with human experience and history, and they would always have been seen to be so if the personal greatness of Jesus, of which they are the effects, had been rightly appreciated.

The popular mind, which Jesus had impressed with such power, was so stirred at this awful death that the nervous and sensitive especially, and these communicated their excitement to others, saw everything through the magnifying medium of their raised imaginations. Occurrences, which, at other times, would have passed without notice, became mysterious portents, big with an ominous significance. The aspect, which the overcast heavens took from the horror-struck minds of men, seemed to be a preternatural gloom. A rent in the veil in the Temple, caused, it may have been, long before by age or accident, was now observed for the first time. A single tomb, unaccountably found open,

and exposing to the passers-by the bodies of the dead, would have sufficed at such a juncture to give rise to the most exaggerated reports of earthquakes and cleft rocks and open graves and apparitions seen by many. Especially were stories of this kind likely to be told and credited among an ignorant and superstitious people, and in an age when there existed none of the means, that are now possessed, of correcting popular delusions.

The account, therefore, of marvellous portents accompanying the Crucifixion of Jesus, so far from casting the shadow of a doubt over the actual history, tends only to confirm it, showing incidentally—and, therefore, all the more powerfully—that what is related of Jesus, previous to his death, must have taken place, and that the Life of Jesus must have been of no ordinary character, since it told so upon the minds of men that, when he was put to death in so violent a manner, there was no report of marvels attending that horror which the people were not fully prepared to believe.

For the extraordinary event that is related to have occurred on the third morning after the Crucifixion of Jesus, and for what may be said in behalf of its historical truth, I beg leave again to refer to the little

book entitled, "*The Unconscious Truth of the Four Gospels.*"

In conclusion, I suppose no one ever studies this remarkable History without regretting that it is not more full and exact. How much must there have happened that is left untold! And yet I do not know that any greater fulness and exactness would be desirable, if these qualities could have been secured only at the cost of the careless simplicity that pervades these Writings, and the effect of which is to create in us the conviction that their authors not only knew what they relate to be true, but that they felt that they were telling things known to multitudes at the time they wrote. It was not only because they were strong in their own knowledge, but it was because they were strong in the knowledge of thousands of others, that they were so careless about explaining things, and had so little concern for observing the due order of events and putting the facts related in their right places. This characteristic of the Gospels, the utter absence of all anxiety about effect, of all solicitude to prove and convince, implies a great deal more than the faith of their authors. It implies that at the time these books were written, or rather the narratives of which these books are com-

pilations, there was a great number of persons to whom the events narrated were perfectly well known to have occurred.

Wonderful is the character of Jesus. And hardly less wonderful is the manner in which it is portrayed in the Gospels, undesignedly, by brief, sketchy narratives of a variety of incidents, strung together with only the slightest regard to their right order and connection, and yet yielding a result of unequalled moral beauty and of a world-saving power,—a result, self-consistent, all-consistent, and spontaneous, because, let me reiterate, the incidents narrated are true.

THE END.

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