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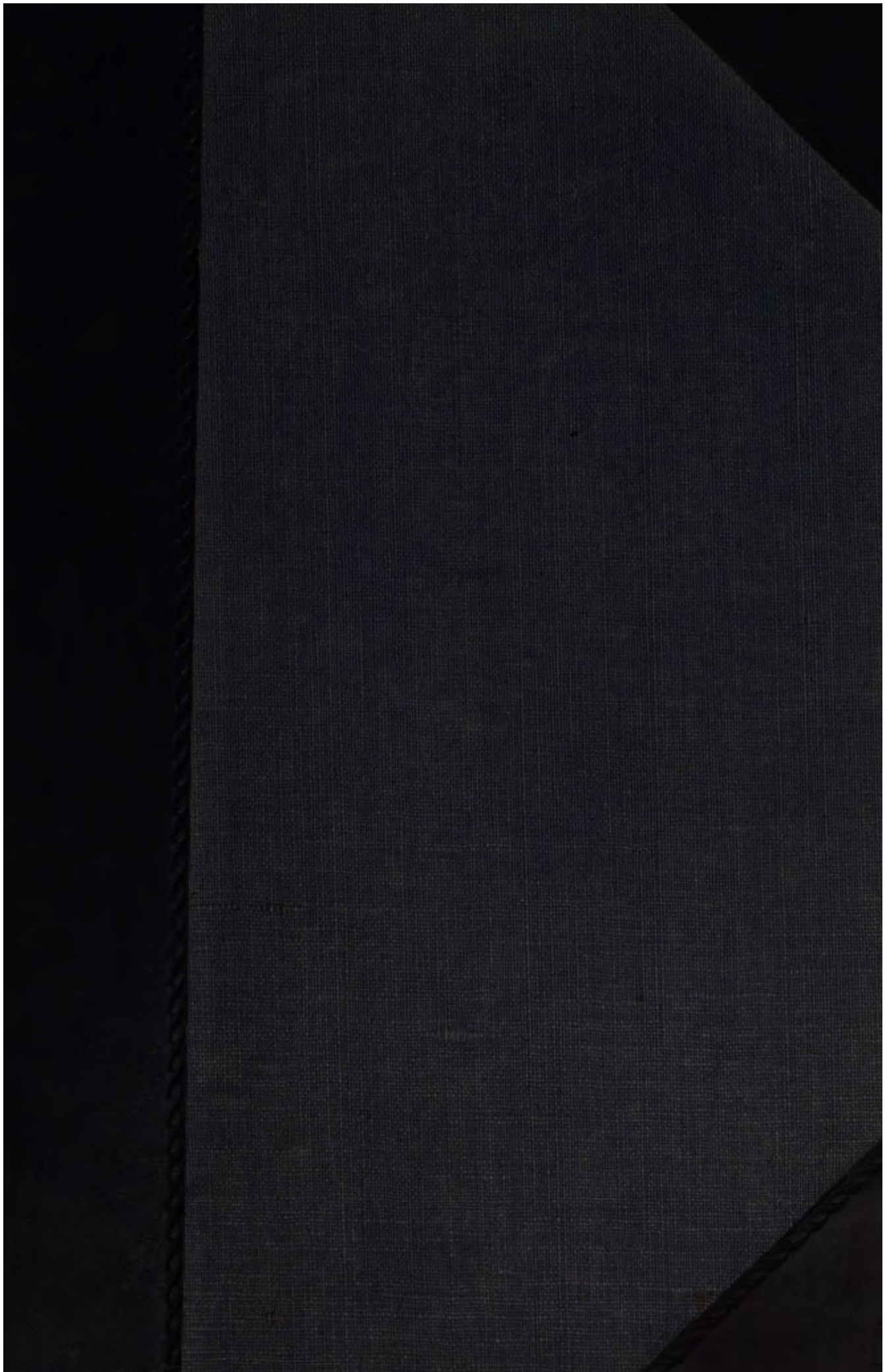
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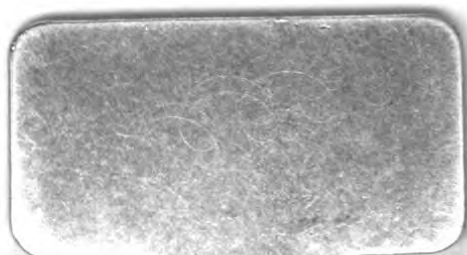
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THE
MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

EXPOSITIONS:
CRITICAL, DOCTRINAL, EXPERIMENTAL.

BY THE
REV. ROBERT MAGUIRE, M.A.,
INCUMBENT OF CLERKENWELL.

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THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

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"Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do these Miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him."—John iii., 2.  
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THE Miracles of Jesus Christ form one of the main pillars of evidence touching the character of the Messiah, and the claims of the religion which He founded. Prophecy and Miracles are the twain pedestals of Faith ; and, if these be securely laid, and surely built upon, the superstructure of Evidence will be strong to bear any weight, and continue "stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord."

In this Introduction to the detailed Miracles of Christ, I cannot do better than start from the two fundamental propositions, with which Paley opens his convincing work on the "Evidences of Christianity."

1. "I deem it unnecessary to prove that mankind stood in need of a Revelation, because I have met with no serious person who thinks that, even under the Christian revelation, we have too much light, or any degree of assurance which is superfluous.

2. "I desire, moreover, that in judging of Christianity, it may be remembered, that the question lies between this religion and none ; for, if the Christian religion be not credible, no one with whom we have to do will support the pretensions of any other."

In continuation of the argument thus started, let us proceed to state some elementary propositions, or, if you will, we shall call them—probabilities:—

I will suppose that this world of ours has had a Maker ; that He takes an interest in His own handiwork ; that He made it for a purpose and with a design to some ulterior end ; and that He will not therefore lightly blot it out of existence.

Further, that man has been placed in this world as the great intelligent inhabitant of this his dwelling-place ; that he is endowed with powers and capabilities which are ever tending onward and

upward, and that it is reasonable to suppose that this existence and these powers will not be terminated by that which we call Death.

That there would therefore be provided some other world for transplantation of man, when he is removed from this present sphere—a world in which he can better unfold and develop those powers that are stunted here, but are yet ever aiming after higher degrees of knowledge, and seeking further attainment in the understanding of the hidden works and ways of the Unseen.

That the abiding character of such other world would be according to the character which has been growingly cultivated, and at last established—in this: a system of rewards and punishments hereafter, to rectify all the inequalities of the present world, where “there be just men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; and wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.”

It would, moreover, be reasonable to suppose that the Creator would make known His mind to this inhabitant upon His own world; and would be disposed to make some communication of His will, and to introduce His creature to some knowledge, more or less, of the things that shall be hereafter. For, we know that man is capable of receiving such moral and spiritual impressions.

It would, therefore, be reasonable to suppose that such communications to the creature from the Creator would be special and extraordinary; not too frequently, lest they should become commonplace; nor by everybody, lest the distinctiveness of the message be lost in the indiscriminate character of the messenger.

And that, if these communications be revealed to man, it would be most reasonable to expect some special guarantee of the person sent to deliver the message. All special ambassadors are specially authenticated. They convey special tokens of authority, credentials of their office, as a guarantee of their good faith and right to represent the King or Master who hath commissioned them.

And, what should we suppose these special tokens ought to be, but something out of the common, above the ordinary experience; that is, something extraordinary. In a word, we would expect nothing short of *Miracles*, which are “extraordinary effects produced upon extraordinary occasions.” These would accordingly be—

Signs and tokens from God to man;

Credentials of God’s appointed ambassadors; and

Evidences of the Truth of the message they are commissioned to convey.

“In a word,” as Paley again remarks, “once believe that there is a God, and Miracles are not incredible.”

A Miracle is an occurrence that is contrary to the ordinary constitution of things, arising from the suspension or controlment of the laws of nature, brought about by an immediate act, on previous notice given that it will be performed; and this in attestation of some great truth or doctrine, or in evidence of the Divine mission or authority of some particular person.*

What we call the "laws of nature" are in Scripture called "the ordinances of heaven and earth." The Creator of Nature has enacted laws to govern the operations of His work; and these laws are respected and obeyed; any unbidden divergence from them causing a dislocation of the parts, equivalent to utter ruin of the whole mechanism of creation. But God, the Creator, can control the elements which He Himself hath made; can alter or change the action of the various parts of the constituency of Creation. He can send forth the winds and recall them in an instant; permit the tempests to rage, and at a word restrain them within His treasure-house again. All this is above the power of man, and beyond the power of Nature herself to accomplish. Hence, we distinguish between ordinary and extraordinary occurrences; yea, between the extraordinary and the miraculous; between marvels and Miracles. All Miracles are wonders; but all wonders are not Miracles. Nature has her varied phenomena, but these are not miraculous. Comets are natural appearances, and very wonderful, but no one would venture to call them miraculous, any more than he would call eclipses by that name—simply because these events may be, and are, calculated by Science, and thus anticipated.

Thus, a very large and unexpected yield of harvest would be accounted "wonderful;" but bread rained down every day round about our dwellings would be accounted "miraculous." The one would be according to the known laws of nature; the other would be beyond the province of nature's working.

Accordingly, Miracles are superhuman works, and, as such, evidences of a superhuman Author; and as God would not lend Himself to the support of error, we may naturally conclude that a Miracle is an evidence of Truth—both of the agent that works it, and of the doctrine or teaching he delivers.

Hence Moses and the Prophets wrought Miracles. They were ambassadors, who brought to men the messages which had been revealed to them from heaven. But how were men to be persuaded of this? How were the nations to whom they were sent (generally ungodly and disobedient nations) to be certified of the real source

* See Horne's Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures, vol. i, ch. iv, sec. 2.

and origin of these doctrines? How, but by Miracles, establishing the authenticity of the message and the authority of the messenger?

So, also, is it with the Miracles of Christ—our present subject. How was Christ to be made known to men—His authority proved, and His real character and claims established? There were two ways in which this might have been accomplished—(1.) By coming as a God, with an open manifestation of His glory, commanding the obedience of the good, and with the sword of judgment slaying the wicked; or (2.) by coming as He *did* come, in humble garb and guise; as a man; one of ourselves; to place man in a state of probation; to put him on the search after the things of God; and by moral suasion to convince his mind, win his heart, and gain his obedience.

Now, Christ did not come after the former manner—as a God would be expected to come. Had He done so, there would have been no room for Faith, where all was Sight, and under circumstances which could possibly leave no option but to acknowledge the Messiah to be God and Lord. This reception of Christ would, accordingly, have lost all its moral force, and have worn the aspect of a constrained recognition. Whereas, the latter method has all the advantage of evidence, to be sought for, and to be found; and chiefly in the Miracles which were the proof that this Man, Jesus, had “come from God, for no man could do these Miracles except God be with him.”

But, in either case, the appearance must be accompanied by Miracle, in order to convince men’s minds. In the sudden manifestation of the Godhead would be (to men) a Miracle, a superhuman visitation, of the grandest and most glorious character—undoubted, indisputable. And in the coming of our God “manifest in the flesh,” were the Miracles of Jesus, with evidence within the reach of all men, to substantiate the claims of Christ to be what He said He was—the Son of the Living God; He and His Father—ONE.

Thus did our great Master prefer to make Himself known to us, as one of ourselves. He came to beseech men, to persuade men, to win men’s hearts and affections to *His* heart and to *His* affections. Accordingly, he propounded holy doctrines, and set forth hallowed truths, for the guidance of men, so that he might lead us up to God. He came, not only as a God, to offer a perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, by which we may be saved; but also as a Man, to set us a perfect Example, by which we ought to walk.

But how was this Great Teacher to be recognized? He was reputed as the son of the carpenter, was contemptuously called the Nazarene. How then was His authority to be made good? If He

be thus clothed in ordinary flesh, with the common-place mantle of our humanity, what is there to prove Him to be so extraordinary a person? It must be by signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. Else, there exists no evidence on which to establish Faith—no groundwork on which to build belief in either His Person or His Doctrine.

Hence, the Miracles of Christ were largely manifested, as the credentials of His mission among men; the evidences of His Messiahship; the tokens of His authority; and the infallible proofs that He was indeed "God manifest in the flesh."

Miracles are not contrary to nature; they are simply *above* nature; that is, requiring the God of nature specially to interpose, and so to alter, or suspend, or control the laws of nature, as that extraordinary issues should arise to view. The principle involved in this is one which is brought into play in our every-day experience—that inferior laws are held in suspense by superior power. Brute force is ruled by intelligent power; physical laws are controlled by mechanical laws; mechanical powers are held in suspense by animal power; and animal power is subjected to moral law. It is not, therefore, altogether an unknown or unrecognized principle that underlies the evidence of Miracles—that a great spiritual law in the hand of God, the Lawgiver, is able to suspend the lesser and the lower laws of nature.

Indeed, so far from Miracles being contrary to nature, there are many of the Miracles of Scripture that were quite natural occurrences, and were only rendered miraculous by the circumstances that attended them: they were wrought for a purpose; were announced beforehand; were suddenly sent; and as suddenly removed at the command of God, or of His servants. Thus, many of the Plagues of Egypt were natural visitations. Frogs, flies, and murrains were some of the ordinary and local inconveniences of Egypt, induced by atmospheric or other natural causes. But in the hand of Moses these became miraculous visitations. They were announced to the very day, and they fulfilled the notice given, and were intensified in power and number, and were then suddenly removed at the bidding of his word. Hence they were regarded as genuine Miracles. Locusts might have covered the face of the land, and darkness might have continued for the space of three days, on natural principles. But, in this case, being notified beforehand, being retained at the pleasure of God's servant, and removed only at His command, they became, not natural, but miraculous. Still, it cannot be said that they were contrary to nature; they were simply *above* the natural order of things.

So was it with many of the Miracles of Christ. For example, "the beginning of Miracles"—turning the water into wine. Now, all wine is made out of water. The rains descend, and the dews of evening fall, and enter the ground, and give moisture to the soil of the vineyard. The hundred fibres of the root of the vine drink in the supply of food; and this becomes the sap and life-blood in the veins of the tree. By and bye, it is transmitted into the grapes of the cluster, and thence is expressed into the overflowing cup, as the pure, natural, unadulterated, unintoxicating "fruit of the vine." Now, this is the natural process by which pure wine is made; and it comes altogether of the gift of God. But this event in Cana of Galilee becomes a Miracle, because it is instantaneous; and Jesus, omitting the process, and dispensing with the natural ordeal, brings about the same result. So that pure wine is made by the same God who maketh the vine and the fig-tree to yield their fruit—but, for this once, without causing the water to pass through the root, and thence through the vine, and thence to the grapes; but at once, and without any intermediate process, and by a word, He transmutes the water into wine. This was not contrary to nature; it was simply *above* nature.

So also, in the miraculous feeding of the multitudes: It is the same God who to-day feeds the multitudes of every land, and makes the fruits of the earth to arise, and to give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater. A few bushels of seed would, in process of nature, and by the blessing of God, bring forth enough to feed thousands; and this would be according to the ordinary working of nature. But, in this case, Jesus brings about the increase an hundredfold instantly, and without the ordinary natural process; and hence this beneficent deed of His becomes a Miracle. It was not contrary to nature, but was *above* nature.

It is no real objection against Miracles, that they are beyond our comprehension; and it is no valid argument to say that, because they are beyond our comprehension, they must be contrary to reason. This would make the limit of our understanding to be the limit of our experience. But we know there are a thousand things around us and within us that are far beyond the tether of our actual knowledge; and yet they are facts for all that. If everything *must* be unreasonable that is incomprehensible, then we ourselves, our breath, our being, must be unreasonable, and contrary to reason; and thus a door is opened, by which to drive out of the region of fact many of the things that constitute our daily actual experience.

How the seed grows, and develops itself into human food, is a

matter as much beyond my comprehension as the Miracle of Feeding the Multitudes. That the coarse bulbous root should send forth flowers or fruits utterly unlike itself, is as great a mystery to me as is the forming and fashioning of the human body in the womb. And the breathing of life into the embryo conception is no more clear to my understanding than is the miraculous raising up of a dead body. What was Adam but a corpse till God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life? and, surely, He that breathed the first breath into Adam, could as easily breathe a second time into the body of Lazarus, and raise him from the dead. I simply mean to show that Miracles, though above nature, are not contrary to nature.

In the Miracles of Christ we trace the wondrous works of One who not only is a messenger from heaven, but is the Son over His Father's house, the Heir of all things, the Great Power of God. Jesus is the Executive of Jehovah—His right Hand. Therefore, we may expect Miracles as the result of His visit to mankind. He came, unlike a God, to prove that He is God. He came to give us evidence which may lead our hearts and understandings to recognize in Him our God and Saviour; and intelligently and lovingly, with head and heart, to appreciate His wondrous Love and marvellous self-sacrifice. There is no religion whose evidences lay hold upon men's hearts and power of intelligence, like the religion of Christ. *There* are found those bold brave deeds of self-denial that rise to the heroic, commanding the respect of manly minds; and fragments of philosophy that compel philosophic intellects to bow down and reverence the story of Jesus; and touches of nature, and thrilling scenes of sympathy, that melt strong men to tears, and make mailed warriors to halt and lean upon their swords, while they listen to the narrative of the great history of the Son of Man. Poets, Painters, Statuaries, Nature and Art, Philosophy and Science—all range themselves around the story of the Saviour of the world; and acknowledge that, without Him, they would be bereaved of their noblest and choicest subjects. And what a copious tributary to all these are the Miracles of Jesus!

And, in still reviewing the character of these great deeds of Love and Power, does not every circumstance increase the weight of evidence? He that wrought them was one amongst many; surrounded by enemies—enemies to His Person, to His claims, to His doctrines. His precepts were against the grain of human nature, antagonistic to the wishes, because they were a protest against the pursuits, of men. Therefore, every Miracle was narrowly observed, and minutely scrutinized. They watched Him; they questioned

Him ; they tried to entangle Him ; they falsely charged Him ; they did their best to depreciate His Miracles, or to account for them by some other means—but *they never could deny them*. They questioned and cross-questioned the once-blind man ; they examined and cross-examined Him, as a special pleader would the evidence of a damaging witness, if possibly it might be shaken and destroyed. The Pharisees asked about the means employed in the recovery of his sight ; tried to turn off the point of the Miracle because it had been wrought on the Sabbath-day ; urged that Jesus must therefore be a sinner ; then pretended to doubt the fact of the man's former blindness, and appealed for evidence on this point to his parents ; and are by them adroitly referred back to the man himself. Meanwhile, he that was blind has but one argument against their many, and but one reply to their questions ; he ever falls back upon the fact—“One thing I *know*, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” They then begin again as before, asking by what means this had been done ; are rebuked for not knowing what they had already heard ; are then provoked, and resort to reviling ; and, finding the whole strength of the tide of evidence rising and swelling against them, —to close the unequal controversy, they “cast him out !” Then it was that Jesus met with him once more, and imparted to him the true Light, by revealing Himself to the eyes of his understanding ; so that he said, “Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.” His bodily and spiritual blindness alike were healed.

The Miracles of Christ were, moreover, done openly, in the light of day, before witnesses, and unostentatiously, as great and genuine works always are. They were wrought by the simplest means—no elaborate process, no cumbrous apparatus, but by a touch, a word, a look. The facts remained as standing witnesses afterwards, for men to take knowledge of them. Men were converted by these evidences, attached themselves to the ministry of Jesus, left all they had or hoped to have, followed His footsteps, and embraced His fortunes. These same men devoted themselves more fully and more faithfully after they had lost Him ; and for the love they bore their Master endured, as He did, wrongs and sufferings, and cheerfully submitted to the persecution which He had foretold should come to pass. And all this was in testimony of His Miracles. Such a specimen of self-dedication to a cause, and self-devotion to a Master, was never seen before or since. Surely, the Miracles *must be true* that have produced so many martyrs, in the very age of their performance, and among the very witnesses that had seen them. A living power must have dwelt within these works of Christ, to

embolden these men to meet prejudices; ay, and not to turn back, when they find that prejudice is backed by power.

Again, the Ministry and Miracles of Christ were not designed simply to add on some new element to already existing religions. Christ and His Apostles went forth to no such mission, but to disown and disavow *all* the gods of the heathen, and all the vain subterfuges of the Jews. All must give way before God and His Christ. It is *this* religion or *none*; but no compromise. Plato and Socrates simply entertained their disciples in learned disquisitions, in the schools and academies of learned men. Their systems involved no casting down of all that was against them, nor yet the self-denial of their followers, much less their self-sacrifice. Leaders of all other religions simply contented themselves with adding some new God to the mythology of the nation; and, if Paul had been content to do this, he would have at once gained the approbation of the multitudes of Athens and of Ephesus. But no—his mission was to cast down every false god, and exalt the One True God; to raze every altar, save the altar of the Lord, his God; and to level in the dust every human hope of salvation, that God in all things might be glorified. The contrast, indeed, is most remarkable and significant: “the one was nothing more than what it would be, in Popish countries, to add a Saint to the Calendar; the other was to abolish and tread under foot the Calendar itself.”* These were indeed bold, daring deeds for a few fishermen to attempt; and they not only attempted, but also *did* them, in the strength of their confidence in their Lord and Master, of whose Miracles they had been the chosen witnesses.

Nor could it be that these men were *deceivers*, knowingly imposing upon the world what they did not themselves believe. The whole history of their origin, their education, their call, their sufferings, and their deaths, repels any such charge as this. Deceivers are never martyrs to a cause. They usually contrive to be on the side of power, rather than expose themselves to danger. But here are men who, for the evidence of the Miracles they themselves had witnessed, adopted the cause of Jesus Christ, and, in the spirit of faithful attachment to that cause, endured griefs, suffering wrongfully. Yet they relinquished not the cause for this, but boldly pleaded it, extended it, suffered for it, and at last died in its fiercest battle-field. Surely, this is not the conduct of deceivers!

Nor yet could they be *self-deceived*. Here were twelve men, living together, working together—the chosen companions of their

* Paley's Evidences, Part I, ch. 1.

Master—aware of the difficulties of their position, knowing well the natural antagonism of the world to their profession and doctrines; men who must have known each other's minds, observant of the evidence of the religion of which they were the chief founders, and anxious to give to every man a reason of the hope that was in them. And to think of these men going forth as dupes of a grand imposture all over the world! men of gifts, and talents, and graces—themselves personal Miracles; their very life a continued Miracle; their great fundamental doctrine—the Resurrection—based upon a Miracle, the Resurrection of their Master from the dead! These men duped and self-deceived! It is incredible. Their title to apostleship was their personal evidence of the Resurrection of the Lord, and upon this they staked everything; by the truth or falsehood of this, all their teaching and doctrine must stand or fall. Philosophers argued with them, and they shrunk not from the conflict; and, like Paul, many of them disputed daily in the schools and academies with unbelieving Jews and philosophic Greeks; and, in the might of Jesus's Miracles, they cast down the unbelief of the one, and the worldly wisdom and philosophy of the other.

What account, then, can be given of the establishment of such a Religion in the earth? There must be some account; and, if ours be rejected, then our opponents are bound to render some other account instead. It is comparatively easy to cast down, and to start objections, and to imagine difficulties; but it is more difficult to build up a better superstructure. And all that infidelity has ever done has been to unroof the refuge of the soul, and then cast it houseless and homeless on the world—to curse the day it lent an ear to the voice of unbelief.

Whether we start from the time of Christ and trace on to the present, or work back from the present to the days of the Son of Man, we can discover no break in the historic evidence, no gap in the chain, no other time, or place, or circumstance, for any other beginning of the Christian Church than that which the Gospels indicate.

And, indeed, there are no historic consequences so abiding as those that have proceeded from the evidence of the Miracles of Christ. Origen once challenged the heathen on this score, as contrasted with their pretended Miracles: "What has come of them? In what did they issue? What society was founded by their help? What is there in the world's history to show that they lay deep in the mind and counsel of God? The Miracles of Moses issued in the Jewish polity; those of the Lord in a Christian Church; whole nations were knit together through their help." And, again, he

asks : " What have your boasted Appolonius or Esculapius to show as the fruit of their miracles ? What traces have they left behind them ? "

Thus, it matters not whether we argue from results back to their effective cause, or from the antecedent cause to the subsequent effects ; in either case, we stand on ground that is unassailable. And it does appear to me to be somewhat presumptuous when a few puny men in this or in any age stand forth against the testimony of all time, and against the full sweeping tide of all evidence. We point to memorials still standing as witnesses of the past ; we look with thankfulness upon the venerable antiquity of the Miracles of Jesus, still remembered and unforgotten ; their power is not dimmed, neither is their supernatural force abated ; but the echoes of the kindly deeds done in Jewry, and in Galilee, and by the waters of Tiberias, still linger among us, and shall yet teach our children and our children's children, what they taught Nicodemus long ago : " Thou art a Teacher come from God ; for no man can do these Miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him. "

It only remains for me to notice the objection that is made in the matter of the diversities of the Gospel narrative of the Miracles—discrepancies which some say weaken the evidence, and others say destroy it utterly. So far from weakening the evidence, I rather regard them as essentially strengthening their testimony. When a story is told by different persons in precisely the self-same words, without variety or change, we are disposed to set it down as the result of conspiracy or collusion ; but, if the story be told differently by several witnesses, we can easily detect the truth of its main features. In the one case, the witnesses are *dependent*, and in the other they are *independent*. We prefer the latter—contributing each his own view and aspect of the circumstances, thus fulfilling the perfect narrative. This fulness and completeness we have in the respective narratives of the Evangelists ; and we thus are enabled to possess, as it were, a perfect photograph of the Miracles of Christ.

In our more detailed readings of the Miracles, we must not omit to read and study them in the light of their deep spiritual meaning and intention. The Miracles of Christ are the illustrated representation of the doctrines of Christ—visible pictures of the spiritual precepts of the Word. Thus, when He feeds the Multitudes, He directs them to the " Bread of Heaven ; " when He supplies the miraculous draught of fishes to the fishermen of Galilee, He makes them understand thereby that they are to be henceforth " Fishers of Men ; " when he gives sight to the blind, He proclaims Himself as the " Light of the World ; " when He raises Lazarus from the dead,

He declares Himself to be "the Resurrection and the Life;" and, when He healed the Gentile Centurion's servant, He took occasion to show that this was but an earnest and instalment of the wide opening of the Gate of Salvation to all, both Jews and Gentiles, saying: "That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven."

A profitable review now lies before us, in opening up the nature and character of the Miracles of our Blessed Lord. We must endeavour to read and review them in the context of the great doctrines of the Gospel, which they were intended to elucidate; as some one has said, Miracles are "an index and prophecy of the inner work of man's deliverance; in each of them the *word* of salvation is accompanied by an *act* of salvation." We shall thus read the record of the Miracles of Christ, not as bare narrative or naked history, but as suggestive of the great truths of the Gospel, and containing the germ of Christian doctrine, and a complete circle of illustrations of Christian experience. If there be morals in fables, which are but fictions, we may well expect to discover morals in Miracles, which are facts.

In the course of these Lectures we shall trace the Kingship of Jesus, the evidences of His Sovereignty and Power, and His authority to wield the sceptre over nature and the elements; and in many of them we shall find not only evidences, but also instalments, of the Kingly power that is yet one day to sway the sceptre of Emmanuel over all the earth.

WATER MADE WINE.

~~~~~  
"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed in Him."—John ii., 11.  
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In the Old Testament Scriptures we read of "water turned into blood"—a deed of vengeance and of wrath; a judicial punishment upon a wicked king and a disobedient nation; a specimen, too, of the general character of the Miracles of the Old Dispensation.

In the New Testament, however, we read of "water turned into wine;" the genial, generous, refreshing fruit of the vine;—emblem of the fulness, and blessing, and peace, which were to characterize the New Dispensation.

Moses' Miracles were the beginning of the Plagues of Egypt; this Miracle of Jesus was the beginning of the deeds of mercy which characterized the Son of Man. The one was transacted in blood; the sign of wrath even unto death—the first Plague; a type and foreshadow of the last great Plague—the Death of the Firstborn. The other was transacted in the fruit of the vine; the sign of joy and gladness, and of nature's fulness, and a type of the last great Feast of the Passover, when Jesus did eat and drink with His disciples, and, under the emblem of the fruit of the vine, "did institute, and, in His holy Gospel command us to continue, the perpetual memory of that His precious death, until His coming again."

The narrative now before us is familiar to us all. It is significant in its circumstances, and remarkable in its results, and has been the means of awaking more than one controversy in the Church of Christ. We would review the Miracle and its lessons under successive heads, suggested by the current context of the narrative.

I. It was the initial Miracle of Christ—"this beginning of Miracles:" The commencement of Messiah's public ministry is recorded by St. John, in a more minute form than by any of the other Evangelists. He seems as though he had kept a journal of the earlier days of Christ's ministry. Accordingly, he begins with the departure of Christ from Bethabara, where John was baptizing. One of the disciples of the Baptist, Andrew, is the first who attaches

himself to the higher discipleship of Christ. His brother Peter is next called; and these two were Galileans. The call of these two brethren suggests a visit of Christ to their country—"Jesus would go forth into Galilee." John i., 43. There He meets with Philip, a townsman of Andrew and Peter; and Philip finds Nathanael, and introduces him to Jesus, who testifies how He had seen and known Nathanael, before Nathanael had seen or known Him. And from this foreknowledge of Jesus, Nathanael recognizes both the Divine Sonship and the Royal dignity of Christ, saying, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel;" a full confession of faith, worthy of the honour of discipleship, into which it is supposed Nathanael was at once admitted, under the name of Bartholomew. The conversation ends by the promise of Jesus—"Thou shalt see greater things than these."

Now these things happened in Galilee, and most probably in Cana, for we are told that Nathanael was "of Cana in Galilee." John xxi., 2. And thus is established an immediate connection between the two opening chapters of St. John's Gospel. And within three days was the beginning of the manifestation of "greater things" indeed, in the first definite manifestation of Christ's Divine glory.

II. The occasion of the Miracle was the celebration of a marriage. The Miracle was, accordingly, done in honour of the married state, which is pronounced by St. Paul to be "honourable in all." The Divine blessing is secured to marriage, especially if we "marry in the Lord." It was the first institution established in Eden, in the time of man's innocency; and it was the first that was sanctioned by Christ, the great Restorer of the Fall. The presence of Jesus is not sufficiently sought at our marriage-feasts. If He be bidden, He will come, and bless the union of twain hearts, and consecrate, not only the threshold, but the thoroughfare also, of their after-history. I fear the great lesson of the First Miracle has not been sufficiently learned by these latter days of Christendom. Marriage is, in these days, too much divorced from religion.

There was, moreover, a great dispensational purpose in the selection of this particular Miracle. The religion of Christ is not that of the hermit, or the ascetic. The Christian man is placed in society, in the world, in the circle of human relationships, to perform a Christian part in all these; to be a witness for his Master. The apostolic precept is "*in* the world, not *of* it." As the salt that pervades all, as the leaven that leaveneth the whole lump, so ought the Christian to be in his intercourse with the world; not withdrawing himself from the civil and social and domestic relationships of life; but fulfilling all these, as a servant of his Divine Master. And in

the inner meaning of this Miracle is contained a weighty admonition against all those who would make asceticism, and abstinence from society, or from any food or drink, to constitute the essence of their Christianity. And here we are enabled to trace a prophetic and preventive warning to the Church. Christ foreknew and did truly foresee that certain heresies would arise, "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." 1 Tim. iv., 3. In anticipation of such was this First Miracle wrought; showing that if any should hereafter arise, who, for mere ascetic purposes, withdrew themselves from the world's great battlefield, and for this reason plumed themselves as leading a holier and purer life, and possessing a higher degree of virtue than other men, this beginning of Miracles, lying, as it does, at the very root of Christ's ministry and doctrine, is commissioned to send forth its voice of admonition, telling men everywhere that "the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv., 17.

If any man, therefore, is induced to abstain from any meat or drink for his brother's sake, let it be for conscience' sake—"conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other." 1 Cor. x., 29. And when the deed is done, and the good influence felt, and the example telling, and, perhaps, the soul of thy fellow-man everlastingly saved, then withdraw thyself into the inner shrine of thine own heart, not as the Pharisee, to boast, but as the publican, to pray; and be ready to acknowledge, in the midst of duties done, "I am but an unprofitable servant; I have done that which it was my duty to do."

III. The Miracle was wrought in the fulness of Christ's will and power, and without any subordinate intercession. Here, as in the former case, the purport of the Miracle is prophetic and preventive. The eye of the Great Prophet saw another great error in advance, which should one day mar the beauty of the worship of the Church. It is said, "the mother of Jesus was there;" not "the mother of *God*," but the mother of *Jesus*—the man, Christ Jesus. The Blessed Virgin was the mother of Christ's humanity—of the manhood. His Divinity had no birth—it was from all eternity.

But, even as the mother of Christ's manhood, it might possibly have occurred to her that her influence may be great, and ought to be put in exercise; and evidently she seeks to use it now, not presumptuously, nor, perhaps, unduly; but future interests are wrapped up in that transaction, and, for the Church's sake, due precaution must be taken, lest a false precedent be established.

Accordingly, the answer of Jesus to his Mother's request is fraught with deep significance—"Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

Mine hour is not yet come." There is nothing severe in the expression, "Woman." For, at a time of deep sorrow and anguish, He thus addressed His Mother as he hung upon the Cross, "Woman, behold thy son!" It was rather an expression of tenderness, than otherwise. If there be severity at all in the remark to His Mother at the marriage-feast, it was in the words, "What have I to do with thee?" and this apparent impatience of her interference may have been greatly modified by the tone and accent, and manner in which it was spoken. Suffice it to say, that the expression derives its chiefest significance from the efforts of after-times, extending to the present day, to exalt the Virgin to the position of an Intercessor, it not to a higher position than even that. It was not so much an actual rebuke to her, as a prophetic reprimand to those who in after years would not only ask her intercession, but even go so far as to worship her.

Jesus has a time, an hour, a set purpose. He will accomplish His purpose in His own good time, and without interference from others. He will, indeed, be inquired of concerning all things affecting our spiritual good; but He will permit no intercessor to stand between Himself and the suppliant. His words are—"Come unto Me;" "Look unto Me." There are two great parties concerned—God and man; and "there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." And as none else dare intervene between God and the sinner, *but* Christ; so none must be allowed to intervene *at all* between Christ and the suppliant.

IV. It was a perfect Miracle—undoubtedly genuine: This was abundantly proved by manifold tests and evidences. An actual want is reported, and Christ alone can supply it. He therefore postpones the doing of the Miracle until the supply was quite exhausted; and then "His hour" had come; when, for the very stress of circumstances, and by the last ebb of the supply, the Miracle might be all the more appreciated. Christ makes use of the water-pots which were for the purposes of purifying, not for wine, but for water. He bids them fill them "to the brim"—to the brim, so that there shall be no suspicion of the introduction of any other element than the water. Instantly He commands the servants—"Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast." The newly-made wine is then set first of all before the person who was appointed to superintend the arrangements of the feast, and whose province it was to select food and drink for the guests. The wine is brought to him, while as yet he knows not whence it came; and therefore his judgment would be without prejudice as to the person or circumstances that had produced it. Accordingly, on its own merits he pronounces **it to be**

“good wine,” and better than that which they had been drinking. Now observe the curious commentary on the ways of the wine-drinking world, in the speech of the governor of the feast—“Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and, when men have well drunk, then that which is worse;” showing how the ordinary rule is, to deal with wine-drinkers as with men whose palate is dulled and deadened, and who, by drinking deep, lose their sense of discrimination and taste.

Thus, all the tests, and evidences, and circumstances of the Miracle go to prove that it was perfectly wrought, and undoubtedly genuine.

V. This Miracle “manifested forth Christ’s glory:” Until now, the glory of Jesus had been hidden—a veil thrown over His Divine nature, His Deity mantled in human flesh. He had grown up from childhood to manhood, residing in Nazareth, subject to His parents; and with, perhaps, the one exception of His teaching the Doctors in the Temple, His life has been obscure and unnoticed—a period of thirty years’ subjection, discipline, and preparation, during which He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

But now, the time has come for the inauguration of His public ministry; and this is by the performance of a Miracle, which is to show forth His glory, to emit the first ray of the Divine power—an emanation of the glorious and Divine Majesty that dwelt within Him. Here he showed Himself as, indeed, “the brightness” (*i.e.*, the effulgence, or shining forth) “of His Father’s glory.”—Heb. i., 3.

“And His disciples believed in Him.” They were then but four in number—the nucleus of the larger number who were yet to gather themselves round about the wonder-working ministry of the Son of Man. These four men had already attached themselves to His person; but now, for the work’s sake which He hath done, they *believe* in Him, and, from that day forward, embraced the fortunes of Him in whom they had believed.

VI. There is yet another view in which I feel it important to regard the occasion of this “beginning of Miracles”—namely, in its connection with the drinking customs of modern times.

I am myself a Total Abstainer from all beverages of an intoxicating character. By my example and influence I have induced many others to do likewise—some for their own sakes, and others for the good of their fellow-man. There are many persons, however, who cannot yet see their way to adopt a similar course; and some who deem such a system to be altogether unwarranted by Holy Scripture. These persons are accustomed to lay stress on the fact, that our Divine Lord and Master, our model and pattern in all things, did so far sanction the drinking of wine as that He did *make wine*

for the guests at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. It is to this point that I desire now to address myself—in its connection with the Drinking Customs of modern society, and with this specific remedy for curing the specific evil of Drunkenness, and staying the innumerable sorrows that flow from Strong Drink.

I am glad to have such an opportunity as this for setting forth what I believe to be the true and only valid grounds upon which the Total Abstinence principle can be established; and thus to justify this most important effort in its attempt to suppress one of the most prolific seeds of evil in our own country and throughout the world.

I must first, then, and once for all, avow that the system of Total Abstinence from wine and strong drink is not based upon any *direct* requirement of Holy Scripture, nor could we expect it to be so. The Bible is not a book of detailed rules and regulations; it is a book of principles and of motives. The Bible is not a code of legislation, as to what a man may eat and drink. This, indeed, would be to reduce its great doctrines and precepts to the level of a sumptuary law, prescribing meats and drinks to be received or to be refused. The only limits set in Scripture on this subject are—(1.) Abstain from that which is harmful to yourself; (2.) Abstain from that which, though not harmful to yourself, may by your example become a stumbling-block to a weak brother. These two great rules are deduced directly from the general teaching of the Bible; and this sufficeth for all practical purposes in the matter of a man's own personal conscience. The Bible may, possibly, *permit* the drinking of wine; but the Bible nowhere *commands* the drinking of wine or other strong drink. Yea, rather, does the Bible sanction my abstinence from any food or drink, if by doing so I withdraw a stumbling-block from my brother's way.

I dismiss, therefore, from our present review, any idea of the supposed *unlawfulness* of wine. I do not demand of all men the adoption of the principle as a necessary *duty*; nor do I exalt it to the position of a Christian *virtue*, and therefore condemn all who do not practise it. On the ground of *Christian expediency* I lift my standard; and ask men to attach themselves thereto for the sake of enjoying the Christian *privilege* of doing good. I say of wine, as St. Paul said of other things—"all things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." 1 Cor. vi. 12. And again, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Rom. xiv. 21.

This at once puts the thing before you as a matter of Christian principle and of conscientious motive; and, where the Bible utters no detailed rules, let the revealed motives of the Bible speak.

From the foregoing statement, it would, accordingly, appear that the great Miracle in Cana of Galilee has *no connection* with the system of Total Abstinence, seeing that, albeit the example of Christ, the Apostle states that he could be brought, by circumstances, totally to abstain from wine for a weak brother's sake.

But this matter is capable of a more detailed exposition from a consideration of the circumstances of the Saviour's First Miracle, which strongly contrast with the circumstances of our own time:—

1. There existed no such extent of Drunkenness then as now: Drunkenness, indeed, did exist; but not to the fearful and fatal extent of modern days. I am quite sure there existed then no such temptations or dishonourable inducements to Drink as now. Sure I am, there stood not a glaring gin-shop at the corner of every street in Cana of Galilee, to tempt the father from his home, and to bring sin and sorrow into every neighbourhood. Sure I am, that strong liquors, such as are used in the present day, were not known within the precincts of Palestine; and that the great crying sin of England was not the characteristic of those times and places.

2. This proposition prepares the way for the further question: How far does the Miracle in Cana of Galilee sanction the drinking of wine? At the very utmost it amounts to a *permission*, but can never be quoted as a *command* to drink wine or strong drink. What if John the Baptist had been present at this marriage-feast (a not unlikely circumstance), would he, then, have partaken of this wine? Certainly not. Albeit, it was made by the miraculous power of Jesus, still, *if* it contained strong drink, the Baptist, as a Nazarite, would not have tasted it.

I instance this simply to show that, in the circumstance of the Miracle, there is no command to drink wine. It would, indeed, be a strange proposition—Christ made wine; therefore, all must drink it! As well might it be said (indeed, with far greater propriety)—Christ was present at the marriage of Cana; therefore, all persons must marry! Now, the truth is, there is in this Miracle no more command for the universal drinking of wine, than there is for the universal adoption of the married state. There is liberty and the power of personal choice in the one as in the other. Therefore, if any one should choose to say—It is *lawful* for me to marry; but it is not *expedient*—he has the personal freedom, and also the apostolic authority, to make such a choice. (1 Cor. vii. 26, &c.) And so also if any man say—“It is *lawful* for me to drink wine, but it is not *expedient*”—who can deny him the exercise of his Christian liberty to abstain? Observe, this proposition is laid upon very high ground, for the sake of argument; it allows, for the pre-

sent, that wine (the medicated and adulterated compound of the present day) is a divinely-appointed beverage, as marriage is a divinely-appointed institution.

3. But the wine of the present day is *not* a beverage of divine appointment: So far from being a "creature of God," it cannot even rank among the ordinary wines of Scripture; and it is only in name, but certainly not in nature, that it can be allowed to enter into consideration at all side by side with the divinely-given wine at Cana of Galilee.

The ordinary wines of Palestine were not of the same pernicious character as the present wines of Britain: this is a proposition, alas, too true! There is more wine consumed in England than can be produced by all the vineyards of the Continent. This fact renders it necessary that the wines in ordinary use must have passed through such an adulterating process as to leave but little of the pure "juice of the grape" in their constitution. Hence the remark of an eminent writer on this subject: "Genuine wines cannot be had, and for the simple and obvious reason that the consumption is a hundred thousand times greater than the grape can produce; and so the little that is originally expressed from the vine is instantly divided, and subdivided, and diluted, and manufactured, that scarcely a drop of the fruit of the vine remains; while thousands of hogsheads are wholly fictitious—not one drop of the juice of the grape being in them."* The same writer adds—"This fact once admitted is of vast importance in promoting the object now in view; it bears strongly, as we shall see, upon the scriptural authority in this matter, proving that our question is about the propriety or impropriety of using drinks utterly unknown in the Scripture times, and therefore lying outside their authority, except inferentially. . . I do not in this place discuss the nature of the Scripture language with reference to wines or strong drinks: all I contend for is, that the modern drinks in their fiery, intoxicating, alcoholic nature, do so entirely differ from anything known or drunk as a stimulant in the days of Scripture, that any passages in the sacred volume which appear to favour the use of the latter can by no honest interpretation be applied to the former. The drinks sanctioned in Scripture have now positively no existence among us."

* The Dean of Carlisle. See article on "The Adulteration of Drinks" in *The Church of England Temperance Magazine* (No. III., December, 1862). The Dean ably strengthens his argument by the following extract, quoted from the *Times*:—"Such is the extent of this nefarious commerce, that one individual alone has been pointed out in the French ports, who has been in the habit of despatching, *four times in the year*, 25,000 bottles of champagne, each shipment of wines not the produce of the champagne districts, *but fabricated in their wine-factories.*"

Surely, when we contemplate the rich clusters of the clambering vines, the vast profusion of Nature's gift and of God's beneficence, we can scarcely recognize any proper or legitimate connection between such gifts of God and all the misery, and vice, and degradation, and blighted prospects, and blasted reputations, which come of the strong wines of England. And when I look upon the waving corn-fields and the valleys filled with golden grain, ripening beneath the glow of heaven, and designed in due season to yield "seed to the sower and bread to the eater," what possible connection can I trace between this innocent gift of God, and the ultimate fatal effects wrung out of it when it has been manufactured into burning drink, the parent of woe and wretchedness?

Who would tell from such a morning,
 Such a dreary darksome day?
 Who, a lifetime so degraded
 From a dawn so bright and gay?
 Learn how soon what God hath planted
 May by man be turned to woe;
 Say not it is "God's good creature,"
 It is *man* that made it so!

4. We turn now from the wines (so called) of modern times to the wines of Scripture: It forms no part of our present subject to enter into a detailed account of the character of the respective wines indicated by different Hebrew words in the Old Testament Scriptures, but uniformly translated "wine" in the English translation of the Bible. Suffice it to say, that pure unfermented unintoxicating wines were, and still are, in use in the East; that this pure "fruit of the vine" was an ordinary food of the people, as it still is in grape countries; and, as such, is associated with "corn and oil," as the staple produce of the land. The Rev. S. Robson, a Missionary at Damascus, states that "the fruit of the vine forms a substantial part of the food of the people—so much so, that I believe I am correct in stating that from August to December, bread and grapes are substantially the food of the people."* A more familiar authority is that of the celebrated Dr. Duff, the eminent living Missionary to India from the Church of Scotland. He thus writes, after a visit to the wine countries of France: "In these countries, mantled with vineyards, one cannot help learning the true intent and use of the vine, in the scheme of Providence. In our own land, wine has become so exclusively a mere luxury, or, what is worse, by a species of manufacture, an intoxicating beverage, that many have wondered how the Bible speaks of wine in conjunction with corn and other

* *Missionary Herald*, 1845.

staple supports of animal life. What is the Providential design in rendering this soil so productive of the vine if its fruit becomes solely either an article of luxury or an instrument of vice? The answer is, that Providence had no such design. Look at the peasant at his meals in vine-bearing districts! Instead of milk, he has a basin of pure unadulterated 'blood of the grape.' In this its native original state, it is a plain, simple, and wholesome liquid, which at every repast becomes to the husbandman what milk is to the shepherd: not a luxury, but a necessary; not an intoxicating, but a nutritive beverage."*

All, therefore, we contend for here is, that while there were fermented and intoxicating wines used in Scripture times, there were also unfermented and unintoxicating wines in common use, as part of the natural food of the people. This being so, it would seem to account for the diverse testimony of Scripture regarding wines; and that when the Bible commends the drinking of wine, as "making glad the heart of man," and otherwise contributing to his strength and vigour, it speaks of the native fruit of the vine pressed into the wine-cup; and, when it speaks in terms of admonition and warning, and calls wine "a mocker," and makes it the chosen symbol of the wrath of God, and the pouring out of Divine vengeance, it indicates the harmful wine, fermented and adulterated.

I am the more strengthened in this impression from the fact that the Bible very often speaks approvingly of wine in those passages which speak of it in its full abundance and plenty—so full and so plentiful, that it must, if of an intoxicating nature, by its very quantity, produce evil and sinful consequences. Thus, the Psalmist—"My cup runneth over," Ps. xxiii., 5; and the Psalmist's Son—"Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly," Cant. v., 1; and, again, "Thy presses shall burst out with new wine," Prov. iii., 10; and Isaiah—"Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price," Isa. lv., 1. These blessed emblems of the plentiful supply of God's grace would surely lose all their spiritual import, and be inconsistent with innocence and purity, if, being harmful in their own nature, they were thus largely indulged in.

5. It now remains but to determine what kind of wine the Saviour made at the Marriage in Cana of Galilee. If there be an option or any choice in the matter, between an intoxicating and an innocent beverage, methinks it would be in favour of that which addeth no sorrow therewith.

It is also important to observe, as I have done in the former lecture

* *Missionary Record*, April, 1840.

of this course, that this, like many of the other Miracles of Christ, was the accomplishment of a Miracle by simply producing a natural result, but without the ordinary process of nature. Thus, all wine is made from water—the dews and the rains of heaven, by the blessing of God, become moisture to the earth, sap to the vine, and, ultimately, the juice of the grape. Beyond this, nature and the God of nature incur no responsibility. All wine-making over and above the pure juice of the grape is not natural, but artificial; not nature, but manufacture. Now, it would appear that Jesus made the wine up to the same point as would have been attained by nature in the ordinary process of growth—that is, that He perfected all that is divinely natural, but incorporated nothing that is humanly super-added, in the making of the wine.*

This would further seem to be required by the very large and liberal supply provided by this single Miracle (the quantity being estimated as being something about 120 gallons in all). It would seem that He gave it for present use, and in such quantities as, considering they had already exhausted their own supply, would have been utterly inconsistent with the purity of Christ's own example, and the innocent enjoyment of the guests. I think too much stress cannot be laid upon this fact—of the large quantity supplied by the Miracle. I would, therefore, put it in this way—The wine must have been either harmful or harmless in its quality. If harmful and intoxicating, would not the quantity be more than most persons, however prejudiced, would deem to be safe? and, if innocent and unintoxicating—well, then, my theory is established!

Any way, this Miracle was wrought for the best of purposes—“this beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory.” When Christ is present, and His glory the great prevailing thought and motive, all will be well. If all

* The learned Commentary of the Rev. Albert Barnes (*in loc.*) corroborates this view. He observes—“*Good wine.* This shows that this had all the qualities of real wine. We should not be deceived by the phrase, ‘good wine.’ We use the phrase to denote that it is good in proportion to its strength and its power to intoxicate. But no such sense is to be attached to the word here. Pliny, Plutarch, and Horace describe wine as good, or mention that as the *best wine* which was harmless or innocent—‘*Poculo vini innocentis.*’ The most useful wine—*utilissimum vinum*—was that which had little strength; and the most wholesome wine—*saluberrimum vinum*—was that which had not been adulterated by ‘the addition of anything to the must or juice.’ Pliny expressly says that a ‘good wine’ was one that was destitute of spirit—lib. iv., c. 13. . . . The wine referred to here was, doubtless, such as was commonly drunk in Palestine. That was the pure juice of the grape. It was not brandied wine; nor drugged wine; nor wine compounded of various substances, such as we drink in this land. . . . No man could adduce this instance in favour of drinking wine, unless he can prove that the wine made in the water-pots of Cana was *just like* the wine which he proposes to drink.”

wine were as pure as that which was made by Christ in Cana of Galilee, and if all wine-drinkers drank to the sole glory of God—there would be no drunkenness and no drunkards in the land; and therefore no necessity for this severe protest which our conscience leads us to make, as a specific remedy for the special evil, which has taken such deep root, and filled the land. But, if the drinking of wine be, as it generally is, a self-indulgence, for carnal pleasure, for ungodly mirth, and sinful revelry, and be followed by sin and sorrow and blasphemy, and forgetfulness of God and of religion—then, so far from securing the presence of Christ, it excludes Christ, and banishes every thought of Jesus. Then, I say, better—a thousand times better—put away the wine, than exclude the Saviour. At any cost, let Him be present; and all is well.

And, remember, where Jesus is, there must be the Christ-like spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice. For sinners the sinless died; for the weak, He that is the Strong God became weak; He stooped to conquer; and this, that He might lift up fallen man to the measure of His stature, and to the glory of His strength. Would men be Christ-like, let them do as He hath done. He came out of His place; He descended from above—not to blame us, nor to condemn us, nor to leave us in the mire of our own fall and degradation, but to take us by the hand, and lift us up, and impart to our weakness His strength, and bless and cheer us with His sympathy and love. And whoso would go and do likewise, must not rebel against that principle which some of us have adopted, that leads us to abstain from wine and all intoxicants, so that we may woo and win some weak brother or erring sister of our Father's world-wide family; and by this means save some.

The question is—Can you do good thereby? Can you thus reach a brother, when no other door seems open to you? Can you by this principle gather out the stones from the stony ground, and give the seed of the Word “deepness of earth?” If so, depend upon it, “this beginning of Miracles” does not stand in the way of your doing good, or in the slightest degree hinder you in zealously pursuing this path of blessed privilege.

From this initial Miracle of Christ, we shall now proceed to a consideration of the further Miracles of the Son of Man; and, I trust, derive much profit and instruction from this detailed study of the life and mission, and ministry, and deeds of mercy, wrought by Jesus of Nazareth—“a Man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did, by Him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.” Acts ii. 22.

THE NOBLEMAN'S SON

AND

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.

"There was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum This is again the second Miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judea into Galilee."—John iv., 46—54.

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a Centurion, beseeching Him And Jesus said unto the Centurion, Go thy way; and, as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."—Matt. viii., 5—13.

Two distinct Miracles of our Blessed Lord are now to command our attention: that wrought upon the Nobleman's son, and that other and similar one, on the Centurion's servant. For the former we are indebted to St. John's Gospel alone. The latter is recorded both by St. Matthew and St. Luke.

We commence with the NOBLEMAN'S SON. St. John, though writing last of all, yet seems to lay greater stress upon the earlier scenes of Christ's ministry; and rests some degree of emphasis, not only on the Miracles themselves, but also on the dates and circumstances of their occurrence.

The journeys of the Saviour at the outset of His ministry are carefully recorded by the beloved disciple. Leaving Cana of Galilee, He next proceeds to Capernaum (John ii., 12); and thence to Jerusalem to the Passover (ii., 13); during which visit He cleansed the Temple of its traffic and worldly merchandise, and held that remarkable conversation with Nicodemus (iii., 1, &c.); and also did many wonderful things at the feast (iv., 45). He then departed from Judea for Galilee again, and "must needs go through Samaria" (iv., 3, 4). It was during this journey that, being wearied, He sat down by Jacob's well, and held the conversation with the woman of Samaria. And, although He rested only from a momentary weariness, yet what with this conversation with the woman, and the

subsequent interviews with the men of the city, Jesus, at their request, "abode with them two days" (iv., 40)—showing us how willing is Jesus to tarry with those that receive Him and hear His words. We next find Him once again entering "into Cana of Galilee, where He had made the water wine" (iv., 46).

Here then—at Cana of Galilee—is wrought the Miracle of the Healing of the Nobleman's son—"the second Miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judea into Galilee."* This Nobleman lived, not at Cana, but at Capernaum—the two cities being about a day's journey apart. He comes to Cana to meet Jesus; and instantly prefers the petition of his heart—"that He would come down, and heal his son, for he was at the point of death."

The answer of Jesus does not seem to be very promising or in any way satisfactory, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." This remark, however, seems to be addressed not only to the Nobleman, but also (and more particularly) to the people who very likely had gathered in large and curious crowds round about the person of Jesus. It must not be forgotten that this is Christ's second appearance in Cana; that the fame of His former visit had been spread far and near; and that the public curiosity was whetted for another display of His wonder-working power. The witnesses of the former Miracle were confined to the select party of guests at the marriage feast; but now He stands in the highway, among the multitude, who not having seen, but only heard of, the wondrous act which He had done, now desire to see a Miracle for themselves. We can easily imagine how this second visit would be likely to stir up the people; and thus we can well understand how Jesus would address this wondering crowd, thus desiring to see some new thing, and to gratify their eyes and their sense of curiosity—"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

Faith that is dependent upon signs and wonders is not that implicit, experimental faith, that can afford to wait for the issue. And the great object of this Miracle is, to illustrate that faith that implicitly receives Christ's *word*, believes it, and is enabled to depart in full confidence and assurance thereof.

Meanwhile, the Nobleman is impatient of delay. He had left his child "at the point of death," and he knows not how it may be with him even now. He therefore repeats his request more urgently and earnestly than before, saying, "Sir, come down ere my child die." This is the agony, anxiety, and suspense of true affection, when matters have arrived at a critical moment, which, if lost, all is

* This, though called "the second Miracle," is not the second of the whole series of Christ's Miracles, but of the Galilean Miracles.

lost—just such a moment of anxious suspense as that, during which the loving sisters at Bethany waited and waited the expected arrival of Jesus, and over-waited, till their brother's death robbed them of the last residue of hope and expectancy. Such was the anguish and agony of that precious moment to the Nobleman.

There were, doubtless, many there who were anxious that Christ should accept the request and answer it; many that would have gone down with Him as witnesses of the act. They would desire to see Him come and stand by the couch of the young man, and touch him, and by the touch impart the gift of healing. They would thus have gratified their curiosity to the full. But, no. Jesus is now about to prove it is not necessary that He should "come down"; that His power makes no account of distance; that His word, wheresoever spoken or at any time, sufficeth; and that if these men would see signs and wonders, they shall this time be disappointed—"And He saith unto him, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." There is no sign, no proof, no evidence that this is so. The Miracle is wrought at a distance; and Jesus in Cana of Galilee despatches healing and health, swifter than the winds, to yonder youth in Capernaum; and the simple record of the Nobleman's faith is—"the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." It is not till after the exercise of his faith that he receives the evidence and proof, or actually understood the fact to be as Jesus had declared; for "As he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth." Then, by comparing observations, he found that the hour of his son's recovery corresponded with the precise hour in which Jesus spoke the word. This is implicit faith, confidently believing the word of Christ, and in the fulness of that confidence departing homewards.

The Healing of THE CENTURION'S SERVANT next demands our attention. This is recorded by St. Matthew (viii., 5-13) and by St. Luke (vii., 1-10). An apparent discrepancy occurs in the narratives. St. Matthew represents the Centurion coming in his own person to Christ; while St. Luke says that he sent certain of the elders of the Jews, and subsequently some of his friends, to plead in his behalf. But the discrepancy is, as I have said, only an apparent one—*qui facit per alium, facit per se*: "What one does through another, he does through himself;" just as an application may be made in Court by such an one, and yet it is his representative that really acts. Besides, St. Matthew does not say that the Centurion's friends did not also come; and St. Luke plainly represents the Centurion himself as coming to meet Christ, though at a later stage of

the negotiation. I rather look upon this diversity as an illustration of the candour and honesty of the Evangelists, who, if they had designed a forgery, would plainly have taken care to preserve verbal identity of narrative; and also, I see in it the more full description of the scene, as viewed and detailed by two respective witnesses, delivering their testimony quite independently of each other. Here, in fact, are two aspects and different features of the same occurrence. St. Luke delivers the more detailed narrative; and describes the successive scenes:—first, the elders of the Jews, urging the Saviour to grant the petition, and supporting his plea to be a partaker of Christ's power; then, their appeal still further strengthened by the friends of the man; and, lastly, the Centurion himself coming to meet Jesus. Now, St. Matthew seems to have been particularly struck by the conduct of the man himself, and therefore lays stress on that portion of the scene; while St. Luke, having observed more particularly the kindly interference of the man's friends and Jewish neighbours, specially records that fact. I conceive that, between the two narratives, we have a more complete stereoscopic view of the whole transaction than we should have had if it had been recorded by only one Evangelist; and that this complete view represents *both* the Centurion himself and the Jewish elders resorting to Christ in behalf of the servant who was sick.

Comparing the two Miracles—that of the Nobleman's son, and of the Centurion's servant—we cannot fail to discover many points of similarity, and also many points of contrast, between the two: for example, both the Nobleman and the Centurion resided at Capernaum; the cause or ground of their appeal is much the same—one for his sick son, the other for his sick servant. Both resort to Christ, as to an all-powerful Physician. It would also appear that both these men were Gentiles—the Centurion, certainly; and the Nobleman, most probably, inasmuch as the word by which his office is indicated (*βασιλικός*) is supposed to involve some position at Court, or under Government, which was then foreign, or Roman. Both of these suppliants, too, were men of position and importance. So far for the points of resemblance.

There are also points of contrast. The most remarkable of these is the different character and degree of the Faith of each. The Nobleman besought Jesus twice that He would "come down" and heal his son. The Centurion simply tells his case, saying, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." Whereupon, Jesus answers him, "I will come and heal him." In the one case, the request to "come down" is on the part of the Nobleman; in the other, the offer "to come" is on the part of

Christ. And here is the evidence of the superior faith of the Centurion, that he sees no necessity that Christ should be present at the scene of the sickness, whereas the other seems to associate the Saviour's presence with the accomplishment of the Miracle.

Accordingly, when Jesus answers, "I will come," the Centurion's faith interposes—"I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof: but *speak the word* only, and my servant shall be healed." He thus begs of Christ that He will *not* come; but only speak, and the spoken word sufficeth all. This is a proof of the man's faith—that he expected a miracle, and not any mere ordinary exercise of healing, and that he believed both the power and the willingness of the Saviour to do this thing. Now, this faith was somewhat in advance of the faith of the Nobleman, who could scarcely realize Christ's power to heal at so long a distance, by the simple volition of His will, and by the speaking of His word.

It is evident that the Centurion's appeal was not one of those ordinary appeals to a Physician, who must come and see, and examine the case, and thus determine upon the remedies to be used. This was an extraordinary appeal—the appeal of extraordinary faith, which saw no local limits to the Saviour's power, and understood that time and place and distance are of no importance to the Great Physician. But speak the word, the life-giving, wonder-working word; and it sufficeth, Lord!

The Centurion's faith was, moreover, a recognition of the omnipotence and omniscience of Jesus—Divine attributes in the Person of Christ. He was assured that Jesus knew the place, the disease, the danger, all the circumstances of the servant; and that He could perform this miracle of healing when afar off, as though He were nigh at hand. It is also a testimony of the man's faith in the history of God's doings and dealings toward men—that as Creation came forth at the *word* of God, so could this healing power proceed by a word from Christ. The greater Miracle of Creation was by the *word* of the Creator—"God said, Let there be light!" and, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made." The ordinary method is, to do some deed, or manifest some process. Now, thus to act is human; thus to speak, divine. "He sent His *word*, and healed them." Ps. cvii., 20.

And, not only does this manifest faith in Christ's power, but it also discloses the man's deep, penetrating view of his own unworthiness. And, as a soldier, he speaks after a military fashion the expression of this feeling of his heart—"For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant,

Do this, and he doeth it." And when Jesus heard this remarkable evidence of his faith, He marvelled, and said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And after opening up, from this incident, the wide door of the kingdom of Heaven to all believers, he dismisses the Centurion, saying, "Go thy way; and, as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee! And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

The great Lesson to be taught and learned from these twain narratives is, the All-mightiness of Faith. Here is exemplified the faith of two strangers, pronounced by the Divine Teacher to be worthy to occupy the place of a model faith to the seed of Abraham. It is well worth our while, then, to inquire in what consisted this model faith, thus rising above and beyond the *maximum* faith of Israel. The details of this great Lesson may be gleaned and gathered from the respective narratives; then, let us again review them, for this purpose.

I. The phase of faith manifested by the Nobleman is that which sees nothing as yet, by way of sign or token or visible proof, and which yet believes, because of the *word* of Jesus. Others believed because of signs and wonders; but this man believed without these evidences. His faith was pure and simple, and altogether an implicit faith. Man judges by the outward appearance and on the evidence of the senses. In spiritual things, this is no test; for, if spiritual things are to be discerned at all, they must be "spiritually discerned." The whole controversy of the Cross with Jews and Gentiles turned on this point—"The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." 1 Cor. i., 22. Now both are wrong in this; for in neither of these consists the true essence of Christianity. Worldly wisdom may do very well for the philosopher and the disputer of this world, and signs may satisfy the curious; but true religion is far too spiritual a reality to gratify mere curiosity, and is far too simple to need the setting off of human wisdom. Hence the significance of the Divine rebuke—"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

In olden times, God vouchsafed to give many signs and tokens to men. The Rainbow, the Sabbath, the Law, the types and shadows of the first Covenant—all these were made to serve as "signs" between God and men. Signs, in the more extraordinary and miraculous form, were constantly given to the patriarchs and prophets. And in the New Testament times we find a very earnest and curious desire after signs and wonders. Therefore the people say, "Master, show us a sign from heaven." They seem to have "loathed the

light bread" of doctrine and precept, and to have demanded more visible signs and tokens; and are severely rebuked for this—"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." A sign or token of love is never demanded by those who really love. The husband, the wife, the child that demands a sign of connubial or filial love, must have doubts and suspicions to justify the demand. Perfect love sees eye to eye, and face to face, in honest, open gaze that needs no token to *prove* affection. It is only "an evil and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign." And such as these should be disappointed, as were those in the days of Christ, to whom no sign was given but that of the Prophet Jonas—and this, not a present and visible sign, but a bygone evidence, to be received and realized by faith only, and not by sight. And for this reason the signs of the Saviour's power were oftentimes and in many places withheld, "because of their unbelief." Matt. xiii., 58.

The same thirst after signs is reproved in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus: if Lazarus would but go to the Rich Man's brethren, surely (thought he) they would repent and believe. But the answer of heaven still sends them back from present and visible signs and wonders to the evidence of the written word—"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." The unbelieving Jews called upon the Crucified to come down from the Cross, and they would believe; and yet the greater sign—His Rising again from the dead—did not persuade them.

There is also observable throughout this context a progressive series of faith and evidence: "The Galileans received Him, having *seen* all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast." John iv., 45. The Samaritans, however, displayed a higher character of faith, for they believed because of the *words* of Christ; "and said unto the woman (of Samaria), Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves." John iv., 42. And now in Cana of Galilee, a still higher degree of faith is exemplified—in the Nobleman, who, without signs or tokens, "believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him," and in the confidence of this implicit faith departed, and as he went his way and was going down, his servants met him, and confirmed his faith by the tidings of his son's recovery.

This is faith, pure and simple, confident, relying. The word of Jesus is spoken and pledged; and faith, without being able as yet to see the issue, believes that at the word the deed is done. The issue has yet to be verified by facts; but before this proof arrives his faith has grasped the reality, and in the full assurance of believ-

ing confidence he wends his homeward way to see the evidence which is there vouchsafed—not to create, but to confirm his faith. Along this homeward journey he walks by faith and not by sight. What a strong contrast does the faith of this stranger present to the doubting unbelief of Thomas, who, notwithstanding the accumulating evidence of the Resurrection, still resists all evidence, and continues obstinate in his unbelief!—"Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." And, when the Saviour had granted his demands and established his faith in his Risen Lord, it was yet accompanied by this rebuke—"Thomas, because thou hast *seen* me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

It would seem as though many of the Church and professing people of God are still without this faith—this implicit faith, that accepts and acts upon the word of Jesus. Too many of us demand to see signs and wonders. We say, If Jesus would but come in person; if I could hear Him speak, and see His Miracles, and thus prove His precepts, I would, I must, believe! Is not this the vain and profitless desire after signs and wonders? It also betrays forgetfulness of the fact that the signs and wonders wrought by Christ did not always or uniformly produce faith in those that saw them.

It is so, likewise, in a spiritual point of view. In spirit we crave after signs and wonders. You expect Christ to "come down," and by some wonderful manifestation to open your eyes, to heal your sin-sick soul, or release you from the bondage of sin. You look for some strange feeling, some peculiar ordeal, to happen unto you, as to Saul of Tarsus. You demand happiness and joy and peace—all these as signs and tokens, and *before* the pardon of your sin. This is but to transpose the order of things, which is, first pardon, then peace. We must first be delivered from all our sins, and then, and then only, can we serve God with a quiet mind. Jesus is willing now and stands waiting to speak the word; and where faith is implicit, it receives the word, and believes the word, and departs—by and by to feel the great change that has been wrought.

How many are kept back by frames and feelings—waiting to feel, when it is time boldly to believe! The Nobleman believed; he did not demand first to see the issue, and then believe; but he believed first, and then departed, and, as he was going down, his faith is confirmed by the tidings of the fact; and he found that the word of Jesus fully answers to His work! Thus it always is, that implicit faith is met half-way by confidence and assurance, and thereby is made more strong. The great lesson to each of us is—"Go thou,

and do likewise!" Only believe, in the strong confidence of confiding faith; and Jesus will be made known to you, not at first by signs and wonders, but in reality, in deed, and in truth; and will accompany the word by signs following.

II. The faith of the Centurion supplies another aspect of that model faith which is so highly commended by Christ. It is even more striking than that of the Nobleman, seeing it is more strong and masculine. The faith of the Centurion was (1.) Believing Faith; (2.) Humble Faith; and (3.) Logical Faith.

1. It was Believing Faith. It volunteered from the first to resign what the faith of the Nobleman seemed to demand—that Christ should "come down," and perform the Miracle. It, too, seeks no immediate sign; "but speak the word only," and time will prove the power of that word. This faith teaches its possessor that Jesus need not come, and stand by yonder bedside and touch the servant, or perform any outward deed; but that He need only speak the commanding word, and all is done. In the comparison, it is stronger faith than was that of the Nobleman. The Nobleman believed the word of Jesus *after* it had been spoken; but the Centurion's faith *anticipated* the speaking of the word, asked but the bidding of that voice, and felt assured that all would then be well. This was implicit trust, believing faith.

2. It was Humble Faith: Starting from a thorough understanding of his own unworthiness, the Centurion is well persuaded as to the dignity of the matchless Man whose aid he seeks. Accordingly, when Jesus answers his request by saying, "I will come, and heal him," the Centurion at once replies—"Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Now, observe, how different is the representation made by the elders of the Jews respecting this man—"And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom He should do this." The elders say that the Centurion "is worthy"; but he himself declares, "I am not worthy." It is always the case, that the best men speak most humbly of themselves. Others judge of us according to the human standard of duties done; while we judge ourselves as we stand in God's sight, conscious of no merit, conscious of no worthiness—conscious only of sin.

Such was the experience of the Apostle, St. Paul, when as a self-sufficient Pharisee he measured himself by the standard of the law; he then counted himself "blameless;" but, when he was brought into subjection to the law of the spirit of life, and measured himself in the scales of the sanctuary, he reckoned himself as "the chief of sinners." The Spirit of Humility and of Humble Faith is best pro-

moted within us by regarding ourselves in the light of the purity and holiness of Jesus. So long as we measure ourselves by ourselves, we stand very much upon the same common level, and can only at best establish a relative holiness ; but, when we stand in the presence of Jesus, as the Centurion did, we look from the low-lying valley of our own fall and degradation to the infinite height of the Divine perfection and holiness of God in Christ. And such a view as this alone can enable us rightly to understand our own utter unworthiness in the pure eyes of a holy God.

Thus, then, did the Humble Faith of the Centurion find utterance—"I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof." He was conscious of sin as the indwelling principle under that roof; and, where sin dwells, Christ cannot dwell. He here further acknowledges the holiness of Jesus: he so infinitely unworthy to receive such infinite grace and goodness! Sin, and the penalty of sin—sickness, dwelt there; disease, defilement, trembling palsy, were resident there; "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

All this has a deep spiritual meaning and significance. Our bodies are by nature the temples of Satan and of his indwelling power. We are all, spiritually, palsied men. When Felix trembled before Paul, while he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come"—this was his spiritual palsy. When demons and devils trembled before the presence of Christ,—this was their incurable palsy. And, when alarms and fears agitate the conscience, and a horrible dread overwhelms the soul—this is the palsied condition of the sinner, "grievously tormented" under consciousness of present wrath, and in anticipation of the coming woe. Such as these must stand in the lowest valley of Humility, and "out of the depths" they must cry—"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof. Come not down, no not yet, to visit me; but speak from Thy holy Heaven; speak from the distant standing point of the majesty of God; speak with the commanding voice of One who can forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin; speak the word only, and Thy servant's spirit shall be healed! Then come and dwell under my roof, in the chamber of the heart that hath been 'emptied' of the defilement of indwelling sin, 'swept' of the dust and degradation of the same, and 'garnished' with the gifts and the graces of Thy Spirit, and thus made meet to be the temple of the Holy Ghost!"

3. It was Logical Faith. True faith is always well supported, capable of test, and patient of argument and proof. Such faith as

this is neither superstition, nor credulity, nor pusillanimity; it is that nervous, manly thing that fills our mouth with arguments, and gives a wrestling power with God, so that the man of faith shall do valiantly, and at last prevail. The Centurion, accordingly, supports his faith by argument—by a syllogism which all the logic of the schools cannot weaken or destroy—"I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." The force of this argument is not expressed in the narrative. The evangelist abruptly leaves it, standing out in all its legible, logical plainness, causing Christ Himself to marvel, and constituting, without note or comment, in its own naked truth, that faith the like of which He had not seen in Israel.

The argument is this—I am a subordinate officer, under the command of those above me, but yet having soldiers under me. These soldiers are my servants, and what I bid them do, is done at my command, in obedience to my *word*. I, though a subordinate, yet "speak the word" to those below me, and they obey me. But Thou art subordinate to none, and all things serve Thee; all disease is in Thy power; and when Thou dost bid it, Go, it goeth; and when Thou sayest, Come, it cometh; and when Thou commandest any servant of all Thy vast dependency, Do this, he doeth it. My servant now lieth under the heavy hand of one of these Thy servants—palsy; if Thou wilt but "speak the word only", at Thy supreme command it will depart, and my servant shall be healed!

This is what logicians call an *à fortiori* argument—from a lesser to a greater reason. The train of reasoning is this:—

- a. I am a man under authority;
- b. I yet have soldiers under me;
- c. Though I am subordinate to others, yet my soldiers, as *my* servants, obey my *word*;
- d. Thou art under the authority of none; all are Thy servants.
- e. All diseases are in Thy power; and therefore this palsy;
- f. Then, as the Sovereign Lord, subordinate to none, "speak the word only"; bid the palsy to depart, and it will depart; and my servant shall be healed.

Such was the Centurion's argument—from the experience of his own command (though itself subordinate) over his own servants, he rises to the power of Christ's supreme unlimited command over all things. And "when Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

The faith of the Centurion recognized the great fact of the Sove-

reignty of Christ. This, indeed, was the basis of his argument. Now, this was the great truth denied by others, and specially by Israel—those mutinous spirits that would not have this man, Jesus, to reign over them. But here at least is one right loyal subject of the King; and one of Cæsar's bold centurions becomes by faith a model soldier of the King of kings. His Faith was a double-edged sword; it fought its way on the one side, to an understanding of his own helplessness and unworthiness; and, on the other side, to an appreciation of the power and holiness and Sovereignty of Christ.

"No, not in Israel." Among the seed of Abraham, the descendants of the Father of the faithful, there is none found with faith to equal that of this stranger. Here was a heathen man, possessed of no advantages and privileges such as the Jews enjoyed, but who exemplifies a superior faith to that of the chosen people, to whom pertained the promises. It is a sharp rebuke to the seed of Jacob, that they are thus outstripped in the race by a stranger, and provoked to jealousy by them that are not a people.

And, as the door of the Gospel is thus freely and fully opened, so shall the issue be, as declared by Christ on the occasion of the Centurion's faith—"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven." It is important to observe the occasion upon which this expression was used;—based as it is on the faith of the Centurion, it would seem as though this Gentile believer were the first fruits of the Gentiles that should turn to Christ, and that his confidence and faith were the earnest of the future labour of the Church in all lands. Yes, this was the seal set by the Divine Teacher to the universal call of all nations to the Gospel, the fore-shadow of the fulness of that Kingdom which ruleth over all.

And what an admonition is that contained in the final sentence—"But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out!" The Gentiles saved, and "the children of the Kingdom" lost; the Royal family dethroned, and strangers set up in their stead! This was designed as a warning to the Jews in that day; and it is equally intended as an admonition to the Churches now. Many of the ignorant heathen who know not Christ will be called to His Gospel and to have faith in Him, and will obey the call and believe the Gospel; while, alas, many who profess and call themselves Christians shall be "cast out": "the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matt. xxi., 43.

FIRST MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”—Matt. iv., 19.

“Now when Jesus had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon, answering, said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net. And, when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.”—Luke v., 4–6.

ONE would almost suppose that this would be the first and foremost of the Miracles of Christ. Seeing that it involves the call of Andrew and Peter; and that circumstance, we know, was among the first, if not the very first, of the early scenes of the Saviour's ministry. We should be disposed to account it as the beginning of Miracles, were it not that St. John assigns this honour of precedence to the Miracle that was wrought in Cana of Galilee. Accordingly, we are led to look a little more curiously into the connection of affairs; and if we would trace out the chronology of all these scenes, we find all that we need laid down in St. John's Gospel. There we read that Andrew was originally one of the disciples of the Baptist; and that having heard his master's testimony of Jesus, he attached himself to the higher ministry of Christ, and immediately brought over his brother, Simon, to the same allegiance. This, then, was what we may regard as the first call of these brethren of Bethsaida; but at this period they are not commanded to leave all, and to follow Christ. The more decisive call appears to have taken place on the occasion of the Miracle that forms the subject of the present chapter. It is recorded briefly, and without the Miracle, by St. Matthew (iv., 18–20), and by St. Mark (i., 16–20); and in the minute details of the accompanying Miracle, by St. Luke (v., 1–11). And, if there be any chronological intention in the order of the narrative of St. Luke, it would appear that, so far from being the first, it was very far from being the first, of the Miracles of Christ. For, in the preceding chapter, we read of the casting out of an unclean devil (iv., 33–36); and of the healing of Peter's wife's mother (iv., 38, 39), and as a

consequence of this, the healing of multitudes of sick folk (iv., 40), and of persons possessed of devils (iv., 41). And, after all these Miracles of Healing, we find the people pressing upon Him to hear the word of God, "and He stood by the lake of Gennesaret." *

At this point our narrative begins. Jesus saw there two of the fishing-boats standing by the lake, moored or anchored by the shore. The fishermen were on the beach, washing their nets, or, as St. Mark says, mending their nets. They were, in fact, doing both—washing out the sea-weed that had adhered to them; and also mending the meshes which had been broken or rent. Jesus enters into one of these ships—that which belonged to Simon—and sitting down (the posture of all Jewish teachers), He, the Great Teacher, taught the people out of the ship. From such a pulpit, before such an audience, and by such a Preacher, was this great scene enacted; and, after He had spoken, He caused Simon to launch out into the deeper places of the lake, and commanded him to let down his net for a draught. This command seems to take Simon by surprise; yet still from his knowledge of the wondrous works that Jesus had wrought, he was willing to try the experiment; and, although they had toiled all the night, and had caught nothing, yet at the word of Christ he did let down the net. The result was worthy of Him who had commanded the deed; and at once the bosom of the net was filled with a glut of fish, so that the net was beginning to break, and the two brethren are obliged to call in the aid of other fishermen, and they filled their own ship and their comrades' ship, so that not only did the nets begin to break, but even the ships began to sink. This circumstance draws forth from Simon Peter the confession of his own guilt and of the Messiah's kingship and holiness—"Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" These brethren are then commissioned, "as fishers of men," to "go forth and "to catch men"; and, obedient to the call, they forsook all, and followed Jesus as their Master.

Although this is not the first Miracle, yet it is the first great commission given to these disciples. It was their second call, but their more decisive discipleship; their ordination, as it were, for their future mission—and this by means of a Miracle, which supplied at the same time an illustration of the nature of their work, a symbol of their future success, and a great spiritual lesson to all ages and Churches of Christendom. It was the call of the humble fishermen of Galilee to the noblest mission ever entrusted to human hands. It was the deliberate choice of (humanly speaking) the most unlikely

* Called also the Sea of Galilee, and the Sea of Tiberias.

means to accomplish the triumphs that Christianity *has* achieved. Men are chosen from those fishing-boats, who are to go forth to inaugurate a new faith, to overturn all human religions; in a word, to "turn the world upside down." Was ever beginning so unlike the marvellous history it commenced, or a cause so out of proportion to the effect produced?—"not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Cor. i., 26-29.)

The great point of this Miracle is not so much its marvellous character, as its spiritual meaning and interpretation. It was altogether wrought for the purpose of setting forth the nature of the Christian ministry and the work of Christian ministers. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Such is the Divine interpretation of His own act. If we had thus interpreted it of our own understanding, we should perhaps be charged with encouraging fanciful fine-drawing or figurative illustration; but the interpretation is of the Divine mind; and by the symbolic act He constitutes them "fishers of men." It is well for us to learn from this, once for all, that much spiritual teaching may be gathered from the Miracles of Christ; and that in most, if not in all, of them there are contained practical illustrations of Christian principle or of Christian doctrine.

I regard this Miracle and its details as being eminently designed to instruct, to comfort, and to edify those that are downcast and desponding, who have been much and deeply tried and tested in their faith, and who have thus far wrought without result, and toiled without reward. There are many, both in public and in private walks in Christian life, who have invested energy and action, diligence and perseverance, and who yet are struggling on without a single glimmering of hope, to cheer or to encourage them. And, after all their earnest work and patient continuance in well-doing, in the pulpit and out of it, in the Sunday-school class, and in other departments of Christian toil, they still find in the spiritual market the return is "*Nil*"; and in the spiritual bank the answer is—"No effects"; in a word, "they have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." How many efforts spent in vain; how many prayers sent up to no purpose; how many desires and aspirations which have proved utterly abortive; and to-day they find themselves no nearer

the kingdom of God, or to the character of Christ; and they cry out—"My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" "My leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face."

The great lesson, methinks to be learned here is, the great difference between working without Christ and working with Christ.

I. *Working without Christ.* The night-long toil was past; the fruitless labour had been abandoned; and the ships were standing anchored by the shingly beach of Gennesaret. The fishermen were washing and mending their nets for, perhaps, another venture; but little thinking of the glory that was drawing nigh, or of the vocation and ministry to which they were about to be fully called.

They had "toiled all the night, and had taken nothing." This is a description of many fishers of men, who have no call, no blessing, no bait to fish with, no message to deliver, or no power to deliver it. They are working hard perhaps, but see no result. Congregations come and go; classes of children grow old before them and pass away—and none of these are netted for the Master. Human means and human agencies are not lacking; but seeing that this is all, and that all faith is reposed in these—such labourers soon come to realize the very unwelcome fact that "they have taken nothing." How many Ministers, Teachers, Missionaries, thus complain of the lack of all proportion between the labour spent and the effects produced! Every external application may be in its best normal state; ordinary and extraordinary services attended by apparently devout congregations; and certain duties well and regularly discharged; and yet, so far as real and abiding spiritual results are concerned, they have taken nothing! They look, and look in vain, for seals to their ministry, souls for their hire; and wait, and wait to no purpose, to see the sparkling of some gem, that may yet one day adorn the Redeemer's crown, and be their joy and rejoicing in the day of Christ. And, indeed, it is marvellous how little of the spoil of Satan we rescue for Christ, and how small a return is rendered as the result of much labour spent.

"It is but lost labour that ye haste to rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness." There is one grand reason why so much Christian labour is labour in vain—it is *without Christ*. There is much of human means, human ingenuity, human learning, and the eloquence of words; but these have no power in themselves. Hence is it that so many of those who resort to our stated ministries are unprofited thereby. The fish come to the net, but they are not netted—some to admire, others to look on, and not a few to compare, and contrast, and criticise,—and these go away from the preaching of the Word, unscathed by the lightnings of the law,

untouched by the power of the Gospel, or by the glittering spear of the Omnipotent One. It needs but one breathing of the breath of the quickening Spirit to put life into them all, and make a very Pentecost of our dullest and dreariest days.

From this sorrowful picture, from this melancholy dearth, we turn to the more pleasing aspect of the question :—

II. *Working with Christ.* This makes all the difference. To these toiling fishermen the presence of Christ was everything. He brought immediate success, a large take, a great draught of fishes; so that their net began to break, and they are obliged to call to their brethren in the other ship to come and help them.

What a picture is this of a living, active, powerful ministry! Christ intervenes, and where all has, hitherto, been lost labour, signs of success begin to dawn, and by and by the whole atmosphere is filled and flooded with meridian light. The presence of Christ is as life from the dead. Men, once desponding, now rise to action. Sluggish souls are quickened, and sleepers wake to the work of the daytime. The fishers of men, wearied of their fruitless toil, now launch boldly forth, and, at the word of Christ, they let down their net, and instantly 'tis filled. If, then, a man would be successful as a preacher, as a teacher, as a visitor, and gather a large draught of souls for Christ, he must be "a worker together *with Christ Jesus.*"

And this makes amends for all. In this case, it did so most fully and most plentifully. The night is the seasonable time for fishing, but the season had been spent in vain, and morning dawned upon a fruitless labour. The shallow waters were the most likely places in which to let down the net for a draught; but, now they are bid to launch out into the deep places, where fish were not usually caught. All these things—the time and the place—seemed to be against them; but the presence of Christ made up for all. And so is it in the great spiritual reality. Many a man who has forsaken his work, or abandoned his post, or, being discouraged in it, meditates retirement from the sphere of his Christian toil, enters again hopefully when Christ appears; and binds his fisher's coat about him, and launches out into the deep places of society, in faith and confidence that Christ is with him, and will work through him, that He will bless the labour of his hand, and multiply the seed of eternal life which he has planted.

There are many fish to be caught, if only Christ be with us. There is no scarcity, no lack—they are in all places, in the shoals and shallows, in the deeps, and every where. I sometimes think that we are, many of us, like the disciples fishing by the margin of the lake, in the easy places—in our stated congregations, whither the fish

resort, and where they may be found. And yet but few will take the bait, and, therefore, but few are netted for Christ. They come very near the nets, they play with the bait, they frolic in the meshes, but, somehow, they are not caught. Whether it is that we do not mend our nets, that the meshes are wide and open, and a way of escape is left, or by what other influence—certain is it that the result of the “fishers of men” of these days is not just such as we would desire or expect. Ordinary and stated congregations do not repay the effort bestowed upon them. We stand in doubt of the vast majority of our hearers, and are utterly disappointed of our hope. Nets are washed and mended, labour and toil are invested in their spiritual good, the Gospel is fully and faithfully preached, and yet “they have not all obeyed the Gospel.” All stated congregations ought to be great schools for the progressive attainment of Christian doctrine and advancement in Christian practice; but they are not. We are not permitted to see the onward progress, discipline, and intelligence of our congregations, which argue the increase of faith and of all Christian virtues. And if to-day they were to enter upon a competitive examination in Christian experience, I fear the result would be that many that have longest heard the Gospel must be put back to the lowest form, and the most elementary classes of the school.

And, failing thus to find the result of our labours, some of us have “launched out into the deep,” and cast a wide net over the multitudes in the streets and lanes of the city, who readily flock to our standard, and from whose number many are caught in the net of the Gospel. The deep places of society present large scope for the fishing labours of apostolic and missionary-minded men, although they be, or would seem to be, unlikely places to yield a good result, in comparison of the expectations we entertain from the more regular and legitimate congregations of the professing Church.

Labour with Christ is, however, always followed by success; whether it be in this place or that, under circumstances hopeful or otherwise. And, accordingly, the context of the Miracle unfolds the characteristics of such toil and labour of our hands—

1. The large and liberal result of labour with Christ:

The Gospel is designed for a large work, ever widening and augmenting. It is sometimes likened to a field of labour—“the field is the world”—in which the seed is sown broadcast. Over the whole face of this great field of labour are men to be found—at the corners of all our streets, out upon all our highways, ready to hear, and anxious to be instructed. Thus by and by the vast extended plain is enriched with standing corn, needing only the faithful and laborious

husbandmen to enter into the harvest, and gather it for their Lord. Again, it is compared to leaven that leaveneth the whole lump; and to the salt that preserveth the mass. And here it is likened to the net of the Galilean fishermen, let down into the sea, gathering a large draught of fishes—sometimes cast into the gentle waters of the lake, and sometimes into the stormy waters of the deeper seas. We need more fishing-nets, more fishing-boats, more fishers of men, and, above all and over all, more of the Presence of Christ to bless our toil, and render it yet more and more productive. Such large and remunerative results would, according to the analogy of the Miracle, soon call forth

2. The earnest spirit of mutual co-operation :

The result of labour with Christ is an overwhelming result. What a vast yield of spiritual results, when three thousand souls were, by a single sermon—that is, a single cast of the Gospel net, added to the Church! How anxiously overwrought must have been the energies of the Apostles when, at the words of their message, sinners were pricked at their hearts, and cried out—“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Surely, these vast results of apostolic labour must oftentimes have recalled to the memory of the once fishermen of Galilee that day in the waters of Gennesaret, when Jesus, their Master, gave them the type and earnest of their future successes, and of the triumphs of His Gospel in their hands.

Christian co-operation is rendered more and more necessary upon the increase of labour and toil, and all the more if that labour and toil be successful. I seem to see in this narrative the distribution of labour and community of toil which have ever characterized all well-organized efforts in the Church of Christ. In this fishing-boat of Simon I see, as it were, Simon's parish, or Church,* and a work for Christ, and with Christ, that surprises by its magnitude, and demands the assistance and co-operation of others. In the fishing-boat of James and John, I see the parish or district for which these men are responsible; and how it is that, failing any express work of the Lord in their midst, they willingly resort to the help of the Lord's work under another man's charge? And what a sublime, but too long neglected, lesson does this enforce upon the ministers and members of the Christian Church, lest the partition of labour should become so utterly local and selfish and circumscribed, as to interfere with or prevent the true Christian spirit of mutual helpful co-operation!

We are, too many of us, fainthearted and desponding. We are

* It is a curious fact, illustrative of this thought, that the main part of our Churches and Cathedrals is called the *nave*, a word derived from the Latin *navis*, which means *a ship*.

allowing ourselves to become accustomed to ill success, and are too readily disposed to settle down upon our lees, and expect no large gathering of souls to Christ. In this frame of mind, we too often draw up our ships high and dry upon the sandy beach; and we are found "standing all the day idle," spending our time in vain regrets and profitless complainings, instead of boldly launching forth, and in obedience to Christ's command letting down our nets on the brave venture of faith. Depend upon it, if this be done on our part, with the presence of Christ, the power of Christ will do the rest; and this parish or congregation will influence the next, and the next; and the influence will spread, and by and by it would be found that they had "filled both the ships."

This is the work, the calling, and the vocation of the "fishers of men"—to cast their net in all waters; and, with the presence of Christ, to labour for souls, and, having caught them, to keep them for Christ. This Miracle is a striking and remarkable illustration of ministerial work. Like those Galilean fishermen, it is for us to go forth into the deep, with a careful assiduity and an enduring spirit of patience—to "learn to labour and to wait." Though the night be long and the day be unpropitious, in all weathers, in season, out of season, let us ever be found at our post of duty, indefatigable in the industry of Christian fishermen. And, in the intervals of labour, there is still a work to do—in washing and mending the nets. The working gear of the Gospel may be out of order and need repairing. "Saturday," I once heard an eminent clergyman remark, "Saturday is the day on which I mend my nets, to catch fish on Sunday." Our hearts as well as our sermons need to be "prepared" for such a glorious toil in the Great Master's service.

And then to keep the fish that have been caught! This following out of the Miracle to the last supplies the finishing touch to the whole lesson—fish, when netted, are drawn out of their element, and instantly die. Thus they that are caught in the Gospel net are *drawn out* of the element of their former life, of worldliness and sin, and die to the world and to sin; and then are they "born again" by the breath of a new life and being. Here it is that the spiritual reality outruns the parallel; the fish die, to live no more; but souls netted for Christ, die to sin, and from that death they rise to a new being—the life of righteousness. Such is the reality of the change, the distinctiveness of the renewed condition—"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? . . . Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. vi., 2, 11.

THE MONARCH OF THE MAIN.

“And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”—Mark iv., 38, 39.

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.”—Matt. xiv., 25.

ANOTHER little group of Miracles, similar in character and alike in meaning, is now before us; both of them Galilean Miracles, wrought upon the Sea of Galilee. They must, however, be kept distinct and separate so far as the facts of the case are concerned; though their spiritual meanings beautifully blend into one complete and perfect view of the superintendence of Divine Providence, and of the dependence of all human help upon our God. There is the scene of the Stilling of the Tempest by the Son of Man, who slept on a pillow in the Galilean fishing-boat; and that other scene, perhaps more awful and mysterious, when, in the midst of another storm upon the lake, Jesus intervenes at the crisis of the peril, comes walking on the sea, and, as the Sovereign Lord of all Creation, proves Himself to be the Monarch of the Main.

The former of these narratives is recorded by three of the Evangelists (Matt. viii., 23-27; Mark iv., 35-41; Luke viii., 22-25). These different and independent accounts agree in all the main particulars.

The Miracle seems to have occurred in the midst of other Miracles, and to have intermingled with sundry parables—as though to serve as a climax to the one, and as a testimony to the other. After a laborious day of words and works—the day of the Great Sermon on the Mount and of accompanying Miracles, at eventide the Great Teacher proposed to His disciples that they should take ship, and depart to the other side of the lake, to the country of Gadara which was over against Galilee. They accordingly set sail, with a retinue of “other little ships,” filled no doubt by the wondering people, who had heard His Teaching and beheld His Miracles.

The Sea of Galilee is an inland sea, forming a gathering together of the waters of the Jordan. It is about seventeen miles in length, and eight or nine in breadth. It is enclosed by lofty hills, broken only by the entrance and outlet of the river. These waters lie full six hundred feet below the level of the ocean; and the ravines and gorges of the hills are said to act as "gigantic funnels to draw down the cold winds from the mountains."* Hence the sudden gusts and squalls, that descended straight from the mountain range; and the very natural expression, "there came down a storm of wind on the lake."

But, in the midst of this commotion of craft and crew, and winds and waves, it is added—"but He was asleep;" or as in the more detailed account of St. Mark—"He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." The sleeping Jesus outsleeps the storm, and must needs be awaked. Sweet and deep is the sleep of innocence; and thus the Saviour slept, while storm and tempest raged around Him. No doubt, wearied by the toil of the day, Jesus laid Himself down to rest, and He who had not where to lay His head, now at all events is pillowed on the deck of a small fishing craft, playing on the lake. The disciples, still loath to disturb the Master, now feel their jeopardy, and instantly awake the slumbering Monarch, saying, "Lord save us, we perish!" These men had been inured to tempests, and were no strangers to the fickle winds of Galilee; but this is no ordinary storm; and their skill, and experience, and strength seem to be but of little use against such terrible odds. But, happy are they, that the Great Helmsman, who rules the storm, is there, even though He be asleep.

And at their cry He rises from His sleep, and faces this great raging wrath. He first gently rebukes their feeble faith, and then with greater force "rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." This is one of the grand touches of the Divine hand in the human history of Jesus. Here is the Man, in the weariness and weakness of His human nature, sleeping and giving His tired nature its soft and sweet repose; and then from human slumber, He rises as a God, with a look, a word, to command the raging seas that they be still, and they obey Him. It reminds us of that weary traveller who rested by the well of Jacob, and yet sent His own omniscient gaze into the thoughts, and intents, and history of the woman of Samaria. It calls to memory, too, that sympathizing friend who stood over the grave of Lazarus and "wept"; and, having thus displayed the human feelings of a man, then spake the life-giving word,

* See an eloquent and Scripture-like description of a storm on the lake of Galilee experienced by Dr. Thomson: *The Land and the Book*, p. 374.

which only God can speak, and thus proved Himself Divine. Here indeed are some of the bright and glorious manifestoes of His godhead, accompanied by the shadow of the manhood;—His power and might and majesty darkened, shadowed, shrouded by the sorrows, tears, and infirmities of man. What a sympathizing, self-denying friend must Jesus be, thus to suffer with us and for us, while invested with all power in heaven and on earth!

And the men marvelled all, saying—"What manner of man is this?" The Divine glory was so manifested as almost to extinguish or eclipse the human aspect of the Saviour. It was one of those grand, gorgeous, all-imposing deeds of greatness, worthy only of the King of all. And truly, in this did He reveal Himself as the expectant Lord, and this a specimen of the power He wields, and which He shall one day exercise in all its fulness, when He shall rule over land and sea, over heaven and earth, and *as a man* restore to man all that dominion which the first Adam by transgression lost. The Miracles of Christ, most of them, are incidental examples of the general government which He is yet one day to exercise in the Kingdom of His Power; and the scene of the Stilling of the Tempest is one of them.

The corresponding Miracle—the Walking on the Sea—is also recorded by three of the Evangelists (Matt. xiv., 22-33; Mark vi., 45-52; John vi., 14-21). It is represented by all three as the sequel to the Miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. This Miracle was the concluding scene of a ministry of several days' continuance, upon which Jesus not only sent the multitudes away, but also "constrained His disciples to get into the boat, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida." And, when all had departed, Jesus is alone—in that still hour upon the mountain-top, in prayer and close communion with His Father—His wearied spirit refreshing itself by withdrawal from the scenes of wondering multitudes and curious crowds, and finding rest in His own Great Father's bosom. Oh, the Heaven on earth, upon that mountain-top, whither Christ betakes Himself to pray, and perhaps to feel the rising agonies of that sorrow which was unto death!

But, while Jesus prays on yonder mountain-top, it is faring badly with the disciples; for "the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves." Contrary winds opposed their progress; the dark tempestuous night aggravated their fears; and perhaps, above all, was the consciousness of the absence of Jesus from their midst. But the eye that never slumbers is still upon them; to Him the night is as clear as the day; and, from the mountain-top, His eye pierced the gloom, and "He saw them toiling in rowing." And

about the fourth watch of the night the Ruler of the waves comes walking upon the watery carpet of His own dominion; and, as the figure came in sight, majestic in the gloom, and mysterious in that stormy main, their fears are intensified and quickened all the more, for they thought it was a spirit, and cried out for fear. What more natural than this for excited minds to picture to themselves;—the storm; the raging deep, the darksome night; their fruitless effort—surely this must be an apparition superadded to the scene, the spirit of the vasty deep, who comes thus forth to view his agitated kingdom, and to take his silent midnight walk upon the surface of his world!

And lo, He that walketh upon the waters draweth near. He knows their fears, how vain they are; and at a word calms down the agitation of their souls, saying, "*It is I; be not afraid.*" And at His command the wind ceased; the seas assuaged their wrath; the disciples received the Lord into the ship; and all was peace.

These twain Miracles are briefly told. But what great lessons we may be ever learning from each and both! The Miracles of Christ are outward and visible signs of deeper and higher spiritual things signified thereby; and as lessons are conveyed through allegory and parable, so also are Miracles great teachers in the Church.

In reviewing the spiritual import of these Miracles, I seem to see in legible lines the symbols of the Church—launched upon the stormy waves of this troublesome world; and, descending more into detail, I see the struggles of the personal experience of those that are disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This little craft on the waters of Tiberias contained the very Church of Jesus Christ, visible in its few scanty members. As they had launched into the deep, so is the Church now embarked in its earthen vessel and driven out upon all waters—to pursue its voyage amid many vicissitudes of the deep. Sometimes in the track of sunshine, sometimes in the moon-lit path, and oft and oft beneath the darkening clouds and lowering tempests—she sails gallantly on, bound for the heavenly shore. That fishing-boat of Gennesaret was indeed the type in many ways of the Church of the Son of God; through manifold changes and chances, through scenes of sorrow and of joy, through days of patronage and of persecution, through evil report and through good report—she is chartered with the custody of souls for Christ. That crew of disciples was the type and earnest of all the members of Christ's body in all ages. That storm and contrary wind was the typical forerunner of the storms, and persecutions, and trials, and temptations that have ever chequered the

Church's voyage to the better land. And as it was then, so is it now; it is only Christ, in His own Presence, that can conduct His Church in safety, or keep it in security. All this is alike learned from the two Miracles.

But at this point they branch off into their respective illustrations of Christian knowledge and experience. It matters something to the Church and to the individual Christian, whether Christ be with us, or be absent from us; and whether, being with us, He is asleep in our midst, or awake in the active exercise of His godlike power to save and to defend His own. The Church in which the power and testimony of Christ are lulled to sleep is liable to danger from storms and tempests without, and from fears and fightings within. Much more, the Church from which Jesus is absent, is in grave and deadly peril, and is the first to fall a victim to the warring elements. The dark and dead times of the Church have been those seasons of the Church's forgetfulness of God, when Christ seemed as though He were asleep within her. And this was Satan's time and the power of darkness. It was just at such junctures as these that he assailed the Church with all his storms, and brought forth the fierce winds of temptation wherewith to cause her to make shipwreck of the faith. But Christ has ever been with His Church; or at least has never been far distant from her side. He may have slept long, and overslept many a storm; but this was because He had not been awakened to undertake the Church's cause. He will be inquired of concerning these things; and, whatever be the storms that blow upon the main, or however beset may be the vessel of the Church—we have but to cry to Him, and He will hear us.

A more individual and personal lesson may also be derived; and, while the former Miracle may be more applicable to the Church as a body, the latter may be more calculated to teach a personal lesson to the individual members of Christ, as being (1) descriptive of our state; and (2) suggestive of our hope.

1. It is descriptive of our state. Although Christ may at times have been, as it were, asleep within His Church, yet we can scarcely say he has ever been really absent from her. His promise is—"Lo, I am with you always." But we are by experience aware that Christ may be absent from ourselves personally; may absent Himself, or withdraw His Holy Spirit from us. This is the chosen season of Satan's storms, when he breathes the contrary winds and buffets us upon the wave, and hinders us upon the voyage of life. The waves of Time are subject to these sudden gusts. The wings of adversity and the strong cross-current of circumstances are ever on the move, and never continue in one stay; so that the soul that is

without Christ finds but little rest, is ever tossed upon the stormy seas of sin and doubt and a troubled conscience. We are, meanwhile, "toiling in rowing," but the wind is contrary, and our toil is all in vain. By and by the tide gains on us; the waves throng and press around us; the wind stirs up the angry tempest, and with incessant contrariety resists our progress. There are rocks ahead, and hidden dangers on every side. The darkness is not the greatest danger; but it terribly enhances the magnitude of the peril. There can be no more miserable condition, no more hopeless situation. Very solemn issues hang upon that moment, fraught as it is with such serious consequences. Above is blackness; beneath is danger; around are all the accompanying terrors of the scene; without are fightings; and within are fears. Mark what are the perils of the soul from which Christ is absent; and how unavailing is the power of human effort—"toiling in rowing"; but this did not make the storm to cease, and, at best, it wholly fails to conduct us home. What then?—

2. It is suggestive of our hope. Yes, dark as was that dismal night, Light is at hand. Tempestuous as was that stormy sea, the Peacemaker is drawing nigh, and He can calm the troubled waters. The crew of that little craft is in vital danger, but there is one on yonder mountain-top, who sees their jeopardy, and, from the height beholding their desperate condition, He uprose to help them; and in the extremity of their need He draweth nigh to deliver them. He brings peace to their troubled minds, joy to their mournful spirit. They cease their anxious toiling when Jesus is with them. It needs but the speaking of a word, and all is calm; and they are at the haven where they would be. And has Jesus forgotten to be gracious? or, have we ceased to be in danger? We are now launched upon the waters of life, down in the troubled lake, and on all sides are we surrounded by Eternity. The ups and downs of life are as the fluctuating waves of the sea. We have sinned, and our sins have blown their blasts upon the deep, and stirred up angry strife. If thou wouldst be safe, hope not in toiling, depend not on thy brawny arms, nor yet upon the strength of thy human might; but "from the depths" cry unto the Lord; and, rising from the billows that have engulfed thee, look to the hills, from whence cometh thy help. Jesus is there, on the encircling hills, on yonder mountain-top; and there He prays and intercedes for you, for He knows you are tossed on a billowy main, and He pities the poor helpless and hopeless mariners—helpless, until His own arm brings Salvation;—hopeless, until they learn this prayer, "Lord, what is my hope? my hope is even in Thee!"

Such are some few of the spiritual lessons derived from these two wondrous manifestations of Christ. They are symbols of the Church in the World, and of individual personal experience—mid storms and tempests; Christ asleep within us, or else wholly absent from us.

“When we amid this stormy world
 Feel like the homeless dove;
 We would in spirit spread the wing,
 And flee to Him we love.”

We now proceed further to review the successive stages of the narrative—(1) the Disciples' Peril; (2) the Disciples' Prayer; (3) the Disciples' Faith; (4) the Saviour's assuring Answer; and (5) the ultimate accomplishment of the Miracle.

1. The Disciples' Peril. It was imminent; in the circumstances of both Miracles, their peril was great and urgent. There was not only great fear, but also real ground for fear, threatening the loss of ship and crew, and consequently death. It had come to be a desperate case, relieved by scarcely a shred of hope. In the one case, indeed, Christ was present, but He was asleep, and therefore, speaking after the manner of His human nature, would be unconscious of this raging storm. In the other case Christ was absent, and therefore the realization of their peril would be all the greater. It is remarkable to trace the growing spirit of dependence on their Master which from scene to scene characterizes the disciples. They seem to be increasingly distrustful of themselves, and more and more dependent upon Him.

2. The Disciples' Prayer. Danger generally calls forth the exercise of prayer. There are many who never pray in the sunshine, who yet are constrained to pray in the storm. It is a sad and melancholy commentary upon this fallen and corrupt nature of ours, that in the day of prosperity we are likely to forget God; and in the day of adversity we remember Him. God is so uniform in His good gifts, and with such regularity supplies our daily wants, we are often tempted to forget or overlook the fact that He is the real author and giver of all our good things. If He were at times to withdraw His hand and withhold His gifts, we might more thoroughly recognize our utter dependence upon Him, and own that every good gift and every perfect gift cometh of His bounty. But this good Friend is one whom we practically forget until we want Him, and need His help. Do we not ourselves regard with utter scorn those ungrateful persons of our acquaintance who are ready enough to use us in the day of their trouble, but forget us when the trouble is past? And what, think you, is the estimate in which God regards us, when only in the time of trouble, and through stress of circumstances, we are

driven to His footstool; and then forget His loving kindness and tender mercies? Surely, this must be the very basest ingratitude—to be daily recipients of His bounty, and yet daily forgetful of His goodness!

I do not mean to say that these disciples had forgotten their Master; or that they never prayed; but it does seem to be implied here that the extremity of their peril drove them to urgent, earnest prayer—"Lord, save us, we perish." This is as all true prayer always is—short and to the point, brief but very comprehensive. It is a direct recognition of Christ's power, and contains a statement of their urgent need—"we perish," and a prayer for Christ's instant help—"Lord, save us." St. Mark's account implies a spirit of impatience and distrust—"Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" Truly, their faith was very weak. This conducts us to the next circumstance.

3. The Disciples' Faith. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of *little faith*?" The faith of the disciples was small; and Jesus therefore rebukes their Littleness of Faith. The group of events recorded in the 8th chapter of St. Matthew, of which the Stilling of the Tempest is one, is illustrative of many kinds and degrees of Faith. There is the faith of the Leper—Confiding Faith: "if Thou *wilt*, Thou *canst*." There is the faith of the Centurion—Humble Faith: "I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof." There is the faith of the Scribe—Impulsive Faith: "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest;" not knowing or counting the terms of this discipleship, and what was involved in the following of a Master who had not where to lay His head. There is the faith of another candidate for discipleship—Procrastinating Faith: "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." There is, moreover, the faith of devils, who verily "believe and tremble;" the case of the Demoniacs in the country of the Gergesenes.

Now, among these diversified illustrations of Faith is included the faith of the disciples—Littleness of Faith; less than that of the Leper; far less than that of the Centurion. These men, the chosen companions of Jesus, receiving the oft instruction of their Master, having witnessed already so many of His wonderful works—and yet they represent a degree of faith immensely inferior to that of strangers. They are, in the former of these Miracles, favoured with the immediate presence of Christ, and yet they feared; as though aught of harm could befall them, while Jesus is so near.

Littleness of faith was too often a characteristic of the disciples. Let trouble come, let sorrows fall, and they are utterly undone, as though all were lost. They are first of all afraid, and then, through

fear, they turn to Christ in prayer; whereas, Christ being nigh, it was for them implicitly to trust Him; as the Psalmist trusted when he said—"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." (Ps. xlvii., 2, 3.) But the faith of the disciples was not up to this mark.

In a word, their faith was small and weak. They had fear enough, and complaining enough, and distrust enough, but they had not faith enough. The same faith that failed them in the day of their Master's sorest trial, when they all forsook Him and fled, now fails them on the storm-wrought waves of Galilee. They seem neither to realize His presence, nor to appreciate His power.

It strongly reminds me of that illustration of the immortal Bunyan, where he represents a pilgrim called "Little-Faith" prosecuting his pilgrimage to Sion. This man's faith was little and small in degree, while the dangers were many and great. In an unguarded moment, he lay down to sleep at a dangerous point of the road. The bandits of the way were soon upon him, and Little-Faith is instantly overpowered. Filled with fears and terrors, bereft of his money and means, and prostrate on the earth, gashed and bleeding,—the Little-ness of his Faith has brought him into sore and grievous trouble. But, just at the moment of his deepest extremity, there is heard the sound of advancing footsteps—of Great-Grace, the King's Champion, who is out upon the road. The bandits are at once put to flight; and Little-Faith is saved.

This was the position of the affrighted disciples when buffeted by the stormy waves of Galilee; but Great-Grace is drawing nigh—even Jesus, their Lord and Master, who comes to them treading His own deep seas. Upon the highway of the waters of life there are thieves and robbers, which, like those beetling waves, throng and press to rob us of our treasure and our prize; but Great-Grace walks the sea, and commands the thoroughfare of the deep. Why then are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? "Thou art the God of my strength: why dost Thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." (Ps. xliii., 2, 5.)

"One trouble calls another on,
And gathering o'er my head,
Falls spouting down, till round my soul
A roaring sea is spread.

“Why restless, why cast down my soul?
 Hope still, and thou shalt sing
 The praise of Him who is thy God,
 Thy health's eternal spring.”

Is not all this calculated to teach us the great lesson, that where Jesus is, there can be no danger, and therefore need be no fear? Even though He seem as one that heareth not, or as one that doth not heed—He will yet awake; and you have still but to trust Him, to pray to Him, to confide in Him, and be faithful. And in due time He will give you rest. He will breathe the whisper of His voice, saying, Peace, be still! And whatever storms may blow, or tempests beat—there shall yet be “a great calm.” Only be faithful; “only believe!”

4. The Saviour's assuring Answer. The immediate response is different in each Miracle,—in the former, He instantly awakes and rises from His pillow; and, in the latter, He comes down from the mountain and enters, as it were, into like affliction, into the same stormy waves. All the great deeds of Christ for men are deeds of condescension, *coming down* from some height of glory or of dignity, and undertaking our lot and partaking of our portion. In the one of these Miracles He draws nigh to the affrighted disciples, as a spirit or a spectre on the waves; and yet the Lord of earth and ocean. And, as the Spirit of God once moved on the face of the waters, so does Jesus now move upon the face of the deep, so that he may restore chaos and confusion to order and peace. And, drawing nigh to them, they draw nigh to Him, until their fears are dispelled by the nearer view, and they hear the well-known familiar voice, saying, “*It is I*; be not afraid.” This is the Assuring Answer of the Saviour, a balm to the weary soul, as oil on the troubled waters—“*It is I*.” It is so like the assuring word of a kind, good parent. As when a child dreams its tiny dreams, and is, perhaps, affrighted, and starts from its slumbers, and is filled with fears, and terrors, and alarms; but at once the tender hand of a mother is laid upon its cheek, and the familiar voice whispers—“Hush, my child, it is I; be not afraid; lie down to sleep again!” And that voice is as a magic sound; the child knows it, believes it, trusts it, and instantly turns upon its weary side, again to sleep; and all is well.

And this voice has ever been the comfort and the consolation of all the people of God at every time. The consciousness of the Presence of God has been their staff and their stay amid a thousand sorrows. Noah, amid the desolation of a deluged earth, was not afraid, for God was with him. Lot, in the midst of the overthrow, still felt God's presence near; and was not afraid. When Jacob, to escape his brother's wrath, fled from his father's house, he little

thought what blissful visions would play about his head, under the open canopy of heaven, on that dark and dismal night; and how he was to hear the voice of God—"Behold, I am with thee." And, when he arose in the morning, he felt the solemnity of the scene, "Surely, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." Elijah felt the same comforts of the presence of the Lord, when, amid the terrors and alarms of his perilous position, he heard the whisper of the "still small voice" speaking comfortably to his sorrowing soul. Daniel, and the three brethren of the Captivity, surely understood the consolation of a present God—the one in the lions' den, with God as his protector; and the three brave martyrs walking in the midst of the fiery furnace with their Divine Companion—"the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Peter realized the strengthening power of that Presence; when, far in advance of his actual faith, he ventured too presumptuously upon the waters, and soon began to sink. In that moment of his peril, there was One near to him who can and will save him—Here, lay hold upon this hand; rest thee upon this arm! And Paul the apostle, when doing fierce battle with the untoward circumstances of the Corinthian people, is reassured by the timely voice of God—"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for *I am with thee.*" (Acts xviii., 9, 10.) And even so, now amid the storms of Tiberias, the same Divine Presence draweth nigh, and reassures the trembling hearts of the disciples by the kindly answer to their fears—"Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

5. The Ultimate Accomplishment of the Miracle. The result is twofold. In the one Miracle Jesus walks upon the sea; and in both He stills the Storm. He came forth as the Monarch of the Main to tread and tramp the tempest beneath His feet. From the circle of the waters He hushes the winds, and casts back the adverse storm—by the mere speaking of the words, Peace, be still! And the result is immediate and instantaneous; it is this that renders it miraculous—another evidence that Miracles are not contrary to Nature, but simply above Nature. It is surely not contrary to Nature that a storm should subside into a calm; but it is above Nature that the raging storm should instantly cease, and at the bidding of a word. In Nature's process, storms and tempests take time to cease, and by and by "brawl themselves to rest"; but in this case the Great King intermitted the process, and produced the result immediately. As a monarch, He commanded; and it was done. As the lion-tamer walks amid the rampant angry beasts that are the terror of other men, and bids them lie down again, and they obey, and nestle gently at his feet; so the Great King of all bids the waves be still, which no

man, no human power, can tame; and at His all-commanding word they are hushed to silence; for He is God and King.

“ See the Lord, in might excelling,
 Visit this His great domain ;
 Making here His earthly dwelling,
 Swaying all the world again.
 Fierce diseases flee before Him ;
 Sleep the tempests of the sea ;
 Blind and deaf He doth restore them ;
 Treads the wave of Galilee.”

And others partake of these blessings. Those “ other little ships” on the sea, tempest-tossed, participate in the “ great calm,” the result of the disciples’ prayer, and of the Saviour’s Miracle. Thus it is, that all the world is the better for Christ’s visit to man. Each one, whose angry spirit and whose troubled conscience is calmed by the voice of Jesus, becomes a blessing to all around him, communicates of his calm and peace to others; so that others feel it, and share it with him. That angry-minded and rudely-passioned man, when his rough spirit is tamed by the gentleness of Divine grace, becomes a blessing to his family, friends, and neighbourhood; so that others partake of the fruits thereof. Oh, for more of that Peace of God that passeth all understanding! It calms the troubled breast; it soothes the agitated soul; and where storms had raged and the angry seas had wrought—the waking Jesus or the walking Jesus proves His Presence nigh; rebukes the winds and waves; AND ALL IS PEACE!

THE DEMONIACS.

“And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the Deep.”—Luke viii., 30, 31.

“What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean Spirits, and they do obey Him.”—Mark i., 27.

THE design of these Lectures is not to arrange any chronological sequence of the Miracles of Christ, but rather to form groups of Miracles, which are similar in character, and alike in their doctrinal teaching. For example, I have reviewed, in the same chapter, the gifts of Healing as evidenced in the Miracles respectively wrought upon the Nobleman's Son, and the Centurion's Servant—both tending to illustrate phases of Faith, and to prove the power of Jesus over bodily diseases; so likewise, the group of Miracles of our former Lecture, in which is illustrated Christ's power over the elements, subduing the angry winds and stormy waves. And now, we propose to review an illustration of a still greater power—the might of Jesus exercised over the agitated mind and conscience of man; over the diseases of the inward spirit; over man disturbed by the wrath of devils, and by the power of indwelling demons. Thus are we enabled to trace out the progressive character of Messiah's Miracles, and to regard them all as triumphs over Satan's dominion in the earth—his dominion over the body of man, and over the elements of Creation, whose disturbance, and disruption¹ and disorder, are the result of Sin and Satan in their influence over mankind and the world. And now, the Eternal King advances boldly to the very citadel, where Satan himself is enthroned; and in the Miracles wrought upon the Demoniacs of Gadara and Capernaum, Jesus proves His power and authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out.

The first of these Miracles that demands our notice, is that which took place in Gadara, in the country of the Gergesenes. This is recorded by three of the Evangelists: St. Matthew (viii., 28—34),

St. Mark (v., 1—20), and St. Luke (viii., 26—39). The fullest and most detailed of these accounts is that of St. Mark; and, by combining the diversities of the respective narratives, we are presented with a complete representation of the whole transaction. The only difference between the several narratives that seems to require explanation is, that St. Matthew speaks of two *Demoniacs*, while the other narrators speak of only one. I take it that there were two, but that one of them is the more remarkable object; and, as such, he appears in the forefront of the picture, the other remaining in the background.*

In all other respects, the narratives are identical. The Miracle occurs shortly after the landing of Jesus and the disciples from the dangerous voyage of the preceding night, when Jesus slept amid the storm. The *Demoniacs*, from the tombs of Gadara, come to meet Jesus. These men were "exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way." There, dwelling within the lonely graveyard, among the rock-hewn sepulchres, rendered all the more solitary because of their habitation of the place, these miserable men held on their wretched existence, fast tied and bound by Satan. The condition of the *Demoniac* is further described by St. Mark, who minutely details all the horrors of the case—"And no man could bind him, no, not with chains; because, that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

On drawing near to the presence of Jesus, the devil owns and acknowledges Christ, and the man, glad, perhaps, of this one chance of escape from his cruel tyrant, has no sooner seen Jesus in the distance, than "he ran and worshipped Him"—the demon crying out the confession of his fears in his recognition of Christ: "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that Thou torment me not;" or, as in the account of St. Matthew, "Art Thou come hither to torment me before the time?" And Jesus straightway commands the unclean spirit to come out of the man. This occupies a little time—a process of expulsion is conducted, during which Jesus enters into an inquiry, asking the Demon, "What is thy name?" And he answered, "My name is Legion: for, we are many." The Demon, or the *Demoniac*, speaking partly of himself, and partly at the

* A similar instance of reconcileable diversity occurs in the narrative of the two blind Men, recorded by St. Matthew (xx., 30), one of whom, Bartimeus, monopolizes the parallel histories in St. Mark (x., 46), and St. Luke (xviii., 35).

suggestion of the evil spirit, designates the "possession" by the name and character of the Roman Legion, which brought terror and desolation with it throughout the invaded country, and is, therefore, spoken of as the emblem or symbol of the devastating power of the Evil One.

During this conversation, the demon further takes occasion to beseech Jesus, that He would not command them to go out into the Deep; and, seeing a large herd of swine feeding hard by, he asked to be permitted to enter into them. This permission being granted, the demon-power took possession of the swine, and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. The blame of the destruction of property is, by the owners, laid upon Christ; and, loving their merchandise more than they loved Jesus, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.

In strong contrast to this request of the people, was the conduct of the healed Demoniac: who, feeling within himself the birth of a new life and the dawn of a new existence, now desires to be permitted to follow Christ, and to join his fortunes to those of his deliverer. But this desire of his heart is not granted; and, instead thereof, he is commanded: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." And, accordingly, he went through all Decapolis, publishing his own personal deliverance, thereby becoming a witness to Christ, known and read of all men; for those who had hitherto known him only as a dangerous Demoniac, now cannot help taking knowledge of him, seeing him "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind." So much for the story of the Demoniac, or the Demoniacs, of Gadara.

Another Miracle, of a similar character, is recorded concerning the healing of a Demoniac in the Synagogue of Capernaum. This is narrated by two Evangelists—St. Mark (i. 23—26), and St. Luke (iv. 33—36). Jesus had entered into the Synagogue, as was His custom, on the Sabbath-day; and was in the act of teaching the admiring congregation, who recognized in Him the person of one who taught them "as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes." The doctrine of Jesus is interrupted by an unclean spirit, which cried out in testimony of the nature and mission of Christ—"Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

This recognition of Christ by the demon is straight succeeded by the authoritative rebuke of Jesus, who bids the devil to come out of

the man. And, with all the accompanying horrors of expulsion, the demon, having rent and torn the man, came out of him. Thus, to the authority of word and doctrine, did Jesus add the further authority of work and miracle, so that the people recognize a connection between the doctrine and the deed, saying, "What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him."

These Miracles are illustrations of Divine power wielded over devils, and an executive lodged in the hands of Jesus—in the casting out of the indwelling power and person of Satan. The lessons derived therefrom are many, and all of them instructive:—

It would appear that demon-power and possession were a characteristic of those times. We read of no such bodily possession of men by Satan in the Old Testament Scriptures; nor do we read of such instances in modern times. It seems as though this palpable, and sensible, and almost visible power of Satan, was permitted at that particular time, in order that the two Great Antagonists might meet together face to face and hand to hand in this the great battle-field of strife and conflict; so that it might be proved on whose side was the pre-eminence. Once they dwelt together in the highest and holiest Heaven; then separated, by reason of the fallen archangel's foul rebellion; and now, after so long a time, they meet again upon the platform of this fallen world, on Satan's vantage ground, and within the human stronghold and citadel of man's heart. Jesus, the rightful King, and Satan, the usurping King, now wage their earthly warfare, and prove, by the result, that the power of Jesus is superior to the power of Hell.

We further learn that the demon or devil is distinct from the man possessed, and that the two are separable, the one from the other. And, also, that the power of Satan is a real power, and his kingdom an executive royalty, and his possession of man's heart veritable and true. That "the world is not as a chess-board, on which God is in fact playing both sides of the game, however some of the pieces may be black and some white; but, that the whole end of His government of the world is the subduing of this evil; that is, not abolishing it by main force, which were no true victory, but overcoming it by righteousness and truth."*

Accordingly, it is no solution of the difficulty to raise doubts and discussions as to the Author of Evil, and why God permits the power of Satan thus to run riot in the earth. The facts of the case

* Dean Trench on the Miracles.

are not altered by these discussions. Rather, accepting the facts, let us recognize the reality of Satan's dominion, the actual sovereignty he holds in the earth, and observe the lengthened hard-fought struggle on the part of Jesus, to win back the alienated affections of mankind; so that, when offered the kingdom of the world and the glory of them—and this by one who had them to bestow—He rather preferred to take them back unto Himself in time, by the willing vote of man's affection, than to receive them then by donation of the usurping monarch.

We also are here instructed that these Demoniacs were unwilling victims; as, indeed, is best of all indicated by the word "possessed." They were held in bondage, caught and caged, possessed by a power they would gladly forego, looking out of their prison-house, and, like affrighted birds, dashing their wings against the bars of their cage, sighing beneath their yoke of bondage, weary of their struggles to be free, and anxiously expecting the day of their deliverance, if such could ever dawn.

But the most remarkable of the lessons conveyed by these narratives is the insight we are permitted to gain as to the final destiny of devils, and the conscience and the faith which they display in anticipation of their coming woe. Here the demons lead us to understand how they anticipate their "time" and "torment," their "destiny," and "the deep," to which they shall be at last and eternally consigned. They readily recognize the presence of Christ, and hence their terrors and alarms—"the devils believe and tremble." They know there is a Future, and that that Future is terrible and hopeless—dark, deep, and dismal, and all-desolate of good. Therefore, are they desperate.

In these Miracles of Christ, we observe the demon-power usurping dominion, and in actual possession of the man. Yet, despite this advantage, the demon is subject to Christ, and trembles for his very existence, and in prospect of the coming "torment," which he fears is now about to be administered. In this respect, the devils know their Future, and fear it, and, believing, they tremble at the prospect. They thus far know the mind and purpose of the outraged King, whose laws they have defied, whose dominion they have usurped, and whose wrath and punishment they fear. Therefore, they cry and shriek forth their dread alarms—"Art Thou come hither to torment us *before the time*?"

There is a "time" appointed, in which Satan's power shall be vanquished, and his usurpation recompensed by eternal punishment. As the Apostle, St. Peter, writes—"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down into hell, and delivered them into chains

of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." (2 Pet. ii., 4.) And St. Jude—"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." (Ver. 6.) Now, the devils know this, believe this, anticipate this; but the times and seasons are hid from them; their knowledge reacheth not to this. In a dread uncertainty they dwell—their conscience conjuring up all sorts of terrors; and, at every manifestation of Jesus, their thoughts and fears at once revert to the Destiny that awaits them.

Therefore, albeit the Demons' name is Legion, their fears are quickened and awaked; and, though they be many, yet they quail before the Nazarene, and own His greater power. And their fears are accompanied by entreaties—"They besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the Deep." The mere English reader might possibly misunderstand this expression, and confound "the going out into the Deep" with the subsequent flight of swine and devils down a steep place into the sea. Not so. The true translation of the original imparts a deeper and more awfully solemn meaning to the words, "the Deep." The word used by the demons, as related by St. Luke, is, *τὴν ἀβύσσου* (*the abyss*), the same word as is translated "the bottomless pit" in Rev. ix., 2, *τὸ φρέαρ τῆς ἀβύσσου* (*the pit of the abyss*); and, in Rev. xx., 1, *τῆς ἀβύσσου* (*the abyss, or the bottomless*). This throws new light, and a more awful consequence, on the entreaty of the Legion. The devils, in fact, besought Christ that He would not at that time command them to be cast into the "bottomless pit," which they know is their ultimate fate and eternal destiny.

And, is not this a scene worthy the contemplation of angels and of men? See that cunning, crafty devil, supplicating his injured God and Judge for a prolonged time; humbling himself, and yet intent on further mischief; a very tyrant, and a very coward; ruling the Demoniac with a rod of iron, and yet crouching beneath the feet of Jesus! Is not this a marvellous illustration of the subserviency of devils? Once a rebel host in heaven, then routed in the fight, then hurled from the bright fields of bliss, then seeking vengeance against Jehovah, and finding full revenge in Adam's Fall, and ever since sustaining a perpetual rebellion in the earth; and yet they know their "time" is coming, the day of wrath and final judgment; and, knowing that their time is short, and that these are the last days, they put forth a desperate effort; and, in the wild delirium of hopeless loss and helpless ruin, they do all the mischief in their power, within their allotted "time," and before their appointed "destiny."

I have said there is no such bodily "possession" now. And yet all sicknesses and diseases are influences that come of Satan's dominion here—the sad inheritance of sin-stained flesh. Every sin of man is another coil of Satan's possession wound round and round the soul; every sin is a move in the wrong direction, rendering the final issue yet more fatal. The man impelled by lust, or captivated by ungodly pleasure, or spell-bound by strong drink—What is he, but "possessed" of Satan? Ofttimes he cannot resist; and, unless plucked as a brand from the burning by some hand that is stronger than his weakness, he must utterly perish.

Yes, Satan's power is very great, and his devices are many. He weakens him that is strong; he casts down him that is weak; he plants his hoof upon the neck of the downfallen; and utterly slays the spirit of the down-trodden. He has spoiled Heaven; he has ravaged Eden; he has robbed God of His people; he fills Hell with his everlasting prey, and is that lying, cursed evil spirit that goeth to and fro in the earth, cunning and crafty and cruel enough to deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect. That is, indeed, a most important prayer we are taught to offer in our plaintive Litany—"That it may please Thee to strengthen such as do stand, and to comfort and help the weak-hearted, and to raise up them that fall; and, finally, to beat down Satan under our feet!"

It has been said by some that there are only two Miracles of wrath found among the blessed deeds of Jesus upon Earth; and this—the destruction of the swine—is reckoned as one of them; the blighting of the fruitless fig-tree being counted as the other. All else are allowed to be blessed deeds of mercy, and miracles of love, and pity, and compassion. I scarcely think this Miracle can lawfully be reckoned as a Miracle of wrath: at the very utmost, it may be regarded as a commingling of wrath and mercy: for the *man* was delivered, though the *swine* were destroyed. There are, indeed, some who boldly question the propriety of this Miracle, as involving an interference with the rights of property, which (they say) ought always to be respected. But who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? "The Earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." (Psalm l., 10.) Whose property, then, were these swine? They were in the power of Jesus, to do with them as He—their rightful owner—should deem the best. And what saith the analogy of Nature? Who breathes with the blast of the winds upon the waters, causing such loss of property in a thousand shipwrecks strewn upon the wave? Who causeth the blight and the mildew to

fall upon the growing harvests, to the inestimable loss of property in the supply of food for man and beast? Why, then, quarrel with this same Jehovah when, in the exercise of like power, He causeth the loss of this herd of swine?

Indeed, we would go further than this—There was a propriety in this act of the destruction of the swine. It is well known that in Palestine swine were forbidden—living or dead—as a source of traffic, or as a supply of food. The Jewish law was stringent, even to jots and tittles; and this was plainly again and again forbidden. Now, either these swine belonged to Jews or to Gentiles. If to Jews, then the destruction of the herd was the judicial punishment of their offence against their law, by which “every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.” If they belonged to Gentile owners, then it must be proved that the laws of the Jews must not be mocked or tampered with by the stranger that is within their gates. Anyway, it was scarcely more than a permissive power: as our experience tells us every day that God, for His own wise purpose, permits many things to take their ordinary course; and, in this case, He would intend, perhaps, to show in the mere animal creation how awful, how dreadful, and how destructive, is the power and wrath of an indwelling demon. And, if the issue was so deadly in their case, what would it be, what must it be, when Satan lays hold upon the soul, not of the beast that perisheth, but of man that never dies? Alas, in this case, fearful panics seize the soul; and Satan pursues his victims down the incline of death—down the steep place of Hell—down to the pit of the bottomless—the dark ocean, without a bottom, and without a shore!

And the result of Satan’s supplication, and of his yet extended “time”—what is it? Why, this: that notwithstanding the Miracle, and the too palpable evidence of its real accomplishment, the fears of the people, and their selfishness, overcame their better feelings; and “they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.” Once, in the wilderness of Judea, the people mused in their hearts concerning John; and his testimony was—“There standeth one among you whom ye know not.” But here was One standing in their midst whom they *did* know, and whose Miracle they had witnessed; and yet they received Him not, but bade Him depart!

Here we observe (1) the evil characteristic of man, and (2) the evil device of Satan:—

1. *The Evil Characteristic of Man.*—The presence of wealth, the possession of many flocks and herds—though forbidden by God’s law—is preferred to the presence of Jesus. How like is this to the every-day conduct of men! We are content to bid Jesus depart, so

that we may comfortably retain our fondled sins, and continue to worship the idols of our hearts. We know and are conscious we cannot have both together—God and Mammon, Christ and Belial; and we take our option to the exclusion of Jesus, and to the prejudice of our own souls.

Now, it is a solemn and awful thing to bid Jesus to depart from our midst. Christ has been manifested in our sight; plainly set forth before us in the Miracles that He wrought, in the precepts He proclaimed, in the evidences of the faith which He established, and, above all, in the death with which He died. And yet, the world, almost to a man, bids Him to depart. They close the door of their hearts against Him; their farm and their merchandise steal away their affections from Him; and even the lawful engagements and occupations of life are allowed so to engross and absorb all our attention as to become a hindrance to the service of our God and Master. Some, through fear of giving their conscience too much light; others, through exasperation of spirit, because the Gospel of Jesus is a standing protest against their works and ways; some, through indolence and heedlessness, bid Him—Begone! Rather would they see that poor Demoniac under the rod and lash of Satan; rather would they promote their forbidden traffic, and cast a stumbling-block of temptation in the way of a too disobedient people; rather this, I say, than that Jesus should be with them, to release the poor rent and torn Demoniac from Satan's bondage, and, as much in mercy as in judgment, to remove the stumbling-block out of the way.

What a faithful representation is this of the world as it still is, and of ourselves individually! If Religion were an easy thing to embrace, and not a difficult thing to hold, it is possible we might be accounted religious; but, if Religion be a path of self-denial, or involve any, even the slightest, self-sacrifice, or demand the resignation of any fondled pleasure, or any selfish indulgence, at once the spirit rebels; and the carnal heart takes its choice, and bids Jesus to depart. Religion, walking in silver sandals, and treading in the path of the sunshine, is welcome to most men; but, when Religion bids you draw your sword, and be a soldier, yea, a hero, then a thousand and a thousand apologies and pretexts arise to view; and, like the cowards of Gideon's army, the majority of men retire to their homes again, and fight no battle, and bear no cross; and, therefore, they can wear no crown, can claim no victory, can celebrate no triumph. Ay, so soon as Religion deals with us as with men who ought to be in earnest, and touches home upon any cherished interest or idol, then we are offended, and walk no more with Jesus. Such was the

selfish, worldly wisdom of the Gergesenes in the day of Christ; and such is the conduct of most of us in the present day.

2. *The Evil Device of Satan.*—Here we can trace somewhat of the cunning craftiness of that Old Serpent. This was an attempt, and a successful attempt, too, to prejudice the popular mind against Jesus. Whether this might have been obviated or not, is not now the question; suffice it to say, that he goeth about till the time of the end. Use is here made of the very Miracle of Christ, as a ground of complaint against Him. It is as though Satan had designedly entreated Jesus to prolong his career and extend his allotted time, in order that he might mar the effect of the Miracle and bring about an adverse result. It is but another proof and evidence that Jesus has not yet taken the full reins of government into His own hands; and that another Lord holds dominion over us, as “the God of this world.” Yea, and so it is; and oftentimes does this usurper interpose his craft and subtlety to spoil the work of Divine grace, to destroy the seed of the word, and to trample down that which he cannot devour. Again and again does the Subtle Tempter reproduce his original temptation, by casting the apple of discord between God and man, and destroying the very work of Christ.

“Satan with all his arts assays;
His agents all their powers employ
To blast the blooming work of grace,
The heavenly offspring to destroy.”

From within and from without, he is busy; where we expect him, and where we expect him not; within our own hearts, whispering deceitful thoughts, words of blasphemy, suggestions of sin and of sinful deeds; within the house of God, intermingling among the sacred ordinances of religion, defiling the holy place with his unhallowed tread, and standing where he ought not, as the very abomination of desolation—within the consecrated precincts of the Church of God.

What an insight does this give us into the nature and character of Satan! He is not one but many—a whole Legion of Satanic influences; that mysterious being, who is one, and yet divisible; not so restrained to Hell but that he can take and hold possession of the Earth also, and go about the kingdoms of the world, as their spiritual Lord and god. As he is here presented to our view in the country of the Gergesenes, his character is a mixture of the courtier and the tyrant, the slave and the task-master, cringing meanness and haughty overbearing; crawling as the serpent, eating dust, and yet again roaring as a lion, or sipping at the wine-cup of Kings. Our great

danger is, that we know him not, and are not aware of his devices ; “for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” (2 Cor. xi. 14.) Sometimes as an angel of darkness, and sometimes clothed in sun-lit robes ; a specimen of alternate strength and weakness ; a sworn foe and yet a seeming friend ; and, in these diversities of character, he is reproduced in all his servants. This foul spirit takes us unawares, and doth compass the “possession” of our souls, and enters as an armed band, or Legion, into the temple of our body. “Oh, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”

It is an interesting study to follow the sequel of the Healing of the Demoniac. In strong contrast to the conduct of the people, who besought Jesus to depart out of their coasts, the once Demoniac “prayed Him that he might be with Him.” In the first flush of his enthusiasm, and in the now altered circumstances of his lot, he thought it well to attach himself to the person and ministry of his Benefactor, and, perhaps, to become a disciple or an apostle of Jesus. But no ; this is not his calling or vocation ; and “Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”

Is not this an illustration of the field of labour that is open to most Christian men ? All are not called to the public ministry of the word and sacraments ; and it needeth not that all be ministers, in order that each may have a work to do. This is a phase of Christian labour which is too likely to be overlooked—the influence of a Christian man among his own friends, and kinsfolk, and acquaintance. This intermingling of Christian testimony amid the engagements and relationships of life is that which really makes Christian men to be as “the salt of the earth”—that quiet, gentle, all-pervading influence that works its way unobtrusively, and without the more demonstrative ministrations of religion. Every man that is called to Christ, is called to some work in Christ’s cause. If he be not called to the exercise of public office, he is, at least, commissioned—“*Go to thy friends.*” Here is the home circle, near to each, not far from any—the scope and sphere for every man’s influence—the authorized Home-Mission of every Christian. If every man, out of whom Satan’s power has been expelled by the great Salvation, were thus to become the centre of his own home circle, leavening the mass, and influencing those over whom he may be supposed to have most influence—his friends, what a large, and blessed, and ever-extending work would be done for Christ ! It needeth not

we should go far out of our way to seek out a sphere of Christian employment; it is nigh unto us; at our very doors: "Go to thy friends!"

And what influence could possibly be more telling than that of this once Demoniac upon his own friends? His would be a personal testimony of "how great things the Lord had done for him." He, a living witness, and a very monument of Divine grace, now so different from what he once was. Who better adapted than he to speak the praise of the Saviour, or to tell to others the discovery he had made of the Great Physician, the great Ruler of all? And this man's home circle was not a small one; for, being obedient to the word of Jesus, "he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis (that is, a region of *ten cities*) how great things Jesus had done for him." Mark v. 20.

And what is our decision to-day? Shall we, like the people of Gadara bid Jesus to depart, so that we may still indulge in forbidden pleasures, and still cling to our fondled sins, and yet a little longer worship the idols of our heart, to the utter jeopardy of our souls? God forbid! Rather let us ask to follow Christ; and, if so commanded, withdraw ourselves into the inner circle of our friends, and proclaim the goodness of the Lord, having ourselves first tasted of its blessed experiences; and, by and by, He will call on us, and bid us come up higher; and, having done His work on Earth, and having borne testimony to Him below, He will gather us to His bosom, and present us to His Father—"Behold, I, and the children whom the Lord hath given Me!" And, after the Saviour, shall come the saved: and that once Demoniac, and many more like him, shall be found "sitting," not at the feet, but at the side of Jesus, set down upon His Throne of light; "clothed" in the white robes of immortality; and, "in their right mind," even the same mind as was in Christ Jesus.

THE LUNATIC CHILD.

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“And when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is lunatic, and sore vexed; for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.”—Matt. xvii., 14—16.

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In the preceding Lecture we entered upon a review of those Miracles of Christ in which He manifested His power over demons, to rebuke them, and to cast them out. We have not yet completed this review; for we are now to consider another instance of demon-possession—this time, in the case of the Lunatic child that was brought to Jesus. This was a more awful and desperate possession than that of either the Demoniacs of Gadara or the possessed in Capernaum. It was a case of demon-power of no ordinary kind, an influence affecting body and mind, soul and conscience; a possession, full, and strong, and overpowering; representing by the most awful and harrowing agonies what is the power of an indwelling devil and of an incarnate demon.

This Miracle is recorded by the same three Evangelists who recorded the former Miracles wrought upon the Demoniacs—St. Matthew (xvii., 14-21); St. Mark (ix., 14-29); and St. Luke (ix., 37-42). The narrative as given by St. Mark is, as usual, the most detailed of the three, containing the more minute circumstances of the scene, and thus representing a more complete picture of the whole transaction.

By all three Evangelists this Miracle is recorded as the immediate sequel to the Scene of the Transfiguration; and, by the strongly-marked contrast, it is rendered all the more dark and awful—the one, a manifestation of the splendour of the Divine Glory upon earth; the other a display of the awfulness of Satan’s dark dominion in the world.

The Transfiguration was designed to be a specimen-proof of the future glorious Kingdom of Christ. It was the fulfilment, within eight days, of the promise or prediction that had preceded it—

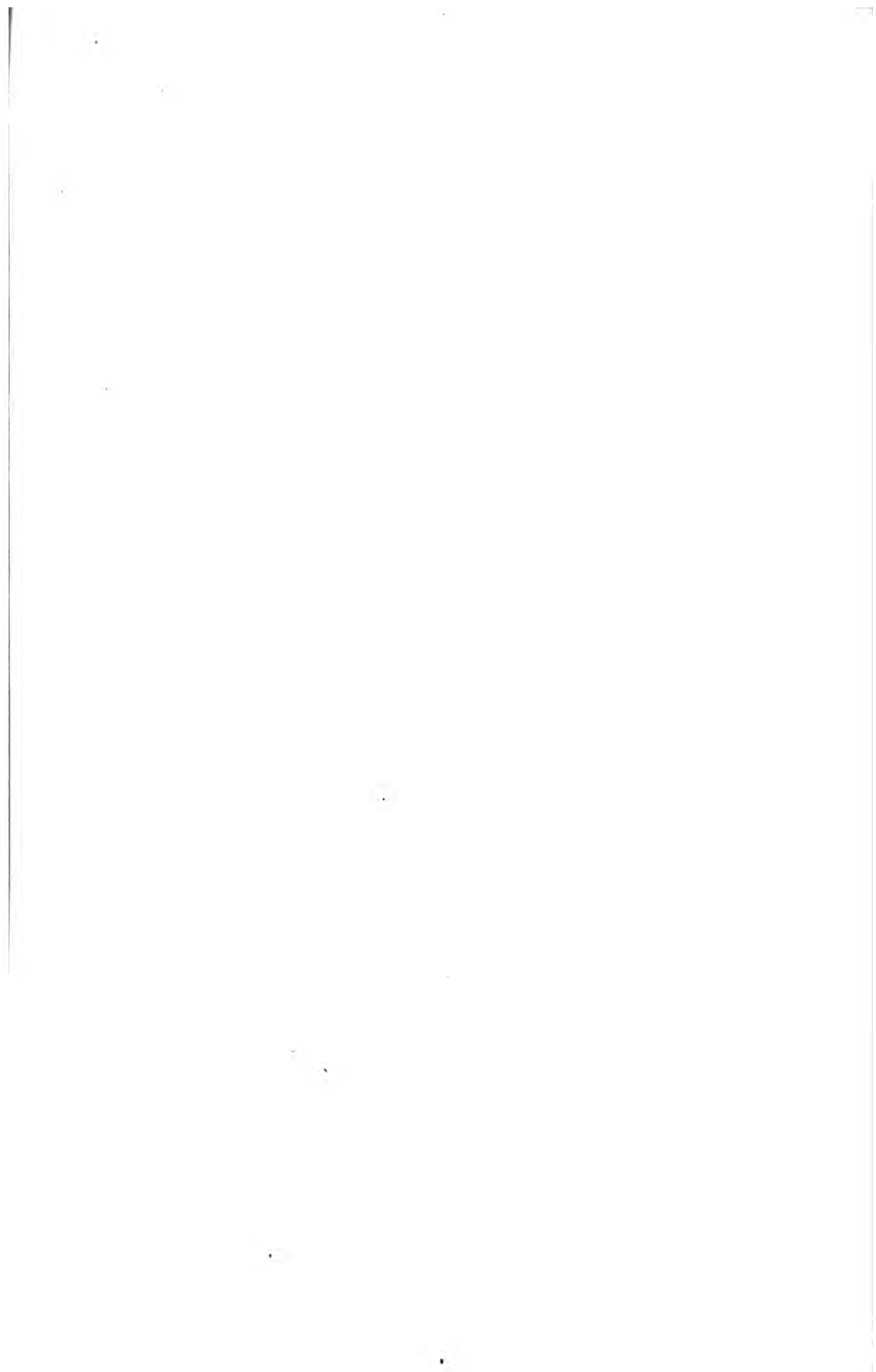
“ Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power.” (Mark ix. 1.) And accordingly, within the octave of the promise, “ Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them.” This scene of the Saviour’s glory was an earnest and specimen of the Kingdom that is yet to be, when Christ shall sit upon the Throne of His Glory. And therefore Moses and Elias are selected as the chosen companions of the Great King; both of these being representative men—Moses, the representative of the dead and buried Saints, who shall be raised again in the day of Christ’s coming; and Elias, the type and representative of that other class of men, those that are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord, and who have never seen death, but are “ translated ” into glory, and are (as Elijah was) by rapture caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Thus, then, was transacted the transient miniature of the glory that is yet to be revealed, when Christ, as Lord and Universal King, shall appear with all His saints, and with His ancients gloriously—saints and ancients, of whom Moses and Elias were the representatives. And, as the Miracles of Christ are the earnest and foreshadows of His Divine and Kingly power, so the Transfiguration (itself a great Miracle) was the foreshadow and first visible instalment of the glory of His Kingdom.

But by and by the glory is departing, the splendour of the scene is waning, the glorified companions are vanishing again into the unseen; and this great evidence having been manifested before chosen witnesses, Jesus and the three disciples again descend from the Mount of Vision; once more to mingle in earthly scenes, to do battle with terrestrial strifes, and to stand among a people that knew Him not; and (apart from the glory of His countenance) the Son of God once more becomes “ the despised and rejected of men.”

Upon their return from the Holy Mount, they find the disciples and a great multitude, and the Scribes questioning with them. It was a hard-reasoned argument, a hotly-contested conflict, in which the disciples were getting the worse, and the Scribes for once were on the high road to a triumphant issue. This questioning and strife of words arose out of the fact that a certain Lunatic child had been brought by its afflicted and affectionate father, that Jesus might heal him; and, not finding Jesus, the father next sought the aid of the disciples; and they tried to cast out the unclean spirit, but could not. It reminds one of the season of the absence of Moses from the camp, when he was with God upon the mountain-top; and the







he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind." Well does the Great Dreamer express the imminent danger that at this point throngs the path of the Pilgrim—

"Poor man! Where art thou now? Thy day is night.
 Good man! be not cast down; thou yet art right.
 The way to Heaven lies by the gates of Hell;
 Cheer up! hold out! with thee it shall be well!"

But mark the terms and conditions of this deliverance; observe the man's unbelief, his need of faith—"if *Thou canst do anything.*" But no, not this; it depends not so much on Christ's power, as on the father's faith—"if *thou canst believe.*" Here are the two "ifs." There is no lack of power in Christ, but there is lack of faith in the man. It needs a co-operation between the Divine Author and the human object. This casting out of sin has both a Divine and human aspect—God's power and man's faith. There must be something to correspond with, and to lay hold of, the great power of God, whereby man's faith is linked on to God's omnipotence, and becomes in part a joint-agent of the deed—a participator in the cure—a partaker of Omnipotence—"all things are possible to him that believeth." And even "this kind," this higher order of demon, must yield to faith when divinely planted in the human breast. This is the faith, the believing faith the man required—"If thou canst believe."

Now, trace the rising of his faith, and also the lowliness of his humility—"Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Here indeed is faith as the grain of mustard seed; it is small, but his prayer is—Lord, increase it, nourish it, tend it; it has been begun by Thee, let it be continued by Thy power, and at last consummated to Thy glory! It is small, but Thou canst make it great; it is weak, but Thou canst make it strong. "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Such faith as this is sure to grow and multiply; and it is not only humbly-existing faith, but also consciously-dependent faith, which, knowing its own inherent weakness, lays the matter in God's hand, saying as the apostles did upon another occasion, "Lord, increase our faith." And, when God is thus inquired of, He will not withhold the increase.

And through what a process is this deliverance from Satan's power brought about! What unwillingness, what reluctance, what resistance, ere the foul spirit is expelled! No human power can compass this; it needs the power of Christ, who is Himself "the great Power of God"—the glance of that Mighty One, the touch of the Omnipotent, the presence of the "Stronger than he," the authoritative word—"I charge thee, Come out of him, and enter no more into him."

This Lunatic child is, moreover, a representation of the world as it now is, possessed by Satan, lying in the arms of the Wicked One, led by him captive at his will. The Church cannot cast him out, or release the world from his dominion. Ministers and people, disciples and apostles, may do their best, and yet their ministrations have utterly failed to deliver the earth of such a curse of bondage, and thereat sinners gather fresh courage, and oftentimes confound the disciples of the Lord by arguments based on their failure to cast out Satan. And we ourselves stand amazed that the Gospel should be so powerless, and our message confirmed by so few signs following. Still, we preach and minister in holy things, and yet Satan holds his ground, and is not cast out; stills he rends and tears, and wrecks and ruins, the moral and physical fabric of the world—this demoniac, this lunatic world, stricken as it is with the stroke of sin, branded with the mark of Satan's ownership. Yes, his throne still stands erect; his authority still reigns supreme.

And so it shall be to the end. We have not faith enough; and therefore "this kind" goeth not forth. And Satan will thus hold possession, albeit the disciples are standing round about, doing their very utmost to cast him forth. And this shall so continue, till Christ Himself shall interpose; when He shall come again from His Transfiguration glory, and in the might and majesty of God. In that day Jesus shall descend from the height of Heaven's own Royalty, with full and final authority over Sin and Satan—that Wicked One, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His Coming." (2 Thess., ii., 8.) "Then cometh the end," when He shall cast that Old Serpent into the lake that burneth with fire, and he shall go out to deceive the nations no more. Of this time and promise does the Apostle speak—"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. xvi., 20.) "Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. xxii., 20.)

Who is this that lifts the dying,
Bids the darken'd eyes to see,
Demon power with might destroying,
Proofs of royal dignity?
'Tis the God that rules in Heaven,
Down to earth His sceptre brings;
To the Son of man is given
Sway of all created things.

Lord and King of all creation,
Come and take Thy righteous Throne.
For the full and free salvation,
For the conquests Thou hast won,
Work the great and mighty wonder,
Free our souls from Satan's thrall;
Break the sinner's bands asunder,
Be Thou King, and LORD OF ALL!

RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.

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"And all wept, and bewailed her. But He said—Weep not: she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying—Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway; and He commanded to give her meat."—Luke viii., 52—55.  
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WE now rise, in the gradation of Messiah's Miracles, to the consideration of a group of wondrous works, which must occupy three successive Lectures—the three occasions of Raising the Dead, by the quickening power of the God-Man. These constitute the climax of the miraculous power of Christ, showing a result beyond that of all other Miracles—the Restoration of departed Life. In other Miracles, Christ generally dealt with individual limbs, or members, or senses of the body; but in these, He dealt with the very Life itself, without which all the body and its members must be in a state of Death.

There is also a progressive power and an increasing character of Miracle to be traced in our review of the three Miracles in which the Dead were raised. The Daughter of Jairus was "just dead"—was, indeed, so trembling in the balance, as it were, between life and death, that Jesus said—"She is not dead, but sleepeth." This was the mildest and gentlest form of Death. The next Miracle presents a more decisive case—that of the Widow's Son, already being carried out to burial. And again, a more inveterate case—that of Lazarus, who was not only dead and buried, but also already decomposing. Thus did Jesus raise the dead from the couch, from the bier, and from the sepulchre. In each of these, in succession, we observe a greater Miracle than that which had preceded it; and in all three, we discern the power of Jesus over life and death—a power that belongeth only unto God.

And, as we trace the progression of Miracles, so also we are enabled to proceed to higher and more advanced doctrine and teaching with regard to our own spiritual state. We are all by nature dead—spiritually dead. Whatever may be the kind or

character of our spiritual death, and whatever the length of our own deceased condition, and whatever the depth of the grave of our spiritual burial—buried in iniquity—still, there is power with Christ to raise us to spiritual Life again. “He is able to save *to the uttermost.*” No dead soul, however long deceased, however deeply embedded in the grave of worldliness and sin, however corrupted and corrupting—no dead soul is beyond the power of Jesus to restore to spiritual life and health.

The narrative now under our consideration is recorded by three of the Evangelists—St. Matthew (ix., 18—26); St. Mark (v., 22—43); and St. Luke (viii., 41—56); and, as usual, it is by comparison and combination of the three that we gain the full and complete picture of the whole transaction.

All the three Evangelists agree in placing this Miracle next in order after the casting out of the Legion of devils from the Demoniacs of Gadara. After the performance of that Miracle, Jesus returned from the country of the Gergesenes, across the lake, and “came into His own City.” (Matt. ix., 1.) There were three cities of Palestine which might be called “His own City:” Bethlehem, as the place of His Birth; Nazareth, as the place of His education and bringing up; and Capernaum, as the place of the residence of Jesus during the chief part of His memorable Ministry. In this context, Capernaum is the city alluded to. Capernaum was, indeed, the most highly privileged of all three. Bethlehem was only the place of the Birth of Jesus; and very soon, the Babe was removed from His Birthplace to other cities. Nazareth was but the scene of His growing youth, and of His human subjection to His parents. But Capernaum was the scene of His Ministry and Miracles: there did He prove Himself to be a God; there He gave the earnest and the evidence of His glory and of His Kingdom. Capernaum, therefore, being the most highly privileged of the three, was rendered the most responsible; and a woe was pronounced against Capernaum, for her unbelief, such as was never pronounced against Bethlehem or Nazareth—“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell: for, if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.” (Matt. xi., 23, 24.)

In Capernaum, Jesus was well known; His power had been oftentimes tested; they had seen many of His mighty works, and were witnesses of some of His most remarkable Miracles. But, till now, there had occurred no instance of Raising the Dead to life again.

Nor does it appear that this ruler of the synagogue had any expectation that He either would or could raise the dead. For, on his appeal to Christ, he simply reports that his daughter was "at the point of death," or "was a-dying." There are two parts of this narrative: first, the father of the child comes to Jesus, while the child is yet alive, but at the point of death (see the account as given by St. Mark and St. Luke); then, the servants of the ruler come, hastening to deliver the message—"Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?" These two stages of the preliminary circumstances, which are kept distinct in the longer and more detailed narratives of St. Mark and St. Luke, are blended into one in the more brief account of St. Matthew, who, overlooking the succession of events, comes at once to the issue of the thing—"My daughter is even now dead."

Hence, the first appeal of the ruler is, "Come and lay Thy hands on her that she may be *healed*:" that is, while life still holds out, come and heal her. So that the ruler looked for no more at the hand of Jesus than that He would lift the child up from sickness, as He had done in many other cases already.

Following the more circumstantial account of the two later Evangelists, we observe how strong was the confidence of this ruler in the power of Jesus: for "he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly." It was a deeply anxious moment to the ruler—a case that would admit of no delay: at the best, the child was dying—at the point of death; and, humanly speaking, everything depended on speed and promptitude: a moment's delay, and "the point" may possibly be passed, and the ruler utterly and hopelessly bereaved.

But the ruler's faith is to be magnified in this incident. This, indeed, is the great object in view in most of the Miracles of Christ—the illustration of the might of the faith of faithful men. Now, Faith is not always thus instantly satisfied; is not always so promptly or so speedily answered; is not thus immediately triumphant in fighting the good fight. And this is the one great pre-eminent truth taught by many of these Miracles—how Faith must *prove* itself—prove itself by test and trial, and thus come forth, as it were, like pure gold, out of the fiery furnace and from the heated crucible—purified and proof, a model faith for the Church and for Christendom to behold and imitate.

Accordingly, when everything demands prompt and instant action, a delay occurs by the intervention of another Miracle: for, as the curious crowd is thronging round the person of Jesus, as He is now going to the ruler's house, a woman having an issue of blood, comes

behind Him in the throng, and secretly touches the hem of His garment. This act, though stealthily done, is known to Christ. His omniscience tells Him, and his omnipotence, too, for He not only knew that the woman had touched His garment, but also felt that virtue (*i.e.* power) had gone forth from Him to heal her. Thereupon a conversation ensues, in which the woman is discovered, her deed of faith is made known, and she is sent away rejoicing—"Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace." This is itself a Miracle, which has yet to occupy our attention, and to teach us its instructive lessons.

But all this time delay is caused; and the ruler's faith is being more and more sorely tried. His urgent necessity is postponed, in favour of a case not half so urgent; for this woman, whose disease had lasted twelve long years, might well have been allowed to wait a little longer, or at least until this pressing and immediate necessity had been disposed of. But no; his faith is to be tested, and this is the Master's method for proving it. Accordingly, the ruler still waits in anxiety of mind, in dread suspense, as to what may possibly be the result of the delay. And yet he murmurs not, nor does he seek to disturb the intervening Miracle, or to question the woman's right to receive of the Saviour's passing power. But all this time the issues of life and death are gathered into a moment of time; and all his hopes and fears revolve upon that single pivot—"the point of death." His must indeed have been the awful agony of suspense and weary waiting. His minutes would seem to be as hours of time; and hours would be as days for length; and Time, that runs so swiftly, oh, how he delays his onward course, and seems to halt so wearily on his way! Time, precious time, seems to be lost; and everything depending upon speed and instant promptitude!

How great is this trial of the ruler's faith! thus made to wait, and still obliged to linger at the door of the Great Physician; staying with the halting footsteps of Jesus; and, in the midst of his own crushing cares, becoming a witness of another's healing, although a case of need not half so urgent as his own. For twelve years had she suffered; surely, she could wait for another day; but his child was at the point of death. Yet true faith is thus made manifest; and true believing faith is that which "patiently waiteth upon the Lord."

And his faith is indeed tried to the utmost; for, in waiting, "the point of death" has been over-past, and all his fondest hopes are shattered to the dust. "While Jesus yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, certain which said, thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?" How little

did these messengers know of this Master, and of His purpose! How true is it that

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain!"

The message is a crushing one—a barb to the very core of his wounded spirit. Shall this anguish and bitterness of soul extinguish his faith? or shall these waterfloods utterly overwhelm him? Here, at that critical moment, when the ruler's faith is trembling, and seems as though it were well nigh being swallowed up of sorrow—mark the goodness and the gentleness of Jesus! Scarce an interval is allowed for any break-down of the ruler's confidence. The Author of his faith stands instantly beside him, and sustains His own gift, and immediately hastens to the rescue. "As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken (the sudden tidings of the maiden's death), He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe!"

A heavy laden dew-drop has trickled from the skies, and has fallen upon yonder fair and tender flower, and has bent and bowed its head, so that it seems as though it would crush it to the earth. A moment more a sunbeam sheds its genial ray upon the burdened flower, and a summer breeze has breathed upon it, and the dew-drop is dried up; and the flower lifts its head again, even refreshed by the moisture of the dew. If Faith has its trickling tears and sighs of sorrow, it has its sunshine, too.

"The tear down childhood's cheek that flows,
Is like the dew-drop on the rose;
When next the summer breeze comes by,
And waves the bush, the flower is dry!"

Heavy, indeed, was the blow dealt forth to the ruler's spirit by the abrupt message of the messengers; but, ere it falls with its full dead-weight, 'tis lightened by the word of Jesus—His hand stays the violence of the blow. And, just as "the darkest hour is that before the dawn," so, instantly, from out the darkened horizon of his hopes, which seem to have set in midnight, lo, the first streak of morning dawn appears; and the kindly reassuring voice of Jesus binds up the breaking heart ere it is rent asunder; pours the balm of comfort on the troubled soul; and supports the weak and wavering faith of the father of the child—Be not afraid now; only believe! and, strong in returning faith, he follows Jesus to the chamber of death, to the side of his dear dead one.

Having entered, they are encountered by the musicians and the noisy tumult of the crowd, who had already, according to the local custom, taken possession of the house. Jesus withdraws Himself from

the scoff and jeer of those that were making much ado, and who laughed Him to scorn when He said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." And now with His chosen three disciples, and with the father and the mother of the child, He enters the death-chamber; stands by the young maiden's side; takes her by the hand; speaks the word of power, the signal of her uprising—"Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise!" And, obedient to His word, the maid arose; and He commanded them to give her meat.

Such are the details of this first Miracle of Raising the Dead. And now for the sake of the circumstantial incidents of the narrative, and most of all for the great and comforting doctrinal truths to be gleaned therefrom, let us stand awhile, and again review the Miracle, in the light of its instructive lessons.

1. And first of all, and chiefest of all—The glory of the Presence of the Life-Giver: already we have had abundant evidence that Jesus could heal the body of its sicknesses and its diseases; that He could tread the waters of the deep; and that He could cast out devils by a word. But now a greater deed is done, a sublimer Miracle is wrought—He can give Life to the Dead! Each step of the Saviour's ministry intensifies the evidence of Messiah; lifts the Man nearer to the God; and renders His character more and more intelligible, His claims more and more indisputable.

Surely, here is the once Creator of all things, whose breath did give life to all living things; and now He is as able to quicken that dead body as when He first breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and made him to become a living soul. Here is presented to our view the Author and Giver of Life; yea, and more than this—the Conqueror of Death, who, out of the darkness of Death, and from the deep sleep of unconsciousness, by a word, a touch, the breathing of a breath, imparts Life again, and makes the dead to arise, and live a new life—a life renewed by a Resurrection power.

And this Life-giving might is the emblem of a yet greater power. The earthly Miracle points to a spiritual verity. We are dead—"dead in trespasses and sins;" there is no health in us, nor a spark of spiritual life. The living power has deceased within us, or departed from us. Tied and bound by the chain of sin and death, we cry out, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But the Life-Giver is here proclaimed. He that raised the daughter of Jairus from her bed of death, can raise up us also from death in sin, to the new life of righteousness.

2. The Character of this Death. I have already said that there

is here a progression of miraculous power; and this, in comparison with the subsequent Miracles of Raising the Dead, is the least of the three. This is the mildest and gentlest form of death—"Just dead." It is Death, so calm, so sweet, that Jesus, in no fear lest He should derogate from the greatness of the deed, yet declares—"She is *not dead*, but sleepeth." It was a peaceful exit of the soul; scarce yet escaped, but just escaping.

"She sleepeth:" there are times when Death is compared to a vessel full sail, gallantly riding the deep waves of mid ocean, by and by overtaken by storms, soon lashed by the warring winds, raked by the rending tempests, and going down a shattered shipwreck, torn piecemeal by the roaring tide—the angry waves wrathfully raging, and, not content with the mischief they have wrought, breaking in triumphant billows over the ruin they have made.

There are times, when Death is transacted amid agonies and pains; when there are bands in death; conscience agitated with a thousand storms that will not rest; Jordan troubled to its very depths; the wave of life "like a troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" when the pains of Hell get hold on men, and a horrible dread overwhelms them;—times, when after-life's long day is past, a drear and dismal sunset goes down in the angry threatening clouds of the darkening west, the earnest of a storm that shall never cease.

But such is not the character of Death now presented to our view. It is Death, calm and peaceful. The maiden *slept*—slept securely and serenely on her sleeping bed, unruffled as a summer's sea—as though her blood was still warm within her veins; her cheek yet tinged with the last lingering touch of the flush of health. Her heart had scarce ceased to beat. It seems to have been the transition moment, longer or shorter, in which Life merges into Death, and the tide ebbs out its last ripple. The imprisoned spirit, just escaping by the open door, is spreading its wing, to flee away, and be at rest—and yet not so escaped, but that it may be recalled and brought back again.

Death is oft compared to sleep: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," said Christ, when the disciples "thought He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep." But He spake of death, and then said unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead." When death is thus likened to sleep, it generally refers to the death of Saints; as it is narrated of Stephen, notwithstanding his painful and violent martyrdom, that "he fell asleep." Acts (vii., 60); and Paul speaks of departed Saints as "them that sleep in Jesus." But the sleep of Death does not always refer to the peaceful rest of God's brave heroes, and martyrs, and servants. It sometimes refers to the death of the ungodly;

thus the Apostle speaks of some of those disobedient Corinthians, who trifled with holy things, and suffered judicial punishments even to death—"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep," (*i. e.*, are dead). 1 Cor. xi., 30. The general interpretation, however, of the death-sleep is the slumber of the Saints of God; and it is a soothing, peaceful thought, that after all life's battles and strivings, there is a pillow on which the aching head may rest, a Father's bosom on which the aching heart may stay itself, and still its throbbings. Hence, we ought to call the burying-place, not by the name of a Necropolis (which means, *the city of the dead*), but by the better name of a Cemetery, (*Κοιμητήριον* which means, *a sleeping place*). This is the word now chiefly used in Christian lands to denote the place where our loved ones are laid in their still sleeping beds, till the morning of the Resurrection, when they that sleep in Jesus, "the dead in Christ, shall rise first."

This death-sleep of the damsel is, in its mild and gentle character, the emblem of that spiritual death, which most resembles life; not the harrowing violence of the spiritual death of the utterly wicked; but that death of the soul, which is mitigated and modified by external circumstances, the loves and amiabilities of life. Still, such an one as this is dead before God.

Here is a damsel, whose death is like to an innocent sleep. She is fair and lovely, but she is dead: "lifeless, but beautiful, she lay" on her peaceful couch, clothed with the fair white linen coverlet; the object of the love, and regard, and deep regrets of all that knew her.

This character of death, then, is the natural emblem of that spiritual state of death in sin that seems not as though it were death. It is the emblem of the sinner, not gross and carnal in his sin, not yet encompassed with deep corruption, nor yet buried beneath the soil of earthliness. And there are many such, whose apparently innocent sleep is DEATH. Yonder young man, so correct in all his conduct, no blot upon his fair fame, no "presumptuous sins" to provoke God's wrath, or challenge human justice; one who, without the self-righteousness of the Pharisee, *can* say—"I thank thee, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers"; for, really, he is none of these; and yet he is *dead*. He is clothed upon with a cloak of amiability and love, the fair exterior of outward propriety and respectability; so near to life, and yet *dead* for all that! This kind of spiritual death deceives; it is so like sweet sleep and soft repose, and yet it is Death, actual Death, and, but for Christ, the Life-Giver, it is Death irrevocable. Such an one has as much need of Christ as other men, who are more

deeply-fallen, more darkly-desolate of life; for he that is drowned in shallow waters is just as dead as he that has been drowned in the deep, deep seas. And if such dead souls are not raised by Christ, their death must be an eternal sleep, and their sleep an eternal death.

How often, and how painfully are we reminded of this sleep-like death of the soul, when we enter the house of mourning, and the chamber of death! Many a time have I known sorrowing survivors grasp at the merest shadows as props of hope and grounds of comfort, with reference to departed friends. Alas, alas! I have often gone away sorrowful and sad, to think that the most ordinary virtues, and the most common-place characteristics, should be thus loosely flung as a robe of righteousness around the memory of the dead. It may be a generous kindness, or the indulgence of a charitable hope, but such an estimate falls infinitely short of the true character of that Life that Jesus gives. Depend upon it, the amiabilities and amenities of life may all the time be but the outer tinsel of the soul that is dead in sin.

3. The conduct of the ungodly world: When Jesus intervenes to raise the dead from sin, how He is obstructed by the world; at first by scorn, and then increasing to a yet stronger resistance to the movings of His grace. In this house of mourning were the revels of the hired mourners, who with noise and tumult made this ado. And the comforting word of Jesus is received with the loud laughter of scorn by those who knew that she was dead.

This is indeed a true representation of the world outside. Rather would they revel among the dead in sin, piping and dancing the dance of death, than see their occupation gone, by the return of the dead to life again. Sinners would rather keep their sinful companions than lose them by that change of heart which takes no more pleasure in the ways of the wicked world. They would rather see you occupy a box in the theatre, than a pew in the church. And, if better things are reported of a once boon companion—that he is being influenced by religion, or turning his feet to the House of God, how the jeer goes round, and they laugh him to scorn! Where spiritual death is, there do sinners congregate; they throng the house of spiritual death in thousands. With noisy revellings, and boisterous mirth, they receive every attempt to restore life to the dead soul. And alas, how many are laughed out of their religion, and turned back, by the scoff of contempt, to rue the day (sooner or later) when they allowed themselves to “walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and to stand in the way of sinners, and to sit in the seat of the scornful.” (Ps. i. 1.)

“And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.” The world knows not the power of Christ, believes not in the giving of life to them that are spiritually dead. The world knows very well that the unconverted are dead, but the world believes not that these can yet be made alive. But Jesus knows, and has the power; and, therefore, He passes through this scornful crowd, intent upon His great design, heeding not their laughter, bound for the life-giving message He bears to yonder dead one.

4. The process of the Miracle: Jesus now proceeds to the doing of this great act of Raising the Dead; and the narrative puts us in possession of the steps of the process by which it was accomplished:—

“And He put them all out:” Yes, the scorners and the scoffers, the minstrels and the noisy multitude—He put them all out. Such mirth and revelry were altogether inconsistent with the quietude of this great act, and the evidence of the witnesses of the Miracle. The tumults of the outer world must needs be hushed to silence before the presence of the Great Physician in His visit to the soul, when He comes to raise spiritual death to spiritual Life. It is a transaction between God and man; and therefore apart from the giddy multitude, in the seclusion of the closet, or in the stillness of the chamber, the dead soul is raised to life; away from the unsympathizing strangerhood of strangers, for this is a joy that the stranger intermeddleth not with.

Accordingly, in that still moment in the quiet chamber of death, with those most dear to Christ—the three Disciples, and with those most dear to the dead one, Jesus stands, and takes her by the hand. That touch of the life-giving Jesus sends the pulses of life throughout her frame, and thrills in every member. That commanding voice trembles with the emotion of the great power that is stirring within Him. And, obedient to His word, and responsive to His touch, the maid arose; and, in a resurrection power, her soul comes into her again—resumes the tabernacle from which it had been but a brief moment absent; and, in renewed life, she lives again. She is then consigned, by Him that loves her best in Heaven, to those who love her best on Earth. And Christ has added on this further testimony to His Messiahship—“The dead are raised up.” (Matt. xi., 5.)

Every Conversion is a resurrection—the Raising of some dead soul to spiritual life, the passing from death to life. In all the dead ones raised to life by the Miracles of the Saviour’s ministry, and, chiefest of all, in His own Resurrection from the Dead, we read the type and emblem of our own spiritual resurrection from death in sin to the

life of righteousness: as saith the Apostle—"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. iii., 1.)

5. The Sequel of the Miracle: "And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway; and He commanded to give her meat." The extraordinary Miracle is at once followed by ordinary means. She arose from death, and lives again, and, therefore, must be fed. So we spiritually arise, and live; and we, too, must have spiritual sustenance. We are, accordingly, consigned to the means of grace, the spiritual supply, the bread of Heaven, the waters of life, the sincere milk of the word, and (when we are able to bear it) the "strong meat" of the Gospel. Even a Resurrection life has its wants and necessities. It is an evidence of the reality of the Miracle. Therefore, Lazarus, after his resurrection, is said to have been "one of them that sat at the table with Him;" and Christ Himself, after His own Resurrection, said to His disciples: "Children, have ye any meat?" And so, this revived maiden must have her necessary food: "And He commanded to give her meat."

So is it likewise in the renewed spiritual life of man. No life is healthy without its oft-recurring appetites; and no life can continue healthy unless those appetites be supplied with needful food. There is no food in death; no refreshment in the grave of sin; no strengthening required where all is dead. You have but to leave the dead body to itself, and it becomes its own food—breeds worms and foul corruption. And so is it with the dead soul. It has no spiritual appetites, and seeks and receives no spiritual food. It feeds upon itself, upon its own corruption—"it feedeth on ashes." And yet this is not all: it is not only that the heart, the soul, the conscience, of man is by nature dead—it is worse. It is not mere negative death, nor a state of passive non-existence; our state of nature in sin is precisely parallel to the morbid state of the dead body. The body that is physically dead is not only decaying, but it is itself defiling; it is not merely corrupted, but it is also corrupting all around it. It is spreading abroad a contagion and a pollution which are active; breeding corruption, disease, and death, in the circle of which it is the centre. Hence is it that of the nearest and the dearest amongst us we are called to say, and must say:—"Bury my dead out of my sight."

But, when the dead soul is raised to life again, it once more resumes its former functions, lives in God, and derives its every breath from God. And, for its spiritual nourishment, it requires spiritual food. Raised from death in sin, it now hungers and thirsts after righteousness, has spiritual appetites, and must be fed. Hence,

our good Father commits His living members to the ordinary and appointed means of grace,—the reading of the Word, the preaching of the Gospel, the communion of prayer, and, most of all, the communion of the Holy Ghost. Thus are His children fed with marrow and fatness, and a table is spread for them all through the wilderness. The living soul thus receives its daily bread; not carnal meat, nor earthly manna, but angels' food, the bread of Heaven; for "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

6. The evidence of a Future State and of the Resurrection of the body: "Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel." And one of the most manifest proofs of this is to be found in the Raising of the Dead by the power of Christ; and chiefly when He raised up Himself again from the dead. The question of old, "If a man die, shall he live again?" is here practically answered. Here, indeed, are proofs and evidences that, after the body has succumbed to the dominion of Death, there is yet the continued existence of the Soul; that it is not the reviving of the living power, but the bringing back of the vital being from its after state, once more to occupy its old house of clay. Yes, in Death the Soul dies not, but continues its existence in a Future State.

And, moreover, here is an earnest given of a Resurrection of the Body; that the body of man *can* live again; and this proof gathers strength as we advance into the subsequent Resurrection Miracles. Christ is here set forth, not only as the Life-giver, but also as the Life-restorer—the Author of Life, and of the Resurrection. With these I shall more fully deal in the next two Lectures, in the Raising of the Widow's Son, and in the Resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany.

RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON.

“And He came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother.”—St. Luke vii. 14, 15.

THIS Miracle constitutes the second step of the gradation of progressive power in the Miracles of Raising the Dead. It stands, as it were, midway between the preceding and the following Resurrection Miracles—a case more desperate than that of the Ruler's Daughter, and not so far gone, or so deeply committed to the bondage of death, as the case of Lazarus. It supplies one more evidence of the good hand of God in His manifested Son—an evidence, too, which was not lost upon the witnesses of the scene.

It is a curious fact that this Miracle is recorded by only one of the four Evangelists—St. Luke (vii. 11—17). It seems strange that this, one of the most wonderful of the works of Christ, should be thus singly recorded; yet, it is not half so remarkable as the fact that the still greater Miracle of the Raising of Lazarus is also recorded by but one of the Evangelists—St. John. Various theories are hazarded, in order to account for the omission of this Miracle by the other Evangelists; but none of them appear to be at all satisfactory; and it remains for us to accept the single narrative as it is given by one of the four, and to prize it all the more, seeing it has not been withheld altogether, and thankfully to learn its great lesson, for that the Spirit has not seen it fit utterly to remove its light and evidence from the Church of God.

It appears that this Miracle was wrought on the day after the Healing of the Centurion's Servant at Capernaum. Jesus, having wrought that deliverance, proceeds next day upon His onward

journey. He is accompanied not only by His chosen body of Disciples, but also by a mixed multitude, who, impelled by a feeling of curiosity, and by other motives, followed Jesus—"And many of His disciples went with Him, and much people."

Approaching to the gate of the city, lo, a dead man is being carried out to burial. It is a deeply affecting case, with two circumstances of emphatic melancholy: he was the "only son," and his mother was "a widow." The desolate and lonely estate of widowhood has ever been a subject of commiseration; and an "only son"—how fond the affection, how intense the love; and how bitter the bereavement, when one is thus bereaved! Such an occasion of grief has almost passed into a proverb, and is employed by the sacred writers to indicate the direst woe and the deepest affliction—"Make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation." (Jer. vi. 26.)

This scene of sorrow—a bereaved widow's sorrow, now doubly widowed—moves the compassion of Jesus, who instantly bids the mourner, "Weep not." This might, indeed, have been said by any of us, in the mere spirit of sympathy; but with Him, it signifies much more than this: for He gives her wherewithal to dry her tears. She wept for her son, her only son; bereaved of him, she *was* bereaved. The drying of her tears must be by the removal of her sorrow; and this can only be by the restoration of her son. And, accordingly, in the power of His Resurrection might, as Lord of Life and Death, Jesus came and touched the bier; and they that bare it stood still. And He spake the Life-giving word; and the young man arose, and began to speak. And Jesus restored him to the mother's arms, yet again to be the joy and the comfort of her widowhood.

So far for the mere narrative. I would simply mention one or two thoughts as to the circumstantials of the scene: 1. It is worthy of observation that the burials among the Jews were extra-mural. This funeral procession was coming *out* of the city. The sanitary laws of the Jews were very strict, and also very admirably devised. Much of the legal code of Moses and Leviticus might well be copied by those who are responsible for the health of the people. In this respect, we observe that the Dead were removed from the immediate vicinity of towns, and not blended among the Living. It is, perhaps, only among Christian nations that the custom has prevailed of burying the dead in churches and churchyards, and amid the vast multitudes of the busy moving crowd of life. I should be far from admitting that this was (as some say) the result of superstition. Rather should I attribute it to the Christian feeling of the oneness

of the Christian family, whose members are never separated, no, not even by death. It was this feeling, I should think, that led the earlier and later Christians to associate the worship of the living, and the memory of the dead round about the sanctuary of God. There do these families still meet—living and dead—and this the outward emblem that they are one in Christ, and still gathered into one place. In the earlier ages of Christianity, reasons arising out of the persecutions of the Church would operate in the same direction. When the catacombs were of necessity the shelter and refuge of the members of the body of Christ, it was important that the bodies of the dead should be protected, as well as the lives of the living; and, accordingly, where they worshipped, there they died, and there also they were buried. A pious horror of the desecration of the dead, and the hope of the future Resurrection, conspired to induce the early Church to keep the dead bodies of Christians near to the sanctuary. 2. I would also remark upon the *plaintive* character of the scene, and all its surroundings. The circumstances were altogether such as would be likely to attract the notice of the Saviour: the widow, the only son, the tears of bitter sorrow, and the evidence that this family was held in high respect, from the fact that “much people of the city was with her”—all these circumstances combined to increase the plaintive interest of the transaction, and the sequel, certainly, was worthy of the deed which had been done.

The effect of the scene and Miracle upon the curious multitude—the “much people,” was great and instantaneous: “And there came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us. And, that God hath visited His people.” The fame of this mighty work further extended to the disciples of John the Baptist, and called forth their anxious inquiries respecting the evidence of Messiah. The Miracles of Christ were, indeed, great demonstrative teachers in the Church, and so they continue still to be.

And in this Miracle we behold not merely a wonderful work, but we may learn in it an instructive moral, and deep spiritual teaching: (1.) The manifestation of Christ; (2.) The character of the death here described—the great moral of the Miracle; (3.) The witnesses of the occurrence; and (4.) The consequences.

1. The Manifestation of Christ. He is presented to our view as a compassionate sympathizing Friend, grieved to behold these sorrows and woes of humanity. Here is the world, His own world, utterly brought under the dominion of Death. Man, once rejoicing in perpetual life, now by sin and disobedience has for-

feited his high privilege, and, daily forming funeral processions to the grave, gives evidence of the reality of the curse—"and death by sin." Here, the compassionate Friend feels for the widow's sorrow, sympathizes with her grief, and kindly bids her "Weep not." And this same Jesus is *your* compassionate Friend, your true Brother; and, whatever be your woe and wretchedness, He is the All-sufficient One.

But, more than this: not only is Christ a compassionate Friend, He is also a *powerful* Friend, able to deliver, and strong to save. He is powerful in word and in work. Any sympathetic friend could say "Weep not"; but it is only that Friend, whose power is equal to His sympathy, and whose might is from Heaven, who can effectually staunch the fountain of tears. And in Christ we find, not words only, but also deeds, of good; not only kind wishes, generous sympathies, and fervent breathings of the soul, yearning over another's sorrow—but, also power to remedy the wrong, to revoke the curse, to stay the progress of death, and the onward march of this corruption to the grave. He can turn the mourners back by a way they knew not; and He alone can "appoint unto them that mourn, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

And yet again, Christ is manifested here, as in the former Miracle, as the Life-giver; the Spoiler of the grave, already open to receive its prey, and deep dug to hide its victim, and keep him safely for the future judgment or for the Resurrection morn. And this was a greater instance and test of His Godlike power, being over one whose death was so far a certainty as that he was being carried out for burial. It was not as the Daughter of Jairus—just dead; the spirit scarce escaped, when it is instantly recalled; as, when a taper is extinguished, it is easier to light it that moment than when it has grown cold again. But here was one whose spirit had departed far, and had already winged its flight to its everlasting home; the spiritual emigrant having already arrived at the shore of the spirit-land, and even now settling down in his final abode. And now, by the power of Him who hath all power in heaven and on earth, that spirit is recalled, resumes the tabernacle of the body, again to quicken that pulse, and to send forward the life-blood, and restore all the functions of the body. This manifestation of Christ as the Life-giver is another miraculous evidence as to whence He came; another seal to His heaven-sent ministry; another warrant of his Divine Authority; yet one more proof that Jesus of Nazareth was Very God of Very God.

2. The Character of the Death here described, and the great Moral

of the Miracle: I have already shown how far gone in death was this young man. And this was permitted, so as to magnify the great power of Jesus as the Author and Giver of Life. The spiritual import of the Miracle is therefore most instructive. It is an illustration of the man that is dead in sin, far gone in spiritual death—so far, that the spiritual life has long since departed, and the dead soul is about to be consigned to the only living inhabitants of the grave—the gnawing worms, and to the darkness, the loneliness, and the corruption that dwell beneath the soil of death, where light and joy and peace never come, till Christ Himself doth come to make all things new.

There are many sinners of this dark, degraded type, from whom the spirit of life hath utterly fled; dead in sin, yea, “twice dead, plucked up by the roots.” Already are these dead ones noisome and pestilential to their friends; so that it would be well if we would say, “Bury these dead out of my sight.” There are sinners, round about whom all the associations of spiritual death have gathered—fit for nothing, but to breed corruption and spread an evil contamination all around. And not only are these dead in sin, but they are also well nigh buried in sin, beneath the soil of earthliness which is open to receive them, and soon about to close upon its prey.

Our state by nature, then, is simply a state of death. I know there are some who would laud human nature, who would speak of its amiability, its humanity, its charity, and all its noble qualities and proportions; who would speak of it as some verdant field, requiring but the accidental circumstances of clime or temperament to produce an almost spontaneous growth of every good word and work. I admit that there are still existing in man's constitution some noble proportions; but these rather indicate what he once was, and at the same time they tell the terrible tale of what a ruin he has become. Man is a ruin; he has lost his completeness; he has lost his integrity in which he was first created. You have, perchance, at times beheld some majestic ruin; you have admired, no doubt, its ivy-clad walls, which have been half crumbled away by the ravages of time; you have looked sentimentally upon its dismantled towers or upon its dilapidated doorway. But, if you analyze your feelings aright, do you not view that scene more in pity than in admiration? You have a feeling of the sentimental, and melancholy instinctively creeps over you, because in that scene you trace the remnant of what once was; you infer its primeval grandeur and its strength from those pillars that now lie in ruins around you; you measure its original magnificence by that which is left of the stately structure. It may look venerable; it may add one more romantic

object to the view; but, after all, what is it? It is a ruin! What is there in that broken-down fence to admire? What is there in that decayed embrasure, or in that roofless tower? Are not these things all signs of destruction at work, the surest emblems of a tendency to further decay? What glory do you see in that creeping ivy? At best it is but a covering to hide the nakedness, the defects, and the deformities of the building. And even so is human nature. It is now a ruin of its former self; and, with at best a melancholy sadness, we view that present wreck of a once stately structure. As I said before, it has lost its completeness—man has lost his integrity; he lacks the essential parts that constitute true strength; what remains may give indications of former strength, but they are the proofs of present unprofitableness, the shadows of former glory perhaps still lingering around the scene; but those very shadows prove that the glory has departed.

“ I feel like one
Who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted;
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed.”

And, as we move amid this scene of desolation, amid the evidences of spiritual death, 'tis well if Christ be there to give new life. If all be dead, and “all but *He* departed,” there is yet hope—yea, the fulness of hope—that all will yet be well. But there is no manner of use in lauding human nature; no use in laying a flattering unction to our souls, or whispering, “Peace, peace, where there is no peace.” The truth is, that the hand of the destroyer has been at work; that hand has been put forth, and has sadly spoiled man's first estate, and now the hand of the Renovator and of the Restorer is needed.

It is thus the Holy Spirit finds man by nature “dead in trespasses and sins.” Experience bears out the testimony of Scripture, and proves that man is dead. Our own hearts and consciences confirm the testimony, and prove that we are dead. The curse that was pronounced upon Adam was, “Dying, thou shalt die;” and he died the death, and the flame of Divine power that had been kindled in him utterly expired. And now the heart of man must be kindled once more by a live coal from off the heavenly altar, by Him who is the Author of life and of light. The lost glory must be restored; and from the grave and gate of death man must be raised by the life-giving efficacy of the Spirit. “And you,” saith the apostle, “you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” It was thus that the father of the returning prodigal rejoiced, on account of the contrast that existed between the state of death in

which his son once lay, and the state of life at which he had, through grace, arrived; "For this my son was dead, and is alive again." Hence, too, the Apostle commands us—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v. 14.)

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth"—that is, it is the Spirit that giveth life to the dead. It is the glorious province of the Spirit to breathe into the spiritually dead man the breath of life, and thereby to make him a living soul. Now, observe what this involves. It implies that man is already dead; and so he is, spiritually, morally, legally, actually dead. This is the Apostle's verdict of man—"In Adam all die;" and this is an experimental fact—a fact that is proved by our every day's life and experience. There is not a pain we suffer, not a trouble we are heir to, not a sickness that falls to our lot, not a single death that is gazetted, not a passing funeral by the wayside, but approves the truth of the Apostle's verdict, that "in Adam all die." But Adam once was a living soul; he once dwelt in the brightness of the presence of his God; he once held intimate converse with his Maker, who, in the cool of the evening, would come down and walk and talk with His creature, man. Our first parent was, as such, the companion and friend of Jehovah. He lived—that was the sum and substance of his happiness. He lived, undisturbed by sin, undismayed by care, undeterred by danger: for sin and care and danger existed not; they are the fruits of sin, and as yet sin had not entered. There was nothing then, to mar the felicity of the life which he led. His life was hid in God. There was no sickness to shorten his days, there was no death as a penalty to cut off the years of his life. He lived, simply because the Spirit breathed into him the breath of life, and the life-giving Spirit sustained that life within him. But in an evil hour he was tempted; but that was not his sin. Temptation is not necessarily sin; the sin is in yielding to temptation; and even so our first parent was drawn away of his own lust, and he yielded; and that lust conceived and brought forth sin; and that sin, when it was finished, brought forth death. And thus it is that "in Adam all die;" and human nature has become nothing but defilement, darkness, and moral and spiritual death.

Thus it is that our state is described in Scripture as a state of activity in death; the fallen heart working out a process of constant, continuous corruption, doing evil, exercising itself in sin—like the prodigal, putting itself to a deal of trouble to make itself unhappy—spreading contagion to others, swelling out the tide of iniquity, and helping forward the devouring scourge of sin and death. By this

our evil nature is perpetuated; evil habits are imitated, evil examples are copied; iniquity abounds; our companionships of evil are unprofitable and very dangerous; and it is rendered quite true in our experience that "evil communications corrupt good manners." The whole family of man, by the active process of death and defilement, is rendered one vast community of wretchedness and woe—becomes a plain of death and a field of blood.

Into this spiritual Aceldama it was that the Spirit brought the prophet in a vision—even into the valley of dry bones; and, as the prophet and the prophet's Master looked round upon that valley, "Behold the bones were very many, and they were very dry." So much so, that the Spirit asks the prophet, "Can these bones live?" So sceptical is the prophet as to the possibility of the resuscitation of that great mass of death, he knows not how to answer the question of Omnipotence, but appeals to the Omniscient One Himself, and says, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." Then comes the Spirit's operation. He says, "I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." Then the prophet prophesies: he prophesies "to the wind," or to the Spirit, and there is a noise, and a movement, and a shaking, and they come together, bone to his bone; and sinews and flesh come upon them; and skin covers them. But still the work is not completed; there is as yet "no breath in them." It matters not what they be; until the breath is in them they are nothing better than dull statues, with their parts complete, but no heart to feel, or pulse to throb. Then comes the finishing stroke: the Spirit commands the prophet—"Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." And the Spirit that never refuses to come to him that asks—the Spirit breathed upon them, "and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." (Ezek. xxxvii. 1—10.)

Sinner, your state is just this: your sins are gathering round you, are laying hold of you, and they will slay you; and soon will you be buried beneath the ruins. Already are you being carried out to burial. Sin has slain you; and sinners form the funeral procession to bury you. The company of sinners will only make you to be more and more dead in sin, and more and more deeply buried in corruption. Every sin is a move in the wrong direction, and every day spent in sin is but another day's march nearer to the tomb, the very sight which Jesus saw—"a dead man carried out." Oh, that Jesus, the Great Power of God, would pass by that way, and draw near to thee, and interrupt thine onward journey, and bid

thee rise, and thus enable thee to say, as a rescued man, "O grave, where is thy victory?"

3. The Witnesses of the Miracle: The Evangelist records that "many of His disciples went with Him, and much people." The following of Christ was composed of two classes of men—the "Disciples," and the "much people." Many came to admire, to wonder, to seek and to obtain relief. There were but a few who did abide and tarry with Him, or live and die for Him. Mixed motives brought the multitude; mixed motives kept them there; the same insufficient motives dissolved the intimacy. There was much selfishness, and but little self-denial.

And this continues to the present day. There are still two distinct classes among the followers of Christ—true "Disciples" of the Lord, and "much people" besides. There are those who follow the Lord fully, and those, whose attachment to the cause of Christ is only in profession. It may be well to distinguish between these two classes by their respective marks and evidences—

The "Disciples" exercised self-denial. At the call of Jesus, they left all, and followed Him. It cost them something, some sacrifice, the surrender of some fondled treasure, to be Christians. And, having embraced the cause of their Master, they manifest a uniform and regular attendance upon His Ministry. Their attachment was not fitful or occasional, but constant. They devoted themselves to His service; they were ever with Him. They felt lonely when He withdrew Himself from them. They were His chosen and constant companions—in His prayers, and discourses, and Miracles; in His way-side walks; by sea and land, on the mountain, and in the level plain. They were the fond pupils under the good Master's instruction, scholars in the school of Christ. They showed no desire to return to their former callings, but were abundantly satisfied to abide with Jesus. They evidenced faith in His doctrine, love to His Person, obedience to His commands, and hope in His promises.

Not so the "much people," the promiscuous crowd. They were actuated by different motives, were influenced by other reasons, were drawn together not by the superior motives, but by inferior inducements—personal, selfish, and interested. They manifested no self-denial, had left nothing, had made sacrifice of nothing. Many of them came hungry, to get food to eat; many came as to a skilful physician, without the exercise of any faith; many through carnal curiosity; many followed with the crowd; and not a few to carp, and criticise, and entangle Him in His talk, but only to fall victims to their own rash daring. There was, indeed, a wide difference between the "Disciples" and the "much people," between the

compact body of the few but faithful followers, and the loose and incoherent constituency of the crowd.

This latter class, besides, showed no uniform or steady adhesion or attachment. According to circumstances, they did come or go, they did hear and forget, they did see and not perceive. Their attendance was once in a way, but there was no devotedness. They thought they could at any time unite or dissolve their association with Jesus. There was no sacrifice of erroneous principle, religion, worship, or convenience. The mixed multitude is not to be depended on. The popular applause that would one day make Him a King is soon changed into popular indignation, crying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

The "much people" evidenced no exercise of faith, or hope, or love. They had no faith in His doctrine: else, why did they not believe in Him? They had no love to His person: else, why were they so fickle? They had no hope of His promises: else, why did they not cast in their lot with Him? There was no real or abiding *principle* of attachment. Circumstances brought them together; and circumstances disbanded them.

But both of these classes of followers were witnesses of the Miracle, just as even now all are partakers of the privileges of the Gospel; and the two classes still exist in the professing Church; but it is only they that are "Disciples" who receive the Gospel savingly. To some, the Word is the savour of life unto life; while, to others, it is the savour of death unto death. The evidence of Christ, the proofs of His ministry, the manifestations of His power, are still clearly set before men; but it is only the true Disciples of the Lord who appreciate these, and profit thereby. Are you among the resurrected souls? or among those that are dead in sin, and being carried out to be buried under sin? Are you among the little group of loving and loved Disciples? or are you found amid the promiscuous throng of the "much people?"

4. The Sequel of the Miracle: The people feared greatly on beholding this great deed of power; and they gave glory to God; and owned that Jesus must, indeed, be the predicted Prophet, and that God Himself had visited His people. How near were they to the knowledge of the truth, and yet how far from embracing it! These Miracles of Christ were proofs, owned and acknowledged of men. They brought to mind, and memory, and conscience, the words that prophets spake, and showed forth the signs and tokens of a Present God. Here were the dawnings of the day of Messiah's Kingdom; glimpses of the great fact that, after all, the Nazarene was true.

And the effect of this Miracle extended far ; through all Judea, and all the region round about. This marvel is trumpeted forth by every tongue ; and every voice is heard to celebrate the glories of the Man who giveth life to the dead. Truly " God hath visited His people." The tidings are also conveyed to the Baptist by certain of His disciples, who had witnessed or heard of this Miracle of the Lord. A message is then sent from John to Jesus (for the satisfaction of the doubts, perhaps, of the disciples of the Baptist) to ask Him the great question of all, the answer to which is to decide their minds, and declare His claims. And the Saviour answers them not in words, but in works ; and, pointing to the many cures which He had just then wrought, the signs and tokens of Messiah's power, the evidences of His ministry, the credentials of His mission, and the predicted glories of Emmanuel, He bids them go and tell John how it is that the deeds of the Gospel are the fulfilment of the words of the prophets ; and that, therefore, He is the very Christ which was to come into the world. " The dead are raised up."

" How can these things be ? "

" It is the Spirit that quickeneth." And this is the spiritual Resurrection of the dead in sin.

The Spirit has no prescribed and uniform process of action. He comes when He will ; He comes to whom He will ; He comes in whatsoever manner He will. " There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." To some His influences come suddenly, as to the persecuting Saul of Tarsus ; to others, the Spirit makes His access and approach by the slow and progressive steps of deep conviction, on to conversion. Sometimes the influence of the awakening, reviving, and quickening Spirit pervades a whole district, and characterizes a vast population. Sometimes His goings are in the sanctuary within, and sometimes His sound is heard on the tops of the mulberry trees without. But when that Living Spirit of God has once acted on the dead spirit of man, oh, what a change ! what mercy, and peace, and love, are multiplied !

This new birth, this new creation, this turning point from darkness to light, from enmity to love—this is once more to impress upon man's soul the long-lost image of the incorruptible God ; this is to restore man from his downfall in sin ; this is to repair the ancient ruin, and the waste places thereof. " Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." God has by His Spirit laid again the foundations that had been destroyed, and has builded

thereupon, in the renewed man, the sacred edifice of a holy faith which had been overturned. This, again, is Conversion.

You may, however, possibly ask, what interest you have in this great work. I answer—Much, and in every way. In a spirit of unbelief, you may perhaps reason with yourself—If the Spirit is so indispensable, if I cannot enter the Kingdom of God, unless the Spirit has caused that great awakening and revival to take place in my soul, I may well ask, Who is sufficient for these things? I answer—There is no sufficiency in yourself; all your sufficiency is of God. The power of the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit are to be sought for by prayer and supplication. God will answer, yea, will abundantly answer; He has pledged Himself to thee, for “He giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.” You may argue that you are too sinful, too polluted to come to Him; but come just as you are. You may say—How can a sinner such as I am, dead in trespasses and sins, how can I ask such a favour? Away with such doubting fears! Think you, is any child too hungry to ask for bread? Is it not its very hunger that drives it to its parent, to ask for sustenance, and it gets it? Is any man too sick to send for the physician? Is it not the extremity of his malady that causes him to send for the physician, and he comes and heals him? Is any man too poor to ask for aid? Is it not his poverty and deep destitution that drive him to your door, and he obtains relief? What, then, is the argument that Christ Himself employs? “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” If you cannot come pure, then come impure; if you cannot come whole, then come sick; if you cannot come believing, then come in unbelief; if you cannot come as you would wish, then come as you are.

“Oh! linger not: 'tis ask, and have;
No hard conditions these.
Thy sins are many: pardon crave,
And soon thou shalt have peace.”

And that peace is “the peace of God,” a peace “that passeth all understanding;” and that peace will “keep your heart and mind in the knowledge and in the love of God.”

RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS.

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“And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”—John xi. 43, 44.

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THIS is a massive subject—a Miracle of grand proportions, the Raising of Lazarus from the Dead. It is the greatest Miracle of the Son of Man, save and except His own Resurrection. It is also one of the final Miracles of the Ministry of Jesus, and, as such, it comes in most appropriately to cap the climax of them all. It is a worthy successor to the preceding Resurrections, and is a worthy prelude to His own Resurrection. It is an emblem, too, of the spiritual resurrection of the dead soul, long buried beneath corruption; and is also an earnest and assurance of the Resurrection of the body, which shall one day take place at the command and call of this same Jesus, who is “the Resurrection and the Life.”

The Miracle is recorded in the single narrative of St. John. Speculation has been busy in endeavouring to account for the omission of such a Miracle by the other Evangelists. It seems strange that this choice deed of Christ should have been passed over by the three earlier writers, and should have appeared as though it were some fragment overlooked and forgotten, then at length rescued from oblivion by that Gospel which was written last of all, and toward the end of the first century of the Church's history. There are some who say that, Lazarus being still alive when the earlier Evangelists wrote their Gospels, the allusion to the Miracle would have tended to provoke the spirit of persecution against him—a strong tendency to which appears in the sequel of the Miracle, for “the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death.” (John xii. 10.) Others, again, say that St. John wrote specially for the Gentile world; that, therefore, this Miracle is recorded for the information of those who otherwise would never have known of it;

and that, seeing it was well known in Judea, the other Evangelists omitted to record it.

I need only to mention these reasons, to show how poor and unsatisfactory they are. Surely, if Lazarus had been exposed to persecution, he would have had grace enough to endure the hard lot of his brother Christians. He had surely learned more, in his experience of Christ, than to shrink from a brave protest in defence of that Master's cause. And he, of all other men, ought not to aim at being above the lot and condition of the good Friend who had raised him from the dead. And, that the other three Evangelists did not record this Miracle because it was so well and widely known, is much the same as to say that they wrote for their own age only, and for their own clime—whereas, we know that all these things were written for all times, and ages, and peoples of the world.

It is better to offer no reason at all than to hazard a weak one; and more particularly when no reason is required. It is only man's vain and curious conceits, and love of speculation, that could possibly demand an explanation where no real difficulty exists. The simple fact is this: The Miracle is *not* recorded by the other three Evangelists; it *is* recorded by St. John. The Holy Spirit that indited these records is alone the constituted judge of the reasons for supplying this narrative, or withholding that. The Spirit has allowed the testimony of this Miracle to hang by a single thread, perhaps to show how such single testimony is able to support the greatest of the narratives of the deeds of Jesus. Any way, the testimony of the beloved Disciple is true; and that is sufficient. (John xxi. 24.)

The Miracle, indeed, seems to contain within itself an apparent reason for the singleness of the narrative. It is a Miracle that needs but a single touch to complete it. There are some of the Miracles of Christ that must be builded together out of the varied and diversified materials supplied by the different narrators; the respective accounts must be compared and combined; and thus the whole scene is compiled and compacted—one Evangelist supplying some phase or feature which has been omitted by another. Thus, the diligent student gathers all the accounts together, and, in a kind of double view, as in a stereoscope, the scene stands forth in all its aspects, and in full relief. But this Miracle is completed by one hand and at one stroke. It is poured direct into one mould, and comes forth perfectly finished and complete, one of the noblest masterpieces of Gospel story. It is here described so minutely, so circumstantially, at such great length, and so particularly, as to leave us nothing to regret in that it has passed through the hand of a single Evangelist.

We would now review the whole train of the circumstances of the occasion. Bethany is the scene of the Miracle. This town has been immortalized by the loving family that dwelt there, and by the kind solicitude of the Saviour in their behalf. It was distant about two miles from Jerusalem. Many a time was it the chosen resort of Jesus, when, after the cares and toils and dangers of His ministry in Jerusalem, He retired at eventide to the quiet and repose of this suburban retreat, and to the companionship of the Christian family of Bethany. This family had received a large share of the human love and of the divine affection of Jesus, who had oftentimes been entertained beneath their roof. They were three in number—Lazarus, and his sisters, Martha and Mary; a beautiful illustration of what a Christian family may be, and how different temperaments and dispositions (which so diversely characterize family groups) may alike give glory to God, and, being duly exercised in His cause, are honourable and honoured in His sight. We have here the active diligence and busy service of one sister, and the devoted affection and loving contemplation of the other. Martha served, and by her service Christ was honoured; Mary sat at the Saviour's feet, and thus again was Jesus magnified.

This family is invaded by the scourge of sickness. (What family escapes the ravages of disease?) The even tenour of their way was interrupted by the illness of Lazarus; and this illness is so sore, that it already threatens serious consequences. The devoted sisters can count upon one great Friend, and they know well where help is to be sought, and where it may be found. It is pathetically and beautifully stated by the Evangelist, that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." But this good Friend is now at a distance from Bethany. He comes not in and out as at other times; but had gone away "beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized." (John x. 40.) This was very likely Bethabara, where John was baptizing during the earlier stage of the ministry of Christ. (John i. 28.) To this place, therefore (about two days' journey from Bethany), the afflicted sisters sent a message to Jesus, saying: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." And it would appear, from the comparison of dates, that he was even then dead by the time of the arrival of the messengers. And yet how strange the answer of Jesus—a reply which he intended, not for the messengers only, but to be conveyed by them to Mary and Martha—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

Now, there was no lack of interest in the breast of Jesus for this afflicted family—He loved them each, He loved them all. The

case was urgent; the danger imminent; the remedy, to be in time, must be prompt, and without delay. And yet, notwithstanding all these circumstances, Jesus "abode two days still in the same place where He was." There is much significance in this delay of two days. It was not the only time that Jesus tested the faith and proved the patience of his suppliants by substituting delay for promptitude. And now, He subjects the faith and patience of the sisters of Lazarus to this ordeal of proof. These two days must have been days of weary waiting, a period of sore test and trial. They had sent to their loving Friend; they knew that He loved them, and that He would not refuse their request; and yet they must wait, for Jesus cometh not yet—a season of anxious and painful suspense to Martha and Mary. Meanwhile, Jesus tarries in the place where the messenger had found Him, and, during the interval of waiting, Lazarus becomes worse, and dies, and is buried. The messengers return to Bethany to hear the tidings—Lazarus is dead; and yet are empowered to deliver this message, as though in apparent mockery of their sorrow: "This sickness is *not unto death*."

After this delay, Jesus proposes to His disciples—"Let us go into Judea again." And, accordingly, the little company proceed upon their journey from Bethabara to Bethany, though fraught with great danger from the lying in wait of the Jews, who sought to stone the Saviour. But Jesus, undeterred by the threatening dangers, undertakes the journey, because His work-day of mortal life still continues, even though it be its eleventh hour, drawing near its eventide. Upon the way, He recurs to the subject of their friend at Bethany, saying, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," and then significantly adds, "but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." This was mysterious language, and was much misunderstood by the disciples. Death had scarcely yet come to be spoken of as "sleep." If the heathen spoke of death under the illustration of sleep, it was as an "eternal sleep," the sleep that never wakes, with the curtains of night so closely drawn, that light never enters. But Jesus speaks of awakening the sleeper from his slumber—"I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." To the Christian, death is sleep—the laying of the aching head upon a peaceful pillow, the closing of the eyes, and the gathering of the sleeping swathing dress about the body, and there reposing till the trumpet-blast shall wake the dead, and bid the sleeper rise, and with all pomp and circumstance, usher in the morning of the Resurrection Day. Therefore, in all the deep and solemn meaning of the phrase, Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." He then more plainly tells them, and without any ambiguity of expression,—"*Lazarus is dead*"; and immediately

adds, "and I am glad—glad for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him." And to Bethany they proceed; and, on their arrival there, they find that Lazarus has been four days already in the grave.

Thus far advanced had matters become since the day on which the sisters had sent the message to Jesus. How unaccountable must have been this delay, how dread their weary suspense, hoping against hope, fighting in the midst of fears! Jesus loved them—this they were sure of; this had been proved in many ways. Emboldened by the love He bore them, they had sent to Him, hoping He would instantly come, and ward off Death from their household. But Jesus does not come, and delay wears out their patience, and well nigh exhausts their faith. By and by death supervenes, and the burial of their brother closes the scene, and four days have already fled; the customary days of weeping are being accomplished, with a continuous flow of friends, and kinsfolk, and acquaintance, who have come to weep and sympathize with the bereaved women. And, as though to account for this crowd of visitors, the Evangelist adds—"Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off"—*i. e.*, about two miles.

It is instructive to follow out the circumstances of the Miracle. Our difficulty is in the selection of the plentiful fruit of this fair tree, seeing we cannot gather all. The narrative is told with all the skill of a romance, and yet with all the detailed minuteness of a reality; the changes and alternations, the shades and shadows, the hopes and fears, the puzzles and speculations, the difficulties, and (humanly speaking) the impossibilities—all of which are unravelled only by the fact that it is Jesus that speaks, and is about to put forth His power to raise the dead. If it were our lot to read this narrative now for the first time, how anxiously and on the tiptoe of suspense would we read the onward story; how breathlessly would we await the issue; and in rapt attention read it to the end! Let us take heed lest our very familiarity with its details should rob us of its profitable lessons.

On the arrival of Jesus in the vicinity of Bethany, it would seem as though He had come, like all the rest, merely to comfort and condole with the bereaved sisters. Information is conveyed that Jesus is coming, and no doubt He was still expected, though it was felt that now, all being over, His intervention would be too late. Martha proceeds to meet Him; but Mary sat in the house. There is one advantage that may be gained by a review of the details of this Miracle—that it tends to magnify the character of Martha, and her faithful devotedness to her Master. And certainly she displays

an amount of faith in Christ's power, far in advance of most of the Jews. Somehow, Mary has been allowed to monopolize the interest of the story, and Martha is cast into the shade. But, in truth, it ought not so to be. Preachers and theologians have vastly exalted Mary's character beyond that of her sister; they have compared and contrasted the different temperaments and characteristics of the twain; and many have boldly struck the difference and pronounced for either. Now, I am persuaded these characteristics of the sisters of Bethany were never intended to be weighed against each other, but rather that the character of each should be imitated, for both are, in their own way, instructive and exemplary. And, without partiality, I would endeavour to follow the beaten track of the narrative:—

Martha is the first to meet to Jesus. Her deep sorrow has not quite excluded the outer world from her view; her active spirit saves her from that consuming grief that seems to have settled down upon the more sensitive mind of her sister. And, while Martha has heard of the arrival of Jesus, and goes forth to meet Him, Mary still sits a mourner, absorbed in grief, transfixed with melancholy. The veil of mourning without, and the contemplative brooding of her soul within, have now cut her off from meeting with Jesus, and refreshing her wounded spirit in the fountain of His love.

The meeting of Martha with Jesus is an interesting episode of the story: she pours out her whole soul in an agony of grief such as would be likely upon the first interview with one who had so truly loved and ever taken such an interest in her deceased brother. This would be the moment of concentrated memories, when all the circumstances would rush to mind; the remembrance of His love; His affectionate interest in their family; the oft associations of the past; the longed-for presence of Jesus; their settled confidence that, if He were with them, no harm could come nigh their dwelling; how they had sent for Him, and how, all through that darksome time, He never came; how they waited for His answer, and how, when it did arrive—"this sickness is not unto death"—the words were belied by the result, for he *did* die—all these thoughts and reflections are embodied in the salutation wherewith Martha greeted the Master—"Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." This was an expression of Martha's faith, and yet a limitation of the fulness of faith; for Christ, whether present or absent, could bless, and heal, and save. But now, her faith takes wings, and soars into a lofty flight, and gets home into the very secret of the Resurrection power of Jesus; for she immediately adds—"But I know, that *even now*, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee."

And yet even here there is a lack of a due appreciation of the power of Christ, as though it were but a delegated power, to be obtained by prayer, and not (as it really was) an inherent power, to be exercised at will.

Then Christ, in the strength of His conscious power, and in the might of His own authority, declares—"Thy brother shall rise again." Once more does Martha's faith fall short of the immediate realization of the promise; for she replies—"I know that he shall rise again in the Resurrection at the last day." Whereupon Jesus propounds the great fact of His present power, ever existent, to which all days and times are one, all circumstances the same; Himself the very concentration of Resurrection-power; to-day (if he but will) a Resurrection-day—"I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." That is to say—He that believeth in me, shall indeed die in the body, and yet shall he live again; and he that liveth in the body, and believeth with the soul, shall never die; for that man's bodily death is not death.

"To die is landing on some peaceful shore,
Where billows never beat, nor tempests roar.
Ere well the friendly stroke is felt, 'tis o'er."

When the Christian dies he falls asleep to this world, to wake in another and a better world; and to such as he Christ is the Resurrection and the Life.

Superadded to these declarations of Jesus, is the personal, practical, and pointed question, by which He inquires of Martha—"Believest thou this?" The answer of Martha is not direct; it is an indirect reply to a direct and definite question. She answers—"Yea, Lord; I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Martha's faith has not yet grasped all the details, but it has thoroughly apprehended the germ of all true doctrine, the great living seed, the central Truth, out of which all sound doctrine is developed and evolved. Her faith in the Resurrection, present or to come, may be strong or weak, but her simple and comprehensive faith—"I believe that Thou art the Christ"—includes all; Yes, everything. This central creed contains all. Believing this, she accepts all—His love, His power, His greatness, His majesty, His kingdom. All that is contained within the Person of Christ, and the mission of Christ she implicitly believes. This is that Faith that pours itself fully and unreservedly into the bosom of Jesus; and exhausts itself in His fulness, to receive back much more again of that inexhaustible supply.

Martha did as good as say—Thou art true: therefore, all that Thou sayest I am willing to believe; Thou art wise: therefore, all that Thou teachest I am willing to learn; Thou art good: therefore, all that Thou doest I am willing to bear; Thou art powerful: therefore, all that Thou wilt I know will be performed; “Thou art the Christ:” this I believe; and all that is wrapped up in this faith, all that is contained in it, all that proceedeth from it—all this I steadfastly believe.

Who now will venture to say that Martha is but a secondary person in this narrative? While Mary sat still in the house, Martha had gone forth to the battle-field, to wage the good fight of faith, propounding a creed for all Christendom to copy—better than many a more elaborate creed, though compiled by Councils and guaranteed by Pontiffs—a creed of simple, confiding, dependent, and implicit faith.

It is now, however, Mary's turn to be introduced into the story; and she must not be overlooked—that woman of devoted love, that knelt behind her great Master's couch, in the spirit of her humility, and washed His feet with the tears of true penitence and affection, and wiped them with the hair of her head—that great model woman of Christendom!

Martha comes to call her sister Mary. She wakes her from her reverie of grief by a summons which Mary will not disregard—“The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” There is no intimation of this command in the recorded conversation between Jesus and Martha; but it formed, perhaps, the incidental remark with which the Saviour broke off the sublimer conversation—Send thy sister hither! The summons being announced to Mary, she quickly obeys, and soon is by her Master's side, and prostrate at the Saviour's feet. She, too, pours forth the gushing fountain of her tears. Mary's departure from the house, so sudden and abrupt, is not rightly understood by the Jews who were with her in the house. Rising with a sudden ecstasy, she hastens to the place where Martha had met with Jesus, and is straightway followed by the Jews, who thought some sudden impulse had seized her mind to visit the grave of her brother, and to weep there. But Mary is gone to seek Jesus; and she finds Him, the long-expected Friend; and at once gives expression to the very self-same words that Martha had used—“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died:” showing the sympathy of inward thought, cultivated, no doubt, by conversation, that if their Friend Jesus had but been present, this bereavement had not occurred.

The scene of this devoted woman's outburst of bitter anguish moves the Saviour. The agony of Mary's spirit would, perhaps, be more intense than even Martha's, unrelieved by the busy mind, and

rather increased by her contemplative disposition. And here occurs one of those exquisite touches of the sympathy of Jesus: when He saw her weeping, and the Jews weeping around her, He is utterly unmanned. Mary weeps because of the memories awakened by the visit of Jesus; the people weep because Mary weeps; and Jesus weeps because they all wept—blending His tears of sympathy with their tears of sorrow; and “He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.”

The word translated “groaned” in our version (*ἐνεβριμήσατο*) includes the emotion of anger as well as that of pity. It was a sigh of deep trouble, which rose to a groan of indignation, quickened by the scene now spread before Him. It was not merely pity for the sufferer, but also anger, that filled His breast—that wrath of God which is provoked every day by the sight of Satan’s triumphs, which have filled the whole earth with woe, and misery, and death. It was the hoarse murmur of the compassionate One, the pent-up grief of the Saviour’s breast, while now beholding wreck and ruin, death and desolation, bereavement and corruption. And all this because men *will* have Satan’s dark dominion, and will not have Jesus to reign over them. Therefore, Jesus groaned by reason of the usurper’s sway—groaned for man’s infatuated blindness—groaned for all the consequences to body and soul; and, in that weeping crowd, He saw the earnest and the evidence of the woes that afflict mankind.

There appears to have occurred no conversation between Jesus and Mary. The people thronged around the Saviour, and thus prevented that intimate communion which Martha had enjoyed. And Jesus, now intent upon His great design, inquires—“Where have ye laid him?” And the people, leading the way, reply—“Lord, come and see.” And then is recorded that deeply-affecting incident of the God-Man—“Jesus wept.” And the Saviour’s tears of sympathy call forth the admiration of the throng—“Behold, how He loved him!”

“Jesus wept.” This is the shortest verse in the Bible; and yet it is one of the most comprehensive of the touching records of the Saviour. *He* wept, who had all-power to wipe away every tear. Some one has said—“The tears of sympathy are sacred drops from the well of life;” and truly so, for “Jesus wept,” and so consecrated the tears of fond regret by the example of the weeping Saviour. He that wept over the grave of Lazarus, and also wept over the prostrate city of Jerusalem—the Sion of His love—now sheds a more universal tear over a dead world, still dead in trespasses and sins. Oh, how can the Christian man be a hard-hearted man? How can a follower of Jesus remain unmoved and cold-blooded, while he beholds every

day the miseries and all the sad consequences of Sin? Surely, a stoical indifference can form no element of the servant of that Jesus who did not only grieve over the sins and weep for the sorrows of mankind, but did also put forth His energy and power to remedy the evil and revoke the wrong. What a lovely illustration is this of the union of the human and divine in Jesus, the blending of the All-compassionate with the All-powerful!

And yet the cavils of the crowd are heard above the audible sobbings of the Saviour—"Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" This allusion to the cure of the blind man, recorded in a preceding chapter (ix.), strangely contrasts with the manner in which they received and resisted that Miracle. There they tried every argument, and resorted to every possible expedient, even to the use of violence, in order to break down the evidence of the fact; and yet, now they make it to serve as the basis whereupon to build an accusation against the power of Christ.

And now the crisis has arrived. Jesus draws near to the grave; and, again moved by the spirit that stirs within Him, He again groaned in Himself. One obstacle stood in the way—the stone that lay upon the mouth of the cave. Jesus could have removed this obstacle, but He bids the bystanders—"Take ye away the stone." This command opens again the wounds of Martha's broken spirit; she fears the exposure of the body, so long buried, and now, as she would suppose, far gone in decomposition. She would have prevented this bringing to light again of the once familiar face, and, in her failing faith, interposes an objection to the opening of the grave; and is straightway lovingly reproved—"Said I not unto thee, that, if thou shouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Alas! how little do we see of the designs of God towards us, while we occupy this low standing point among the mere spectators of the scenes of life! How poor judges are we of the ways of God to men! But when we gain, as we do in this chapter, a loftier standing point, how plainly do we trace out all the way the Lord was leading those sisters of Bethany, and learn how true it is that

"God is His own interpreter;
And He will make it plain."

Accordingly, man does his part: "they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid." And then Jesus transacts His part, as only He can do it—the Raising of the Dead. He lifts His eyes to Heaven; He communes with His Father there; draws copious draughts of power and might from His throne above; and prays this

thanksgiving—"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me." This implies no doubt a difficulty or uncertainty as to the issue of the Miracle; but is interpreted by the following sentence—"And I knew that Thou hearest me always; but *because of the people* which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me." Here we observe how Jesus puts Himself into direct communication with Heaven, and this for the people's sake; so that they may understand whence is obtained that power that raiseth the dead to life again.

"And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!"—with a *loud* voice, as it shall yet one day be with the voice, the loud voice of the trumpet, the voice of the Son of God, which shall awake the silent, sleeping Dead. No whispered words were these, but words of energy and power, as though, by their commanding grandeur, representing the colossal proportions of the Miracle. And, straight obedient to the command of Jesus, the dead man stirs with the instincts of Life, and, rising from the tomb, he came forth, bound in the swathing-bands of the grave, and then, at Christ's command, is loosed, and let go free. Lazarus, that was dead, is alive again; and Jesus has once more, by a still mightier manifestation, proved that He is indeed what He had said He was—"The Resurrection and the Life."

My soul, ponder upon these things! They are all written for our learning; then, let this Resurrection teach thee and instruct thee!

1. Learn the all-wise Providence of God. Learn to believe, though clouds and darkness gather round about thy dwelling. "This sickness is not unto death"—and yet "Lazarus is dead;" and both are true; only we must patiently abide the full unfolding of the Providence that thus mysteriously complicates, that he may plainly unravel, the tangled skein, and prove that He is all in all.

2. Learn the length of life's long day of work—"twelve hours in the day;" and, whatever betide, let duty be done. Though dangers throng your path, and foes assault on every side, yet, in humble dependence on your God, but not in self-sufficiency or presumption, work while it is called to-day. He that hath commissioned His ambassadors, will protect them to the end; and, when their work has been accomplished, and only then, will He send them to their sleeping couch, for rest, refreshment, and repose. It is true, and the truth is here unfolded, that "a man is immortal, till his work is done."

3. Learn the union of the Human and Divine in Jesus. How He might have prevented this sickness, and might have staved off this death; and yet He absents Himself, lest, by the oft entreaties of the

Sisters of Bethany, His Divine will should have been persuaded by His human sympathies to forego this opportunity for setting forth the glory of God. In this was His Humanity set forth. And when He groaned, and when He wept, and when He prayed—was not this the Human nature of the God-Man? But, by and by, He rises to the majesty of His Godhead; when He proclaims His intention to restore the dead, and advances to the tomb, and speaks with that “loud voice,” and bids Death give back its dead, and the grave to resign its prey. Here is the God of Heaven come down to earth—the Author and Giver of Life; the Conqueror of Death; the Spoiler of the grave; yea, verily, and, indeed, “The Resurrection and the Life.” This is the blending of the divinely-human, and the humanly-divine in the Person and the Power of Jesus Christ.

4. Learn what is the privilege of man, and the part he is permitted to perform. Before the quickening work of Jesus “Take ye away the stone;” and, after the quickening work of Jesus, “Loose him, and let him go.” Man is permitted to go before, and prepare the way for Christ, in the removal of the stone that shuts in the dead; and after the Life-giving word is spoken by the Life-Giver, man has yet a work to do for his fellow man—to remove the hindrances from his way, and things that bind him, the belongings of the tomb that still cleave to his flesh, the grave clothes of corruption that still externally impede his free action as a living soul. Awake, ye men and women of Christ! Take away the stone from the sepulchre; gather out the stones from the stony ground, and thus prepare ye the way of the Lord to approach your dead brother, and quicken him to life. Is it evil company that shuts him in the grave of spiritual death? Then, take it away! Is it the lust of the eyes or the pride of life? Then, take it away! Is it strong drink that seals the stone upon the spiritual death of thousands? Then take it away! While these remain, Christ’s power indeed remains all powerful, but ye have not done *your* duty, and your brother is not raised. And, after the quickening of a once dead sinner, still have you a charge and custody of his soul—“Loose him.” Whatsoever bands of earthly association still remain, whatsoever stumbling-blocks lie in his way, whatsoever things may interfere with his healthy working power and increasing growth in grace—Loose them off; take them away; and “let him go!” Join hands with God in this glorious work—“workers together with Christ Jesus.”

THE HEM OF THE GARMENT.

“And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment; for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.”—**MATT. ix. 20—22.**

THE chief object of the doing and recording of the Miracles of Christ is to illustrate Faith, the power of Faith, and the reward of diligent, persevering, overcoming Faith. This great and effectual “gift of God” is the communicating medium between God and man. It is the cord, the cable, the sympathetic chain, alive in every link, that binds us to the Saviour. It is the great power that dispatches messages from earth to heaven, and receives back the speedy answer of Jehovah. Faith is the chief topic of most of the Miracles, illustrated in some form or under some figure, and thus represented to our minds as the potent engine for moving the omnipotence of God.

Hence, Faith is illustrated under manifold similitudes. It is called the Eye of Faith, because it sees Christ; the Ear of Faith, because it hears Christ; the Hand of Faith, because it lays hold on Christ; the Heart of Faith, because it believeth unto righteousness. Faith is a spark of Divine Omnipotence entrusted to man; the invincible weapon with which he fights the good fight of faith. It is his Faith that fills his mouth with arguments, and imparts a wrestling power with God. It is Faith that patiently waits upon the Lord, though He bears long with us; and has so grasped and already realized the power of Christ, as that it will not let Him go until He bless us.

Read the record of the Miracles of Christ in this view of their meaning and intention; search out this element in all; and you will find that this is the secret influence that brings the demoniac, the lunatic, the palsied, the blind, the leper, the halt, and the maimed, into the presence of Christ, for a share of His mighty

power. It is also such illustrations as these that constitute the great practical commentary on the text which saith, "Only believe; all things are possible to him that believeth."

This Miracle is recorded by three of the Evangelists—St. Matthew (ix. 20—22); St. Mark (v. 25—34); St. Luke (viii. 43—48). By comparing all these several accounts we are led to review the Miracle under these three headings—(1) The Local Associations of the Miracle; (2) the Personal Circumstances of the Miracle; and (3) the Close Contact of Faith, as the great lesson which the Miracle teaches us.

I. The local associations of the Miracle. In the context this deed of mercy stands as a Miracle within a Miracle. All the three narrators agree in placing it within the scene of the Raising of the Ruler's daughter. It is also an incidental Miracle, a way-side Miracle, wrought in passing; itself tending largely to illustrate another's faith, for it tested and sorely tried the Ruler's faith, by standing in the way of his request, and causing a delay where promptitude was necessary.

This Miracle, then, is a parenthesis thrown into the narrative of the story of Jairus. His daughter lay a-dying, at the point of death, trembling in the balance, hesitating between life and death, so that by this time he knows not whether she be still alive. Here everything depended on speed and urgency; and we should not be surprised if the Ruler did become at last impatient of delay. Yet, just at this critical moment, the multitudes thronged around the Saviour, impeding His progress—the curious crowd intent upon seeing some strange work, and hoping to witness some more of the signs and wonders of the Saviour's power. So far there is delay, where the demand is for instant action. And this delay is to be still further prolonged; for a certain woman in the crowd takes advantage of the press of people to do a stealthy deed, by secretly touching the hem of the Saviour's garment. Her faith and her dire necessity prompted her to this act. This deed stays the Saviour in His onward progress to the Ruler's house. He halts in His way to make inquiry as to who it was that touched Him. This occasions the subsequent conversation in which Jesus and the woman and the disciples all bear a part; and it is during this interval of delay that the servants of the Ruler intervene, bearing the message, "Thy daughter is dead." The critical moment has passed while this woman occupies the attention of Jesus. Death had availed itself of the delay, and had snatched away its victim. Some can very well understand what is the dread suspense of those who wait for the issue of a critical moment;

and the anguish that those words create when they are at last borne to their ears—"Thy daughter is dead." And surely this anguish would be intensified all the more, and that moment of despair rendered all the more desperate, from the thought that He that *could* have healed has delayed upon the way, attracted by the claims of another daughter of sorrow and affliction; and that, while the Great Physician halts to attend to this case, Death has left behind the dead body, and carried off the living soul, of the little daughter of the Ruler.

Such circumstances as these would be very likely to produce a thorough break-down of even patient faith; and yet time is scarcely allowed for such a result, for Jesus immediately reassures the faith of the Ruler, saying, "Be not afraid; only believe." This was the infallible assurance of the infallible Physician, and the Ruler *does* believe. His faith has been tried and tested by delay, and trembles in the balance, but only to receive the sustaining power of the sustaining Hand; and from the feebleness of faith he advances to the certainty of assurance by the kindly spoken word of Jesus.

It is important to bear these things in mind, as the incidental parts of the whole narrative, contributing their proportion of instruction; and they are not to be neglected or overlooked in our review of the Miracle. This is a Miracle within a Miracle—one object of sympathy crossing, and for a time intercepting, the path of another child of sorrow. And yet this circumstance proves that one suppliant seeking Jesus is not in the way of another suppliant. You need not fear lest the mind of Jesus should be so engrossed by another's want as to neglect you and your necessity. Many and many a delay may occur upon the path of Jesus; but take courage, He is on the way to you, He will reach your case at last. But it is part of the probation of the faith of most men that their faith be tested all the way, so that at the end they may be able to believe more confidently than at the beginning.

II. The personal circumstances of the Miracle. We now consider the circumstances of the Miracle itself. The three accounts, with very little diversity, record the following narrative:—A woman, who had had an issue of blood for twelve long years, mingles with the crowd that gathered round the person of Jesus. This was a bodily disease which she had done her very best to cure. She had consulted many physicians, and had spent her all, and yet was nothing the better, but rather, if anything, worse. She insinuated herself into the throng; and as a crowd is, after all, one of the best places to hide oneself, she takes the opportunity

of this great multitude to try the greatest and grandest experiment that ever yet has been tried—the experiment of Faith. The woman naturally prefers secrecy, and hides herself in the crowd. She hesitates before so many to tell out the plague that troubles her, and she believes, by the faith that is in her, that if she can but touch the hem of His garment, she shall be made whole. Accordingly, she at once puts her theory into practice; and “straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.”

Oh, the hem of that garment! How many hath it comforted in the hour of sorrow; how many hath it sustained in the extremity of their affliction! What encouragement to the weak-hearted; what strength to the feeble-minded! If such be the virtue of the lowest tassel of the fringe of that phylactery, what must be the power of the Person that wears that robe—how great, august, and glorious! And has this no message of joy to you? no finger to beckon you on in hope? Has it not a lovely touch of nature in it, and a still larger element of grace? It is, indeed, a bright and glowing incident in the great context of Messiah's ministry—Christ, as delicate as He is powerful; as good as He is great. Who among us can fear, or fail, or faint, when this woman, who hides so stealthily, is yet brought forth so prominently, on the illustrated canvas of the scenes of the Saviour's life—manifesting this mighty believing faith, for you and for me to behold, to admire, and to imitate?

There is symbolic teaching here; a type and emblem of a yet deeper wrong, and a yet nobler remedy. This woman is your representative and mine, in the matter of her malady. Her bodily disease is the type and representation of our spiritual disease—Sin. Oft have been our attempts to rid ourselves of this plague of our own heart. Many have been the physicians we have tried, that we might be cured of this disease. We have been spending all—all our faith, all our hope, all our strength and effort—all we have, with a ruinous prodigality; and we are, for all that, nothing the better, but rather the worse. Many of us have been spending our all upon human saviours and human remedies, but all in vain. Diseased sinners try to banish all thought of their disease. By many means they seek to drown their conscience and consciousness of its existence. They resort to pleasure to while away the bitter thought. They fly to excitement, hoping to pre-occupy their mind, and exclude the thought of their disease. They drink the burning draught, to drown the soul's reflections, or they imbibe the opiate of unconcern, to soothe them into sleep. They

sometimes, at the last, seek the aid of Christian ministers and the means of grace, as though they of themselves could cure them. They have spent their money to purchase a remedy; they undergo long pilgrimages, establish costly charities, and leave handsome legacies; they believe in men, and put their confidence in systems; and yet it is not until they come to Christ that they come to the right Person, or try the true Physician, or obtain the great Salvation.

This pride of our carnal nature is well illustrated in the case of Naaman the leper (2 Kings v. 1—15). The Syrian captain took with him to the prophet of the Lord all sorts of wealth and treasures—gold, and silver, and changes of raiment,—as though these would suffice to take away his leprosy. But by and by the prophet bids him, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times.” This seems too simple a method, too easy to flesh and blood. Surely (he thought) a pilgrimage to the more distant rivers, Abana and Pharpar, would be better; and, offended by the very simplicity of the cure, he went away in a great rage. Naaman’s servants seem to have been wiser than their master; for they reasoned with him thus—“My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?” Thus is it still with this self-sufficient, self-reliant nature of ours. We are disposed to spend our all on all sorts of ineffectual efforts to heal our spiritual disease of sin; we try every remedy but the right one; and last of all, and then, perhaps, too late, we resort to Jesus. This woman’s faith teaches us the great lesson, Go and see Jesus!

Yes, this is it: One look to Jesus; one touch of Jesus; one contact of faith with the mighty “virtue” of the Saviour—this is enough. This makes amends for all the past—“Be not afraid; only believe.” “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” And, as our disease is still the same; and all our vain efforts are the same; so, being actuated by the same want, and being taught by the same experience, let our faith be as hers—strong, believing, confident, experimental Faith: “If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.”

III. The close contact of Faith, as the great lesson which the Miracle teaches us. Let us again review the narrative. The multitudes throng around the Saviour; a woman touches His garment, and, according to her faith, she is healed. This deed, though stealthily done, is known to Christ; for He felt that a

portion of His virtue (that is, *power*) had gone forth from Him to heal the woman; and accordingly He asked, "Who touched me?" The disciples think this a very strange question, seeing that the crowd pressed upon all sides, and thronged Him. Now, Jesus very well knew who it was that had done this; but He will have her to discover herself, and His Omniscient, as well as His Omnipotent power made known. It is as when Elisha inquired of his servant Gehazi, upon his return from his secret and guilty pursuit after the restored Syrian leper,—“Whence comest thou, Gehazi?” and yet he is able to detect the falsehood of his servant, saying—“Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?” Accordingly, Jesus, still in search for the person that had touched him, looked round about, and in the searching presence of that look, the woman saw herself revealed; and “fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, she came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth.” Thus Jesus by conversation and inquiry draws out the facts; and having spared the woman the painful exposure of her malady, while the plague was on her, He now reveals her in her full health, a very monument of confiding faith and of sparing mercy. Having got good by stealth, she must declare it openly, and make known what God hath done for her.

But this is not the point I mean to press. I would rather lay the emphasis upon the words of the answer of the disciples to the inquiry of Jesus.—“They all denied; and Peter and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?” And still Jesus is not satisfied; there has been some contact besides the sur e of the crowd—“Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.” It was not the pressure of the multitude, but a something more than this, that had perceptibly drawn forth somewhat of the Master’s miraculous power. There were but two persons in all that crowd who could answer that question—“Who hath touched me?” The woman knew it; and Jesus knew it. The two parties concerned in that transaction were well aware of this great secret; and Jesus will make it known. All the power that had gone forth from Him had poured into her like a refreshing flood of healing and health. He was the author, and He knew it; she was the recipient, and she felt it:—“immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.” And this daughter of Abraham is sent on her way rejoicing—“Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”

Now, it is said that the multitude thronged, and touched, and pressed sore upon Jesus; and yet *that* contact brought no blessing. But *this* woman touched in faith, and she was immediately made whole. Yes, there are many that come into close contact with Christ, and yet they receive none of His mighty virtue. It is not enough to stand with Christ, or to mingle in the crowd with Christ. It is not enough to press upon Him and to touch Him. Some there were in that very crowd who touched His hand; some that stood shoulder to shoulder with Jesus; and yet no "virtue" went out of Him to do them any good. The mere contact of body with Christ is nothing; to be of any use, it must be the touch of Faith, contact in spirit.

And is it not so now? The multitudes still stand round about Christ, and congregate about the places where Christ is to be found. The professing Church, and all who bear the name of Christ and frequent the ministry of the Word—these come into contact, and some of them into close contact, with the Saviour; and yet there is no thrill of power that passeth from Him to them. They are near to Him in name; for, are they not Christians? Near to Him in the Sacraments; for, are they not all baptized men, and some of them Communicants? Near to Him in privileges; for, do they not all hear the Word? Near to Him in ordinances; for have they not all a share in the means of grace? And yet this close contact has never provoked the inquiry of Jesus, "Who hath touched me?" This contact hath not saved them—hath not healed them. They are yet far from Christ; albeit He is so near.

How awful is it to think of this—that we have stood in the crowd with Jesus; have eaten and drunk in His presence; He hath preached in our midst; and we have heard the Gospel message; aye, and we have, some of us, even prophesied in His name; and yet, to think we may be cast out, because there has never been a real, thorough contact by faith! Our nearness to Christ, to be of any use, must be a touch of Faith—no merely idle or incidental contact; but with design and purpose, arising out of our necessity and need. We must come to Christ, driven to His feet by the dire emergency of pressing want, with the running sore of our sin, that none can staunch but He. We must come in the utter hopelessness of our case, in the well-proved helplessness of our condition. We must bring the impure fountain of our sin to the cleansing fountain of His grace. Faith points us to Jesus, directs our steps to Jesus, moves our feet to Jesus, conducts our way to Jesus, lays our sins on Jesus, embraces Jesus, clings to

Jesus, abides with Jesus, grafts us upon Jesus, roots us into Jesus, builds us upon Jesus, makes us like to Jesus, lifts us up to Jesus, exalts us with Jesus, makes us joint-heirs with Jesus!

Go, then, and touch but the hem of His garment; only *touch* it; touch, if it be but the *hem* of the garment: but touch it in the confidence of *Faith*. It may be the feeblest, weakest touch of the outermost extremity of the uttermost fringe; but still remember that the anointing oil from the head of our Great High Priest distils, bedews, and still descends *to the skirts of His clothing*. Touch the hem—be not satisfied with less; and “virtue” will come forth to heal you. Despise not, then, the hem of the Saviour’s garment. The virtue is not in it—it is in Jesus Himself; and its great mission is to go forth from the Saviour to the sinner—the connecting link being the hand that is nerved by Faith to touch the Saviour, to draw from thence the power and virtue of His goodness and His grace. No such power goes forth from your fellow-man. Such “virtue,” such inherent power, dwells not in man, and therefore cannot go forth from him. We are at best but the instrumental agency, but Jesus is the effective Cause. We know not by any instinct within ourselves when a soul is born again; nor can we tell when any good is done through any instrumentality of ours. We feel no stirring or moving or going forth of “power;” but in Jesus all fulness dwells, “and of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

This whole narrative is one of those teaching, telling illustrations of Faith which are so often found in connection with the Miracles of Christ. Its great object is to point out the smallness of human means as compared with the largeness of Divine Faith; on what a slender thread true Faith can hang when joined to Christ; and how minor issues are oftentimes magnified into real significance by becoming the vehicle of believing Faith. And if such be the result of the merest *contact* with Christ, what must it be to embrace Christ Himself, fully, faithfully, and lovingly? If such be the virtue that issued forth from the uttermost hem of Christ’s garment, what must it be to be clothed upon with that glorious robe, in all its fulness, completeness, and perfection? If stealthy faith, fearing crowds and ashamed to tell out its own corruption, thus steals away a blessing, what must it be when with open face, with boldness, and without fear, we grasp that hand and lean upon that arm, and draw the copious floods of pardon and of peace, and cast ourselves implicitly and unreservedly upon that good Saviour’s love, and hear Him say, “Thy faith hath made thee whole: be of good comfort. Go in peace!”

OPENING THE EYES OF THE BLIND.

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“And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. .... And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.”—JOHN ix. 1, 7.

“And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him.”—MARK viii. 22.

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“THE eyes of the Blind shall be opened,” was one of the fore-shadows of the prophetic Scriptures, predictive of the days of the Son of Man (Is. xxxv. 5); and answerable to this declaration of the Prophet was the Word of Jesus—“The Blind receive their sight;” one of the demonstrative evidences of the Messiahship of Jesus, as pointed out by Himself to the disciples of John the Baptist. That many blind men were healed of their blindness by the enlightening power of Jesus is very plain, from the character—the beneficent character—of the Miracles of Christ. Only three groups, however, of this class of Miracle are detailed in the Gospel story, and two of these are now to occupy our attention; the third, the healing of Blind Bartimeus, being reserved for our next chapter. This group of sight-giving Miracles is designed, not only as a record of the fact that these several parties did receive their sight, but also for the opening and enlightening of our own eyes, the eyes of our understanding, which are spiritually dark. So that we, being blind by nature, and dark in sin, having our understanding darkened, may be able to “see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The group of Miracles now before us consists (1), of the Miracle wrought upon the Blind man at the Pool of Siloam, which is recorded by the Evangelist St. John (ix.). And (2), that wrought on the Blind man at Bethsaida, recorded by St. Mark (viii. 22—26).

1. Jesus, still in Jerusalem, fulfilling His great ministry there,

has been teaching the multitudes on the Mount of Olives, and in the Temple, instructing that disobedient and gainsaying people in those weighty truths which were so fully and so faithfully uttered by Him who spake as never man spake. He has just removed Himself from the threatening of the people; and "going through the midst of them, so passed by." (John viii. 59.)

And as He thus passed by, an occasion serves for supporting His enlightening word, by an enlightening work: "He saw a man which was blind from his birth." Around about this Blind man is gathered a remarkable circle of circumstances, arguments, unbelieving doubts, and, withal, some blessed doctrines, too, which we do well to note, and diligently to consider; still bearing in mind how much truth of Christian doctrine and teaching is inwrought into the structure and circumstances of these Miracles of our Blessed Lord.

The appearance of this Blind man does not at first give promise of the working of a Miracle. It rather suggests a question to the minds of the disciples—an inquiry not at all intended to have any reference to the event which followed, and yet wisely directed, and suggestive of the Miracle which Jesus is about to perform. "And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" In a legal dispensation, the discipline of immediate judicial punishment formed part of the sanction or power of the Law; and "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." It was, therefore, commonly supposed that bodily ailments and illnesses were the punishment of sin, either personal or hereditary; and, indeed, in many cases judicial penalties did follow upon sin, in this world.

But in this instance it was not so; for Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents"—an expression which would be wholly unintelligible apart from the context of the disciples' question. This Blind man and his parents had oft-times sinned, but this observation of Jesus is to be interpreted in the light of the question to which it was an answer—that it was not for any particular sin of the Blind man or his parents that this Blindness had happened unto him; that it was not a judicial visitation for any known sin; "but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." It is an interesting study to trace out the record of the permitted providences in men's personal histories in the New Testament, which became, and were designed to be, occasions for setting forth the Divine glory of Jesus. Some of those very Miracles that seem the most incidental are yet produced by circumstances that had been permitted in God's Provi-

dence for the manifestation of Christ's power. Thus, in the sickness and death of Lazarus, the delay of Jesus in coming to Bethany is accounted for upon this principle—"that the Son of God might be glorified thereby;" that is to say, a greater opportunity was thereby afforded for the display of Divine power than would have been if Christ had intervened at an earlier stage.

Many of God's inscrutable Providences may thus be accounted for:—Dark and dreary days are purposely appointed, in order to the manifestation of Christ's glory; painful dispensations fall to our lot, so that we may all the more appreciate the great deliverance with which the Lord delivereth them that are His; and man's fallen state is oftentimes allowed to run to its last extremity of need, in order to magnify the grace of God that bringeth salvation. And all this but serves to fulfil the great work-day of Christ, with the blessed toil of doing good to both the bodies and the souls of men. And, indeed, the Day of Christ was filled with great spoil, rescued from the physical and spiritual dominion of Satan. Largely was Christ's glory manifested in healing all manner of diseases, of body, and soul, and mind, and conscience. The term of His mortal life was a well-spent day—a period which served as a practice-ground for proving how much the world would gain by bringing back its lawful King, and establishing Christ again on the throne of His dominion over all the earth. And a special propriety would attach to this act of giving Sight to the Blind; for, saith Jesus, "as long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

Such an opportunity being presented for doing one of the beneficent deeds of the Son of Man, the process of the Miracle is accordingly begun. The working of this wonder is apparently through the use of appointed means, (1) on the part of Jesus; and (2) on the part of the Blind man.

1. On the part of Jesus—"He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the Blind man with the clay." This was not intended to convey to the people's mind any idea of a miraculous power in the clay, or in the spreading of the clay on the eyes of the Blind; but simply as an outward form or sign, to serve as a medium for the conveyance of the power from Christ to the Blind man's eyes. Thus it was also in the case of the other Blind man, in Bethsaida (Mark viii. 23), and very nearly the same in the case of the Deaf and Dumb man (Mark vii. 33).

There would seem to be a reason for a departure in these instances from the Saviour's usual method (direct and immediate)

of working Miracles; and the reason is found just in those cases in which it would seem to be necessary—the Miracles wrought on the Blind, and on the Deaf and Dumb. Those that are deprived of the senses of sight and hearing, are usually dealt with by outward *signs*. It was important that the Blind men should know that it was Jesus Himself that opened their eyes; and as they could not *see* Him, He so caused that they should *feel* His presence, and thus be instructed that it was indeed the Nazarene that thus wrought their deliverance from darkness. And in the case of the Deaf and Dumb man, as he could not *hear* the commanding voice—“Ephatha,” it was important that the word should be accompanied by outward signs, which would connect the Miracle with Christ, as the only doer of it. This, I take it, is all the significance to be attached to the means employed by the Saviour on this occasion, in making clay, and spreading it on the eyes of the Blind man.

2. On the part of the Blind man: he was commanded by Christ—“Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam.” This was intended to be a further outward sign that Jesus was the Worker of the Miracle. By signs, and acts, and definite commands, Jesus proves that the issue depends upon His own power, and that the work is throughout conducted to that issue by His own direction. He therefore puts the man through a further process of action, and a discipline of obedience; and associates the accomplishment of the Miracle with the washing in the waters of Siloam, whose stream flowed fast beside the oracle of God.

This command was a test of the man's faith in Christ's power, and obedience to Christ's Word. There had never been any healing virtue for the Blind in the Pool of Siloam; and in vain would the Blind man have sought for the necessary link of connection between the appointed means and the cure of his blindness. The command was simply a test of his faith and obedience. The very name of the brook—“Siloam, *Sent*”—indicates unquestioning obedience to the Master who *sends* His servant on any errand of His will. This Blind man was simply “Sent,” and, according to his obedience, the result shall be. He strongly reminds us of the prophet who bade the proud Syrian leper to “go and wash in Jordan seven times.” Only with this difference—the Syrian captain rebelled against the command of the prophet, and sought to reason out the unreasonableness of the direction, or, at least, to set up the rivers of Damascus in rivalry against the prescribed waters of Jordan. Not so the Blind man at Siloam. He went as the Master bade him go; he washed

in Siloam's stream; and thence he "came seeing." Not for the virtue of the waters, but for his faith and his obedience, was it thus done unto him, that he should receive his sight.

The Miracle is wrought; the eyes of the Blind are opened. The power of Jesus, and the Blind man's faith and obedience, have co-operated for a blessed result. But now comes the great questioning as to the evidence and reality of the work; the violent, but feeble efforts of the Jews to deny the Miracle, to gainsay the act, to divert the minds of men to other questions, or to induce the man to ignore the fact that he had been healed by the power of Christ. The warring elements now blow upon the scene, and angry strifes are raised; and, finally, persecution (the last resort of every bad cause), is threatened against Him that wrought the Miracle, and against him on whom the Miracle was wrought. It is a curious study to mark the quibbles and evasions, the shifts and subterfuges, by which the prejudiced multitude sought to turn off the sharp edge of the unquestionable evidence of this Miracle. A review of these questionings will tend to illustrate the irrefragable character of the Miracles of Jesus Christ, which were not only done, but also proved and justified, in the presence of unfriendly multitudes.

The conflict that is waged against the evidence of the Miracle opens with a doubt or question as to the man's identity. The once Blind man had been well known in that locality; himself and his parents resided there; the fact of his blindness was patent, and known to all. Yet now, with all their prejudices arrayed against the works and words of Jesus, there is no honest dealing with the evidence of the Miracle. Instead of frankly admitting the well-known and established identity of the man, a question is raised, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" In reply to this, some boldly asserted his identity—"It is he." Others fell back on a possible personation of the man—"He is like him." But the man boldly asserts the fact of his own identity, saying, "I am he."

The Jews now endeavour to shake the evidence of the Miracle, on the score of the method by which it had been wrought; and in no friendly spirit they inquire of the man—"How were thine eyes opened?" In reply, he tells the whole tale, in all the steps and stages of the process—"A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight." We can now see it was well that Jesus thus dealt with the man through these outward signs, and made him to realise the fact that

it was Jesus Himself that had wrought the cure. All these measures were precautionary. He that is omnipotent to heal is also omniscient to perceive beforehand how the evidence of the Miracle would be questioned and debated, and that the man himself would be the chief witness in the case. Hence the wisdom of the ordeal and process. Deep impressions are thereby made upon the once Blind man. He has learned the name of his benefactor, and has come to know the different means by the combination of which the cure was effected. And now the result is clear and palpable as the noon-day—"I received sight." Such is the power and weight of personal testimony, founded on actual experience.

The cross-questioning on the part of the unbelieving Jews having already elicited proof as to the name of the worker of the Miracle, and as to the method employed, the next inquiry seems to threaten Jesus personally, when they ask—"Where is He?" Some significance attaches to these inquiries as to the means employed in completing the cure. The great object of the question seems to be, to establish the fact that means *were* used, so that they might bring against Christ the charge of having broken the Sabbath. Accordingly, having received the evidence of the man that Jesus had made clay, had anointed his eyes, and commanded him to wash in Siloam, they feel they have a sufficient case to refer to the Pharisees, in the matter of "work done" on the Sabbath; for "it was the Sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes." The once Blind man is, accordingly, now brought before the Pharisees, and is by them again interrogated as to the means used in the opening of his eyes; and once more he tells the consistent narrative—Christ's part, his own part, and still, as before, laying emphasis on the result, "He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see."

The consistent and truthful evidence of the man brings conviction to the minds of some, and only increases the prejudice of others: "And there was a division among them." Some professed to see in this deed of mercy only an ungodly infringement of the Sabbath—a charge which they felt to be fatal to the Divine claims of Jesus. Others, looking more to the fact itself than to its theological associations, cannot see how sin can consist with the doing of so great a Miracle. The consequence is, that the multitude is divided into two opposite opinions. The once Blind man, still maintaining his true position in the matter, is appointed as the umpire, and is asked to decide the question. And this he does promptly, boldly, and unhesitatingly, saying, "He is a Prophet."

And yet the Jews resist. They will not be persuaded. And

now they recommence the argument, by falling back on the objection which was first of all started, and first of all answered—the matter of the man's identity; although this time it assumes rather the form of a doubt cast on the fact of his former blindness—"The Jews did not believe concerning him that he had been blind and received his sight." Accordingly, they seek confirmatory evidence to establish the proof of his blindness; and they appeal to the parents of the man. Of the parents they ask two questions: one of identity and proof of blindness—"Is this your son, who, ye say, was born blind?" and one as to their knowledge of the means of his recovery—"How, then, doth he now see?"

To the former of these questions, as a mere matter of fact, the parents readily respond—"We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind." This evidence they could safely give, as the father and mother of the man, without committing themselves to the real question in dispute, one way or other. But the second question touches directly on the matter of debate, and involves an expression of opinion, which they would rather avoid, seeing that they feared the Jews. They, accordingly, in a most adroit and dexterous manner, relieve themselves of all responsibility in this matter, and urge the plea of ignorance, and plead the young man's ability, by reason of his full age, to speak for himself; and by this expert device they turn off the edge of the pointed question—"But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age, ask him: he shall speak for himself." It was a clever device, and it succeeded; else, by the acknowledgment that the Miracle was wrought by Christ, they would have as good as acknowledged His Messiahship; "and the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." "Therefore," adds the Evangelist, significantly, "therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him."

How easily, sometimes, are they outwitted, who would entangle us in difficulties. Their wisdom is oft turned into foolishness. Still, we set no honour upon this evasion, clever though it be, of the parents of the Blind man. At best, it was but cowardice, a timid shrinking from an open avowal of the truth, and an expedient for shifting the real burden of responsibility upon another's shoulders. They were, indeed, but outward spectators of the mighty deeds of Jesus, brought thus near to their own door, and yet ignored. Alas, how many cold-blooded spectators are there who see their children's eyes enlightened, and yet will not themselves acknowledge Christ, or commit themselves to His cause! There are

parents of Christ-loving children who can testify to their children's birth and age, who yet have never cared to contemplate the greater fact of their new birth, and the opening and enlightening of their once darkened eyes. Christian parents, take heed lest your children enter the kingdom of light, and ye yourselves be cast into outer darkness! Much, very much, depends on the Christian sympathy of parents with the Christian experience of their children. It is not a matter of indifference if parents share not with their children "the testimony of Jesus." There must be no shirking of this question, but a bold, consistent combination of Christian evidence, characterizing the Christian household in all its members. Thus they that are bound together in the common bond of earthly interest, shall be found in one holy communion in the faith, confirming and strengthening each other in the spiritual interests of the soul.

The doubt and hesitancy of the parents of the Blind man seem to impart courage to the captious Jews; and as though they could afford to close the argument in triumph, they sought to finish off the conversation by saying, "Give God the glory; we know that this man is a sinner." This summary disposal of the Miracle, and of the character of Jesus, does not seem to the mind of the once Blind man to consist with the mighty work which had been wrought in him; and he therefore rejoins—"Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." The fancied triumph of these men is again wrested from their grasp by the ready answer of the man, who, from the power of his own personal experience, is able to bring the fact of the Miracle to bear upon their philosophy and prejudices. He ever falls back upon the great work that had been wrought, and with this he repels all the assaults of the Jewish objectors. And this reply tends to reopen the controversy; but in a new phase, and greatly to the disadvantage of the opponents of the Miracle; for again they return to the point from whence they had started, asking the man, How did He open thine eyes? These men, you observe, break no new ground, but fall back upon the ground from which they have already been beaten; and, like a repulsed army again returning on the foe, and, with diminished forces, again tempting the conflict—weaker and weaker; so now are the unbelieving Jews. The tide has turned, and already has risen high against them. The Blind man now assails them in his turn, and throws them on the defensive. He declines to tell over again the recital of the healing, already so minutely told; and inquires whether this questioning means that they are really seeking the

truth, and would also be His disciples? Thrown thus off their guard, they lose their temper, and only expose themselves to a severer rebuke from the man, who now seems to have fairly shaken off the weight of opposition; for now he speaks in a tone of lofty sarcasm, and thence rises to a loftier level still—the utterance of one who is, by reason of his very defence of Jesus, growing in strength, and increasing in knowledge—“Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes;” and thus he continues to plead the cause of Christ, who is proved to be of God, by the very work which He hath done—“If this man were not of God, He could do nothing.”

The result of this bold speech was, that they answered the man with angry recrimination; and then cast him out. And then it was that Jesus found him, and called him to faith, by revealing Himself to his open and wondering eyes, saying—“Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” The answer of the man to this question is consistently in keeping with the whole character of the man’s conduct in the preceding narrative; he replies, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” The answer of Jesus is direct and unmistakable—“Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.” This revelation of Himself as the Son of God, supported by the Miracle which He had wrought, draws out the whole soul of the once Blind man into one great energetic act of faith, saying—“Lord, I believe.” And, having thus professed his faith in Jesus, he added to his faith devotion, “and he worshipped Him.”

The great lesson or moral of this Miracle is, that we are blind,—blind by nature, spiritually blind;—that there is power in Jesus, and in Him only, to open our dark eyes, and give us spiritual light in our hearts and consciences. Sin hath blinded the eyes of our understandings. It is “the God of this world that hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” It is Christ, the same Jesus that giveth Life to the Dead, that can also give Light to the Blind. In doing this, He is able and willing to do His part, as He alone can do it; and He also requires that man shall do his part, and fulfil his proportion of the conditions. In this instance Jesus provides the outward means, and all He requires at the hand of the Blind man is, that he shall *use* them. He provided the waters of Siloam; but the Blind man must wash there, and thus be clean. So, He now provides the fountain of His Blood, and simply requires

that we shall wash in that saving fountain, which is opened for sin and for uncleanness. And, surely, these are not hard conditions; but they constitute the prescribed process of man's co-operation with God in Christ.

We learn, likewise, how vigorous and virulent is the opposition of the unbelieving world to any work of the renewing and enlightening Spirit of God. What striving and resistance is here displayed against the evidence of the Miracle that Jesus wrought! How men fight against God, and gainsay the operations of His hands! They argue, and are repulsed in argument; yet again to array their reason against the evidence of fact. And, at last, they cast out those whom God accepts, and reject the testimony of Jesus, although so visibly set forth among them.

But we learn even more than this—namely, the force and influence of a consistent and unyielding testimony in the cause of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. This once Blind man stands the brunt of many assailants, and repels them all. Again and again they returned to the conflict; but, at every stroke, the hammer was broken on the anvil. And wherein consisted the strength of this man's testimony? Why, simply in his own personal experience and realization of the change that had been wrought in him. It was not the mere hearing of the ear, or any secondary evidence; it was his own experimental knowledge of Jesus, and of the work He had performed, that strengthened him in this day of strife, and made him conqueror at last. Argument after argument, and objections—a quiver full, are brought against him; and yet he has a ready answer that blunts the point of the sharpest weapon—"One thing I know, that, whereas I *was* blind, *now* I see." He sets the strong rock of his own *experience* against the angry billows of their *opinion*; and the waves, however threatening, yet break at the foot of that stern rock, and murmuring die. Thus it is that the experimental faith of the Christian man is the best and surest preservative against the shock of merely human opposition. Men may wrangle, and debate, and dispute upon a thousand issues; but a single experience decides the doubt.

We learn also how such a steady defence of Christ is approved in the sight of God; and they that plead for Christ will not be long before Christ finds them, or they find Christ. And when the world is most wrathful, and in its enmity doth cast you out, then is it that the presence of Jesus draweth nigh. So was it in this case: no sooner had the Jews cast out the man, for his bold and unflinching testimony, than Jesus finds him. And, having

already given him bodily sight, He now adds on the greater gift of spiritual sight; and gives him faith to believe, and boldness to confess his faith in the Son of God.

There are some who, reading these pages, may possibly ask, as did the Pharisees—"Are we blind also?" To such I answer, in the words of Jesus—"If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (vv. 40, 41).

The other Miracle wrought upon a Blind man, which we include in this chapter, is that which Jesus performed at Bethsaida. It is recorded by St. Mark (viii. 22—26). This Blind man is brought to Christ by the people, with a request that He might touch him—the people thereby expressing their faith, that there was power even in the touch of the hand of Jesus. There is some importance to be attached to the stages of the process by which this Miracle was accomplished. Some spiritual thoughts and reflections are suggested thereby.

The narrative declares that Jesus took the Blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town. It would appear as though Jesus led the man away and apart from the multitude, so that, on the opening of his eyes, he might see that no other power than that of Jesus had healed him. It was just such an expedient as would be most suited to the case of a blind man. The same remark may be made with regard to the other stages of the process—"He spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him." All this would seem to be in order the more to impress upon the man the great fact that the whole effect of the Miracle was owing to the power of Christ. There must be no mistake about this; and as the Blind man could not *see*, it was the more necessary he should be enabled to *feel* that it was indeed Christ that thus interested Himself in his behalf.

Besides, this Miracle was progressive, by certain stages of progress, on to completion. For example, after the first touch of the wonder-working hands of Jesus, the eyes of the Blind were opened, and Jesus asked him if he could see anything? And the man, looking out blankly and vacantly upon the prospect, says, "I see men as trees, walking." Now, the meaning of this, I take to be, is, that with this newly-acquired sense, he was not able to discern or distinguish objects. A blind man can, by the sense of touch, be taught to distinguish between objects that differ; but it does not follow that when his sight is given him, he can so thoroughly or satisfactorily use it, as to know at once by eyesight the things he has hitherto known only by the other sense of touch. A

blind man, suddenly receiving his sight, is simply put in possession of a new instrument of observation; but until he has tried and exercised it, and *educated* it to its functions and duty, (which is a work of time,) he cannot rely on it for practical purposes. For instance, a blind man who has known how to distinguish colours by the sense of taste, could not off-hand, and *by seeing*, tell black from white, if he were suddenly gifted with the power of vision. This must arise from the after exercise of his new gift. Thus it would appear that this Blind man, on the immediate opening of his eyes, would confound the notion of a *tree* with the notion of a *man*; and though knowing the difference between these two objects by the sense of touch, yet when now looking upon both through the untried medium of the new sense of vision, he would confound the two, and be able to distinguish men from trees only by the fact that men were "walking," while trees were fixed and stationary. The full result of the Miracle is then recorded—"After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."

Now, it would appear that in this there were *two* Miracles in one, or, at least, two stages of a process working out the completion of the Miracle. At the first touch of the hands of Jesus, the man simply received sight, that is, the power of vision; and at the second touch, Christ in a moment fully educated that power so as to fulfil all the practical purposes of seeing. The fact of this progressive cure of Blindness magnifies the Miracle and the wondrous power of Christ.

And it also suggests a profitable lesson. As this Blind man gradually advanced to fulness of vision, so do we advance by steps and stages of our spiritual progress to higher and yet higher attainments of spiritual vision—at first darkly, then less dark, then light, and then more light; and thus onward is the path of the just, "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." This Miracle is for the comfort and encouragement of those whose prospects (though their eyes are opened) are yet dark and indistinct. They need still to abide with Jesus, and to know that it needs but another touch of His all-powerful hand to banish mist and darkness—to dispel the uncertainty of the spiritual eyesight, and at last to enable them to look up with perfect vision, to be restored from utter darkness, and to see all things clearly.

BLIND BARTIMEUS.

“And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway side, begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”—MARK x. 46, 47.

ALL the wonderful works of Jesus were deeds of mercy, miracles of grace, manifestations of a sympathising Friend and loving Saviour. These great acts were not merely acts of power; their chiefest element was love. Had they been but signs and wonders, they would have simply made the crowd to gape in mute astonishment; but the Miracles of Jesus caused the multitudes to glorify God. They dried the tears of the sorrowful, bound up the wounds and rendings of the broken-hearted, poured the oil and wine of health and gladness into the afflicted soul, and made all men to rejoice. And that same Jesus is *our* Saviour. He knows the sorrows of humanity, He has been out upon the earth in His mission of mercy; and still retains His perfect love; so that both body and soul are the better for His great visit to man. Sin hath afflicted the bodies and the souls of men; and as a perfect Saviour, Jesus is spoken of by the Psalmist—“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.” (Psalm ciii. 3.) Yes, the bodies of men, as well as their souls, are the better for Christ’s coming; and the religion of Jesus is “profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Such are some of the thoughts that occur to my mind in opening up the narrative of the Miracle that was wrought upon Blind Bartimeus.

The account of this Miracle is recorded by three of the Evangelists: St. Matthew (xx. 29—34); St. Mark (x. 46—52); and St. Luke (xviii. 35—43). These different narratives agree in the following account of the transaction:—In the neighbourhood of Jericho, a Blind man sat by the wayside; and as Jesus passed that way, accompanied by a great multitude, the Blind man, hear-

ing the tramp of footsteps, asks what it meant; and being informed that it is Jesus of Nazareth that is passing by, he cries out for a portion of the power of Christ to fall upon him. And being called by the voice of Jesus, he draws near, and by the word of the great Master, he received his sight.

There are two diversities, however, in these respective accounts, which require consideration in passing; St. Matthew speaks of "two blind men," whereas the other two Evangelists speak of Bartimeus only. This is easily accounted for; there were two blind men, but one of them, Bartimeus, became the more prominent of the two, and absorbs the attention of the Evangelists St. Mark and St. Luke.

A more remarkable diversity occurs with reference to the time and place at which the Miracle was wrought. St. Matthew and St. Mark represent the Miracle as having taken place when Jesus was departing from Jericho, while St. Luke says it was when He drew nigh to the city. The best solution of the difficulty would, perhaps, be this: That St. Luke records the incident more fully than the other Evangelists, and includes in his narrative two circumstances, one of which occurred as Jesus drew nigh to the city, and the other upon His departure from the city. St. Luke is the only narrator who records the inquiry of Bartimeus: "And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant." This would be before Christ's entrance into Jericho. He would then throw himself again in the way of Jesus, so as to meet Him on His departure from the city; and then would the Miracle take place.* And this agrees with St. Mark's account—"And they came to Jericho; and as He went out of Jericho, Blind Bartimeus sat by the highway side, begging."

This is a blessed story, full of comfort, filled with the spirit of Christian consolation. On the one side is the poor beggar; on the other is the Lord of life and glory, the Majesty of God. Here, indeed, is the meeting of the twain—God and man; and this highway is the platform where they stand and "reason together." This is a glorious manifestation of the Divine economy—abject want in the very presence of the liberality of the full supply.

Would that I were that poor blind beggar! methinks I hear

* This is the view taken by Gaussen in his invaluable work *Theopneustia*, c. iv. § 5. St. Luke's remark after the miracle, that "Jesus entered and passed through Jericho," does not alter this interpretation, seeing that St. Luke never professes to write in any chronological order.

some one say,—Would that I were that poor blind beggar, thus thrown in the way of the mighty Prince, when, in one of those His walks in this His own dominion, He came to seek and to save that which was lost! But stay! This Saviour is not afar off. “Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the Word of faith, which we preach.” Rom. x. 6—8. Yes, if I am not greatly mistaken, there are many poor blind beggars out upon the world’s highway. It is of me, of you, and of yon great Saviour, that all this is written.

There are two aspects of this Blind man, Bartimeus—(1) What he was? and (2) What he did become?

I. WHAT HE WAS? He is described as being a blind man, by the way side, begging.

1. *Bartimeus was Blind*: his sense of sight was gone. The eyes of his body were dark; they were shuttered and barred; an eclipse had spread the veil of its covering over all things. He was blind. Now, we are accustomed to speak of three kinds of Blindness—(1) to one, the eye of the body is dark; and we call that man a blind man: (2) to another, the eye of the intellect is dark; and we call that man a fool: and (3) the eye of the soul is blinded, and God calls that man a *sinner*. It is of the last of these I now specially deal with—the spiritual blindness, the darkness of the soul.

We are all blind by nature; we have all been born blind. We are blind to our own safety, blind to our sin, blind to the great salvation. We are walking in our sleep, walking in our sin, walking in our spiritual blindness. In blindness are we born; in blindness we live; and in the self-same blindness do many die; and only in Eternity do they open their eyes; and, like the rich man in the parable, “in hell they lift up their eyes!”

This need not be any secret to us. We do well to test and prove our blindness by practical experience. To be able to see our own spiritual darkness may be the first step toward the attainment of spiritual light. A blind man cannot know as others know; cannot see as others see; indeed, he cannot see at all. The blue sky, the starry firmament, the floods, and trees, and fields, and colours, and gladsome sights, and glorious scenes, that are seen by other men, form no part or element of his knowledge or experience. He is, by his blindness, shut out from any participation of the blessed light of heaven. And so is the man

that is spiritually blind ; he is unknowing and inexperienced in spiritual things. He sees them not ; he knows them not. These things are "spiritually discerned;" and he is possessed of no gift or power of spiritual discernment ; he is naturally and necessarily ignorant of the things of God.

Just as Bartimeus sat beneath the spreading palms of the City of Palm-trees, and dwelt amid its valleys and hills, and rivers of waters, and saw them not, because he was blind ; and was even near to the presence of Jesus, and knew it not—so the man who is spiritually blind has no conception of the joys and blessings of a spiritual character, and no appreciation of the smiles and favours, the sunlight and glory, of those blessed scenes that stretch away from earth to heaven. Yea, Heaven itself may be brought nigh to him ; and Jesus Himself may stand beside him ; the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, may be brought very close to his eyes ; but are unfelt, unrealised, unknown, because the eye of faith is dark, the eyes of his understanding are blind.

Yonder mother has oft smiled upon her babe, and yet there is no smile of recognition in return. Day after day she has tried the anxious experiment ; and still is met only by the vacant look of those twain eyes. She holds him up toward yonder sun, and there is no blanching of the eye. She stretches forth her hands, and casts at his feet rich jewels that sparkle and glisten in the sunshine ; and yet there is no sign or evidence of sight. And at last, clasping her hands in agony, she is forced to confess the melancholy truth—Alas, my poor child is blind !

Ah, this story is yours and mine. What efforts hath our good Father in heaven already made to attract our notice ! All day long He hath stretched forth His hands ; hath lavished on us His smiles and favours ; hath poured the rich jewels of heaven at our feet, and offered us the very "pearl of great price;" and yet there is no recognition. We are blind ! Our state is as that of the Church of Laodicea—"Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." (Rev. iii. 17, 18.)

Do we know this spiritual blindness of our souls as Bartimeus did, when, for his faith, he felt the Saviour's touch, and straight-way was healed ? or must we be terribly taught to know it, as the once Judge of Israel, who, by being lulled into temptation, lost

his light and liberty and strength in one day? What a melancholy spectacle was that poor blind Israelite, who once rent a lion as he would have rent a kid, and bare the gates of Gaza on his broad brawny shoulders, and now, in his sightless woe, forced to grind in prison, the mirth and mockery of the uncircumcised, who railed upon the once strong champion of the Lord! Can it be that Samson is guilty of the double crime—of other men's lives, the murderer, and of his own, the suicide? It is oftentimes the case that in the day of our spiritual blindness—that dark hour—the vengeance that lights upon others, is at last exhausted upon ourselves.

It is a dreadful and dangerous thing to be blind. How awful to see that man thus tempting danger, walking on that tall precipice, so calm and so contented, and all unconscious of his peril. It is not because there is no danger; but because he is blind! I once saw a blind man feeling his way on a path raised very high above the carriage-way. He knew not his danger, and was heedlessly passing on. The path was narrow and high; the road was very deep. A passing stranger, observing the peril of the blind man, instantly seized him by the hand, and made him feel with the whole length of his staff the depth beneath, and asked him if he yet felt the bottom, and he answered, No. Now the length of the blind man's arm is added to the length of his staff, and again he is asked if he has felt the bottom; and again he answers, No; not yet. He is then sent on his way, with the kind advice—Beware.

But think of the spiritually blind, groping on the brink of Eternity! He feels, and there is nothing; deeper, and yet there is nothing; deeper still, and still there is nothing! It is well if blind men are thus taught to take heed to their footsteps. But if they do not beware, and rashly trifle where all is danger, then see how devils laugh with silent delight. They say nothing, but bide their time; and by-and-by the heedless blind man loses his balance, and over the steep and down the precipice he is hurled into that ocean without a bottom and without a shore—the pit that is bottomless, the deep that is unfathomable; and worse than a thousand deaths is this death that never dies. Poor blind man! he was born blind; he has lived wilfully blind. Christ hath come as a Light into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. Truly saith the Apostle—"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." (2 Cor. iv. 3.)

2. *Bartimeus was Poor.* Blindness is generally accompanied by poverty. If a blind man is not very independent in circum-

stances, he is sure to be very dependent on circumstances. Bartimeus was blind, and he was poor besides. Thus is it with the spiritually blind; they are spiritually impoverished also; their very blindness makes them poor.

Blindness prevents a man from engaging himself in trade or other callings; or, at least, greatly hinders his chances in the busy throng of human competition. He cannot readily understand the value of things, and may, at any moment, be outwitted and over-passed by the man that has his eyes open. Blindness is a great deprivation. And so, also, our spiritual blindness hinders our intercourse with Christ, and with those that are Christ's. The things that are lovely and of good repute are not appreciated or known. If the pearl of great price were itself to be placed in our hands, our spiritual blindness would not allow us to distinguish it from the commonest pebble on the roadside. And, therefore, the spiritually blind are also spiritually poor, afflicted with spiritual poverty to the last degree. They are hungry and thirsty and naked, and they have nought wherewith to supply their spiritual wants. They look to heaven, and see no beauty there; to earth, and all is dark. Their sky is ever clouded, their hope obscured, their sun eclipsed. Jesus is hid from their eyes, they have no light, they are blind; and being blind, they are poor—bereft of all spiritual means.

3. *Bartimeus was a Beggar.* His blindness made him poor, and his poverty made him a beggar. It is not every poor man that is a beggar. Beggary is the last and lowest stage of human poverty; and spiritual beggary is the lowest stage of spiritual want and degradation. The unrenewed heart, the unenlightened mind of man, is reduced to this extreme necessity. It puts on disguises, assumes pretences, and what doth it profit him? Why, a few sordid gifts are flung to him from the passing crowd; a few transient pleasures are all the world can give. He will meet with mockery and contempt and grave suspicion, and, at best, from most he will fail to obtain the sympathy he needs. It is a poor and profitless thing to be a beggar in this world; it is worse to be stripped bare of all spiritual support throughout Eternity.

But if Jesus should pass by that way! Ay, that is the question. He is the Author of life, the Giver of light, the Physician of souls. Here would be a Friend upon the highway for the poor Blind beggar. Are you blind? then ask Him to give you light; for Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Are you poor? then ask Him to give you spiritual riches; for Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Are you a beggar? then, with empty hand, appeal to Him, and

you will not appeal in vain; He will stand and bid you come; men will say, "Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee." The days of thy darkness shall then be ended; thou hast groped thy way to Jesus, and, feeling after Him, thou shalt find Him. The Blind man sees not yet, but it is good for him to be here with Jesus. We shall await the result.

II. WHAT HE DID BECOME? The answer to this question will put us in possession of the beginning and the ending of the narrative. And yet, between, there is a train of circumstances, conducting to the momentous change. Thus, having started from what he was, we now get on the permanent way of the story, which leads us to the issue of the Miracle—the glory, light, and liberty which fell to the lot of Blind Bartimeus.

The three Evangelists render a consistent account of the Miracle, and yet it is a varied narrative too. Taken, all three together, the three narratives combine into one great, all-glorious manifestation of God on earth; and present another evidence of the fact—"He hath done all things well." We have already attained thus far—Blind Bartimeus sat by the highway side, begging. What more? We now proceed to trace the links of the chain throughout. And we shall do this all the more carefully, seeing that it is written altogether for our sakes, being descriptive of our state of spiritual blindness, and (I hope I may add) of our happy restoration to spiritual vision.

We now consider the circumstances of the Miracle (1) on the part of the Blind man; and (2) on the part of Jesus.

On the part of the Blind man—

1. *He knew that he was Blind.* Desires are first awakened by a sense or feeling of want. It is our feeling of appetite that makes us crave for food. A man's poverty (if it does not utterly take the heart out of him) tends to quicken his industry. Necessity is that hungry, poverty-stricken creature, the "mother of invention," that drives a man to many shifts and expedients, to many a fight and earnest struggle, to satisfy the cravings of the soul. A knowledge of our danger—what an earnest struggle does it beget in order to escape! A consciousness of any personal defect—what toil and labour to be rid of it! The realisation of any sorrow, suffering, or sadness—what wrestling agony of prayer does it produce, that prevails at last with God! The Lepers knew their diseased condition—oh, how they cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" The Lame man at Bethesda—oh, how he struggled, that he might be the favoured-first to step down into the troubled pool! How earnestly did Peter strive and strain

against the waves, in his presumptuous walk upon the water; and how at last he cried, when sinking in the flood, "Lord, save me!"

And even so Blind Bartimeus knew and realised his blindness. He had been born in darkness; he lives in darkness, he sleeps in darkness, he wakes in darkness; his day is darkness; his day and night are both alike—darkness both of them. He had heard of the glorious sunlight, its bright beams, its flood of glory. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun"—this he had heard with the hearing of the ears; but he had not seen, and now longs to see, that glory with the vision of his eyes. For every reason—for the blackness of his present darkness, and for the contrast of the longed-for light; for the weakness and dependence of his dreary life, and for the wondrous change the gift of sight would bring; for the sorrows of his midnight gloom, and for the joy and gladness of a glimpse of the shining light; for every reason, he realises his position, and desires a change. Yes, the Blind man *knows* his blindness.

2. *He recognises in Christ a Godlike power to heal.* Bartimeus, hearing the approach of a crowd, inquires, "What meaneth this?" and is answered, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." Instantly his thoughts take one direction—only one. For a blind beggar, a multitude passing by might prove a very windfall; it might be a shower of money, especially if an infection of sympathy had caught the crowd; and this would be very gainful—a god-send of money to his coffer. But this is *not* the thought that occupies his mind. Higher, nobler, and sublimer thoughts engross his attention. Here is, indeed, a windfall which the very blasts and tempests of sin have brought to earth; here the true god-send in the God-sent Messenger of the Covenant. It is not silver and gold he seeks, but such as Jesus hath to give—light to his blind eyes. Therefore does he cry, saying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" And the more the people rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, the more he cried a great deal, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Here, then, are two essential circumstances on the part of the Blind man. He realises his want, and recognises in Jesus the supply of his necessity. Here is the Blind and the Physician of the blind; here the sinner and the Saviour. What more do we need? Can we for a moment doubt the issue? But now we turn to a review of the circumstances on the other side.

On the part of the Saviour—

1. *Jesus stood still.* Let us also stand still, and muse upon this fact. Once the waters stood still, and ceased to flow, when

Moses' rod was lifted, and again when the feet of them that bare the Ark of the Covenant touched the brim of Jordan. Once, Joshua commanded the sun to stand still on Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. Once, in the days of Hezekiah, by the message of Isaiah, Time itself not only stood still, but was driven back ten degrees on the sun-dial of Ahaz. But now, He, by whose power the waters stood; He, who holds the chariot of the sun and moon; He, whom Time obeys—*He* stands still! And this, not by the outstretching of a Patriarch's rod; nor by the consecrated contact of the tabernacle of the Lord; nor by the prayer of a victorious conqueror; nor on the supplication of a Prince, or at the intervention of a Prophet;—but, stayed by the cry of a poor blind beggar, the Lord of life, and light, and glory, "stood still," because Bartimeus calls Him. And this was the last journey of Jesus to Jerusalem. Thither was He proceeding, about to accomplish His decease; His mind occupied with the greatest deed that heaven and earth have ever witnessed. And yet He stands, mid all His anxious rising agonies He stands, to hearken to the cry of the poor blind beggar!

The infidel says he cannot believe (no, he never can believe anything) that God would pass by other worlds, and fix His attention upon this one, so small and insignificant among its fellows. But this amazement is as nothing, when we regard the wonder that is presented here—a beggar (mind you, not a world, a sphere, but) *a beggar* arrests the attention, stays the onward progress, and absorbs the whole mind of Jesus! Proud infidel! Measure not the great Father's providence by the littleness of *thy* reason, but by the greatness of *His* love! If you ask me, What is the place of God; and what the great glory of Christ? I answer—See Him, thus hearing, heeding, and *standing still* to answer the prayer of a poor blind beggar on yonder highway! Yes, the Eye that singled out this world, now singles out this man; and "Jesus stood still!"

2. *Jesus called him.* Here we observe a variety in the narratives. All the three Evangelists record the fact that Jesus "stood still," and here they sound one note in unison. But as to the nature of the message, they strike each a distinct note, and yet they are all in harmony. Thus—

St. Matthew says—"He called;"

St. Mark says—"He commanded him to be called;"

St. Luke says—"He commanded him to be brought unto Him."

An eminent writer, referring to this variety of expression, observes—"Here you have the three great steps in a sinner's effectual

calling illustrated. Bartimeus was called, Sovereignly, by the voice of Christ; Instrumentally, by the service of men; and Efficiently, by the helping hands which guided his willing steps to Jesus."*

St. Matthew says that Jesus "called" the blind man. It is the call of Christ that brings sinners unto God. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. iii. 20.) The whole ministry of Christ, and the continued ministry of His servants, constitute one loud and long and still protracted call of sinners to repentance.

St. Mark writes that "He commanded him to be called." Here God condescends to employ human instruments. He will have men to call men, to beseech men, to catch men. All that go forth to preach the words of this life, go forth to invite men to the feet of Jesus. "How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. x. 14, 15.) Christ will have co-workers, true yoke-fellows, in this great work. Jesus could have called the blind man by His own voice; but He rather would enlist the sympathies of men in behalf of their fellow-men. Yes, Jesus will join hands with men, to make the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dead to live. There are some of those who read these pages who are blind; and surely there must be some who are "commanded to call" the blind to Jesus.

St. Luke expresses it thus—"He commanded him to be brought unto Him." This introduces the Blind man himself upon the scene, as also a co-worker in his own interest. Jesus calls sinners, and men conduct the sinner to Jesus; but the sinner must also himself be made willing to come to Jesus. And here is a wondrous description of the process and the means employed. There is here a mutual drawing nigh; a mutual approach—of the Saviour to the sinner, and of the sinner to the Saviour. Indeed, it is hard to say whether it is I that come to Christ, or Christ that comes to me; but yet somehow we meet. The magnet stands still, and gradually draws and attracts the steel towards it, until at last it embraces it. The pole-star is fixed, while yet that gallant ship sails on under its guidance. And so, we are at one time exhorted to draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to us—a mutual reconciliation; at other times we are urged to take

* Professor W. J. Hoge, whose beautiful little work, *Blind Bartimeus*, I have read with much interest and profit.

refuge in Christ, and to draw near to His tabernacle; and yet, again, the whole attractive power is set forth as resting and residing in Christ alone: "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." (John vi. 44.) "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." (John xii. 32.) And the words of the wise man—"Draw me, we will run after Thee." (Cant. i. 4.)

Thus we have been enabled to review the circumstances of the Miracle, on the part of the Blind man, and on the part of Christ. Bartimeus knows his blindness, and recognises in Christ the remedy. Jesus stands still on the highway, and calls the Blind man unto Him.

We have now to fit in one or two more incidents, and the wondrous work is completed.

The people, though they at first rebuked the Blind man, yet now that they observe that Christ is willing to entertain his application, cheer and encourage him, saying, "Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee." And he did rise, and in the fulness of his expectancy, he flung away his robe, and disentangled himself of his flowing garment, and came to Jesus. His blindness is his claim, and the call of Jesus is his warrant, to come to Christ.

See, now, on the part of Jesus, power, willingness, love, attention to the prayer of the suppliant. See, also, on the part of the Blind man, a thorough consciousness of his blindness; his inquiry, as to what this gathering of the multitude might mean; his knowledge of Christ, and faith in His power; his prayer, and perseverance, and patience to wait for an answer; his instant obedience to the call, and his active energy,—“he rose and came to Jesus.”

The issue is now at hand; the grand result is coming to pass. Come, stand upon the hill-top, and see the dawn of light, the coming of the day—the glorious sunrise that is so soon to shed its flood of light on those dark eyes! "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" is the kindly question of Jesus; and the Blind man instantly replies—"Lord, that I may receive my sight." This was his great want, and the supply of this necessity suggests the burden of his prayer. And Jesus had compassion on him, and touched him, saying, "Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee."

The deed is done; the Blind man's prayer is heard—is answered. Bartimeus is no longer the poor blind beggar of the highway; for "immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." The effect of so notable a miracle on the people was just such as might well have been expected—"And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

Ye blind; ye poor; ye that are still abiding among the beggarly elements of sin—what an opportunity is set before you here! This Jesus is the same to-day, the same in power, the same in love, the same in the bosom of His deep compassions, for they fail not. This is the day of your opportunity—Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. You ask, perhaps, “What meaneth this?” What meaneth this continuous and increasing crowd of testimonies from that day even until now? What meaneth this sound of a rushing mighty wind, inspiring Apostles as the ambassadors of the Cross? What meaneth this cloud of witnesses, that martyr’s pyre, that noble army of brave heroes going forth to tread the flinty road, and to bear the company of Jesus? It is Jesus of Nazareth that passeth by! What mean those church bells, ringing out their invitations to the house of prayer? What mean all these ten thousand pulpits of the land? and what these missionary enterprises, and these brave exploits of self-denying men? They all mean to say, that Jesus of Nazareth is still passing by! Then cry to Him; cry now; and ask for spiritual sight. Jesus is passing; He may soon be past. Call upon Him now; He will stand, and bid you come. He will ask—“What wilt *thou*?” Wouldst thou feel the healing touch of that right hand? Wouldst thou have thy vacant eyeballs filled with heaven’s own light? Wouldst thou have the gloom of night turned into glorious day? Wouldst thou be delivered from the power of darkness, and be translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son? Then go and learn what all this meaneth—

“Blind Bartimeus at the gates
Of Jericho in darkness waits;
He hears a crowd;—he hears a breath
Say, ‘It is Christ of Nazareth!’
And calls in tones of agony,
Jesus, have mercy, Lord, on me!

“The thronging multitudes increase;
Blind Bartimeus, hold thy peace!
And still, above the noisy crowd,
The beggar’s cry is shrill and loud;
Until they say, reluctantly,
‘Take courage, rise; He calleth thee!’

“Then saith the Christ, as silent stands
The crowd, ‘What wilt thou at my hands?’
And he replies, ‘Oh, give me light!
Rabbi, restore the blind man’s sight!’
And Jesus answers lovingly,
‘Thy faith hath saved thee, go thy way.’”

THE SICK OF THE PALSY.

“And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was : and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.”—MARK ii. 3, 4.

THE Miracle wrought upon the man sick of the Palsy was the sequel to that series of Miracles which the Saviour performed in Galilee, after the Sermon on the Mount. The antecedent Miracles are recorded by St. Matthew (viii.), including the Healing of the Centurion's Son, the Stilling of the Tempest, and the Cure of the Demoniacs. In the immediate contact of these successive Miracles St. Matthew records the case of the Palsied man. The same is also recorded, though not in chronological order, by St. Mark (ii. 1—12), and by St. Luke (v. 18—26). For the performance of these great deeds, Jesus has crossed and re-crossed the Sea of Galilee, and is now once more in His own city, Capernaum. Here He is at home. This was the place of His residence at intervals during the continuance of His ministry. In Capernaum Jesus would, therefore, be well known ; and accordingly we find the people resorting to His dwelling, to hear the truths that He preached, and to witness the Miracles that He wrought.

On this occasion “it was noised that He was in the house.” This fame of Jesus instantly draws the multitudes together. They throng the house, “insomuch that there is no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door ; and He preached the word unto them.”

Here the Miracle takes place, wrought upon a man sick of the Palsy, or a “Paralytic,” as the original word expresses it (*παραλυτικόν*). The friends of the diseased man, not being able to find access to the place where Jesus was, because of the throng and pressure of the multitude, ascend to the house-top, bearing their burden on a litter ; and through the roof they let down the man

before Jesus. The faith of the man is rewarded by the Saviour, who pronounces the welcome tidings—"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." The utterance of these words occasions a murmuring among the people, who say within themselves, "This man blasphemeth." And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, inquires of them—"Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?" And immediately He adds the climax of the occasion—"But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the Palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house."

In the course of this narrative there are many circumstances that throw special light upon the Miracle, and therefrom reflect the light of its glorious doctrine on the Church. The context of the Miracle records the fact of Christ's power—His Divine power—His power to heal the body, and to cleanse the soul—His power over sin and the consequence of sin, disease; and establishes, not the mere assertion, but the positive proof, that, as at other times, Jesus was a Man to pity, and a God to save.

And, as in the former Miracles, the facts of the case tend to elucidate the doctrine. To review the circumstances, therefore, is the best way to learn the lessons of the Miracle.

I. The audience and the eye-witnesses. St. Luke's narrative supplies this fact, that "as Jesus was teaching, there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them." (Luke v. 17.) This was a remarkable audience, gathered to the feet of a remarkable Teacher. And these were important eye-witnesses of the Miracles that He wrought. It would appear that a series of Miracles was being wrought on this occasion. The power of Christ was present to heal them. The Evangelist does not state who in particular may here be alluded to; but it would seem that there were many candidates, and that there was neither stint nor sparing of the mighty "virtue" of Christ to heal them of their diseases. This was, indeed, an occasion worthy of the Son of Man, with the power of His preached word, and with the power of His wondrous work, and before such an audience. Surely it was altogether a remarkable scene.

These were not casual passers-by, but a choice crowd, composed for the most part of special men—official men, men in authority, who, if they would but believe in Jesus, would, by reason of their office or their learning, tend to roll back the reproach—"Have

any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" (John vii. 48.) The outlying districts of Galilee and Judea, and the metropolitan district of Jerusalem, contributed the main elements of this congregation, constituting an interesting scene—Jesus once again sitting among the learned doctors of the law.

II. The place in which these things occurred. In the house—His own house—or ordinary dwelling-place. At other times, Jesus had no certain dwelling-place—"He had not where to lay his head." He was a wanderer in His own great world. Many a night did He spend on the mountain heights, apart from men, in secret communion with His Father. Once He slept upon the stormy waves of Galilee. And now and then He found a home and welcome with the members of the family of Bethany, whom He loved. But in Capernaum was a dwelling that He called His own, whither He resorted at intervals of His toil, and therefore Capernaum takes precedence of both Bethlehem and Nazareth, in being called "His own city."

III. The means employed. We may be helped materially in our interpretation of the Miracle, by a remark or two on the structure of the houses in the East. The house in which Jesus was said to have been filled with the multitude of His hearers. It is impossible that any more should enter. Among many other applicants, on whom the power of Christ went forth to heal them, was one, who was sick of the Palsy, borne on a bed—St. Mark, with his usual minuteness, says, he was "borne of four." Unable to penetrate the crowd, their faith overcomes the difficulty; and the very structure of the Jewish houses comes to their aid.

There are two modes of interpretation of this part of the Miracle, either of which may be correct. In Oriental houses, there is a court-yard, four-square, the roof of which is the firmament above. This court-yard is built in, all round; and in warm climates an awning is spread, for shade and covering. Round about the top of the house is a parapet or breast-work, reached by a flight of stairs, which from the outside conduct to the roof.* This is referred to by our blessed Lord, when he says, "Let him that is on the house-top not come down to take anything out of his house." (Matt. xxiv. 17.) The speediest way of escape was from the outside.

Now, some suppose that Jesus was then standing or sitting in

* "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence."—DEUT. xxii. 8.

the open court-yard; the people thronging in from the street, to hear His teaching and instruction; and that the bearers of the Palsied man, failing to find entrance through the door, mounted the outer stairs, removed the railing or battlement, and then lifted the awning, and from the top thus lowered the man in his bed to the court-yard below, where Jesus was.

A better interpretation is supplied by another department of Jewish house-building. The upper room was the largest in the house; it extended over the whole space of all the lower rooms; and was therefore as large as all the rooms of any one story together. This large room was designed and used for festival occasions; and it was in one of these that Jesus ate His last Passover with His disciples. All large family gatherings, or meetings for other purposes, were held in the large upper room of the house. Above this would be the flat roof or house-top, with its own parapet or battlement. Through this roof the Paralytic would be let down to the place where Jesus was—the upper room of the house.

This latter view I rather entertain as the more likely interpretation, because St. Mark evidently speaks of some violence in the process—"they uncovered the roof where He was; and *when they had broken it up*,* they let down the bed wherein the sick of the Palsy lay." (ii. 4.) And St. Luke, also, speaks much after the same fashion—"they went upon the house-top, and let him down *through the tiling*."† (v. 19.)

We gain much by the additional testimony furnished by the later narratives. St. Matthew is silent respecting the difficulties that beset the way, and the means employed to surmount those difficulties. Thus, in his Gospel, we lose the circumstances that bring out into bold relief the strong, overcoming faith of the Paralytic and his friends. But these omissions of the first Gospel are supplied by the later evangelical narratives, in which the whole process is detailed, involving the trouble and labour of the man's friends, the damage to the house, and the possible blame that may accrue to all the parties concerned. But all these considerations are as nothing in comparison of the great deed, which (their faith tells them) will bring to the man the blessing of health. And yet, their utmost expectations must surely have fallen far short of the full extent to which the great power of Christ was already prepared to go, in answer to their believing,

* ἐξορύξαντες, *digging through, scooping out, &c.*

† διὰ τῶν κεραμῶν, *correctly rendered through the tiling.*

energetic faith. God's gifts always go far beyond the expectations of His faithful suppliants.

IV. The Process of the Miracle, on the part of Christ. Before they call, He answers. Ere yet any request in words has been made, Jesus accepts their deed as their request, and doubtless sees in the longing eyes of the Paralytic the language of his heart. And Jesus is the first to speak; and when He speaks, He utters the blessed message of inward pardon—"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee."

It would seem as though the man's conscience had been troubled by sin—the sin, perhaps, by which, or on account of which, this sickness had come on him; as oftentimes, though not always, bodily disease was, in that dispensation, permitted as a punishment for some known sin against God. Therefore, the first words of Jesus to this afflicted suppliant are words of sweet assurance, that the *cause* of this palsy is removed; that the disease is wholly healed at the root; and that therefore, in time, better fruits shall grow and be produced from his renewed and regenerated heart. Or, apart from the bodily consequences of sin, it might be, that Jesus bade the man to be of good cheer, because that his soul was safe and in good health, though his body be diseased. The body is, after all, but a secondary consideration; while the soul's health is first, last—*everything*. And, lo! at the word of Jesus, the first great wrong is righted; the man's sin is forgiven; and though he were to go bodily mourning all his days, yet, having now found pardon and peace, all is well, and shall be well.

This is a word of comfort and Divine consolation to many an invalid, even though Jesus should do no more for him. Yea, many and many a poor bed-ridden, afflicted child of God, is to-day rejoicing in the saving health of that right hand of power that hath blotted out his sins—aye, and rejoices more than that man of pleasure, or that votary of fashion, with health of body, but without the health of the soul. This sentence may be written on the bed, or inscribed upon the path, of the afflicted Christian. Whatever be his bodily disease, however great his pain and anguish, though he be bowed down with an incurable malady, yet, still he may be soothed and comforted by this word—

“BE OF GOOD CHEER; THY SINS BE FORGIVEN THEE!”

This saying of Jesus was comfortable to the palsied man. No doubt, a weary weight was lifted up that day from off his burdened conscience, so that his heart leaped for gratitude; and all was well. No doubt, he is content to spend all his days

with body diseased, now that his soul is released from its heavily burdened state. For himself no further evidence is needed to prove that Jesus is Divine; for, as once another enfeebled object of the Saviour's compassion "felt in her body" that she was whole of her disease; so now, this man must have felt *in his soul* that his great spiritual disease is healed.

But there are others, besides this man, to be satisfied. There were many witnesses; and all of them observant witnesses of the scene; and Jesus will be glorified, and will have His might made known. The inward testimony of the man's conscience is for himself alone; but it constitutes no evidence to others. Yea, the Miracle, so far, might be quoted against Jesus. The inward Miracle which He had wrought—the Miracle of pardon—could not be realised by the senses of men; and therefore it was not an evidential Miracle. Indeed, it could very easily, and with some show of plausibility, be said—"He is safe to say this; safe to assert what no man can, indeed, disprove, but what, nevertheless, no one has seen." An inward Miracle is no Miracle to man, simply because it is beyond the power of human observation.

Indeed, the immediate result of the Miracle of pardon tends to justify these remarks:—The people not only saw in it no Miracle, but in the very words of Jesus they detect words which appear to them to be words of blasphemy. They therefore said, "This man blasphemeth;" and also added, "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" This was the *secret* reasoning of the Pharisees. All the Evangelists agree in this:—

St. Matthew says,—“Certain of the scribes said *within themselves* . . . And Jesus knowing their thoughts,” &c.

St. Mark says,—“And there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and *reasoning in their hearts* . . . and Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves.”

St. Luke says,—“And when Jesus perceived *their thoughts*.”

All this tends the more to magnify the Miracle, and is the greater manifestation of Jesus in His Divine character—proving His power over the spirit of man; and that while He knows this man's sin, He is also cognizant of *their* inward thoughts. Thus does Jesus cause His miraculous power to grow upon them, ere He gives the finishing touch to the occasion.

The whole narrative, indeed, contains a series of connected Miracles—Christ's power to forgive sin; His knowledge of the thoughts of men; and, by-and-by, His power to heal the body. And, accordingly, He at once deals with their lurking thoughts. What they had said to themselves was so far perfectly right—'tis

God, and God only, who can forgive sins. The error of the Pharisees was, that they denied that Jesus was God; and now Christ proceeds to prove that He is God; and by an outward and visible Miracle He confirms the inward and invisible deed of His sin-pardoning love.

The assertion of the inward act of forgiveness of sin is not sufficient for proof and evidence. The Pharisees would therefore, doubtless, object that any body could *say*—"Thy sins be forgiven thee;" but that no one could *see* the result; and that therefore, as a Miracle, it would be unevidential. Jesus, accordingly, meets their objection, and by doing what they *can* see, He offers a guarantee or credential that He is able to do what they *can not* see; that to a certain extent they can trace Him; and when He lifts the veil, and deals with the Unseen, if they cannot *trace* Him, they can be taught to *trust* Him. Therefore the answer of Jesus to their secret thoughts is—"But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the Palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."

In this answer of Jesus to the Pharisees, He calls Himself by His human title—"the Son of Man," and lays emphasis on the fact that He hath "power *on earth* to forgive sins." Here He declares the Son of God and the Son of Man to be one and the self-same Person; and that not only as God in heaven, but also as God on earth, He can pardon iniquity and sin. And lo! the man "immediately arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all." What a contrast here—that poor Palsied man now carries the bed on which he had himself been carried! How complete the Miracle; how undeniable this deed of healing!

We learn from this Miracle—

1. What is *the reward of energetic faith*; not the faith that meditates and contemplates, but the faith that works by love. This man and his friends were unbidden, uncalled; and yet they insist upon making the effort, in faith of the result. They willingly undertake their burden, and at the threshold of the house they are disappointed. Their faith, however, is undaunted; and in the face of difficulties it puts on its stronger armour, and still urges on its way. Uninvited, yet they try the great experiment; they unroof the house, and do their best, by any means of circumvention, to conduct the man to Jesus. And though unbidden, they are not unwelcome. Jesus owns, and acknowledges, and honours their faith—the faith of the man himself, and the faith of his friends.

2. We learn *the value of Christian friendship*, especially when it is employed in conducting men to Christ. There may be many who will not or cannot come to Christ themselves, who may be *brought* to Jesus by Christian friends. I speak not now of God's foreknowledge, or predestination, or of any of those abstruse doctrines that are locked up in the mysterious breast of Deity; but I simply speak of the practical duties that appertain to ourselves as Christians. In the case of the Paralytic, humanly speaking, he had never come to Christ, had not his friends brought him thither. And even so there may be many who are willing, and certainly are very needy, but who, for lack of Christian communion, never reach Christ. What honour and responsibility are here reposed on the duty of Christian men, in conducting and carrying the weak brethren to Christ! It is a beautiful illustration of the strong bearing the infirmities of the weak—these four men who bare the sick of the Palsy to Jesus.

3. We learn *the true Divinity of Christ*, which is here so decisively declared. This is one of the occasions on which He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He here asserts and proves His Deity. The whole gist of the Miracle is to prove that what *God alone* can do in heaven, *He* can do on earth; and that, therefore, He is God. And this He does prove by the evidence of the outward Miracle, by His knowledge of their inward thoughts, and by His pardon of inherent sin.

4. And lastly, we learn *the effect of all this upon the people*: "they were amazed, and glorified God." The feeling of surprise is soon changed into a feeling of intense admiration and respect, for both the Miracle and the Worker of the Miracle. The feelings of the people find vent in sundry exclamations of astonishment and surprise; and here a beautiful diversity occurs in the evangelical narratives:

St. Matthew says, "they glorified God, which had given such power unto men." St. Mark says, "they glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." St. Luke says, "they glorified God, saying, We have seen strange things to-day."

And thus each Evangelist has from his own point of observation recorded the expressions of the crowd, as each heard the utterances of varied tongues giving expression to their feelings of wonder and astonishment. And how gloriously beautiful is the blending of these various verdicts of the people, as each expresses for himself the thoughts of his mind, in beholding this wonder-working power of Jesus of Nazareth!

CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

“When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”—**MATT.** viii. 1—3.

WORTHY sequel this to the great Sermon on the Mount. The preaching of that Sermon was well and worthily followed up by the blessed deeds of Him who went about doing good. A group of wondrous Miracles is here recorded, the first of which seems to have been that which now occupies our attention—the Cleansing of the Leper. The Miracle is recorded by three of the Evangelists, St. Matthew, (viii. 1—4;) St. Mark, (i. 40—45;) St. Luke, (v. 12—16.)

Our review of this narrative suggests the consideration of the following particulars:—(1) the disease of Leprosy; (2) the Leper’s Faith; (3) the Cleansing; and (4) the Testimony of the Leper.

1. The disease of Leprosy. It was a disease that more or less covered the person. This man was “full of leprosy,” (Luke v. 12.) It was an inveterate disease, loathsome to behold, and almost incurable by human means. It was also hereditary, being transmitted from father to son, and perpetuated in a family for many generations. No disease, perhaps, has ever made such inroads and ravages on the human body as this disease of Leprosy. A modern traveller, who has contributed largely of his personal experience to our knowledge of things in general in the East, tells us somewhat of the character of this disease. He writes:—

“There is nothing in the entire range of human phenomena which illustrates so impressively the Divine power of the Redeemer, and the nature and extent of His work of mercy on man’s behalf, as this Leprosy. There are many most striking analogies between it and that more deadly leprosy of sin which has involved our whole race in one common ruin. It is feared as contagious;

it is certainly and inevitably hereditary; it is loathsome and polluting; its victim is shunned by all as unclean; it is most deceitful in its action. New-born children of leprous parents are often as pretty and as healthy in appearance as any, but by and by its presence and working become visible in some of the signs described in the 13th chapter of Leviticus. The 'scab' comes on by degrees in different parts of the body; the hair falls from the head and eyebrows; the nails loosen, decay, and drop off; joint after joint of the fingers and toes shrink up, and slowly fall away. The gums are absorbed, and the teeth disappear. The nose, the eyes, the tongue, and the palate are slowly consumed; and finally the wretched victim sinks into the earth and disappears, while medicine has no power to stay the ravages of this fell disease, or even to mitigate sensibly its tortures."*

Such is the description of the loathsome Leprosy. It was, in the ceremonial law of Moses, selected out of all diseases as the most desperate and inveterate; and as such, special laws dealt with the lepers of Israel. The leper was pronounced unclean, was separated from the congregation, was excluded from cities and the habitations of men. "His clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean." (Lev. xiii. 45.) Every precaution was taken to prevent his contact with other men. Until the priest pronounce him clean, he must continue in his exclusion from society; and so long as the priest pronounces him unclean, he cannot rejoin his associations in life.

There are some who think that this exclusion and separation were of a sanitary character, to prevent the contagion of the disease from spreading; while others regard it as wholly of a moral nature, this disease being specially singled out as the type of sin, that, as a spiritual leprosy, has covered us "from the sole of the foot even unto the head." This latter view seems to be preferable to the former; first, because Leprosy was not really a contagious disease; and again, it was the extremest character of bodily disease, and would, therefore, well apply to the deadly disease of sin that kills the soul. This "sacrament of death," thus daily borne about in the body, would thus be regarded in the law of Moses as the emblem of man's fatal fall, and as the type of man's second death. Indeed, the connection between Leprosy and actual death was still more strongly indicated in the ceremonial law; for Moses commanded the use of the same means

* *The Land and the Book.* By Dr. Thomson, p. 653.

in the legal restoration of the leper, as in the restoration to the congregation of one who had been defiled by contact with a dead body. (Compare Numb. xix. 6, 13, 18, with Lev. xiv. 4—7.) Therefore this Leprosy, “being this sign and token of sin, and of sin reaching unto and culminating in death, it naturally brought about with it a total exclusion from the camp or city of God.”*

The moral and spiritual loathsomeness of sin receives an expressive illustration from this fierce and fatal disease of Leprosy. Sin is hereditary, derived from our first father, Adam—“in Adam all die.” It is polluting, it is unclean, it is mortal, vital, fatal. There is no human cure, no earthly remedy; it is only the Great Physician who can heal this great woe. Restoration from Leprosy must ever have been, as it was in the days of the Messiah, the work of God alone, and therefore always a miracle of grace. It was a disease that naturally tended to grow with one’s growth, and to strengthen with one’s strength. The infant, though *apparently* innocent of this foul pollution, yet its “leprosy lies deep within;” and time and circumstances tend to its unfolding. What an emblem this of the lurking power of sin, so that out of the most innocent the deadly leprosy of sin breaks forth to kill and to destroy! In vain are human remedies. Human pride may plead for its own washings—the waters of Abana and Pharpar, and rest in earthly baptisms; but it is not until the spiritual Leper has washed in the spiritual Jordan, seven times baptized with the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit, that by the touch of Jesus the Leprosy that has cleaved to flesh and spirit can be healed. Both the fact and the lesson are deeply instructive. This miraculous power of Christ that heals the body is the apt emblem of the greater power of the same Jesus to heal the soul.

2. The Leper’s Faith. He must have had great faith in the Divine Person of Jesus, to ask at all, seeing that his disease was incurable by merely human means. He must have had great faith to have come so near, when the law bade him stand apart and afar off. It was the confession of his faith in Christ, and an acknowledgment of his own undeserving. But the words of his appeal, too, are the result of faith: “Lord, if Thou *wilt*, Thou *canst*.” Here he doubts indeed, but it is doubt not of Christ’s power, but of Christ’s willingness to heal such an one as he. Yes, he, a poor despised Leper, cared for by none, a very outcast of the people, self-loathing and self-abased—shall we wonder if he should doubt the willingness of Christ to heal

* *Trench on Miracles*, p. 214.

him ? All depended upon this—the mere volition of Jesus to make him whole.

This man's faith knew well the nature of his disease ; how deeply rooted, a very part of himself. He remembered, no doubt, the answer of the king of Israel to the king of Syria : " Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy ?" (2 Kings v. 7.) And if Jesus had not been God, He would have given the same answer ; He would disclaim the power, though He would have the will. But this man's faith is quick to behold God in Christ. He owns Christ's power, and only doubts His will to save him. And even such is our own position in sin. We own Christ's power and might ; but having no *claim*, we cast ourselves upon His willingness to pardon and forgive.

What a moment of suspense was this ! what agony of doubt ! and yet it is also a moment of prevailing faith. The Leper had staked all on this request. His whole soul went with it, when he breathed forth that fervent prayer ; and if he should be answered favourably, if Christ's will would but co-operate with His power, what a change would instantly be wrought : he would become, indeed, a new creature ; all things would be made new ; his flesh would become " as the flesh of a little child." This is a great commentary on that Scripture which saith, " Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xviii. 3.) The old, inveterate, full-grown leprosy must pass away ; and the spiritually diseased man be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. This man's faith fully believed Christ's power ; and only needed the assurance of His willingness to heal.

3. The Cleansing. After the Leper's confession of Christ's power, and his prayer for the exercise of His willingness, " Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will ; be thou clean. And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the Leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed." (Mark i. 41, 42.)

" Jesus, moved with compassion, touched him." The emotion of compassion was the " will," and the touch was the " power," of Jesus. The compassion first, and this stirs the power within Him ; so that the man's reasoning was right enough—" If Thou *wilt*, Thou *canst*." First the heart of love, and then the hand of power.

" And touched him." This was what none else could or would do. And for Christ to touch the Leper, was the same as to declare

that he was cleansed. Even Christ obeyed the law; and, by the law, to touch a Leper was unlawful. The Jewish priest was not required to lay his hand upon the leprous man, but only to look upon him, and inspect the progress or the abatement of the disease. The touch was not essential to the healing; the touch was rather an evidence that he was healed, and that the disease was removed. It was as good as to declare that the loathsome Leper is no longer leprous, but clean; that the liberty of contact was restored; that he might re-enter society and rejoin his friends. The leprous flesh had now touched a man, and had not defiled Him, but rather, in the act, had received of His soundness to the healing of its leprosy.

The answer of Jesus, "I will; be thou clean," removes the man's doubting fears. The only thing whereon he doubted was as to the willingness of Jesus. This doubt is now resolved, and the exercise of the power follows the dictation of the will. And what soothing words were these—"I will!" Hear now, ye Lepers, this same Jesus, as powerful, and certainly as willing. Where is your confiding faith? Why not now come, and ask, and believe, and be made whole? Do you know your leprosy? Do you feel its loathsomeness? Are you aware that it is incurable by human means? Then, with one earnest pouring forth of prayer, place the whole matter in the hand of Jesus, saying, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." And He will not refuse; He is ready, He is willing; His large heart of love, His ready will, His sympathising soul, His beneficent hand, His omnipotent power, will not decline to grant your heart's desire. He will put forth His hand to touch you, saying, "I will; be thou clean."

4. The Testimony of the Leper. "See thou tell no man," saith Jesus, "but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Here Jesus requires silence, presentation to the priest, and the offering of the legal gift, for testimony and evidence of the Miracle.

Jesus enjoins silence, for a time, and for an object, perhaps; but certainly not that the Leper should be always silent respecting this great deed. In some cases Jesus commanded men to go to their friends and tell what God had done for them. In this, He enjoins silence. There were prudential reasons for this. It was important that the secret should be safely kept until the actual presentation to the priest. Men were still under the law; and according to the law, this man's restoration to society would depend on the priest's declaration that he was clean. But if all the circumstances were known to the priest, prejudice against

Jesus might blind his eyes, or pervert his judgment. It would be in his power to deny the effect of the Miracle, and so prevent the man from receiving, in the eye of the law, the full benefit thereof. It was important, therefore, that silence should be kept lest the news should outrun the Leper, and the prejudice of the priest decide that the man was a Leper still. But if, without prejudice, the priest would examine the man, he must pronounce him clean. Accordingly, he is commanded to depart at once, and to keep his own counsel. The priest's declaration would be an evidence of the Miracle that none could afterwards gainsay or resist.

Jesus enjoins presentation to the priest, and the legal offering to be made for a testimony. There is some significance to be attached to this offering. It consisted of two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop. One of these birds was to be killed in an earthen vessel, over running water. The other was to be dipped alive in the blood of the dead one, and this blood was to be sprinkled upon the once Leper, "and the priest shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field." (Lev. xiv. 2—7.) Here are plainly indicated the two natures of Christ: the one His Human nature, put to death, the blood shed, and we sprinkled in the blood thereof; the other, His Divine nature, that could not die, and which, by the blood of atonement, doth bear all our sins away.

And this for a testimony unto them; not to the priest only, but also to the people; being a proof that all was complete, that nothing more remained to be done. Christ will have this Miracle to be legally attested, the voice and authority of the priest unwittingly affirming His own mighty work; so that it might, indeed, in the face of all men, be said of this great Saviour, "The lepers are cleansed;" and thus another seal of authority be set to the wondrous ministry of the Son of God on earth.

THE TEN LEPERS.

“ And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.—LUKE xvii. 12—14.

THIS is one of the wayside Miracles of the Son of Man ; one of those incidental occurrences that bring out the might and power of that great Missionary, who passed in His journeys from place to place, and carried blessings with Him, and bestowed them, in passing, upon the sons of want and the daughters of affliction. This remarkable and suggestive Miracle is recorded by but one of the Evangelists—St. Luke (xvii. 11—19).

Jesus was journeying toward Jerusalem, and His way is directed through Samaria and Galilee. In the suburbs of one of the villages that studded this region of country, a group of Lepers, ten of them, met the Saviour. These men, brothers in affliction, outcasts alike from all their kindred and acquaintance, find a common bond of union in their very exclusion from all society. Herded together like an outcast flock, they meet upon the highway the Great Saviour, the Good Shepherd, still bent upon His great mission of “ doing good.” These men stood afar off, and from their distant quarantine they lifted up their voices, and cried, “ Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” A simple command bids them go and show themselves to the priests. They obeyed, and went, and while they were yet upon the way, they found that their Leprosy was cleansed. One of these ten Lepers recognised a connection between the word of Jesus and the cleansing deed that had been wrought, and accordingly returned back to render thanks to Jesus. This man was a Samaritan. This single act of gratitude suggests the inquiry of the Saviour—“ Were there not ten cleansed ? but where are the nine ?”

This familiar narrative is full of richness, and replete with precious thoughts. The jutting angles and salient points of the Miracle constitute so many points of observation to which we do well to give heed, and from which we may best view the grand lessons of the story.

Of the nature of the disease of Leprosy I need not here speak at any length, having in the preceding chapter detailed as much as is necessary for our object in the interpretation of these Miracles. The details of this narrative are confirmatory of all we have stated respecting the character of the disease: "they stood afar off;" and not daring to come nigh to their fellow-men, and yet desiring to make known their condition to the Great Traveller who is passing by, they cry out aloud, and implore and importune His aid.

In the working out of this Miracle there is no process of healing. There is no touch of the hand of Jesus; no conversation held; but a simple request—the united cry of all these Lepers, and the instant command to proceed, *as they are*, and show themselves to the priests. In the former case of the Healing of the Leper, the man drew near to Christ, worshipped Him, entered into conversation with Him, was touched by Him, was healed, and *then* was commanded to go to the priest, and offer the customary sacrifice of thanksgiving. There was thus a sequence of circumstances, all of which seemed natural and reasonable. But in this Miracle an abrupt request is abruptly answered—requiring perhaps a larger faith, inasmuch as it was faith as yet without evidence. *As* Lepers, and yet uncleansed, these men are commanded to go and show themselves to the priests.

Their faith consisted in this—that *they went*. They waited not for palpable evidence; they tarried not till they were better; they asked not wherefore they should go to the priests—they, who had no sign of amendment, no symptom of returning health, upon which the priest could look, and give even a faint shadow of hope. No, they went, obedient to Christ's command: "And it came to pass that, *as they went*, they were cleansed." Faith loves to travel the path of obedience, and it is in this highway, however unlikely, however dark, however unpromising—it is in this highway that Faith finds Christ, and realises His promised aid. Faith first, in believing; realization next, in receiving. Not sight first, and then faith; but faith first, and then sight. "Faith is the substance of things *hoped for*, the evidence of things *not seen*." The faith of these men was like the faith of the Centurion, who without signs or wonders, and in anticipation

of the evidence of the deed, "believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and went his way." (John iv. 50.)

What new power, what healing virtue was this that tingled through those men's veins and life-blood, as they trod the path of willing obedience on that eventful day! Those sightless eyes, those distorted limbs, those maimed members, those scaly leprosy—what change, what renovation, what new creation is this! Ten leprous outcasts are instantly restored—how they marvelled, how they wondered, how they felt, how they looked, and looked, at each one's own self, and at one another! "As they went, they were cleansed."

As free men they now walk their journey. No doubt they are glad and joyful. Of nimble step, and lithe of limb, they bound into the presence of the priest. Thus nine of these men pursued their journey; nine of them entered the Temple gates; these nine offered the required oblation; and we hear no more about them, except when echo answers—"Where?" as that question has for centuries rung through Christendom—"Where are the nine?"

One of these ten Lepers, connecting his recovery with the word that Jesus had spoken, "Go show yourselves unto the priests," is moved to retrace his steps, and first of all to present his spiritual sacrifice, the incense of the heart's oblation, the debt of his unending gratitude, at the feet of the Great Master, whose word and power had healed him. With an earnest prayer he had asked Christ's mercy, and with an earnest thanksgiving he now renders back his first instalment of the endless obligation. With heart and voice uplifted, he had cried aloud for help; and now, in no subdued tones, but still "with a loud voice, he glorified God." And his gratitude was real true worship; his was adoring gratitude, and humble thankfulness—"he fell down on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks."

"And," the Evangelist adds, "*he was a Samaritan.*" This border land of Samaria and Galilee, and the common disease of Leprosy, had brought these alien races into one company; and even Jews and Samaritans can have dealings together, when they are alike outcasts upon the world's highway. But why does St. Luke lay such emphasis on the fact that this man was a *Samaritan*? And why an additional emphasis when, in answer to His own inquiry, "Where are the nine?" Jesus replies, "There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this *stranger*?" Is it not to teach somewhat of the same great lesson as is taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan—that bounds of nations,

and national prejudices, and denominational jealousies, may all be surmounted by the gospel of Jesus; that "in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him;" and that the children of the stranger oftentimes render back to God, more than the children of the kingdom, the honour due unto His name?

The lesson intended to be conveyed by this Miracle is the power of Faith, and how true Faith must be accompanied and followed by fruits unto righteousness. The particular branch of the root of Faith illustrated here is that which produces gratitude to Him that is the Author and the Giver of all good things. And this lesson is taught by contrast—(1) by the ingratitude of the nine; and (2), by the gratitude of that one man who did return to give glory to God; both sides of the question being still further enhanced by the fact that *he* was a stranger, while *they* were of the seed of Abraham.

1. The Ingratitude of the nine. Their motto seems to have been,—“Out of sight, out of mind.” They had departed on their way, and were now some distance, perhaps, from Christ; and they did not think it worth their while to return to acknowledge the blessing they had received. It appears to me to be a description of that large class of men (perhaps nine out of every ten), who partake in early life of the good things of the Gospel, who receive the good seed, but bring no fruit to perfection. Jesus is passing by, and He showers mercies and blessings all around. There are many who receive of these—even of spiritual blessings, who are never moved to a sense of gratitude, who absorb all into their own selfish selves, and, not recognising their good Master’s hand in all things, they ignore His goodness and His grace, and render no thanks to that God and Father who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

Such, I take it, are those who receive and benefit by the blessings of civilisation and good citizenship, which are the results of Gospel teaching in all lands;—who derive peace and protection from the very presence of Christ in a Christian country;—who share in the great calm that comes of Christ’s command, when, amid the storms and agitations of the world, He intervenes and bids them “Peace, be still;”—who receive the Gospel, and all the blessed fruits that directly and indirectly proceed forth from the Gospel;—and yet are content to go on their way, unmindful of the Hand that supplies them, ungrateful to the Providence that keeps them, unmoved by the great salvation that has been provided for them, and of the

benefits of which they are, in some measure, participators. In a spiritual sense there may be some who are cleansed from the leprosy of sin, and whose faith has not as yet produced gratitude to Him that hath cleansed them.* Can it be that there are such in the kingdom of God on earth? The thought may, at all events, produce a self-searching of our own hearts—the inquiry, Are we of these Nine?

2. The Gratitude of this one who did return to give glory to God. Gratitude is defined as “a virtue disposing the mind to an inward sense and an outward acknowledgment of a benefit received.” The gratitude that this Samaritan showed was that emotion of the heart that recognises the gifts that come from God, and are given by the Spirit, and which seeks back to the Author of all these good things.

This is the only true description of gratitude. It is not earth-born, but of heavenly origin. It is that Christian virtue which disposes the Christian mind to an “inward sense” and an “outward acknowledgment” of the best gifts—the gifts of a beneficent Father, which call for the fullest exercise of lively gratitude. In the greatness of the gifts of Heaven we ought to trace the corresponding dimensions of true heart-felt gratitude. “Freely ye have received; freely give.”

“How can I praise Thee, Father! how express
My debt of reverence and thankfulness—
A debt that no intelligence can count,
Whose every moment swells its vast amount?
Yet here my grateful bosom fain would raise
This fresh memorial to Thy glorious praise!”

Oh, for a heart to render to the Lord the debt immense of endless gratitude!

And both these lessons—the ingratitude of those, and the gratitude of this—are largely enhanced by the fact that those nine were of the seed of Abraham, while this one was a stranger, a Samaritan. This is one of those glorious precepts and promises of Holy Scripture that open the kingdom of heaven to *all* believers. And more than that, this Scripture is an illustration of the greater readiness of the outcast Gentile, or the despised Samaritan, to embrace the offers of the Gospel, than that of the children of the promise who were first called to the knowledge of

* “A sin only too common! for, as Bishop Sanderson says, with allusion to their former crying: ‘We open our mouths wide till He open His hand; but after, as if the filling of our mouths were the stopping of our throats, so are we speechless and heartless.’”—*Dean Trench*, p. 335.

God and Christ. The Jews, with all their manifold privileges, are outrun in the race by those who started later. What a withering rebuke to the Scribes and Pharisees, with all their boasted righteousness: "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him." (Matt. xxi. 32.)

And is not this question still asked respecting ourselves: "Where are the nine?" Where are all those baptized ones who profess and call themselves Christians? Where are all those millions of men who have heard the Gospel? Where are all those who have borne, in outward profession, the name and the company of Jesus? Yes, "Where are the nine?" Our good Father speaks to us His children; in all the tenderness of a father's love, in all the bitterness of a father's disappointment, in the reversal of all His best hopes, and in the realisation of all His worst fears, He speaks to us: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!"

And this Samaritan furthermore points us to the True Priest. "Go, show yourselves to the priests," said Jesus; and they went. But this man, this stranger, finding himself cleansed, returns to Jesus, comes to present himself before the True Priest, the Great High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. And in this he is the type of all true Christians who recognise in Christ their only Priest, who alone can offer an atoning sacrifice, and alone can forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin. Poor sinner! with the leprosy of your sin full out upon you, shunned, neglected, and avoided, "go, show yourself to the Priest"—that Priest is Jesus. He will look upon your sickness; He will cleanse you from your uncleanness and pollution, and will say to you: "Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

What reason for thankfulness! God forbid we should be found among the ungrateful nine.

"That I (how late
A neighbour of the worm) should e'er forget
The wonders of Thy goodness ray'd on me,
And cease to celebrate, with matin harp
Or vesper song, Thy plenitude of love
And healing mercy!"

PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER.

“And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her : and she arose and ministered unto them.”—MATT. viii. 14, 15.

THE record of this Miracle is so brief, and the whole narrative so simple, one would be disposed to leave it to speak its own message, without any note or comment of his own. Still, there must be something to be said respecting this Miracle, as of all other wondrous works of Jesus. Not one of all this series can be said to be uninteresting in circumstances, or barren of useful lessons to the Church. And certainly this Miracle possesses additional interest, seeing that it introduces the name of Peter and certain of his domestic relationships, and further adds some few instructive truths peculiar to itself.

The narrative gathered out of the three Evangelists, St. Matthew (viii. 14—17) ; St. Mark (i. 29—34) ; and St. Luke (iv. 38—41) ; is this:—Jesus and His disciples have just departed from the synagogue of Capernaum, where He had wrought the Miracle on the possessed Dæmoniac. Immediately Jesus retires to the house of Simon and Andrew, accompanied by these two brethren (I suppose), and also by James and John. Here they find Simon's wife's mother laid sick of a fever—a great fever. Jesus instantly determines to exercise His power in behalf of His disciple Peter, whose relative is thus dangerously ill. So He stood over her, and took her by the hand and rebuked the fever, and lifted her up. The fever immediately left her, and she arose ; and so complete was the cure, that she was able to entertain them, and to minister to their wants. The fame of this Miracle attracts to the house many diseased folk and persons possessed with devils, who were brought to Jesus at sunset. All that were brought were healed ; for “He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick.” And by these many

Miracles, thus wrought upon the minds, the souls, and the bodies of men, a complete evidence of His Messiahship was established, in accordance with the words of the Prophet, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

Surely, such a narrative as this, presenting such an evidence of the Divine mission of Christ, and involving so large and liberal a display of His Divine power, must be prolific of many lessons and suggestions to all diligent observers of the mighty works of Jesus.

The Miracle was wrought at Capernaum. Were it not for the united testimony, though in different ways, of all the three Evangelists to this point, we should, perhaps, have supposed the Miracle to have occurred rather at Bethsaida, which, St. John says, was "the city of Andrew and Peter," and in which, therefore, we might have expected their house or residence to have been. But all the three Evangelists agree in placing this scene in Capernaum. St. Matthew includes it within that group of Miracles which followed upon the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount. And, indeed, that Sermon was largely "confirmed by signs following." St. Mark and St. Luke agree in making this Miracle the sequel to the healing of the Demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum. While St. Matthew, who makes no allusion to that Miracle, makes this to follow after the healing of the Centurion's servant. But all agree in fixing the locality of the Miracle at Capernaum.

Now, this involves a change of residence on the part of Peter and his household. Formerly of Bethsaida, we now find him and his brother Andrew residing in Capernaum. Nor is this at all strange or unaccountable. Jesus made Capernaum the place of His own more fixed abode, and therefore was it called "His own city;" and it is but reasonable to suppose that Peter's change of residence was in order that he might follow the fortunes of his Master, and reside near Him at Capernaum. And this, perhaps, may form an item in the great act of self-denial recorded of Peter, as well as of the other Apostles, that he had "left all, and followed Jesus." He had left his native city, and very likely his house, and gains, and fortune there. We now find him a resident in Capernaum; and although the house is called "Peter's house," and in St. Mark "the house of Simon and Andrew," it is not at all improbable but that it may have belonged to "Peter's wife's mother," who certainly resided there, and is regarded in the sequel of the Miracle as the mistress of the house.

The day on which this Miracle was wrought was the Sabbath-

day. This appears from the comparison of the various narratives. It was on the Sabbath-day that Jesus entered into the synagogue to teach; and on this occasion it was that His teaching took such firm hold upon the people: "And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." The sequel of the Miracle, too, indicates that it was wrought on the Sabbath. In St. Matthew's account there is no explanation why it was that the people waited till "the even was come," before they brought the sick to Jesus. But in the other Evangelists this is explained by the circumstance that it was the Sabbath-day, and the people refrained from bringing the sick and diseased until the Sabbath was ended (compare Matt. xii. 10), that is, in the evening or at sunset; and therefore St. Mark says, it was "at even, when the sun did set;" and St. Luke, "when the sun was setting;"* that is, that they lost no time, but straightway, on the ending of the Sabbath, it being as yet scarcely past, "they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed of devils. And all the city was gathered together at the doors."

I would furthermore add, that it is clear from this narrative that St. Peter was a married man, and that, being called to the apostleship, he did not, in "leaving all," ignore his domestic relationships, and forsake his wedded wife. Nor was Peter deemed by His Lord unworthy of discipleship because he was married. In the whole body of Apostles, whether they were married or single, "wisdom was justified of all her children." No rule or law of celibacy was enacted, either as a qualification beforehand, or as a requirement afterward. Priestly celibacy has no authority from God's Word, nor yet from the practice of the earlier ages of the Church. St. Paul asserts his liberty in this respect, and even quotes the example of Peter and others: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other Apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. ix. 5.) The whole tenor of St. Paul's directions to Timothy respecting the ministers of the Church tends to the same point. Bishops are spoken of as married men—"a bishop must be . . . the husband of one wife." And this relationship involved domestic responsibilities—"one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." (See 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, 5, 11, 12.)

* This comparison of the various narratives suggests one of the examples of "undesigned coincidence" in *Blunt's Scriptural Coincidences*, part iv., § v.

Celibacy has been enjoined by the Church of Rome upon all her clergy; and yet that Church asserts that Peter was her first head and founder. How, then, does the constrained celibacy of her priesthood consist with the fact that Peter was himself a married man, and that Christ honoured his domestic hearth with His presence, and with the performance of a Miracle on Peter's wife's mother? I regard this rule of the Romish Church as being as much a departure from the plain letter of Holy Scripture as any other of the erroneous doctrines and practices which she has introduced into her system. Heedless of the testimony of God's Word, the Roman Catholic Church has sought to elevate the priesthood into a caste or special class of men; and for her own purposes has stamped the principle of priestly celibacy on her system, and has thus committed herself to at least one of the marks of the foretold apostacy—"forbidding to marry." (1 Tim. iv. 3.)

But to return to the narrative.—There is something peculiarly touching and affecting in the request of this household, as recorded by St. Mark—"And anon they tell Him of her;" and by St. Luke—"And they besought Him for her." After the many Miracles wrought upon strangers, Samaritans, Gentiles, here is a home necessity of one of His own chosen followers. And well might they importune their great Master in this behalf. They who had been the witnesses of His mighty deeds and of the mighty faith that ever brought the afflicted suppliants to His feet—surely they have been already taught the great lesson, how to make known their own wants and necessities, and to appreciate in the Person of Jesus the very "Power of God" for the fulfilment of their own desires. Yes, Apostles, Evangelists, ministers, are but men. And oftentimes, when they have returned from their public duties, they find domestic wants and home sorrows, which must needs be brought under the notice of the Great Master. Jesus is as much needed in our own homes, and His care as much called for in our own vineyards, as in the homes and vineyards of other men. Oh, for more of the presence of Christ in the dwellings of His ministers, to heal diseases there, both of body and of soul!

The power of Christ and His mastery over diseases are manifested here. This fever was not some trifling indisposition; it was, as St. Luke calls it, "a great fever." It appears also that no small effort was made and virtue put forth by Christ, for He adopted the attitude and address of authority—"He stood over her, and rebuked the fever."

This Miracle of healing was instantaneous. There was no natural progress of the disease to its natural crisis, and then a gradual convalescence of the patient. This was the work of a moment, and it was followed by immediate results—"The fever left her;" and left her, not in weakness and exhaustion after the struggle, but in perfect health. And this was evidenced by the fact, that "immediately she arose, and ministered unto them."

These active efforts of many who had received of the miraculous power of Jesus are the best and most palpable proofs of the reality of the deed. Not only the suddenness of the act of healing, but the absence of all feeling of the past disease, and the instant readiness to return to the ordinary duties of healthy life, testify to the completeness of these Miracles of the Lord: now in the prostration of a burning fever, and next moment busying about the house, up and doing, ministering to the wants of her visitors. What could be more superhuman, more beyond the province of nature, more unquestionably miraculous than this?

And the evidence of the Miracle thus set forth produced a corresponding result. At sunset of that memorable Sabbath, whole hospitals of diseased folk poured forth to the feet of Jesus, the Great Physician. Most worthy end of a Sabbath so begun. The morning dawned upon the Great Preacher, as He mounted the lofty pulpit of the mountain, and there preached the Sermon of sermons. The mid-day changed the scene from precept to the practical doing of the deeds of good. The Sabbath evening brought the Saviour to the house of His chosen ministers, and there He found scope for His goodness and His power. And now the Sabbath closes with a large array of diseased folk—diseased in mind and body, in soul and conscience—who have come, or have been carried, to the feet of the Saviour. And that "virtue," already so largely drawn upon, is not exhausted yet. Still He speaks the word; still refreshes the weary; still dries the tears of sorrow; and sends multitudes away rejoicing—glad for some blessing received, for some kindness offered, for some good deed accomplished, for some great favour done.

And here St. Matthew quotes from one of the prophets a foreshadow of the promised Saviour—"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (viii. 17).—This is in substance quoted from the Prophet Isaiah (liii. 4): "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." Some difficulty has been felt in the matter of this reference by St. Matthew to the words of Isaiah. In the original words of the prophecy, they

rather refer to Christ's propitiatory sacrifice, in which He bore and suffered for the *sins* of men. And in this connection the prophecy is referred to by St. Peter—"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." (1 Pet. ii. 24.) Some suppose that the use of the words of Isaiah by St. Matthew was merely by accommodation; but a more real connection must surely exist between the original in the prophecy and its echo in the Gospel. And, indeed, it is from the twofold use of the words of the prophet, as quoted in the New Testament, that we come to understand the fulness of the prophetic meaning. Isaiah speaks of Christ's sympathy with human sufferings, and of Christ's sacrifice for human sins. The Evangelist lays stress on the former of these, and the Apostle Peter on the latter; and thus, between the prophecy and its double interpretation, is the character of the sufferings of Christ fully set forth and illustrated.

Sin and suffering are connected together, as cause and effect. This association of the two is ever kept in view in Holy Scripture. Accordingly, the Miracles of Christ took the direction of human suffering, for the alleviation of the sorrows and woes of our fallen humanity. Thus, "He took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses;" and this preparatory to the greater act, the great work of propitiation, when He underwent the heavier load, and "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." In Christ's person and work we have an Example and an Atonement, and in His sufferings we have both Sympathy and Sacrifice. Before He suffered as a Sacrifice, He had told the full tale of human sorrow, and in His own person had learned all the whole length and breadth of human suffering. He knew what was in man; and this, not only by His Divine Omniscience, but also by His human experience. He had sounded all the depths of sorrow; the bitterest tears were the tears of Jesus: "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger." (Lam. i. 12.)

Indeed, in this consists the sympathy of Jesus. His was true sympathy—the fact answering literally to the word. We seem to have lost the true meaning of the word. Our idea of sympathy seems to be—*feeling for* another; whereas the real meaning of the word is—*suffering with* another. It, therefore, means something more than fellow-feeling; it means fellow-*suffering*. Our sympathy is but a cheap and easy thing in comparison of the true sympathy of Jesus. To subscribe for the needy, to clothe the naked, to feed the outcast, to support the weak—we call this

sympathy. The peer and the aristocrat will sometimes unbend, and visit the hovels of the poor—and we call this sympathy. A monarch may now and then lay aside his diadem, and be found as an humble visitor in the cottage of the peasant; and this is accounted one of the noblest acts of sympathy. And yet in none of these is there any actual *suffering*. There may be much display and ostentation in those gifts to the poor. The coronet is soon resumed after the visit to the lanes and alleys of the city. The monarch undergoes no suffering in causing, for the moment, that cottage to become a palace. But suppose the monarch to resign his royalty, and robe himself in the raiment of a poor man; or the peer to exchange his easy couch for the agonised sick-bed of yonder patient in the hospital; or some rich man to take upon him the poverty of the pauper—this would be true sympathy; it would be suffering *with* the object of your care.

And this is what Jesus did, who “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” He left His throne, and laid aside His royal diadem. He descended from the majesty of God to the humility of man. He went lower still, and stooped to the low level of humiliation. He exchanged places with man. He took the burden of our sins and sicknesses; and we take His yoke, which is easy, and His burden, which is light. This is sympathy—the only sympathy that has ever been worthy of the name. The union of Christ with the sufferings of men was so close and so intimate that He bore not only the *cause* of sorrow—sin, but also the *consequences* of sin—the sicknesses and infirmities of man. There is not a sorrow that afflicts you, but Jesus knows it, has felt it, has experienced it. The pendulum of weary care never beats upon your breast but in its rebound it beats back upon the breast of Jesus; and, accordingly, when Esaias prophesied of these things, saying, “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,” he included in this saying all the sins of our hearts, all the infirmities of our minds, and all the sicknesses of our bodies. And thus the Evangelical Prophet receives the twofold commentary of the Evangelist and the Apostle—the one speaking of the sympathy of Christ with man’s body, and the other of the sacrifice of Christ for man’s soul.

I have thus far endeavoured to open up the Miracle in connection with its context. It is a gem set in the midst of a glorious setting; the Miracle itself tending to illustrate the context that surrounds it; showing us—

1. *The sanctity of domestic relationship.* Jesus was a homely Man. Ofttimes did He retire into the safety and quietude of the

home circle; now in Capernaum, then at Bethany. He sanctioned the social relationships of men; now in the sick chamber of Simon's house, then at the marriage of Cana in Galilee. How does this consecrate our social ties, and hallow the home circle with the blessed associations of Christ's own intercourse with those He loved! The Religion of Christ is essentially a Home influence. Would it were more thoroughly realised and better felt throughout the families of Christendom! It was never designed that Christian men should withdraw themselves from society and its lawful associations; but that, as the salt of the earth, they should intermingle in the duties of life, and sanctify the world for the service of their Master. An example of this is given even in the case of Apostles, in order thereby to illustrate the mind of God respecting the ministers of His Church; that they too should betake themselves into the safe retreat and innocent joys of home and family.

2. *The power of Jesus Christ.* He that rebuked the wind and waves has power also to rebuke the fevers and diseases of the bodies of men. He here once more displays that might which He ever wielded as the Lord of all. And that power is not exhausted, though multitudes drew forth the potent virtue that went forth to heal them. Mighty and manifold were the miracles He wrought within the circle of this apostolic home, this house of Peter. And the power of Jesus still exists for the healing of the soul's diseases. He oftentimes manifests Himself in the homes of His ministers, and thence sends forth the message all around, so that multitudes flock to the healing standard of the Saviour; and all who ask are healed of their spiritual diseases.

3. *The use of restored and renovated health.* Simon's wife's mother "immediately arose, and ministered unto them." Such ought ever to be the result of renewed health. It is of God that we are spared; so that these spared lives may be devoted to His service, and dedicated to the advancement of His cause. And so also, in a spiritual sense, as soon as we are raised to spiritual life, we instantly become ministering servants of our Lord. Our hearts and hands, and talents and opportunities, are devoted to Him. We are busied in His cause, and think it neither task nor toil when occupied in His great concerns. So let it be with us, and we shall have learned, not utterly in vain, the lessons to be gathered from this domestic Miracle.

BETHESDA.

“Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. . . . And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.”—JOHN v. 2, 5.

THIS Miracle is recorded only by St. John (v. 1—16). It presents more difficulties in the text of the narrative, than in its exposition. The general statement is this: Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the purpose of attending one of the Jewish feasts (what feast of the Jews it was, we are not informed); and during His sojourn, He visited the pool of Bethesda, which was near the sheep-market. Here He found many of the diseased people of the place—“a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered.” These persons are represented as waiting for the moving of the waters; and this moving of the waters of the pool is accounted for in our English version in this way—that an angel descended on periodical occasions into the pool, and troubled the waters, and whosoever stepped down first into the pool was healed of whatsoever disease he had. Here Jesus finds a man who had an infirmity for thirty and eight years. Conversation ensues between Jesus and the impotent man, which results in the command of Jesus—“Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.” And immediately the man was healed of his infirmity. The same day was the Sabbath; and the legal Jews raised an objection against these works of mercy being done on the Sabbath-day; to whom Jesus answers—“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;” and thence proceeds to open up the great fact and doctrine of His Godhead, of that co-equal and co-eternal power which belongs to Him equally with God.

The difficulty connected with the account of this narrative arises from the allusion to the moving of the waters, and the descent of the angel at periodical occasions into the pool. It is agreed upon by all commentators that there is no authority in

the original for the fourth verse and the mention of the moving of the waters in the third verse. The earliest manuscripts are plainly without this portion of the present received text of the Miracle. That the water was periodically troubled is established by the allusion to the circumstance in the seventh verse, which is in all the earliest manuscripts.* And it is supposed that the fourth verse was originally a gloss or side-note, which, being introduced into the manuscripts of the early centuries, was at last taken as part of the original text, and so perpetuated. The idea conveyed is not at all unnatural, and certainly it does not read like an interpolation. That the waters were moved or stirred is certain from the seventh verse; they must have been stirred miraculously; and hence in the earlier traditions this was ascribed to a "messenger" (ἄγγελος) (translated *angel*) specially commissioned for the purpose.

Here, then, was congregated a very hospital of incurables—incurable by any means other than miraculous. And what a congregation! How strange that moving power that stirred the pool, and how strange the required condition, that only one, and he the first to step down into the water, should be healed. What earnestness must that have been that brought so many, when only one could receive the benefit! Why this zeal, this struggle, this prolonged anxiety, this frequent and oft-repeated effort? Only one could be healed, and each one sought to be that one. What a lesson to us to strive for heaven. Yea, even though there be *few* that be saved, yet this requires all the greater diligence that we be found among those few.

This was the chosen place of the Saviour's visit—this scene of woe. His attention is attracted by one man, a case of extreme necessity—perhaps the extremest, longest, and most inveterate of all: "a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." His own statement is pitiful in the extreme, such as would move the heart of any who had a heart to move. And on this occasion he met with One whose power is equal to His love.

The Saviour, walking as a casual visitor through this medley of a crowd, stands beside this infirm and impotent man, whose protracted and profitless effort He seemed to be acquainted with.

* It is a great evidence in favour of the Holy Scriptures that we are thus able to compare the received text with the ancient manuscripts, as it enables us to intelligently understand and appreciate the searching scrutiny that human learning can bring to bear upon the Bible, to the better opening up of its Divine truths.

He asks the man this question—"Wilt thou (art thou willing to) be made whole?" What a strange question! Surely, the man's presence there, his oft and oft disappointment, is proof enough that this is his one great desire. Why, then, was this question asked, and why is it recorded? Is it simply a vague, tempting question, of mere curiosity? No; we utterly miss the meaning of it, unless we rise from the power of Jesus over the body to the greater power exercised upon the soul—from things that are seen to the things that are unseen.

Here, the Saviour speaks to you and to me. This is Bethesda. "Wilt thou be made whole?" is the question asked of us; and unless we are consciously sick and diseased, and *know* the plague of our own hearts, and strive that it may be cured, we cannot answer it as it ought to be answered. The Saviour visits us, to inquire and to question, to pity and to save.

"Here to each heart Thyself reveal,
And all who enter cause to feel
The presence of our God!"

Jesus stands, and asks to-day of you and of me, and of all men—"Wilt *thou* be made whole?" Would that we could answer with the anxious, earnest jealousy of this man, who told the Saviour of his efforts, his difficulties, and his disappointments, and found in Jesus the one thing needful to restore him from the bondage of his infirmity!

I now proceed to subdivide our subject for the purpose of exposition:—

I. The *Disease*. This man's disease was protracted and inveterate. It had cost him many an effort, and had caused him many a disappointment. The peculiar nature of the disease is not stated; but enough that he was at Bethesda, among the blind, halt, and withered—he was, therefore, one of these.

This disease of that man's body is the type and emblem of our disease in sin. How unwelcome the tidings that we are diseased! Pride shrinks from it; self-sufficiency resists it, and is loath to confess it. And yet, it is true that "there is no health in us." But how hard it is to come down to a realisation of our diseased condition; to thoroughly understand our position before God; and honestly to speak the truth respecting ourselves. But why and wherefore else is Christianity? and why the sacrifice of Jesus? What need of a Redeemer, if we are not bound and sold under sin? What need of a Saviour, if we are not lost and undone? What need of a Physician, if we are not diseased?

What need of an atonement, if we are not by nature alienated from God? We have great need to tell up the details of our spiritual disease, that we may fully realise our position and its danger. There is the carnal heart, the unruly will, the evil thoughts; the deeds that defile our hands, the sins that oppress our consciences; the things we have left undone that we ought to have done, and the things we have done that we ought not to have done; our unprofitableness; our worldliness; our regardlessness of God; "the whole head sick, the whole heart faint;" the wicked, wanton, wayward character; the light that is in most of us being but very darkness, just light enough to make the darkness visible, and to make ourselves to be without excuse. Yes, these are the elements that go to make up the spiritual state of all men by nature. We are all thus diseased.

If you rebel against this description, then go and stand beside the spotless Jesus; and what are you? Measure yourself by His stature, and learn your littleness! Contrast yourself with His holiness, and how unholy are you! It is the contrast of light with darkness, of Christ with Belial, that will give you such knowledge and understanding of your true position as will drive you to your Bethesda and its healing waters, to meet Christ there! The disease of sin is long protracted and inveterate in all men; in some more than thirty and eight years.

II. The Disease is *curable*; that is, the diseased man may be made whole, because Christ has power to heal. By nature, his disease may, from its long standing, be regarded as incurable; not so by grace. With God, all things are possible; and all things are possible to him that believeth. Here is a remedy provided in the healing waters of the pool; and if only this remedy can be applied, all is well. What a great truth is here declared, as to the importance of *applying* the provided means, as to the inutility of the means unless applied. Here were the waters of healing; the presence of the man; his constant patience in spite of disappointments; evidence thus given of the consciousness of his disease, and confidence in the remedy. All that was needed was—that the remedy should be *applied*. If only he could be the first to step down into the waters as soon as they were troubled, his malady would be healed, and he would receive the great and crowning reward of all his patient labour and endurance. But in this he failed. Hitherto he had been unable to apply the remedy.

Now Jesus intervenes; and, seeing this object of pity, he asked him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" If you or I were to

walk through a multitude of diseased folk, and ask such a question, it might be considered as a mere trifling with their sorrow, a tantalising mockery of their disease. But when Christ asks the question, the inquiry is the prelude to the cure. Every saint in heaven is a proof of the curability of sin. They were once in the hospital here, diseased, and apparently helpless; but through Christ's power they have been lifted up, and having been discharged cured, they are now returning thanks, eternal thanks, in the Church of the redeemed above. Therefore says the Apostle,—“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. vi. 11.) It is this mighty deliverance, in the cure of the disease of sin, that tunes the song of the redeemed in heaven—“Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” (Rev. i. 5.) It is this, also, that gives all the emphasis to the statement of the Apostle—“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” (2 Cor. v. 17.) Yes, the disease of sin is curable, because Jesus died. The Miracles wrought upon the body are the types and emblems of the greater Miracles that are wrought upon the soul. The Great Physician is here.

III. There is need of *our willingness*. “Wilt thou be made whole?” Jesus asks, that He may enlist the sufferer's attention to the deed He is about to do; and, in a spiritual sense, to show that our willingness must co-operate with His power to the healing of the soul. We are not mere machines; we are called and addressed as reasoning men. Man has a power of choice, volition, and selection. God does not drive men like dumb, driven cattle; but seeks to influence their will and judgment, and thus to gain their hearts. We come to God because we desire to come, He having put into our mind this good desire. We are drawn, not driven, to God. He leadeth us as a shepherd leads his sheep. He moves the will, and the act follows after. “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” (Phil. ii. 13.)

There must be the intelligent exercise of the knowledge and will of man in his dealings with God. I am convinced that no man has ever dropped into heaven by mistake; no man ever entered heaven accidentally; no man was ever forced into it against his will. God gives us eyes to see, judgment to discern, feet to run, hopes to cheer, and a hearty will to send us on our way rejoicing. “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for Thou art my praise.” (Jer. xvii. 14.)

At the same time the work is wholly of God. In our waywardness and unbelief we oftentimes allow our rebellious thoughts to sit in judgment upon God's dealings. Naaman, in his anger and disappointment at the simple cure suggested by the prophet of Israel, said, "Behold *I thought*," &c.; but what right had he to think or pass judgment, when the means were altogether miraculous, and therefore beyond his power of thought? And even so is it now; you come to Jesus, as a diseased patient, not to prescribe, but to be prescribed for. The waters of Abana and Pharpar may be as powerful as the waters of Jordan; but this is not the question—it is this, that whatever God directs, it is for you implicitly to yield and submit yourself to that direction.

Ay, yield yourself to His charge and care, and indeed you may: "Cast all your cares on Him; for He careth for you." Our professed willingness is too often spoiled by our unwillingness to submit to the measures proposed. To all God's promises and provisions certain conditions are annexed; and unless these be fulfilled, the bargain is incomplete.

Wilt thou, then, be made whole? Do you really desire the healing waters? Go and dip in Bethesda to-day! Then rise at Christ's command; submit your will to Him, and He will make you willing; obey what He commands, and He will give you power fully to obey. And these waters are able to heal, not only one, but many. They are ever stirred, they are never stagnant, they are always healing. The "Angel" of the Covenant descends every day,—is always there,—to move their healing power. A brother that steps in before you does not rob these waters of their virtue. In the flood of Christ's own cleansing blood there is enough for you, enough for me, enough for all—and yet to spare. Only, be thou willing!

IV. We in ourselves are *helpless*. We now stand, not as spectators, but as actors, in the scene—ourselves directly and personally interested in the matter. We are the diseased folk; and like the man at Bethesda, we are naturally helpless: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." This is personally the condition of each unconverted soul.

It is important (and profitable too) that we look upon the scene in this light. We are ready enough to rejoice that the diseased souls have resorted to the healing waters, but we are equally ready to forget that it behoves ourselves to resort thither. It is wonderful, with what a patronising air we look down upon Bethesda, and from the upper terraces survey the congregated sick folk. We are glad, and we rejoice that so many have been

moved to come. "Ah! poor creatures!" we say; and even subscribe of our means to keep them there, near to the waters, so that in time they may be healed; and yet all the time we may be forgetful of the fact that we ourselves are as they are, just the same diseased souls, in the same gall of bitterness, in the same bond of iniquity. The only difference is this (and altogether in their favour), that their eyes are open to their disease, while our eyes are closed to the great fact of our diseased state: we are spectators; they are actors.

In this we do not well. Suppose some score of deaf and dumb people were to subscribe their money, so that some deaf and dumb brother should be restored to the power of speech and hearing; or suppose a dozen blind men to contribute of their means, so that one of their blind brethren should receive his sight; and yet all these remain perfectly satisfied to continue themselves to be still deaf and dumb and blind. What would be thought of such persons? And yet this is precisely what we find in our everyday life and experience. Men subscribe to convert the heathen, who are not themselves converted. There are vast multitudes of men who are content to be pious by proxy, and who labour to make other men religious, without committing themselves to religion's ways.

But now, in our present topic, we must no longer *look* on Bethesda; we must ourselves come down, for we are ourselves diseased; and we must sit among the halt and the blind; and with the anxiety and earnestness of this man, we must wait, and, it may be, wait long, for the moving of the waters. And who can tell but that Jesus may come, and with one commanding word, with a single gentle touch, revive us? And, surely, one drop of His own sweet mercy, dropped into our bitter cup, would be better than all the waters of Bethesda.

See, then, this man's *helplessness*. If he could have cured himself, if any local physician had been able to heal him, if medical skill could by any means have reached his case, he would not have been found at Bethesda. But, knowing his disease and its incurableness, he has somehow crawled to the healing waters, and, though with so many odds against him, has yet made the effort—it may have been a very painful effort—to reach the waters of the pool. His effort is our example, that we "*strive* to enter in at the strait gate;" as his experience is also for our learning—he had "learned to labour and to wait;" and thus he waited long, yet he waited not in vain.

Arrived at the waters of the pool, he is helpless still—"Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the

pool." The healing powers of Bethesda were restricted. One cure at a time exhausted its healing qualities, and its virtue had gone forth from it. But there is One there, whose healing virtue ceaseth not; the power of the waters may be dead, but the power of Jesus is alive.

Just contemplate the sad case of this impotent man. He is on the very margin of the pool; and yet, for want of help, his own efforts are utterly unavailing. And what a picture is this of our own spiritual state, our state of natural helplessness. All that is needed is a friend; then who will help? But all that are there thronging the five porches of Bethesda are alike diseased folk. They cannot help each other, seeing that each is for himself, intent on his own cure. How true is the word of the Psalmist—"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." (Ps. xlix. 7.) If then we look for, or depend upon, mere earthly help, we shall be long before we touch the living waters; and until we touch, we are not healed.

Observe here the man's consciousness of his helplessness. He had good reason to know this. His oft disappointments were the oft teachers of this great fact. And therefore his reply to the Saviour's question is an indirect answer—more of an apology than an answer—"I have no man, no friend, no help, no helper. I am willing, most anxious; it is the very desire of my heart. But what is the use of my willingness, seeing it is obstructed by my helplessness? I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool."

Yes, there he lay—the very type of thousands still; within view of the healing waters, within hearing of the sound of its troubled depths, with a full persuasion as to its healing powers. The theory complete, a very bird's-eye view of all the ways and means appointed, and the palpable evidences before his eyes—and yet, withal, no cure for *his* disease, simply because he was helpless. Time after time he tried, and yet no cure, for he was helpless. All—everything provided, and yet inoperative, because he was helpless.

And is not this the case of many? Is not this man verily and indeed a type of thousands? So near to the healing waters, and yet no cure; not far from the kingdom of heaven, and yet some one thing in the way; "almost," but not "altogether," a Christian; on the very margin of the cleansing flood, but not yet plunged *into* it! Alas, what wreck and ruin hath sin made! We are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." And if our salvation depended on ourselves, we never could be saved.

V. The *Helper*. It is Jesus who asks the question—"Wilt thou be made whole?" The impotent man (judging by his answer) plainly does not yet recognise who it is that has thus questioned him, but he soon shall know it all. He speaks forth the most truthful apology; and in the declaration of his own helplessness, he finds the true Helper. Jesus, seeing his helpless condition, and commiserating the hardship of his case, now brings His love, His pity, and His power, to bear upon the impotent man; and He saith unto him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." He pursues the man with no further questions. He tells not His name, nor who He is. All shall yet be made known by the power of the deed. Jesus has ascertained just these three things—the man's knowledge of his disease; his willingness to be healed; his helplessness to attain the remedy. Man's extremity becomes God's opportunity; so now Jesus fulfils all his desire; He tells this helpless man to lift himself, to lift his bed, and to walk. The same Jesus that gave the command, gave also the power to obey it; and after long striving, and after many anxious prayers, the man is at last rewarded with success, all the more welcome because it was unexpected. On that occasion, Jesus displayed His godlike power, and caused all His goodness to pass before the man—this object of His care; "and immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked."

All this is eminently suggestive of our own spiritual condition, and of the whole process of salvation. Our helplessness in the sight of God and man is of the extremest kind: "And He saw there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His arm brought salvation unto him; and His righteousness, it sustained him." (Is. lix. 16.) And this mighty salvation suggests the song of the Psalmist—"He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." (Ps. lxxii. 12.) And yet again, the dreary, desolate experience of David—"I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." (Ps. cxlii. 4, 5.)

Yes, it is even so; at our worst, Jesus intercedes. We are weak; He is strong. His strength is made perfect in our weakness, when we, in our state of utter helplessness, cast our dead weight on Him. Then it is that we are enabled to know how it is that "God hath laid help on One that is mighty." And from the contrast of our former state and of the present salvation, we

can appreciate the truth of the Apostle's words—"For when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. v. 6.)

This Jesus now comes to us, and asks—"Wilt thou be made whole?" And thus, he that is destitute, and has no helper, finds in Jesus, not only a Helper, but also a Saviour. And at His command we lift ourselves from our diseased condition; we feel the life-blood circulate freely through our veins. Healthy appetites come upon us, and food is supplied to feed them, and manly strength and vigour rise where all had hitherto been weakness and infirmity; and the man thus healed, thus saved, betakes himself to the duties and privileges of his new life, and chiefly does he glorify that God who hath called him out of such darkness into such marvellous light.

The Evangelist adds upon the recital of the cure—"And on the same day was the Sabbath" (v. 9). The Jews, therefore, seeing the man go forth, carrying his bed, laid hold of this circumstance in order to weaken the character of the Miracle, and to prejudice the popular mind against Jesus. They accordingly objected—"It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." The man's answer to this objection is remarkable, inasmuch as he connects the carrying of the bed with the cure itself, of which, indeed, it was the sequel and proof. He urges that it was the same authority that had removed his disease, which also commanded him to carry his bed. The disease had obeyed that great Master's voice; and shall not he, too, obey? The man lays stress upon this fact—"He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk."

It is a favourable view we receive of the once impotent man, when we next find him "in the Temple," where he next meets with Jesus. He had, no doubt, gone up to the House of the Lord, to render thanks for this wondrous deliverance which had been wrought in him. A grateful heart first of all conducts men to the mercy-seat, there to pay their vows unto God. This man seems at once to have repaired to the altar of the Lord, there to offer his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. There Jesus finds him, and reveals Himself as the Lord's Christ, and with an admonitory word dismisses him, saying, "Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

This expression leads us to understand that this man's diseased state was because of some sin or course of iniquity; and that if this recovery does not work in him the effects of righteousness, "a worse thing," a yet more terrible condemnation, may come

upon him. What a commentary is this upon the nature and character of sin; and how much more terrible when that "worse thing" is measured in the balances of the Unseen, and wrapped up in the womb of the Future! That man's sin, somehow committed thirty and eight years ago, had brought forth its immediate recompense in the bodily disease that sent him forth mourning all his subsequent days till now. Thirty and eight years was he tied and bound with the chain of this sin—bodily and spiritually bound! Ay, oft and oft did he have cause—an ever-present cause—to repent. Well did he resort to Bethesda, and seek the virtue of those troubled waters that had power to soothe his agitated body. But now, in this "house of mercy,"* he meets with One who can appease the body, by first allaying the troubles of the soul, and bidding the agitated conscience, Peace, be still! Jesus first speaks pardon, and then gives peace; first delivers us from all our sins, and then enables us to serve Him with a quiet mind.

But how stringent are the conditions—"Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." What worse thing could have befallen this man than what had already consumed his years in sorrow, and kept him in hard bondage during so long a period of his life? Another bodily captivity, perhaps; another vial of wrath poured on his head; another recompense of renewed iniquity. But yet this is the typical foreshadow that stretches its full length beyond the time now present, and extends into the time to come. In this dispensation "the worse thing," indeed, is that which is beyond the grave; the worm that dieth not, the fire that is not quenched. If great spiritual lessons are taught in the Miracles of our Lord; then, here is a lesson worthy of being well and wisely learned, and ever and always acted on. Trifle not with sin; it is the abominable thing which God hates; it is the body-consuming and soul-destroying principle that robs God of His creation, and fills Hell with victims. "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

The man, now knowing who it was that had healed him, "departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole!" We are not informed what was the motive of this information, whether it was in treachery or in a desire to magnify the character of Jesus. We would fain hope it was the latter; and I rather think it was, seeing that he makes the announce-

* Bethesda, in the Hebrew, means "House of Mercy."

ment in connection with his recovery, and not in connection with their objection—the carrying of his bed. He came not to them to inform upon the man who had urged him (in their legal point of view) to break the Sabbath; but to testify that by His power he had been made whole. The form of the message oftentimes suggests the motive, whether in affection or in anger.

At all events, this announcement involved Jesus in persecution at the hands of the Jews. They sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath-day. But to this objection He urges His Father's example—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God, in His preserving and sustaining Providence, is ever active. All His deeds are deeds of good and works of mercy; and He must still be about His Father's business. It was not a work of labour or of toil; nor was it, in any respect, an infringement of the sanctity of the Sabbath. He raised the man to health and strength; and his carrying of his bed was part of the Miracle; it was the evidence of its truth, the proof of its accomplishment.

This answer of Jesus only provoked them the more. The unbelieving Jews saw in it the great truth of Christ's Divinity, and, therefore, all the more strongly resisted it. And now they add to their former charge this other—that He had said also "that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God." Herein, the Jews rightly conceived the inevitable conclusions to which they must assent, if they admit the claims of Christ. To be the Son of God is to be equal with God; is to be very God of very God. And what is this but the true faith of the Christian? We believe Jesus to be the Son of the living God, and, therefore, we believe Him to be co-eternal and co-equal with God, in an eternal generation, without beginning and without end; and this is God. Hereupon is founded one of those detailed addresses of Jesus, which it seems to have been the special vocation of St. John to record; as though that class of Miracles which tended most in their subsequent doctrine to expound the great verity of the Divine nature of Jesus Christ, had been specially consigned to the care of the beloved Disciple.

This again points out the intimate connection between the Miracles of Christ and the doctrines of the Gospel; showing how it is that we are indebted to these great facts for the expansion and unfolding of most of the great and blessed truths of the Christian faith. We need have no lack of Christian instruction, so long as the wonderful works of Jesus thus continue as the great demonstrative teachers in the school of Christ.

FEEDING THE MULTITUDES.

“And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.”—MATT. xiv. 20, 21.

“And they did all eat and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.”—MATT. xv. 37, 38.

Two Miracles of similar character and meaning are now before us—the Feeding of the Multitudes. The former of these gave the supply of bread to the Five Thousand; the latter to the Four Thousand. These were two distinct Miracles, wrought on two distinct occasions of the Saviour’s ministry.

The Miracle of Feeding the Five Thousand is the only Miracle (save that of the Resurrection) which is recorded by all the four Evangelists. Other Miracles are detailed by one, or two, or sometimes three, of the Gospels; but this narrative is supplied by all the four: St. Matthew (xiv. 15—21); St. Mark (vi. 35—44); St. Luke (ix. 12—17); St. John (vi. 5—14). The text and context of the Miracle is this—A season of trouble had befallen the little band of the adherents of Jesus. John the Baptist had been beheaded by the order of Herod; the disciples came and took the body and buried it; and then came and told Jesus. This circumstance suggests to the Master the propriety of withdrawing Himself and His disciples for a time, and He accordingly departed to a desert place, in the vicinity of the city of Bethsaida. This departure of Jesus was by ship, in which He crossed the sea of Galilee with His disciples. The intended secrecy of this retirement was defeated by the zeal and earnestness of the multitudes, who, finding that Jesus had departed by ship, now hasten by land or “on foot,” so that by skirting the lake they may arrive at the point on the opposite shore, for which the fishing boat is bound. Here, once more, is Jesus encircled by a

crowd. He has compassion on them, and pities them, for they are as sheep without a shepherd. He spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. And as the evening drew on, the disciples are solicitous about this great multitude, seeing they have hastily left their homes, and had not provided themselves with food. Accordingly, the disciples, as the readiest way of relieving themselves of the charge of so great a multitude, begged of their Master that He would send the people away, so that by dispersing themselves through the towns and villages they might obtain that food which could not be obtained in the desert place. It is in answer to this request that Jesus now intervenes with His mighty power. He takes what small supply is to be had—the whole stock of a certain lad in the crowd, consisting of five loaves and two fishes; and having caused the people to be disposed in orderly array, He took the bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude; and they were well filled. Moreover, they gathered of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

The second Miracle of Feeding the Multitudes is recorded by St. Matthew (xv. 32—39), and St. Mark (viii. 1—9). Jesus had departed into a mountain, hard by the sea of Galilee. Thither the multitudes resort, for the special purpose of commending their sick to the care of Jesus; and they brought to Him those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others. He healed them all; and thus caused the people greatly to wonder, and, still better, to glorify the God of Israel. The sojourn of this multitude with Jesus was of longer continuance than that of the former crowd; even to the extent of three days did they tarry there as spectators of His deeds, and as hearers of His word. Here, the necessity for the working of the Miracle seems more urgent, as the hunger and consequent weakness of the people were more intense, by reason of the longer interval of time. Hence the strong mode of expression employed, to indicate the extreme urgency of the case—the people had come from far; they had been three days there; and if they should be sent away fasting, there would be great danger that they would faint by the way. The supply for this company was larger than that of the former occasion—seven loaves, and a few fishes; while the number of the company was smaller—Four thousand; and the quantity of fragments was also less—“Seven baskets full.”

These twain Miracles, though alike in all their main features, are yet distinct, and have each their own distinctive marks. The

one was of greater magnitude, the other of greater urgency; but both remarkable, and perfectly unique in character. Some fore-shadows of this expansive and almost creative power of Miracle are recorded in the Old Testament:—The supply of the daily manna in the wilderness; the miracle of Elijah, by which the barrel of meal wasted not, nor did the cruse of oil fail (1 Kings xvii. 16); and that of his successor, Elisha, when he fed an hundred men with the twenty loaves of barley—a supply so small as to provoke the incredulity of the Prophet's servant—"What, should I set this before an hundred men?" And was yet assured, "They shall eat, and shall leave thereof."

There are evidences here of the increasing earnestness and growing zeal of the people in their appreciation of Christ's power and ministry. That they should thus endeavour to outrun, and that they actually did outrun the Saviour's progress, when He went by sea, and they by land,* is itself an evidence of the thorough earnestness of their desire to be with Jesus. The vast number of sick folk conveyed by the people to the feet of Jesus is also an illustration of their great confidence in His power and willingness to heal. And again, as in the latter Miracle, the tarrying of the multitudes so long as three days with Jesus, without even their necessary food, is a further testimony to their attachment to His word, and power, and doctrine.

The love and deep compassion of Jesus are also here set forth with peculiar force. He had on both occasions withdrawn Himself from the more ostentatious crowds, and had retired into the secrecy of His mountain home, apart, for the purpose of holding peaceful communion with His great Father's love. On both occasions He is disturbed from His quietude and peace by the presence and importunity of the people; and yet "He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing." Christ's condescension doth always answer to the boldness and importunity of our faith. We cannot outrun His grace, or weary His love, or exhaust His power.

The introduction to the former of these Miracles is a conversation between Jesus and His disciples—a rather anxious conversation (at least on the part of the disciples) as to the difficulty of obtaining a sufficient supply of bread, except for money, which perhaps was not in the power of this little company of Master and disciples to give. St. John gives this conversation more in detail, perhaps, than the other Evangelists. He explains how this

* "Πεζῆ, not 'on foot,' but 'by land,' as opposed to ἐν πλοίῳ."—*Bloomfield.*

multitude came to be gathered in such large numbers, from the fact that "the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh." This circumstance would cause large masses of people to be gathered in all the main thoroughfares leading up to Jerusalem. Jesus was still teaching His disciples in the mountain; and lo! as He lifted up His eyes, He saw a great company come unto Him. At once, and before the immediate necessity arose, Jesus questions Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"* Every question asked by Jesus is simply intended to draw out or elicit conversation to the better appreciation, by and by, of the Miracle He intends to perform. He inquires, so that it may be proved, that no human means can possibly suffice to compass the desired end, or, as is well said by St. John—"This He said to *prove* him; for He Himself knew what He would do."

Here then arises the difficulty in the disciples' minds. There is no bread in this desert place, and to send for it, at a probable cost of two hundred pence, is beyond the power of the disciples. This conversation would seem to have taken place during the earlier part of the day, and upon the arrival of the multitude. Then, at eventide, the disciples come to Jesus, and seeing there is no way of supplying the people with bread, they besought their Master to dismiss the assembly, so that by dispersing themselves throughout the adjacent villages, they might supply themselves with bread to eat.

It is at this juncture that Christ really interferes with power. It must be proved that man can do nothing, and then Jesus will do everything. He now undertakes this matter, and inquires whether there is *any* bread at all to be had in this great crowd; and it is reported that there is a lad who has five barley loaves and two small fishes. This small stock is at once secured, and upon this small supply does Christ now propose to build up that vast commissariat which is so largely and liberally to supply the hunger and the need of so unwieldy a multitude.

Here we do well to compare and combine the different narratives. It was a fitting place for so vast a labour—an open field, and much grass therein; a desert, or *lonely* place, and consequently withdrawn from the going to and fro of travellers. Upon this green sward Jesus commands the people to sit down by companies. St. Mark (always minute, even to the smallest par-

* This question was asked of *Philip*, probably because of his local connection with the place in which the people were gathered—"a desert place, belonging to the city called Bethsaida" (Luke ix. 10); and St. John says that "Philip was of Bethsaida" (John i. 44).

ticular) says that they sat down "in ranks by hundreds and by fifties."* Here is Jesus displaying Himself as the God of order and arrangement, by division of toil and distribution of labour, giving to each of His disciples a sphere for the exercise of this their typical ministry, as dispensers of the bread of life: "And gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude."

This scene is indeed fraught with blessed types and thoughts of better things. This Miracle was itself a lively type or emblem of that yet greater distribution of the bread of heaven to all those that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Here was marked out the great fact that God is not the author of confusion, but of order and organization. Here, wide-spread upon this field, was the emblem of the Church in the world, flocking to the feet of Jesus, hungering for the bread that He alone can give. And here is marked out the subdivision into companies, or congregations, or parishes, or districts, so that each shall have his own office and vocation, his own sphere to labour in, and no part neglected.

And as the multitudes are dependent upon Christ for this supply, so it is only as it is derived direct from Christ that it supplies the people with sufficiency. The small supply was as nothing, when compared with the hungry multitudes. But, in the hands of Jesus, and with the blessing of Jesus, and by the power of Jesus, it may be made more than sufficient for the wants of all. Therefore, "He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude: and they did all eat, and were filled." All depends upon the power and blessing of Christ—either of these withheld, the small supply must needs be insufficient for so large a demand. But with the miracle-working power of Jesus, this small stock may be increased and multiplied, until it hath reached the utmost bounds of that wondering crowd, that they may see, and feel, and know the reality of this amazing deed of power.

How this Miracle was wrought is known only to the great Worker of it. Our conceptions cannot grasp it; our understandings cannot fathom this most mysterious act. How the seed

* *Πρασιαί, πρασιαί*. This word (the repetition of which indicates the multiplicity of companies) means garden-plots for the growth of fruits or flowers, laid out in regular order and arrangement. Hence Dean Trench observes—"Our English '*ranks*' does not reproduce the picture to the eye, giving rather the notion of continuous lines. Wicklif's was better, '*by parties*.' Perhaps '*in groups*' would be as near as we could get to it in English."

reproduces itself a thousand fold, and a few grains may yet bring forth a full harvest of plenty, is a matter of our ordinary experience. It is one of the permanent and oft-recurring miracles which we usually call "the course of nature." But in this case, the life of the grain had been destroyed, and its power of reproduction had consequently ceased. And herein, methinks, we may trace a double Miracle—the infusion of a resurrection power into the lifeless grain, and the immediate growth of its reproduction, in the enlarged supply of bread to the people. Jesus here manifests Himself as the God of the resurrected grain, and as the God of the growing harvest. There is in this a putting forth of great power, indeed,—the grain revived, and also reproduced, and hungry multitudes fed thereby.

The full panorama of these two Miracles thus passing in review before our eyes, puts us in possession of some of the most beautiful features of this dispensation or "economy" of grace under which we are privileged to live. Here is, in emblem and type, the gathering together of the great family, sitting around their great Father's table—and that great Head of the household is Jesus, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." And even of the "desert place" it is said "there is much grass there." Where Jesus is, there are the green pastures. Here He manifests Himself as Father, Shepherd, Friend. Here, mid the want and hunger which man and human aid cannot supply, He imparts the confidence of faith—"I shall not want." Here He restores the souls of those that are faint and weary, and puts a new song into their mouth—"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." (Ps. xxiii.)

In these multitudes, then, we see the household of God, the human family, gathered to the feet of their Universal Father. Men, and women, and children—all classes, ages, sexes. Such is the constituency of the Church in the wilderness; and all are fed; not one is forgotten. Each disciple receives the charge of his own company; this is the scope of his mission. Each is a dispenser of that bread which God supplies. At the head of this great family sits the Father of the family—Jesus. He takes the bread of life, and, in the chief seat of that hospitable board, He blesses the provision which has been made. He then distributes to those who are His disciples; and the disciples dispense that which the Master has given them to bestow. Here is the Church of God on earth fed direct from a Father's hand, and also through the ministry of His servants.

It is in the narrative in St. John's Gospel (chapter vi.) that we are introduced to the higher and more spiritual interpretation of the Miracle. The three earlier Evangelists seem to have recorded the Miracles of Christ as evidences of His power; but St. John selects and records those wondrous works of Jesus which are illustrative of the doctrinal system which He came to establish. Thus, in almost every instance of a Miracle recorded by St. John, the work is followed up by the word of Jesus; some instructive commentary, or edifying doctrine deduced from the Miracle He hath wrought. There is an evident design in the selection of the Miracles by the Beloved Disciple. He records more than the Miracle—the subsequent teaching of Christ, the unfolding of the great doctrines of the Christian faith.

Thus is it in this context. The multitudes still followed Jesus, and, failing to find Him, they still seek for Him, with secondary and carnal motives, no doubt—"Ye seek me, not because ye saw the Miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." And thence He delivers this doctrine of an earth-abjuring and heaven-seeking faith—"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give unto you." Here is another evidence of doctrine contained in Miracle, and how these Miracles were designed to be the outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual manifestations of the Spirit to the hearts and consciences of men.

And thus Christ proceeds in this heavenly teaching. This bread with which He hath fed the multitude is but the emblem of the spiritual food whereby the hungry soul is satisfied. But how hard is it to preach these spiritual truths to carnal men and carnal minds! It is unbelief from first to last; the very word of Jesus becoming a stumbling-block because of the blindness of their unbelief. And even with this palpable evidence before them, of which they had all been sensibly partakers, they yet demand some other sign, and even compare and contrast the Miracle of Jesus with the Miracle of the manna, which they supposed to have been wrought by Moses. They demand—"What sign showest thou, then?" They also remind Him of the greatness of Moses' miracle—"He gave them bread *from heaven* to eat." Here is the old demand—"a sign from heaven." This earthly supply, these deeds done on earth—they loathed this light food, and required some sign, some portent, some wondrous thing from heaven. And, indeed, He is Himself a sign from heaven; but it needs more faith than they possess to realise and understand it—"Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the

true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (vi. 32, 33). And thereupon He adds more than once.—"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE."

This bread is still being dispensed to the multitudes; is still being delivered to disciples' hands; is still by them distributed throughout the great family of man. We see the spiritual want and destitution of the people; and we marvel how they can all be supplied with spiritual food here in the wilderness. Shall they be permitted to depart to seek elsewhere what only Christ can give them? Hear the voice of Jesus—"They need not depart; give *ye* them to eat." We answer in our unbelief—"We have here but five loaves and two fishes." And this our unbelief is checked and rebuked by Jesus, who takes the whole matter out of our weak hands, and gathers the whole deed into His own, saying—"Bring them hither to me." And, in the hands of Jesus, there is enough, and more than enough—sufficiency for all, and fragments besides.

Come, all ye hungering multitudes; draw near to the Great Dispenser; sit down in this grassy mead; gather around your Father's table! Here is the Bread of Life—by His hands broken, by His lips blessed, and by His power multiplied. The same bread feeds all that come; the same Gospel satisfies all that receive it; the same Saviour saves all that believe in Him. It is as the parent light that lights up all, and yet is not exhausted of its own power; the ever-flowing spring that fills all fountains, and swells all rivers, and yet is not emptied by its continual outgoing; the living seed that dies not, but sends forth its thirty-fold to-day, its sixty-fold to-morrow, and its hundred-fold from age to age—the seeds of Joseph's harvests still maintaining their undying life, and bringing forth seed for the sower and bread for the eater, to remotest generations. This reproductive power of Jesus is but the emblem of that love, that Divine love, which loves all the world, and yet is not expended;—from the central love of God in Christ, ever sending forth wider, greater, nobler manifestations, even to the uttermost. And all this until that Light shall shed its glory upon all the earth; and that stream that maketh glad the city of God shall cover the earth with the waters of Life; and the seed of the Gospel shall have put forth its branches, its leaves, and its ripened fruits; and the love of God shall have compassed all the world, and fed its multitudes with the Bread of heaven; and man shall yet again eat angels' food. "Lord, evermore give us this bread!" John vi. 34.

THE WITHERED HAND.

“For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day. And when He was departed thence, He went into their synagogue: and, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked Him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? that they might accuse Him.”—MATT. xii. 8—10.

THE context of this Miracle imparts the chief significance to the narrative. It is one of those Miracles which were wrought on the Sabbath-day, and which called forth, on that score, the most virulent opposition on the part of the Jews. The Sabbath Miracles are many—about seven in number of recorded cases, besides many others not recorded, but implied throughout the Gospels. There was the Healing of the Demoniacs at Capernaum (Mark i. 21); the Man born Blind (John ix. 14); Simon's Wife's Mother (Mark i. 29); the cure wrought at Bethesda (John v. 9); the Woman with a Spirit of Infirmity (Luke xiii. 14); the Man with the Dropsy (Luke xiv. 1); and this case of the Man with the Withered Hand, which is recorded by three of the Evangelists, St. Matthew (xii. 9—14); St. Mark (iii. 1—6); St. Luke (vi. 6—11).

The narrative of St. Matthew associates the Miracle with the journey of Jesus and His disciples through the corn fields, when they plucked the ears of corn and did eat. This circumstance was laid hold of by the captious Jews, whereon to raise the whole question of the nature of Sabbath observance according to the law of Moses. The charge of Sabbath-breaking alleged against Jesus is refuted by a twofold answer. The former of these is a simple precedent which Jesus quotes from their own Scriptures, and from the history of one whose name was a tower of strength to Israel—even David their King: “Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did

eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" The second answer was even more telling, founded as it is on the necessary attention to the prescribed ordinances of the Sabbath services in the temple—"Or, have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"

Both these arguments are founded on the absolute *necessity* of each of the cases referred to; and this truth is declared, that works of necessity may and ought to be done on the Sabbath-day, even under the strict legal Sabbath of the law. And indeed, apart from the Sabbath, the law must give way to necessity at all times. For example, David had no right to the shewbread under ordinary circumstances; it was the perquisite of the priests. But it did so happen that, through stress of hunger, David and his young men required food, and, in the urgent necessity of the case, they were permitted to eat the bread of consecration. This is quoted not as an argument to justify the plucking of the ears of corn; for the law permitted in the most ordinary cases the wayfaring traveller thus to do—"When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn" (Deut. xxiii. 25). The object of Christ is rather to expose the exceedingly narrow views of these interpreters of their own law.

The latter argument is more immediately connected with the objection urged against Jesus and His Disciples. The temple service, on the Sabbath, as on other days, requires due attention to all its parts, and servile work in preparing, and slaying, and offering the sacrifices. All this servile work is done, and according to the legal requirement too, on the Sabbath; and the doers of these servile works are blameless. The whole argument is then concluded by the statement on the part of Jesus of His own might and majesty—"But I say unto you, That in this place is One greater than the temple;" and still further by the spiritual rather than the legal stress put upon the law—"If ye had known what this meaneth, I will (*i.e.*, I *desire* to) have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." That is to say, all legal and merely legal observance of the law, that rises not to the higher level of spiritual service—the service of love, the service of children, the willing, hearty service of free men—is not that which God will accept; this is but to "strain out the gnat, and to swallow a camel;" to take to heart the jots

and tittles, and yet to neglect the weightier matters of the law,—justice, mercy, and truth.

Occasion now happens to give this teaching a practical illustration: on the Sabbath-day, and in the synagogue of the Jews, in the presence of all the congregation, was a man with a withered hand. Here was the Great Restorer, the fame of whose Miracles had filled the land, and in His presence was an object of suffering and affliction. The people anticipate the result of this meeting of the man's blighted health and Christ's power to heal. All eyes were intent, and "the Scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the Sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against Him." (Luke vi. 7.)

Nor are they kept long in suspense. The circumstances of the Miracle now begin, as we are enabled to trace the connecting links by a comparison of the various narratives. First, Jesus will make no secret of the deed He is about to perform; and, accordingly, fixing His eyes upon this afflicted man, He says, "Stand forth" (Mark iii. 3); or still more emphatically, as in St. Luke, "Rise up, and stand forth in the midst" (vi. 8). The man being now in full view of the congregation, the chosen object of the Saviour's compassion and power, Jesus looks round upon the assembled Scribes and Pharisees, and challenges them as to the "lawfulness" of doing good on the Sabbath-day. The diversity in the different narratives as to the source of these questions, whether from Christ or from the Pharisees, only tends to show that a sharp fire of cross-questions from side to side preceded the deed of mercy done upon the man with the withered hand.

The order of things would seem to be this: The Pharisees asked the first question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days?" (Matt. xii. 10.) This question Jesus answers by asking two other questions; one, an appeal to the law; and the other, an appeal to practical life and experience. His question of appeal to the law is but another (and better) way of putting the question the Pharisees had just asked Him. He says, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace" (Mark iii. 4). "Is it *lawful*"—mark that word, Is it "full of law," quite up to the legal mark? "And they held their peace;" their silence gave consent that what Jesus did, or now proposes to do, is a lawful deed, even on the Sabbath-day, and quite consistent with the law of Moses.

He further presses them with a practical question, which their own everyday experience may most readily answer—"What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall

into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?" The natural and necessary conclusion is, "How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days." (Matt. xii. 11, 12.)

There was not one man within the hearing of the Saviour's voice on that occasion but must have owned the conclusiveness of this reasoning. The ox or the sheep of any one of them, falling into danger, would be rescued as well on the Sabbath as on any other day. Then, why not this afflicted *man*, their own brother, of their own flesh and blood? If they had said (but they did not say) that the sheep fallen into a pit would die if not taken out, but that this man might come on any other day and be healed—this would have been to constitute themselves the judges of the length of that man's life; and would also have advocated a false precedent, in postponing or neglecting to do good, which, according to Christ's argument, would be the same as actually to do evil.

During the continuance of this argument the man with the withered hand is standing forth in the midst before them all. His suspense must have been great, all his hope apparently hanging upon the decision of this legal quibble of the Pharisees. How anxiously did he hear those conflicting words; how painfully did he look upon the unfriendly interposition of the rulers of his people; how imploringly did he look upon the face of the Saviour! Upon the issue of that question depended his release from his deep affliction. He hears no answer; looks of angry disappointment doubtless are cast from one to another, but still an ominous silence reigns throughout the synagogue, and in that still silence his hopes rise fresh and strong, and his faith in the good Master's power is growing more and more; until the silence is first broken by the command of Jesus—"Stretch forth thine hand!"

This command is uttered while two emotions of the Saviour's spirit are striving and struggling within Him. The narrative of St. Mark depicts the person and the very look of Jesus on this occasion—"And when He had looked round about on them with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand." Here is the blending of the feelings of anger and sorrow—*anger*, because their hearts were so hard and unbelieving, so captious and prejudiced; *grief*, because that in this "accepted time" they know not, and would not value, the day of their visitation. Unbelief doth at all times thus affect the Saviour; God is provoked every day; and yet He also grieves to see the headlong infidelity of men, which will not

permit them to turn unto the Lord. And thus on that day, in their synagogue, with anger and sorrow, yet "more in sorrow than in anger," Jesus reproves their captious unbelief, and bids the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand."

The Miracle itself is briefly recorded; the command is instantly obeyed—"And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other." The result, however, does not seem to have been profitable to the people; for "the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him how they might destroy Him;" or, as St. Luke records it—"they were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus" (Luke vi. 11). But Jesus withdrew Himself for a time from the violence of the people into the quietude of a more peaceful company of followers—a company, however, which would appear to have been composed chiefly of Gentile strangers, "from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they about Tyre and Sidon." (Mark iii. 8.)

May we not glean some good and useful thoughts from the Miracle now before us? This "withered hand" is but an emblem of our souls—dead, dried, and withered in sin. Christ, that healed this man, doth save us; and by a willing obedience to His word, our dead souls shall be restored to spiritual life.

1. *The Miracle was wrought on the Sabbath.*—It was a work suited to that holy day. Such works God is ever doing on the day of rest—these preserving, healing, saving works. Christ has already pleaded His great Father's precedent in this respect—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John v. 17). God, our Father, labours on in His conduct of the world, in His control of all things. He is every day our Preserver, our Providence, our Guide. There is no day on which we could account ourselves safe without His active care and charge over us. And this goes on continually. And yet has God reserved one day in seven as man's inheritance of peace, the interval of labour, the resting day of hard-wrought humanity.

Beautiful Sabbath—Day of Rest,
Of all the week, the first the best.
To sons of toil an earnest given
Of labour done, and Rest in Heaven.

2. *The great principle of this Miracle.*—It was done, as Jesus says, on the principle—"I will have mercy and not sacrifice." This is the non-legal spirit of the true Christian—"The letter

killeth, but the spirit giveth life." This is the principle of Christian action that releases the doer of the deed from the feeling of the bondage of a servant, and invests him with the freedom and liberty of a son. "Mercy and not sacrifice" is the great principle that underlies the whole scheme of Christianity. And yet not without sacrifice; only it is not exacted of us; for in order to show mercy to sinners Christ became a sacrifice for sin. So far as the sinner is concerned, he is dealt with on the principle of mercy—free, full, abounding grace; and what sacrifice is provided is the sacrifice of a Substitute, even Jesus—God accepting that spotless victim as "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." Thus it is that mercy rejoices over judgment.

3. *The command of Jesus, and the obedience of the suppliant.*—It is important to consider this—how the man stretched forth the hand that was *withered*. Might he not have urged many reasons against this command of Jesus? Might he not have said—"Stretch forth this hand! how can I stretch it forth? is it not withered, dead, and powerless?" But this would have been the language of unbelief. There was evidently this much of faith in this man, that he believed that He who had given him the command would also give him the power to obey the word; and therefore, in the fulness of this faith and confidence, he did stretch forth the withered hand, and in the very act he was healed. Be assured of this, what Christ commands, He will also give the power to accomplish. His commands and His promises—His enabling promises—run in eternal parallels. And thus the man believed, and according to his faith even so was it done unto him. We are dead in trespasses and in sins; and of our own power we cannot rise, we cannot come, we cannot obey. But Christ will give us power to rise, and power to come, and power to obey. "Only believe; all things are possible to him that believeth."

THE
WOMAN WITH A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY.

“And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.”—LUKE xiii. 10, 11.

THIS is another of the Sabbath Miracles of Christ ; and it seems to have been recorded with the express purpose of exhibiting the true nature of Sabbath work, including all cases of necessity, and particularly all opportunities of doing good. We are not informed in what place this Miracle was performed, but that it took place on the Sabbath-day, and in “one of the synagogues.” It is recorded only by St. Luke (xiii. 10—17).

The subject of the Miracle was a woman possessed of a spirit of infirmity. Her disease was more than bodily. It was bodily in its effects, but spiritual in its deep-rooted cause. Satan had bound her with his bondage, and had kept her so for full eighteen years. The result of her disease was that she was “bowed together,” or, as we would say, bent double, so that she “could in no wise lift up herself.” This woman does not seem to have made any request to Jesus, at least in words. Her presence there may mean that she had come thither in the hope of receiving of that miraculous power, the fame of which had spread throughout the whole land, and filled the hearts of so many with joy and gladness.

The means used in the performance of the Miracle were simply these:—A simultaneous look and call and touch on the part of Jesus: “And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands on her : and immediately she was made straight, and

glorified God." This is the brief recital of the Miracle. The spiritual meaning of it is, that as the power of Jesus could make straight that bodily frame, which was bowed and bent by the bands of Satan's possession, so also hath He power to make straight the moral and spiritual obliquity of man, who, through the bondage of an indwelling power of sin, hath been turned from rectitude, and hath gone into crooked paths, and departed very far from original holiness. So that it is true both of the bodily and spiritual disease of men, that, through the power of Christ, "the crooked shall be made straight."

It is one more of those triumphs won by Christ over His great antagonist, Satan,—one more of those specimens of Christ's Sovereignty and Kingship,—one more of the instalments of the future Kingdom, when there shall be no sickness and no disease, because Satan shall be utterly cast out. Here is a case of Satanic possession, not indeed affecting the mind and conscience, as in the Demoniacs, nor wrathfully raging, as in the Lunatic Child; but a steady, persevering bondage of this woman's body, by which her eyes are turned from their upward tendency toward heaven, and directed helplessly and always toward the earth. And is there not in this an emblem of the spiritual bondage of the soul, that bows the erect stature of the man, makes the eyes to be ever prone to earthliness, and diverts man's upward gaze from the hopeful view of things above, to look only on the things beneath. From this bondage of Satan, and from the consequent proneness of our nature to dwell upon the things of time and sense—from this, I say, the power of Christ can alone deliver us.

The immediate sequel of the Miracle, however, seems to be the great point of the narrative. A proud and haughty man, who held the office of ruler of the synagogue, is now introduced into the story. This man, being filled with indignation because of the glory this deed had brought to Christ, and chiefly because the Miracle was wrought on the Sabbath-day, and yet not daring to interfere personally with Jesus, addresses his words of objection to the people, reproachfully saying, "There are six days in which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day." This speech was indirectly intended for the ears of the Great Master; and accordingly by Him it was straightway answered; for "the Lord answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite!" and thence proceeds to argue out the propriety of this act much in the same form of speech as in the case of the man with the withered hand; only in this case the illustration is followed up by a climax of rebuke which must have stung the

ruler to the very quick, as well as commanded the assent of all others in the synagogue.

The argument of Jesus is this—Thou hypocrite! the hypocrisy of thy heart is fully made manifest by practical experience—Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo! these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?

What boldness of contrast is here! Abject hypocrisy alone could account for the objection urged against that beneficent deed of the good Saviour. In lesser things and for meaner objects many a bond is loosed on the Sabbath by these legal rulers. Their ox or their ass is loosed from the stall and from the crib, and conducted to watering; and while the beasts of the field have their wants thus supplied, the hypocrisy of these men would forbid the loosing of a human sister's bondage; aye, would keep "a daughter of Abraham" under the thralldom of Satan's personal dominion! To retain the ox or the ass for a single hour from the watering would be considered cruel neglect, even on the Sabbath-day; but this slave of Satan has been bound for eighteen long years, and now that opportunity offers, these men resist the unbinding of the fetters that have so long enslaved her! To lead the ox to watering involved the labour of servants, and the doing of servile work, and yet it was permitted on the Sabbath-day; but this great unbinding involves no toil, the service of no servant, no breach of Sabbath rest; 'tis done by the word, the look, the touch of the Great King, whose every day is spent in "doing good!"

No marvel that His adversaries were ashamed, and covered their faces in confusion. No marvel, too, that the people, who shared not in their antagonism to Christ, were filled with joy "for all the glorious things that were done by Him." Jesus had not broken the Sabbath, nor infringed its sacred obligations, nor violated its holy duties. He had rather consecrated its hallowed rest by giving rest to one who was in deep affliction; and had blessed its peaceful bliss by giving peace and liberty to one whom Satan had so long held bound in cruel bondage.

THE MAN WITH A DROPSY.

“And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched Him. And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy.”—LUKE xiv. 1, 2.

THIS Miracle in its context is similar to the two preceding Miracles. It was done on the Sabbath-day; it was done against the grudge of the legal Jews; it was done in the face of those that waited and watched for an opportunity to accuse the Saviour; and was triumphantly vindicated as a proper act on such a day by the word of Him who had done the work.

Jesus had gone by invitation to the house of one of the Pharisees. He had gone to be entertained there on a certain Sabbath; and, even under the roof which He had entered on the score of hospitality and friendship, He is subjected to the malignity of His hosts—“they watched Him.” A man is there diseased with Dropsy. He has somehow conveyed himself into the company as they sat, perhaps, in the open air, in the outer court-yard of the Pharisee’s house. The presence of this object of affliction caused them all the more to observe and watch as to whether Jesus would heal the man, it being the Sabbath.

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, anticipates them by asking the question which we have found had already largely occupied the attention of His audiences—“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?” On this occasion there is no sustained argument; judgment goes by default—“they held their peace.” They could watch Him, but they could not answer Him; and, no objection being urged against this deed of mercy, “He took him and healed him, and let him go.” The Miracle having been effectually

wrought, Jesus still pursues these observers of His acts, and inquires what they would each one do, if an ass or an ox of any of them were to fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day. And still, amid the ominous silence of the company, He answers His own question according to their own practical experience. And still did the silence of the people continue to give its eloquent assent to the word and work of Jesus—the power of the doctrines which He preached, and the power of the Miracles which He wrought.

It is a painful criticism that is suggested here as to the violation of the rights of hospitality, which are almost always accounted sacred and inviolable. In heathen lands, to have partaken of one's "salt" was to have secured all the rights of friendship. But in this case it would appear that all the laws of hospitality were broken; for even under the protection of this chief Pharisee, it seems as though the opportunity had been sought and provided for the mere purpose of making occasion against the Saviour. Invited to the table of the Pharisee, surrounded by fellow-guests, committing Himself to the security of private friendship, He is yet in the midst of enemies, who seemed to live in His presence but for one object—to entangle Him in His talk, or to accuse Him for His very works' sake. Such, at least, seems to be the turn of affairs in that company in the Pharisee's house—"they watched Him." Where could the Saviour be secure from the malignity of men, if not amid the friendly and familiar intercourse of the social and domestic circle? And yet, even here *He* meets with no such security; in the midst of professed friendships, Jesus has committed Himself into the midst of foes. Oh, how great, how deep is the craft and subtlety of man, when intent on doing injury to Christ and the interests of Christ's people!

Is not this spirit still alive in the world? doth it not still work? Have not all the laws of friendship, relationship, hospitality, been violated in the persecution of Christ's people? The history of the Church of Christ tells on too many of its pages the story of the treacherous spirit of the world in its dealings with the followers of Christ, illustrating the truth of the prophetic word of Jesus—"And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death" (Luke xxi. 16). The martyrs have oftentimes been ensnared, surprised, betrayed, and thus have they been committed to prison, and fire, and sword, through the watchful malice of their enemies.

And albeit the days of persecution are no more (at least in these lands), yet are the eyes of all set upon the Christian; and of many

an humble follower of Jesus it may be said, as it was said of his Master—"they watched him." The world waits for our halting, casts stumbling-blocks in the way, and then watches to see what will come of it. The jealousy of a wicked world follows us; its eye is ever on us. Oh, how much we need the Master's spirit; largely to be endued with the mind that was in Christ Jesus! So that whenever we are watched, we may, as Christ did, cause all men to glorify the God of Israel, who only can make His people to walk in safety, while set in the midst of so many and great dangers:

" Watch'd by the world with jealous eye,
That fain would see our sin and shame;
As servants of the Lord most high,
As zealous for His glorious name,
May we in all His footsteps move
With holy fear and humble love!"

What marvellous proofs are contained in these Miracles of the wisdom that dwelt in Jesus; that He was, indeed, the very Wisdom, as well as the very Power of God: "And they could not answer Him again to these things." As Dean Trench observes, "They were silenced, that is, but not convinced; and the truth which did not win them, did the only other thing which it could do, exasperated them the more; they replied nothing, biding their time." (See Matt. xii. 14.)

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”—*MATT.* xv. 21, 22.

THE sphere of the Saviour's ministry was the land of Israel. Within this scope His human life was spent; and although at times He extended His journeys to the uttermost borders of Canaan, yet it does not appear that He ever overpassed the border-land. Most rigidly, indeed, did Jesus confine Himself within the appointed local circle of His great mission, though the fruits of that inimitable ministry have abounded unto all peoples and nations and climes.

The Miracle now before us is recorded by St. Matthew (xv. 21—28); and St. Mark (vii. 24—30). The narrative, as gathered from the two Evangelists, is this: Coming to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus enters into an house, and would have no man know it; but He could not be hid. A Gentile woman comes out of the adjacent coasts of the Gentiles, and beseeches Jesus to heal her daughter, who was possessed of a devil. Jesus at first gives her no answer. The woman still continues to entreat Him to heal her child; so that the disciples rebuke her, and desire the Master to send her away. Jesus does not send her away, but propounds certain objections to the granting of her request. The woman still perseveres, and is at last rewarded by the approbation of her faith, and the healing of her child.

It is possible that, in the reading of the Miracles of Christ, we may not sufficiently realise the reason why they are recorded. We are disposed to read them as mere history, as naked narrative, as a display of the Godlike power and of the Divine authority that dwelt in Jesus. If this be all that we have

learned from these records, we have scarcely extended our Christian knowledge beyond the first incipient stages of Nicodemus, when, in his first interview with Jesus, he was prepared to commit himself thus far to the claims of Christ,—“We know that thou art a teacher, come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” (John iii. 2.) If it was designed that nothing more be taught by these detailed Miracles, one or two specimens would have been sufficient. But more than one or two are recorded, and all that are recorded are suggestive of some great truth of the Gospel covenant. So that, if naught else of Scripture did remain than these Miracles of Christ, I believe we should be able to deduce therefrom the full code of all necessary Christian doctrine, and complete the whole circle of illustrations of Christian experience. In these we find the germ of those revealed truths that constitute the faith of the children of God. If there be morals in fables, which are but fictions, we may well expect to discern morals in Miracles, which are facts.

Accordingly, in reading this Miracle, wrought upon the Daughter of the Woman of Canaan, we do well to inquire why it is recorded; what great doctrine is here illustrated; what great truth declared; what branch of the Tree of Life is here developed, and what fruit doth it bear; what member of the body corporate of Christian doctrine is here displayed? The answer to these inquiries is contained in the detailed narrative.

The great topic here set forth is FAITH—the power and overcoming might of Faith. It is an illustration of Faith under many phases; the Faith of a stranger, a Gentile woman; Faith manifested in the face of great difficulties; Faith without encouragement, yea, absolutely discouraged; Faith rebuked, tested, tried, and yet, withal, triumphant. This is the great point of the Miracle.

There are some who think Faith to be a very easy thing to exercise; that at any time it is possible to believe; that if not to-day, it may be to-morrow; and if not to-morrow, it may be at some other time; that at any moment an easy assent and consent may be given to the principles of the doctrine of Christ—and that this is Faith. Such persons would do well to learn by the facts of this narrative what are the struggles, the painful struggles of true Faith, and what is demanded of those who would strive and wrestle in Faith with God.

There are some who hope that their Faith will have a gentle

conquest, and gain an easy victory; that, considering whose gift it is, and whence it comes, it must be possessed of an irresistible power, which is sure to carry all before it, and cannot be overborne or vanquished. These, too, would do well to learn, from the teaching of this Miracle, that the power of Faith must needs be very strong, and its conflict an earnest strife, if it means at last to prevail.

And there are yet others, whose Faith is easily discouraged, because their wants and prayers and aims are not immediately answered; and who, because they do not instantly gain their point, and see the prompt result of Faith, are cast down, and fail and faint. Now, such as these must also learn their peculiar lesson from the narrative before us—how the Faith that finally conquers is the Faith that patiently perseveres; and the Faith that persistently fights its good fight is the Faith that is crowned with victory at the last; and that faint heart of Christian never yet won the fair prize of godliness.

In the exercise of believing Faith, there must be a sense of want and a knowledge of the source of the supply of that want. Your eye must look direct into the eye of Jesus; your ear must be very quick to catch the first whispers of His pardoning voice; your hand must be stretched forth, bare and empty, and He will fill that empty hand with all bountiful blessings which He hath to bestow upon the waiting Faith of the suppliant. So was it with the Faith of the Woman of Canaan.

Now, for some of the weak-hearted and feeble-minded of the flock is our present subject. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

"O woman, great is thy Faith."—Wherein consisted the greatness of this woman's Faith? In what respect was it set forth and manifested? It was in this wise:—

Jesus had departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. This was the border land of Canaan, where the precincts of Palestine merged into the Gentile frontier. It was in the extreme north of Galilee, that which was called "Galilee of the Gentiles," under the roots of the range of Lebanon, and hard by the rivers of Damascus. A woman of the Gentiles, called by St. Mark "a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation," has crossed the border and has come to meet Jesus. She had, doubtless, heard of the fame of Jesus, how He had healed the sick, and cast out devils, and done many other wonderful works; and now she comes to try the grand experiment of Faith, in the matter of her own heart-sorrow

and affliction. She has a need, an urgent want—"her daughter had an unclean spirit," and was "grievously vexed with a devil." There is an antecedent propriety in her resort to Jesus; she appeals to the Prince of Light against the Prince of Darkness. There is also a due recognition of the claims and character of Jesus, for she owns Him to be both "Lord,"* and also "Son of David," thus acknowledging both His Divine and human nature, of the royalty of heaven and of the royalty of earth; and this was more than the Jews were ready to admit.

But this is not all; her Faith must be tried by an ordeal of test, by a painful process of proof, so that through the crucible of trial it may come forth purified and pure, a model Faith for Christendom to behold and imitate. This Gentile woman has a request to make; she comes to Jesus, and prefers her petition—"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." At this point the testing of her Faith begins.

I. The first test is *the Silence of Jesus*. "And He answered her not a word." It would seem as though it were a sullen silence, utter disregard of her cry, perfect indifference to her request: "He answered her not a word." This was not the silence that "gives consent," but rather that silence that depresses one, takes the heart out of one, corrodes the spirit, and by many is considered worse, a thousand times worse, than a positive refusal. It is this silence that, above all other things, grieves and disappoints a suppliant. It is, after all, the most eloquent way to indicate unwillingness to grant the petition that is asked. There did this woman stand, and ask, and still she is permitted to stand unheeded. The Saviour passes on, apparently bestowing no thought, no care, and no concern upon her case. Perhaps He was intent upon something else more important, more pressing, more worthy of His attention. Yet our own sorrows are everything to ourselves; and so, this woman's domestic woe is so real, and so realised, in her own soul, that she still lingers near the Saviour, and still she stands and asks, though, doubtless, made to feel how insignificant she is.

How strange is this dealing of Jesus with the petition of this woman! how unlike His ordinary conduct to the needy! His ear always so vividly alive to the cry of the suppliant; His hand ever bountiful; His eye always bearing in its glance the answer of

* "The word *Κύριε*, by which she addresses Christ, must, as is plain from the *ὡς Δαυὶδ* following, mean *Lord*, not *Sir*, or *Master*."—*Bloomfield*.

peace! Never did He look upon any child of want but that look brought with it hope and joy and consolation. Yea, even when His eye glanced upon the Christ-denying Peter, that look brought with it half the pardon of the deed, for it wrought repentance, and Peter "went out, and wept bitterly." And yet, on this occasion there is neither ear, nor eye, nor hand to give expression to any word or deed of good to this woman of the Gentiles—"He answered her not a word."

The result of such a mode of dealing with a suppliant would differ according to the different temperaments of men. The high-spirited and proud would resent it with a high hand; the sensitive soul would be utterly unnerved, unmanned, and would creep back into its shell, abashed, ashamed that it had ventured to ask a favour; the poor and needy would be inclined to take it sorely to heart, and curse the poverty or the need that thus exposed them to the contempt of their fellow-man. If any such repinings as these had filled that woman's soul, she would thereby have given proof of her lack of Faith; it would have been a breakdown of her confidence.

What then? His silence awakes her cries. She is not daunted, nor deterred, nor yet discouraged. She has come forth in Faith; she means to prevail; and her Faith is now putting forth its stronger power for the greater emergency. When a strong man meets a difficulty, that very difficulty elicits and proves his strength. Accordingly, the woman follows Jesus, pursues and perseveres, with earnestness, strong crying, and resolute determination. And such is her importunity, that the disciples interfere, not *for* her, but *against* her, saying—"Send her away; for she crieth after us." Strange mediators, all of them; even these red-letter saints of the Christian calendar! Like the Woman of Canaan, we keep to Jesus.

II. The second great test of her Faith is in *the refusal of Jesus*. "He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This was said, not to the disciples, but to the woman. Indeed, Jesus takes no notice at all of the remark of the disciples. There is a dramatic power here which can be best appreciated by realising the scenery of the circumstances: There is the entreaty of the woman; the silence of the Saviour; the cries of the suppliant; the remonstrance of the disciples. And yet none of these things move her; she is not deterred; her Faith is proof; and now a greater test is tried, and Jesus propounds a positive objection to the granting of her request, as though He said, "You know, I am not sent—to you,

or to such as you. You are not the object of my mission, nor within the scope of my ministry. You are a Gentile, standing outside. I am sent to the sheep of Israel."

This is sufficiently discouraging. Yet her faith gathers strength; it wrestles now. Jesus has broken silence; He has deigned to speak, and on that speech she now lays hold, doing and daring great things. Notwithstanding this answer of Jesus, she clings to Him, and "worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!" That is—"Although I am a Gentile; though I am not a Jew; though I am beyond the circle of Thy ministry, yet (laying emphasis on the word) Lord, help *me!*" Truly, great must have been the power of her Faith, thus to except herself from the general order of things. Yes, her Faith tells her this—that there is power in Christ to overleap the boundaries of nations, and bestow a like common blessing upon all the sons and daughters of Adam. Her Faith reminds her that, if she is not a daughter of Abraham, she is at all events a daughter of Adam; and that, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." She has already by Faith conceived and comprehended in anticipation the wide extended scope of the Gospel of Christ, as afterwards declared by an Apostle—"There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. x. 12, 13.) Yes, her Faith has grasped the fulness of the mission of Jesus, as described in the fulness of His own promise—"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd." (John x. 16.) And, therefore, in the strength of this intelligent Faith, she is bold to ask, "Lord, save *me.*"

Depend upon it, we must come personally to this question. It is of little consequence to me, if all else be saved, and I myself am lost. Every man has himself to take heed unto; this is his first and great concern. "Self-preservation" is said to be "the first law of nature;" and so also in spiritual things—Self-preservation is the first law of grace. You must learn to single yourself out from the multitude, and be as earnest in your spiritual things as you are in worldly things. Yonder sick man in the hospital waits and looks and longs for the coming of the physician; and he feels assured that if it were but for himself alone, still he would come all the same. And when the physician enters, the sick man tells not the symptoms of other cases, but tells his own case, his own symp-

toms, his own ailments, all about *himself*. And so is it in spiritual things: until we learn to separate ourselves from all others, we miss the mark the Saviour seeks that we should gain. We have done nothing yet, until we comprehend, personally and for ourselves, our own want and sin, and cry out, "Lord, help *me!*" and continue, against every obstacle and objection to the contrary—"Lord, help *me!*"

III. But the third and last and sorest trial of this woman's Faith has yet to come; and it consists of *a severe rebuke* uttered against her by the voice of Jesus. So far, she stands bravely in the battle-field, and is still undaunted. Her Faith is firm, and she means still to wait, and still to persevere. Her personal request has been discouraged, has been almost rebuked, as though her approach to Christ were an unbidden intrusion, and her Faith more worthy to be called Presumption. And now the last thrust is made against her Faith and perseverance, for Jesus answers—"It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs."

From other lips than those of the Saviour (with deepest reverence be it spoken) such language as this would have been intolerable—adding insult to injury; enough to dash the most sanguine hopes to the dust, to blast the purest confidence, and uproot the strongest faith. The expression, too, is very emphatic, filled with contempt; for instance, where Jesus speaks to the woman as being one of "the dogs," the original word, *κυρῆνια*, the diminutive form of the word is used, meaning "little contemptible dogs."

What can this possibly mean? Can it be that Jesus, always so kind and gentle, so meek and loving, both in word and deed, is here so harsh and unsympathising towards this poor suppliant woman of the Gentiles? No, these are not Christ's own words: In the use of these objections, He adopts the language of the time in which He lived; and for a double purpose: (1) in order to try the woman's Faith; and (2) thereby to reprove the use of such words and epithets as were commonly adopted by the Jews against their less privileged brethren of the Gentiles. From the eminence of Jewish pride, "the children" of Abraham were accustomed to despise their neighbours across the frontier, whom they called "the dogs of the Gentiles," oftentimes intensifying their contempt by using the most contemptuous and opprobrious terms of reproach. Jesus now has an opportunity of proving to the Jewish bystanders (and His disciples among the rest) how a weak woman of the Gentiles can have Faith, and that this Faith of a

stranger may be so strong as to rend in pieces the objections of the Jews to the extension of God's grace to the Gentiles. Here was not, indeed, a learned logician of the schools, nor a captious disputer of this world, but an uninstructed woman, whose Faith was yet able to trample under foot the common arguments of Jews against Gentiles. She boldly stands and fights the battle of the Gentile world, and her Faith insists upon the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven to *all* believers.

There are some whose faith loves sunshine, but does not love the storm; some who, while religion walks in silver sandals, are content to walk with her; some who can bear prosperity, but cannot endure scorn, contempt, and ridicule. But this woman's Faith survived the storm, outlived the fight, and triumphed at the last. Her answer to the word of Jesus is—"Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." She acknowledges the title, adopts the epithet, admits her own utter unworthiness, assumes the illustration to be in all respects true, and thereupon proceeds to build the superstructure of her Faith and Hope. "Truth, Lord," she says, "the table is laid, and sumptuously is it filled with rich and costly viands; and it is true that the children must first be fed; and it is true I am but a dog: yet it is in this capacity I plead, and only for the *crumbs*. It is not the fulness of bread I demand, nor the plentitude of the luxury of that table; but only the crumbs, the broken fragments that remain—only this, and it sufficeth, Lord." Well did the Great Master give to this woman's Faith all that it desired—"For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter."

Oh, what Faith is this—satisfied with the crumbs! How greatly does it magnify the glory and the greatness of the full supply! If the crumbs suffice, then what must the full abundance be? If such be the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim, what must the full vintage of Abiezer be? This woman asks but some stray catches of that mighty power, to touch but the hem of that glorious garment, but one contact with the "virtue" of Jesus, but the tiny crumbs of the bread of heaven.

Her Faith is tried, it is tested, it is weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and is not found wanting. The silence of Jesus, the refusal, the rebuke—against all these she stands unmoved. God grant that our Faith may thus abide, may thus pursue, may thus persevere, and may thus come forth triumphant! Thus shall we be "stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," and thus shall we at last prevail!

THE DEAF AND DUMB.

“And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him.”—MARK vii. 32.

“As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.”—MATT. ix. 32, 33.

IN very many of the Miracles of Christ, the power, the destructive power, of indwelling demons is largely illustrated; and in all the Miracles of Christ the greater power of Jesus is manifested. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and to deliver them that all their lifetime were subject to bondage. And in the bodily Miracles of Christ we find an earnest of that mighty power which Jesus wields over the dominion of Satan. In these poor afflicted men and women of Jewry we see how the “strong man armed keepeth his palace;” and in the person and power of Jesus we see the “stronger than he,” who cometh upon him, and overcometh him, and taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. (Luke xi. 21, 22.)

The group of Miracles affecting the Deaf and the Dumb includes two occasions. The one of these is that of the Healing of the Deaf and Dumb man, recorded by St. Mark (vii. 31—37); the other is the Healing of the Dumb man, which is recorded by St. Matthew (ix. 32—34), and by St. Luke (xi. 14, 15).

The former of these Miracles took place on the return of Jesus through the coasts of Decapolis into Galilee, after the interview with the Woman of Canaan, and is one of the many Miracles wrought by the Saviour on the occasion of the Feeding of the Multitude; for we are told by St. Matthew (xv. 30), that “great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, *dumb*, maimed, and many others, and cast them down

at Jesus' feet, and He healed them." One of these is the object now presented to the Saviour—a man that is deaf, and has an impediment in his speech. The friends of this man desire that Jesus should put His wonder-working hand upon him. The process of the Miracle is, that Jesus withdrew the man aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and spat, and touched his tongue. The Miracle was wrought during a moment of communion with heaven, on the part of Christ, who, "looking up to heaven, sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." The commanding voice of Jesus was at once obeyed, for the man's ears were opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spake plain. This is one of the Miracles respecting which Jesus enjoined silence, but in vain, for "the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it." The public verdict to the completeness of the Miracle is also very fully and remarkably expressed—"He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

I propose to review this narrative under the following divisions:—(1) The subject of this Miracle; (2) the method of the Miracle; (3) the result of the Miracle—to the man; (4) the result—to the people.

1. *The Subject of the Miracle.* "One that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech." It is not said that he was absolutely dumb, but that he spoke as a stammerer, with an impediment—*κωφὸν μογιλάλον*.

Deaf persons are generally dumb also; and those that are born deaf *must be* dumb. The senses of the body are so interwoven, and so connected together, it is very seldom that one suffers without more or less affecting the others. Sometimes the influence of a lost sense is to throw a greater burden of duty upon those that remain; as, for instance, the loss of the sense of sight involves extra duty on the sense of touch; and Providence, always kind, grants this gracious compensation for the loss, in quickening to greater exercise the senses that remain. Thus, as we all know, the sense of touch in a blind man is so exquisitely refined as to enable the blind man to read with his fingers, and to discern colours by his taste, *i.e.* by the sense of touch.

Now, the loss of the sense of hearing involves the loss of the power of speech also. We, therefore, usually connect the ideas of "Deaf and Dumb" together. This consequence of deafness is owing to natural causes. Language is learned by imitation, and therefore requires the sense of hearing. An infant hears so many words spoken, and by-and-by associates these words with certain

persons or things; and by observation, more and more observant every day, the child soon imitates the sounds, and begins to speak. If the infant could not *hear* the words, it could never form them itself, and is therefore indebted to his sense of hearing as the entrance-gate to the faculty of speech. This, of course, applies to those that are *born* deaf, and who, therefore, can never speak. They grow up, unable to utter articulate words, because the whole region of sounds is beyond their knowledge and experience. They cannot hear words, therefore they cannot imitate them.

There are some persons who become deaf in after years. All the power of language at their disposal simply depends upon the length of time they enjoyed the sense of hearing, and the use they made of that period, in the imitation of words and sounds. Some that have lost their sense of hearing in early infancy grow up dumb, having no remembrance of having ever heard words spoken; just as some that have become blind in their tender infancy have retained but little, if any, idea of what Light is. Indeed, the faculties of hearing and speech are so associated, for better for worse, that persons who have become deaf in maturer years are much hindered thereby in the power of language. The celebrated Dr. Kitto, who was long time afflicted with deafness, testifies that he found it very seriously to affect his facility of expression. By reason of so long a period of exclusion from the world of sounds, he experienced a gradually increasing difficulty in sustaining conversation with friends.

This man, on whom the Miracle was wrought, seems to have *become* deaf, and to have retained some power of speech, but with a great impediment. A physical disease had closed his ears, and bound his tongue; so that what few words he could express, he uttered stammeringly, and indistinctly.* The friends of this man conduct him to Jesus; "and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him."

2. *The Method of the Miracle.* Jesus does not do as they requested Him. He chooses rather to adopt the means that seem to Him to be the most suitable to the circumstances of the

* Bloomfield, in his Notes on the Greek Testament, remarks—"Besides, the words used of the man after his cure (*ἑλάλει ὀρθῶς*, *he spake plain*) concur with the proper signification of the term (namely, *one who speaks with difficulty*), to show that the person was not *dumb by nature*, nor, probably, *deaf by nature*; otherwise it would have been needless to call him dumb (for such persons always *are* so); but was one who had a natural impediment to enunciation, or who, having early lost his hearing, gradually lost much of his speech, and had become a stammerer."

case:—"He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

We have already observed, in our exposition of the Miracles wrought upon the Blind, how it was that this peculiar method of signs was used in those cases in which signs are usually adopted for the purpose of conveying information. Thus Christ dealt with the man that was born Blind (John ix. 6), and also with the Blind man at Bethsaida (Mark viii. 23). And so He also now deals with the Deaf and Dumb man: He withdrew the man from the multitude, so that he might associate the Miracle with the person of Christ only; He put His fingers into the man's ears, so that he might understand it was by the power of Christ he is by-and-by to be healed; He spat upon the ground, and touched the tongue of the Dumb man, still connecting the whole scene with Himself alone; and when He had thus certified the Deaf and Dumb man by outward signs, He saith unto him "Ephphatha," and while yet the word of power is being uttered by the Saviour, the man's ears are opened to hear the word, and the string of his tongue is loosed, and he speaks, no longer stammering, but plainly; and the Miracle is accomplished.

In this class of Miracles, then, which affected the bodily senses of men, we find Jesus dealing in the way of signs, the meaning of which they could easily comprehend. The Blind, who could not see, are made, by signs, to *feel* the power of Christ resting upon them; and the Deaf, who could not hear, are made to *see* the personal intervention of Jesus in their behalf.

Hence, the method employed in this case is easily understood. The senses that were affected, are directly touched by the hand of Jesus. He put His fingers in the deaf man's ears, as though by this symbolic action, to open them; and with His finger He also touched the tongue of the man (for he was Dumb, as well as Deaf), and thus loosed the string thereof. He, moreover, accompanied the Miracle by an upward look, indicating that it was from heaven all this power was derived; and He also sighed in His Spirit, grieved thus again to behold what havoc Satan had made of God's fair dominion, and of His creature, man. These sighs of Jesus, as over the grave of Lazarus, and now in the case of this afflicted man, are evidences of the Divine sorrow for this world's weary inheritance of sin, as His tears on another occasion, shed over Jerusalem, were an evidence of the deep pity and compassion that moved the sympathies of His sympathising heart.

3. *The Result of the Miracle*—to the man. “Straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.” The result, then, to the Deaf and Dumb man was, that he was no longer deprived of the sense of hearing, or of the power of speech. It was the complete accomplishment of a Miracle. To him it was a personal blessing, for which he is indebted to the power and love of Jesus, who thus delivers him from a twofold bondage, and sets him free to exercise his renewed faculties.

So far as the man himself is concerned, the narrative ends with the accomplishment of the Miracle. No special reference is made to him afterwards, but only to the multitude. No doubt, the once Deaf and Dumb man is included in that multitude, but still we cannot help feeling disappointment that no special act of thankfulness is recorded of him. It may be that, like many who are recipients of special mercies, this man soon merged into the promiscuous crowd, and gave no special thanks to his Deliverer. Alas, how small and scanty are our returns for the rich and plentiful gifts of God! How often does God in His good Providence take us by the hand, and single us out for mercies, and withdraw us from the crowd, as special objects of His love, and give us signs and tokens of His goodness; and then we again commingle with the multitude, and for special mercies we render no special thanks!

I know not, and therefore do not say, it was so with this man. But in the absence of any special allusion to his own expression of gratitude, this train of thought suggests itself to one's mind. There are so many who receive of the blessing of Christ, who never return to give glory to God. It reminds us of those plentiful showers, the early and the latter rain, that revive the earth, and replenish the springs of water, and fill the flowing rivers, and swell the ocean depths—these are God's gifts rained down from heaven; but the only acknowledgment sent back again is the slender mist of the morning or dew of the eventide. And so our gratitude to God is in much the same proportion to His gifts, “as the mist resembles rain.”

4. *The Result of the Miracle*—to the people. This seems to have been more satisfactory than the result to the Deaf and Dumb man himself. Christ, as on some other occasions, desired and commanded secrecy, that the fame of this Miracle should not be noised abroad. But these injunctions were in vain; for “the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.”

The command of Christ in some cases to publish His Miracles, and, in other cases, to maintain silence, is a matter to be explained, perhaps, by the different circumstances of the respective occasions and individuals. We ourselves know how differently individual cases must be dealt with. When good has been done by the ministry of the word to those that God has given to us to instruct in holy things, we know how difficult it is to decide whether the good thus done is to be written or spoken about, or else withheld in the safe custody of secrecy from being published abroad. And in making up our mind, how much depends upon the disposition and temperament of the party concerned; a sensitive and retiring disposition may be all the better for the communication of the good tidings to others, while a naturally forward temperament would be better, if restrained from overmuch publicity. It was very likely the peculiar dispositions of the persons healed, that guided the Saviour's directions in each case, whether for secrecy or publicity.

The precaution, however, availed nothing in this case. The people were too much interested in the deed, and were too much impressed with the greatness of the power displayed, to allow this thing to be hid. So they published it far and near. And this busy interest on the part of the people was evoked, not merely by a spirit of wonder and amazement, but from deeper sources of the heart. They recognised in this deed of mercy, an evidence of the general goodness of the acts of Jesus, and seem to have associated the occasion with a more than human or earthly power. The murmur of approbation that ran throughout the wondering crowd assumed the form of words—"He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." This was the popular recognition of the power of Christ, and of the love and goodness associated with His power. No doubt, a spirit of faith was kindled in the breasts of some that day, as they traced in these good deeds the proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus, and remembered the words of the Prophet—"The tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly" (Is. xxxii. 4).

"He hath done all things well:" what a testimony from the lips of man to the deeds of Jesus! and how true is this testimony! Is not this a sentiment that may well be expressed respecting all the Miracles of Christ? They were all deeds of Divine Love, and of deep compassion towards the sons of want and suffering. As when God had made all things, and beheld the works of His hands, and pronounced them to be very good, and in testimony of the glorious works of the Creator, the morn-

ing stars did sing for joy; so now, concerning these great deeds of Jesus, all of which were "very good," the people joined their testimony, and with one acclaim bare witness of the deeds, saying, "He hath done all things well;" or, as it is said by St. Matthew, in his more general summary of the Miracles wrought on this occasion—"Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak . . . and they glorified the God of Israel." (Matt. xv. 31.)

The second and remaining Miracle of this group is that which was wrought upon the Dumb man. The narrative is briefly told by both the Evangelists that record it, St. Matthew (ix. 32—34); and St. Luke (xi. 14, 15). It was a case of devil-possession; and the malady caused by this devil or demon was Dumbness. Satan had bereaved the man of all power of utterance; this was the peculiar result of his indwelling in this man. It is clear that this affliction arose solely from the possession of the demon; for "when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake."

This Miracle is rendered remarkable by reason of the inconsistent reasoning of the Pharisees, by which they sought to get rid of the Divine evidence of the deed, and to attribute it to Satanic power that Satan was thus cast out. The glaring inconclusiveness of this reasoning is exposed by a withering reply from the Saviour. He shows how a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, and that thus Satan could not be divided against his own interests. He argues thence the unity of Satan's kingdom, and how vain and senseless was this subterfuge of theirs, in ascribing to Satan himself the act of dethronement or expulsion of himself from the body of this man.

Occasion is taken by Christ from this circumstance to open up the general question of antagonism between Satan and Himself. Jesus grants that Satan is the "strong man," and that he is "armed" for his deadly work, and that in the power of his strength and of his armour he "keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace." This "palace" of Satan is man's body, and the "goods" contained therein are the soul and interests of man for time and eternity. But strong as Satan is, there is yet a "stronger than he," and this is CHRIST HIMSELF, the Lord and King of all, who overcometh Satan, and disarms him, and spoils him of his prey.

This is not only a refutation of the charge urged against Jesus by the Pharisees, but is also a general statement of the overcoming might that belongeth unto Him, when brought into con-

flict with the power of darkness and the kingdom of Satan. The term of the human life and ministry of Jesus was a season spent in an open warfare against Satan; the two great antagonists meet here, on this battle-field of earth, the asylum which received the fallen archangel when routed from the seat of bliss. He sought by pride and usurpation to take the highest place, the throne of dominion, in Heaven, and for his lofty presumption, he was cast down to Hell. He next assailed the earth, and by the subjugation of Man, its lord and master, he became "the God of this world." His next defeat must be from this, his second scene of usurpation; and an earnest of this future conquest was given in the days of the Son of Man, who dispossessed the indwelling demon, and cast out Satan, and delivered man from the bodily possession of the Evil One. And this great power of Jesus was but the first-fruits of the final casting out of Satan. This unclean spirit still reigns in our mortal bodies, and still holds the allegiance of men's souls. But this dominion shall one day cease; when the world shall be finally and for ever rid of this devouring lion, and men's bodies, instead of being the defiled abode of Satan, shall be "empty and swept and garnished," and made meet to be the "temples of the Holy Ghost," and to become the throne of an indwelling Christ. Jesus has already given signs and tokens of the power that belongeth unto God. Every one possessed of devils that Jesus released from Satan's bondage was a type of the yet universal emancipation of the world from Satan's thrall. Every soul that is now delivered from the power of the devil is a soul won to Christ—a new sheaf gathered in, a new subject added on, a new citizen enrolled in the citizenship of the New Jerusalem.

This final triumph of the Lord Christ over Satan, Death, and Hell, has already given its signs and forecasts in the mighty works of Jesus, done in Galilee and in Jewry. It remains for us, as the representatives and emissaries of the Great King, to carry on the work He hath so auspiciously commenced; to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; and thus, as God's ambassadors, to diminish the power of the kingdom of Satan, until the Day of the King shall come, when Satan shall be utterly cast down from his usurped dominion, and hurled by the avenging arm of Jesus into the abyss of the bottomless, from whence he shall go out to deceive the nations no more. Hasten, thou long-expected Day of the Coming of the King!

THE MONEY IN THE FISH'S MOUTH.

“Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee.”—MATT. xvii. 27.

THIS Miracle is remarkable for its circumstances, and also by reason of the occasion on which it was wrought, and most of all for the doctrine that is taught by it. It is a peculiar Miracle, and quite unique in its way. It is recorded only by St. Matthew (xvii. 24—27). The meaning of the Miracle has often been mistaken because its parts have been misunderstood; and, therefore, to some its real truth has been utterly lost.

The context and circumstances of the Miracle stand in remarkable contradistinction to the scene with which the chapter opens—namely, the Transfiguration. There, upon the mountain top, was Jesus manifested in His regal glory, as the King and Lord of all—a specimen of that glorious kingdom which is yet to be. And although it would appear that an interval had elapsed, during which Jesus and His disciples abode in Galilee (ver. 22), yet there is some significance in the juxtaposition of the Transfiguration and this Miracle in the Gospel of St. Matthew: the one was a manifestation of Christ's Kingship in its heavenly glory, the other a declaration of His Divine nature and Sonship, in the midst of His earthly poverty.

The narrative tells us that the Great Master and His disciples had returned from Galilee into Capernaum. This was the more settled abode of Jesus, and hence Capernaum was called “His own city.” Here, as a resident citizen, He would be subject to certain rights and duties incidental to citizenship. Hence the question asked of Peter by those who collected the tribute money—“Doth not your Master pay tribute?” Peter assures them that his Master will leave nothing undone that it is right He should do, and answers “Yes;” and thus commits his Master to

the payment of the tribute. He by-and-by enters the house, and before he has time to explain the matter, "Jesus prevented (*i.e.*, anticipated) him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?" Peter's answer to this question is according to the experience of earthly courts, and he says, "Of strangers." Whereupon Jesus founds this axiom—"Then are the children free." Yet, lest He should cause offence by His non-payment of the tribute, He miraculously supplies the money, saying to Peter, "Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee."

The whole interpretation of this Miracle depends upon our rightly understanding what particular tribute is here referred to. Suffice it to say, then, once for all, it was not a civil impost or any demand for the imperial treasury, but a tax for the maintenance of the Temple, in its structure and its worship. It was not tribute to Cæsar, but an offering to God for the exigencies of His earthly sanctuary. Any other meaning than this would render Christ's argument on the occasion meaningless, and also strip the Miracle of its chiefest point and significance.

The origin of this tribute is recorded in Exodus (xxx. 12—16). At first it was not an annual payment, nor even periodical, but only occasional; it was first commanded on the occasion of numbering the people in the wilderness. It was a poll tax; a census offering; an oblation of thanksgiving to God for preservation. Thus did God design to show His people that their numbering must be not a mere census of *men*, but a census of *God-fearing men*; who would be ready to give to God an offering of praise for preservation and providence. The payment was not a rate, but an equal sum levied from each—"The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel" (ver. 15). The Tabernacle of Witness in the wilderness was originally built by the free-will offerings of the people, contributed in money and in kind; and this tribute was designed "for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation" (ver. 16), and was afterwards, more or less regularly, collected for the service of the Temple. It was always willingly given by the Jews; and even after the dispersion collections were made in every city in Palestine, and in all places where Jews resided throughout the Roman empire, and forwarded to Jerusalem, as the contribution towards the support of their central glory, their Temple.

Allusion is supposed to be made to this tribute in 2 Kings xii. 4, &c., when, in the reign of Jehoash, efforts were made to repair the house of the Lord. It is there spoken of as being partly a leviable tax, and partly a voluntary gift.

The request that was made of Peter in this respect was not made by the publicans, who were the ordinary collectors of the imperial imposts; but by those "that received tribute money;" *i.e.*, they that received *the didrachma*, two didrachms being the amount required of each person for this purpose. It is not a demand, but an inquiry—"Doth not your Master pay tribute?" And the coin which Jesus said would be found in the fish's mouth, in Greek called a stater (στατήρ), contained four didrachms,* which would be the sum for two persons; therefore said Jesus, "that take, and give unto them *for me and thee.*"

In the intervening conversation between Christ and Peter rests the whole gist of the Miracle and its teaching. Jesus, knowing all things, perceives that Peter has been rashly committing Him to the demands of those that collected the tribute money. He, therefore, on Peter's return to the house, at once proceeds to show him how opposed would this demand be to His Divine character and nature. And after the analogy of human royalties, He shows how He is exempt from any such charges as these for the maintenance of the temple. Such imposts are required of those that are not the sons of the royal family, or, as the word here has it, "strangers." Hence it follows that the children are free. Now, the argument of Christ is this—The temple is my Father's house; I am my Father's Son; tribute is paid by strangers, not by sons; the children are free; therefore this tribute cannot be required of me. Here He argues His own Divinity and eternal Sonship; and therefrom deduces His exemption from the payment of this tribute money.

This is, therefore, different from that other question as to whether it is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not (Matthew xxii. 17—21). This was the tax paid to the Roman treasury. The Herodians who asked the question sought to entangle Jesus in His talk, and thought that by this question they had placed Him between the horns of a dilemma; for, if He answered it was lawful, they would impugn His loyalty as a Jew; and if He urged that it was not lawful, they would accuse Him to the civil tribunal, as affecting the minds of the people against Cæsar. But from the very fact that this tribute was paid with the current

* Hence the *stater* was sometimes called τετραδραχμος.

coin of Cæsar, having Cæsar's image and superscription, He is enabled to avoid both horns of the dilemma, and at the same time to propound the great axiom of Christian ethics—"Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

But in this case the tribute was to God's house—the Temple; and hence Jesus pleads exemption, on the score of His Divine Sonship. He pleads this, not to avoid the payment (as the sequel proves), but in order to assert and prove His own true Divinity.

Peter's answer to the collectors of the tribute money was too ready and inconsiderate; it was an unguarded speech, and one that did not duly vindicate his Master's claims. Surely, for the moment, he must have forgotten his Lord's true character and position. He could not have given sufficient heed to the voice from the most excellent glory, which said, "This is my beloved Son." In the person of that Master was "One greater than the Temple;" and to commit Him to the payment of tribute to the Temple was an act which needed the instructive lesson conveyed in the interrogatory conversation between the inconsiderate disciple and his Divine Master.

The question of Christ and the conversation arising out of it compassed the whole character and mission of Jesus. He was here on earth as the Son of God, equal with God, the King of all, the Heir of all things. And this supremacy of Jesus, if ignored by the world, must not be ignored by those whom He hath chosen out of the world. His Divine claims must ever be insisted upon, at least by those that own Him to be their Lord and God. This is, indeed, another instance of the working of that great law that runs through all the Miracles of Jesus,—His Kingship and supreme authority. This must never be forgotten, must never be overlooked; no, not even in the most trivial things. He has come here to regain His own dominion, and to give specimens of that better government which shall be when Jesus shall be King over all the earth. Accordingly, His people must plead for all the rights of His Sovereignty and Sonship. Though He is "despised and rejected of men," yet He must maintain His own position, assert His Royal dignity, and not allow His claims to be trifled with. So that yet one day when He shall sit as King upon the throne of His glory, He may look back and prove that in no respect has He ever compromised either His character or claims.

And herein consists the great truth of Christ's nature, which has been denied by many, and still is denied by some—His true

Sonship, His Divine nature, His universal Royalty. If Jesus were not God, He would not, and could not, have thus spoken. But being God, truly and essentially God, He boldly speaks forth His Divinity, and leaves on record His protest against the undue demands of men. If He had been a stranger to His Father's house and home, He would have paid the tribute as a due and lawful demand; but, being the Son, He pleads exemption, so as to protect the dignity of His person.

And this, after a human illustration, drawn from the rights of earthly royalties, in which the sons are free, and strangers (*i.e.*, they that are not sons) pay the national or imperial imposts. He is Himself of the Royal family of heaven, the Son, the only Son, the Heir of all things. The Temple is His Father's house, therefore no demand can be required of Him to pay tribute to the Temple. It is impossible not to learn the great truth of Christ's Divinity from such an occasion as this.

Yet notwithstanding, see the submission of Jesus; with what humility He bare the yoke of our humanity! "Lest we should offend them," saith the Saviour; that is, "lest we should cast a stumbling-block in the way of any" (*σκανδαλισωμέν*). It is the same word as is used so very frequently in the addresses of Christ, by which He warns His people lest they "offend" any, or "cast a stumbling-block" in the way. It might possibly be that some would misunderstand the act of non-payment, might misinterpret it, might not know or appreciate the true reason, and might speak evil and raise objections against the Master; and for their sakes He waives His protest, and is content with stating it. It is another proof of Christ's entire human sympathy with man. At His baptism He silences and satisfies the reluctance of the Baptist to baptize Him, saying, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Jesus needed no baptism, but seeing He had come to take upon Him man's nature, He took it in all its duties and responsibilities. He accepted for Himself all the law that was imposed on man; and therefore in His baptism He fulfilled that part of the legal righteousness, the righteousness which is of the law. Whereinsoever Jesus suffered, or underwent any legal ordinance, it was not for Himself, but for others' sakes—the great law of sympathy that characterised the whole life and all the acts of Jesus.

How tender and delicate is this good Saviour in all things! He gives up that which is His own, and waives His rights, lest by practically insisting upon them He should cast a stumbling-block in the way of others. He therefore simply urges His plea,

and at once resigns it. He claims immunity and exemption, and yet straightway pays the tribute money for His Father's house. Oh, that we were thus Christ-like, to resign our own for others' sakes!

The details of the Miracle are simply given. Peter is for the occasion sent back to his old vocation, and on casting a hook into the sea, the promise is, that the first fish that rises to the hook, and is caught, will be found to have a stater in its mouth. These circumstances are a good illustration of what a Miracle is: not *contrary to nature*, but *above nature*. There are some who suppose that the piece of money was specially and miraculously created for the occasion; but this is not so. There is no necessity thus to multiply Miracles. The Miracle was not in the fish swallowing a piece of money, nor yet in the fact of a fish with money in its mouth being caught; but in this—that the first fish rising to the hook would have the money in its mouth, *as declared beforehand by Jesus*. So also it is not contrary to nature that a fish should swallow money, or other costly things; it is not contrary to nature that that fish should some time be caught; but it is *above nature* that according to the predicted word, the first fish caught should have the required piece of money in its mouth. In this circumstance, and in this only, consists the Miracle.

This is, then, one further instance of Christ's miraculous power, exercised in proof of His Divine Sonship, and His essential Godhead. Here, as on other occasions, the work done was the evidence of the doctrine taught; and Jesus once more manifested forth His glory, and proved that He was indeed the Son of the living God.

THE HEALING OF MALCHUS' EAR.

“And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his ear, and healed him.”—LUKE xxii. 50, 51.

THIS Miracle is incidentally told by St. Luke only; though the act of violence offered to the High Priest's servant, and the associations of the deed, are related by all the four Evangelists: St. Matthew (xxvi. 51—54); St. Mark (xiv. 47); St. Luke (xxii. 49—51); and St. John (xviii. 10, 11). The narrative, as gathered from all these sources, seems to be this: Jesus is standing in the midst of those who, guided by the treachery of Judas, are come out to take Him. This position of the Master provokes the spirit of one of His retinue, who instantly drew a sword, and, bringing down a heavy blow on the body of the assailant, struck one of the party, the High Priest's servant, and smote off his right ear. This violent intervention was not approved by the Master, who accordingly reproved the doer of the deed, and commanded him to return his sword again into its sheath; and showed him that He stood not in need of any such defence, for if He were so minded He had but to call on His Father, “and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels.”

St. Luke is the only Evangelist that relates the subsequent Healing of the Ear—“And He touched his ear, and healed him.” We are also indebted to St. John for supplying both the name of the wounded servant and of the violent disciple—it was Simon Peter that drew the sword, and “the servant's name was Malchus.” Why the names of the parties were withheld by the earlier Gospels is not certainly known. It was most likely because at the date of writing them Peter was yet alive, and the mention of his name, as the aggressor in this case, might have exposed him needlessly to the odium of the people. When St. John wrote his Gospel Peter had been long dead, and therefore the precaution of the earlier narrators would be unnecessary.

The prompt Healing of the Ear by Christ was itself precautionary. The death of Christ was to be altogether unprovoked by any cause on His part. Now, if the disciples are to be allowed to take their Master's cause into their own hands, their lack of judgment and indiscretion might possibly have given occasion for a personal accusation against Jesus. This act of violence on the part of Peter might very seriously have compromised his Master, and have led to unwelcome consequences. There were cavillers enough then, and there are cavillers enough now, to ascribe the death of Christ to this act of violence rather than to the voluntary offering of Himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin. Therefore, by the instant restoration of the ear, Jesus took away all cause of offence on that score, and rescued Himself from the consequences of Peter's indiscretion and hasty zeal.

Otherwise, there would have been an utter thwarting of the great design and real cause of the death of Jesus. He was to die, not for any offence of His own; and from this sacrificial death no man was asked to save Him. Therefore the rather reprehensive answer of Jesus—"Suffer ye thus far;" that is, "Stay, it is enough!" Resistance on the part of His disciples could only involve the question in difficulties, and defeat the whole purpose of God in thus laying upon Christ this burden of our sin and its consequence, Death. Hence the remonstrance addressed by Christ to the too forward disciple—"Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11.) The cup of wrath was appointed for Him that He should drink it. Then, why should Peter interpose his unbidden arm to cause that cup to pass from Him?

Read, as illustrated here, not only the great power of Christ, displayed even to the last, but also the voluntary sacrifice of Christ, who will come, pure and blameless, and without resistance, to the altar of the Cross: "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." (Isaiah liii. 7.) If human power could rescue Christ from death, "how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

THE FRUITLESS FIG-TREE.

“And seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And His disciples heard it.”—**MARK. xi. 13, 14.**

WE are now drawing nigh unto the concluding scenes of the Ministry of Christ. He is now, at this point of the evangelical narrative, fulfilling the last few days of the Son of Man before His Passion. He is shortly to accomplish His decease at Jerusalem, and has already entered on that eventful week that is to consummate all His sorrows and all our salvation. To pause for a review of the surroundings of such a time cannot be other than profitable to us.

The narrative is this.—The day preceding this Miracle was the Sabbath; it was spent in Jerusalem, and had been celebrated as a day of triumph by the royal entry of Jesus into the city of Sion. The people of Jerusalem had, with popular acclamation, saluted Jesus as the promised One, and, in a temporary recognition of His claims, had received Him as their King. Upon the eventide of that remarkable day, Jesus had retired to the seclusion and quietude of Bethany, and most likely to the familiar abode of Lazarus and his sisters. On the following morning He returned to Jerusalem, and this would be the first day of the week of the Passover.

It is upon this return journey to Jerusalem that the Miracle occurs, as related by St. Matthew (xxi. 17—22); and by St. Mark (xi. 12—24). The narrative of St. Matthew is the more compressed; that of St. Mark more expanded and detailed. St. Matthew comprises all in one scene; St. Mark separates its several parts, and makes its successive stages to pass in review before our eyes. Thus—In the morning of the day after the

Sabbath (which we call the Monday morning of the week), Jesus is returning from Bethany to Jerusalem, and in His journey "He was hungry." And seeing a fig-tree afar off, full of leaf, He came, seeking fruit on it, and found nothing but leaves. He then pronounced a curse upon it—"No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever!" Jesus then passes on with His disciples; He enters the temple, cleanses it of its unlawful traffic, and asserts its only use to be for the worship of His Father, showing Himself to be the Lord and King and Great High Priest of this, His Father's house. In the evening of that day He again leaves the city, perhaps on His return once more to Bethany, and next morning (as we would call it, Tuesday) they saw the fig-tree dried up and withered. Peter calls attention to this fact, saying, "Master, behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away." To which recognition of the result of His word Jesus answers, "Have faith in God."

There are some objections raised in reference to this narrative, to which we do well to give attention.

1. There are some who object that Jesus here displays a lack of knowledge, and consequent disappointment, which would appear to be inconsistent with that omniscience which belongs to Deity. They ask, Why should the all-knowing God thus come to this tree, expecting to find fruit, and finding none?

I answer, this is one of many instances which prove that Jesus was perfect man, as well as perfect God, and that the whole nature of man was completely and in all its parts fulfilled (sin only excepted). As a man, He approached this pretentious tree, with leaves, but without fruit. He, surely, had a right so to do. Those leaves of the fig-tree were themselves an invitation, soliciting the scrutiny of the great Master. Omniscience, no doubt, did its appointed duty on this occasion, and Jesus undoubtedly did know all about that fig-tree; but a great lesson is to be taught, a great truth declared, and, through the emblem of this tree, a figurative illustration is to be given to the disciples and the Church at large; and therefore Jesus, as it were challenged by the leaves, seeks fruit upon the fig-tree.

It is thus that oftentimes the humanity of Christ is kept distinct from His attributes as God. Why, for example, did He weep over the grave of Lazarus, seeing that His omniscience must already have foreseen the result? Why did He prolong His sleep in the fishing boat of Galilee, while the disciples were in deadly danger? And why did He thus permit them to remain in jeopardy, until He was awakened? Are not these the manifesta-

tions of His manhood—"bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh?"

And even so is it on this occasion: with omniscient knowledge as a God, and with the full design in view, and yet as a man hungering for food, He naturally resorts to the leafy fig-tree on the wayside, if haply He might find anything thereon. There is this one thing to be observed in the human life of Jesus, that the power of His Divinity never altered the naturalness of His humanity, in the discharge of human duties. His omnipotence is not disproved by the human precaution He at times adopted, in withdrawing Himself apart from the angry multitudes; and neither is His omniscience disparaged by the proper use of means in seeking for fruit upon this fig-tree. Indeed, in a spiritual sense, does not the omniscient God even now come to many who hold a profession of religion, seeking fruit there, and finding none? And does this disprove Divine omniscience?

2. This miracle is charged with being a deed of judgment, a curse harshly pronounced upon a tree, as though it were a rational agent, and morally guilty.

This, indeed, seems to be a fine-drawing of objections, and when examined it vanishes in vapour; yea more, it tends greatly to strengthen the moral power of the Miracle. A tree, we very well know, is not an intelligent agent, and is not morally capable of being either good or bad. And yet, we also know, that we speak *as though* a tree were thus morally capable, speaking of a *good* tree and a *corrupt* tree, and its good or evil fruits. We speak of a tree as having certain powers and as enjoying certain advantages, and we therefore hold it responsible for the circumstances of its condition, and deal with it accordingly. If it incline to excesses, we prune it; if it grow too luxuriously, we lop it, and place it under discipline; and if it be hopelessly bad, we lay the axe to the root of the tree.

And herein consists the whole weight of the instruction conveyed in the parable of the Barren Fig-tree, which, in the analogy oftentimes appearing between the Parables and Miracles of our Lord, answers to the Miracle now before us. That fig-tree (in the parable) receives a large proportion of the husbandman's care, attention, time, and skill; and is, to all intents and purposes, dealt with as a moral agent, and at last is "cut down," because it cumbereth the ground. All this is transferred to ourselves, as an admonition and warning.

As a Miracle of judgment this act tends rather to enhance the Miracles of mercy. Those were the rule, this was the exception.

The deeds of mercy were performed on men, who were capable of appreciating such good deeds; but judgment was visited upon meaner things, such as this fig-tree, and on the swine of the Gergasenes. And even these Miracles were wrought more in mercy than in judgment. The demoniac was delivered, though the swine were destroyed; and this fig-tree was blasted, so that *we* may be admonished by its teaching and example. How kind is that Saviour who visits judgment on things that have no souls to be lost, for the benefit of those who have souls to be saved! Truly, in this respect, "mercy rejoices over judgment."

3. A more serious difficulty remains, in the words of St. Mark's narrative—"for the time of figs was not yet." It is urged by some that this circumstance presents the Miracle in an unfavorable light, as it seems to cast upon Jesus the imputation of unreasonable severity, and to charge Him with overmuch haste in judgment, as though He were an unjust judge, or, in reality, that "hard man" spoken of in the parable, who "reapeth where he hath not sown, and gathereth where he hath not strawed." Our objector argues thus—Why expect those fruits? yea, why demand them? and, above all, why inflict such punishment for not producing them, if "the time of figs was not yet?" This certainly is a matter that requires explanation, in defence of the justice of the sentence pronounced against the fig-tree.

It would be well, first of all, to ascertain what is the meaning of the expression, "the time of figs," *καιρὸς σύκων*. A similar expression occurs in the parable of the Tares and the Wheat, "Let both grow together until the harvest; and *in the time of harvest*," &c. (Matthew xiii. 30.) Here the words, *ἐν καιρῷ τοῦ θερισμοῦ*, signify not the growing, but the *gathering* of the harvest. And again, in the parable of the Husbandman, the expression, *καιρὸς τῶν καρπῶν*, means the *ingathering* of the fruits of the vineyard. And so the expression, "the time of figs was not yet," would mean the season for the ripening and ingathering of figs had not yet come.

Still, this interpretation does not wholly solve the difficulty; for it is plain not only that there were no *ripe* figs, but that there were *no figs at all*, even in prospect, upon this Fruitless Fig-tree; and hence the imprecation pronounced against it. I would, therefore, further observe, that in the produce of the fig-tree, the fruit appeared first, and then the leaves; so that the foliage of the fig-tree implies the existence of the fruit, except the tree be a barren one. In this fact lies not only the reason of the Miracle, but also the great truth and weight of admonition

contained in it. If there had been no leaves on the fig-tree, Jesus would not have sought for fruit thereon. But by putting forth its leaves it put forth pretensions, which were not warranted by the facts, as realised on closer inspection. If it was not the time of figs, much less was it the time of *leaves*. So that, in dealing with this objection, we are conducted to the very innermost truth and doctrine of the Miracle.

Hence, too, the evidence of a learned traveller in the East, whose testimony quite bears out this view of the case—"There is a kind of tree which bears a large green-coloured fig that ripens very early. I have plucked them in May, from trees on Lebanon, a hundred and fifty miles north of Jerusalem, and where the trees are nearly a month later than in the south of Palestine; it does not, therefore, seem impossible but that the same kind *might* have had ripe figs at Easter, in the warm sheltered ravines of Olivet. The meaning of the phrase, 'The time of figs had not yet come,' may be that the ordinary season for them had not yet arrived, which would be true enough at any rate. The reason why He might legitimately (so to speak) seek fruit from this particular tree at that early day, was the ostentatious show of *leaves*. The fig often comes with, or even before the leaves, and especially on the early kind. If there was no fruit on this leafy tree, it might justly be condemned as barren; and hence the propriety of the lesson it was made to teach—That those who put forth in profusion only the leaves of empty profession are nigh unto cursing."*

Accordingly, the true interpretation of the expression is, not in the matter of the time of the ripe figs, but in the fact that the leaves of this tree had preceded the fruit. It is an instructive instance of the symbolic teaching of the Miracles of Christ, showing the falsity and nothingness of mere profession, and the utter condemnation if the tree should not bring forth fruit answerable to its professions.

This Fig-tree by the wayside from Bethany to Jerusalem, is the emblem of a dead faith, a profitless profession of religion, a fruitless display of external piety. And in the illustrative lesson of the Miracle, we are all admonished to beware. Yes, beware, lest that same Jesus should come to seek fruit on us, and find "nothing but leaves." This is the mere profession of foliage, making promises, raising expectations, challenging a search after

* *The Land and the Book*, by Dr. Thomson, p. 349.

better things—and all ending in bitter disappointment. Surely, the end of such profession is that the fruitless fig-tree be burned in the fire.

Beware of mere outward profession, the glittering tinsel of external show. Foliage is not fruit; verbiage is not eloquence; the outward setting is not the value of the brilliant diamond. Leaves are not the full productiveness of the fruit-tree; the lack of fruit is the real nakedness of the land. The moral of the Miracle of the Fruitless Fig-tree bids you first be fruitful, and then profess your faith; first let the hidden man of the heart be right with God, and then will the outward man be conformed thereto; but profession without reality, leaves without fruit,—this is but an abomination in the sight of God.

And this interpretation gathers force in proportion as we adhere to the literal meaning of the words,—“the time of figs was not yet.” That is, it was not then the season for fruit, but this tree, by reason of its profusion of leaves, made certain pretensions before its time. The too forward and precocious maturity of the tree invited search for corresponding fruit, but only tended to, and ended in, a weary disappointment. If this Fig-tree had patiently waited for its due season, its timely nakedness of leaves and barrenness of fruit would have been but natural, and would have created no false hopes. But it was not so: it put forth its leaves, without the antecedent guarantee of fruit; and therefore it was merely a pretentious tree. The question, therefore, is not whether Jesus may have sought last year’s figs that might still linger on its boughs, or this year’s fruit not yet matured to ripeness, but this—that with the leaves He had a right to expect the fruit also, or, as Dean Trench puts it—“It is plain that no such calculation of probabilities brought the Lord thither, but those abnormal leaves, which He had a right to count would have been accompanied with abnormal fruit.” And yet again, “It was punished not for being without fruit, but for proclaiming by the voice of those leaves that it had such—not for being barren, but for being false.”

In this Miracle is contained an eloquent symbolic lesson for the Jewish nation, reminding us of the words of the apostle, who speaks of that people as once the good olive-tree, but for its unfaithfulness and its unfruitfulness supplanted by the wild olive-tree of the Gentiles. (Rom. xi. 17, &c.) This Fruitless Fig-tree was the emblem of the Jewish nation in its largeness of profession and its littleness of fruit in our Lord’s days. And, accordingly, in the day of Christ, that tree was blighted and blasted

root and branch, leaves and all. The nationality of Abraham's seed was taken away, they were uprooted from their own land, and Israel is now a barren branch, a dried and withered tree. That people were in advance of other nations in profession, as this tree was in advance of other trees in foliage. Yet there were no fruits of righteousness, but only fruits of shame. They challenged inquiry, but answered not the expectation of the search; for when Jesus came seeking fruit thereon, He found "nothing but leaves." There was much profession, but little reality of religion, characterising the Jewish people in the day of Christ. There were Pharisees with broad phylacteries, but no heartfelt piety; there were Scribes sitting in Moses' seat, but they had none of the spirit that giveth life; there were lawyers who professed to have great concern for jots and tittles, but no regard for the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and truth; there were hypocrites who made clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within were full of extortion and excess, whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." (Matt. xxiii. 25, 27.) For this the anger of God went forth against them, and they were rooted out, and now as the dismembered branches of a dead tree they are scattered over the surface of the globe, their privileges, their Scriptures, their promises,—are opened to others. And from her desolation Judah sings her mournful song of admonition to the Gentiles—

"I am a dried and abject branch,
My place is giv'n to thee;
But woe to ev'ry barren graft
Of thy wild olive-tree!"

Yet, not for ever is this blight upon Jerusalem. If the fig-tree is used as the emblem of uprooted and denationalized Israel, the fig-tree is also employed as the emblem of her restoration: "Learn a parable of the fig-tree." And in the unfolding of future history, and in the fulfilment of yet pregnant prophecies, Israel has a great work to do, a great vocation to fulfil. Much of the history of the world is still wrapped up in the fates and fortunes of the Jewish race. There shall yet be a resurrection life of God's ancient people, Israel.

But the real significance of such a Miracle as this is for ourselves. It is written altogether for our sakes. If we be but mere professors of religion, we may be leaf-bearing, but we are not fruit-bearing trees. If our faith be not that faith that

worketh by love, it is a dead faith. If we stand among other men, as being more pretentious and more holy than they, and this claim be unsupported by corresponding fruit, the same wrath that fell on the Fruitless Fig-tree must fall upon us ; and then who will lift us up ?

Such persons will be uprooted from the soil, which has spent its sap and strength for nought in feeding them ; they will be removed from their position, which they have so unworthily occupied ; they will be blighted in the full foliage of their profession ; and in their fall they shall make all men see the visitation of God's hand, and the power of His word. And as they thus speedily answer the imprecation of His wrath, all that pass by shall see it, and Angels and men shall exclaim, as Peter did,—
“ How soon is the fig-tree withered away !”

“ Yet gaze not idly on this fall,
But, sinner, warnèd be ;
Who spared not His chosen seed,
May send His wrath on thee !”

THE SECOND MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

“And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”—JOHN XXI. 6.

THIS is the only Miracle of our Blessed Lord that is recorded as having been wrought during the interval of His sojourn upon earth after His Resurrection. Indeed, we may almost say that any of His appearances to His disciples during that period would partake of the miraculous, seeing how He disguised His person, and at times held the eyes of His followers, so that they did not recognise Him; and when He did appear to them, it was in some mysterious and almost spiritual manner, very unlike His former intimacy and brotherhood with His disciples.

On this occasion, which is recorded only by St. John (xxi. 1—14), Jesus manifested Himself to a select number of His followers at the Sea of Tiberias. It was a remarkable manifestation, and the Evangelist introduces it in the formal manner—“On this wise shewed He Himself.” There were together seven of the disciples of the Lord—Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John, and two other disciples, not named. The Evangelist is, therefore, an eye-witness of this last Miracle recorded in his Gospel.

This little party of disciples is challenged by Peter to go a fishing, thus resorting to their old occupation on the familiar waters of Galilee. They launched forth at even tide, and toiled all the night as on the former occasion (Luke v. 5); “and that night they caught nothing.” Dispirited by their profitless labour of the night long, they return to land. As they are approaching the margin of the lake in the early morning, behold, “Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was

Jesus." The unknown stranger asks whether they had met with any success in their fishing expedition, and they answered, No. He then commands them to cast the net at the right side of the ship, with a promise that they should find. They obeyed the command, and now they could scarcely draw the net for the multitude of fishes which they had caught. This immediate response to their effort, showing also a fulfilment of the promise given them by the stranger, at once suggests to the pious mind of John that it surely is the Lord; and also suggests to the impetuous spirit of Peter to hasten with all speed, and, any how, to cast himself at the feet of his Divine Master. He, accordingly, binding his fisher's coat about him, cast himself into the waters, and by swimming or by wading he got first to the feet of Jesus; while the rest of the party, taking charge of their net, drew it leisurely to land. There they find provision made (whether miraculously or otherwise is not stated), of a fire of coals and bread and fish. Upon this they all dined, having secured and even counted the fish, which were all large and good, and in number an hundred and fifty and three. A mysterious awe and feeling of reserve seems to have pervaded the disciples: there was no positive declaration in words, nor as yet any return to the familiar voice or dress or aspect, to tell them it was the Lord; but still they made a shrewd guess, from the Miracle and its associations, that it must be Jesus, and "none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord."

The range of meaning of this Miracle may best be learned by contrasting or comparing it with former scenes and occasions of Christ's Miracles. For example—

This manifestation of Christ is worthy of remark as compared with former occasions. The Greek expression for "Jesus showed Himself" (*ἐφάνησεν ἑαυτὸν*) calls us back from this last to the first of His Miracles, which He wrought in Cana of Galilee, respecting which this same Evangelist records that He "manifested forth His glory" (*ἐφάνησεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ*). This showing or manifestation of Himself was, however, of a different character: He made Himself to appear, or be visible, to His disciples, who, but for such manifestation, could not have seen Him. It would seem as though the bodily presence of Christ was even then merging into the spiritual, and that He could withhold Himself at pleasure from the view of men, or, at pleasure, reveal Himself to their sight. Thus it was in His appearance to Mary Magdalene, when having, on the morning of the Resurrection, walked the whole range of the vicinity of the sepulchre,

she suddenly perceives the risen Saviour, but knows Him not, and mistakes Him for the gardener. So also, to the brethren journeying to Emmaus: their eyes were holden, so that they should not know Him, and at last, and quite suddenly, He made Himself known to them, and then immediately and as mysteriously vanished, or "became invisible" (*ἄφαντος ἐμένετο*), Luke xxiv. 31).

The whole gist of the occurrence, however, consists in the contrast between this Miracle and that of the former Draught of Fishes (Luke v. 1—11). There are many points of contrast, and it would appear that quite another and different kind of instruction was intended to be conveyed thereby to the mind of the Church. The former Miracle was a symbolic act in all its parts; it was the Miracle that accompanied the definite call of the disciples to the service of their Lord, and in it are found illustrations of the character of their office and the nature of their new vocation. This Miracle was a following up of the teaching of that; a lifting up of the disciples' toil to a higher level, indicative of the part they were now to bear in accomplishing the number of God's elect and hastening His glorious kingdom. This, too, is a symbolic act, but in another direction, looking not so much to the wide-spread offer of the Gospel as to its actual results in its successful issue on "the appearing of the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." The two Miracles point, by symbol, to the two Advents of Jesus, and deal with the associations of each respectively. Let us, however, take a systematic review of the contrast between them.

1. *The contrast of time.*—The one was before and the other was after the Suffering and Resurrection of Christ. The Miracles wrought before Christ's death were descriptive of the doctrines or the circumstances of the Church in the world. This Miracle, wrought after the Resurrection, takes a more distant scope, contemplates the final issue of all discipleship and all ministry, and describes the Church of God gathered, and saved, and finally established. Scarcely has the object of the First Advent been attained, when the Great Teacher encourages His Church and people to look forward to the Second Coming of the Lord. The contrast of times and seasons suggested a contrast of symbols and lessons in the teaching of Christ.

2. *The contrast of ministry and labour.*—In the former Miracle was symbolised the wide-spread ministry of the Church, the "Fishers of men" casting nets into all waters and on all sides of the ship, and gathering large draughts within the Gospel net, but

of a mixed character, both great and small, both bad and good. This character of Miracle is further illustrated by the parable of our Blessed Lord—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." (Matt. xiii. 47, 48.) But in this Miracle another and remoter aspect of the Gospel ministry is set before us. Here, after a night-long of fruitless toil, the disciples are commanded to cast their net to the *right side* of the ship;* they enclose a successful draught; and *all* that they have taken are "great fishes." Is not this a foreshadow of the time that is coming, when "a nation shall be born in a day," and the people shall all be righteous; a worthy return for labour spent and duty done?

3. *The contrast of number and amount.*—In the former Miracle there was no account taken of the number netted. In this the exact number is given—"an hundred and fifty and three." In the former the number taken was so great and so unwieldy as to cause the net to break, and thus some escaped back into their native element again; the ships began to sink for the very weight, and the nets needed mending. In this, though the net is full to repletion, "yet for all there were so many, was not the net broken;" and all were drawn safely to land. Is not this an eloquent symbol, descriptive of the twofold result of the Gospel ministry? In the present dispensation of the word, and during the merely experimental labours of the "Fishers of men," there is a mixed result, of bad and good, alike gathered into the net, thus causing rents and schisms in the Church, and bearing down the Gospel ship by their very weight and number. But in the day, of which *this* Miracle speaks, all shall be good and all shall be "great," and all shall be numbered. This will be the Church of the Saints, the body of the elect, the full tale told of those that are everlastingly saved. No injury shall be done in that day to the net of the Gospel, and the Church of the redeemed shall not be overweighted with the burden of its freight—"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders." All that are netted in the Gospel shall be drawn safely to land, to the shore of the Eternal, and laid at the feet of the Ascended Jesus!

* The same meaning is, I think, to be attached to this expression, "the right side of the ship," as to the words, "the right hand" of the Eternal Judge, in the Final Judgment, when all the *good* are gathered to the right hand of their Lord.

Such are some of the contrasts between these two Miracles, illustrative of the respective doctrine and teaching in each. They are two distinct symbolic acts, pointing to two distinct times and seasons, and modes of operation in the Church of God on earth. The one—the symbol of the Church as it now is, patient, toilsome, and oftentimes unsuccessful, and at best but *partially* successful, in its heavenly labour. The other—the symbol of the better time, the Resurrection-day of the Church, when its great Head and Master, not in His suffering state, but in His Resurrection glory, shall stand by the shore of Eternity, that bounds the sea of Time, and shall Himself direct the casting of the net, and bring about the grand result. Yes, the symbol of a future day of the Church's history, when Christ Himself shall come, and mark the path in which His ministers shall tread, and gather His chosen ones, and fetch them home into His Father's kingdom.

And the symbolic teaching goes even farther than this, and introduces us to the sequel of the successful mission of the Church of God—even to the high festival of Heaven, preshadowed, though distantly, by the invitation of Jesus, "Come and dine." In that little company by the shore of Galilee, after the fruitless labour of the bygone night, and the fruitful issue of that early morning, sitting round the frugal table, with Jesus, their Lord and Master, at their head—in this, I say, is foreshown the Church of the chosen ones, sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Having now done with the storms, and waves, and tempests, the perilous hazards and uncertain results of their voyage, they are rewarded with final success; and now, their work being done, they sit down with Jesus for the refreshment of the food of heaven.

Worthy ending this to the great Miracles of Jesus! In all these deeds of greatness and of good we have found some blessed truth declared, some great symbol of the Cross or of the Crown revealed. And this is the ending of them all. And as it dovetails with the Miracles of the past, so it also blends into the glory of the future, the chosen emblem of the day of the prophet's foretelling—"Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in His time." (Isa. lx. 21, 22.)

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