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FAMOUS PAINTINGS

REV. DAVID DAVIES

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BY

Rev. DAVID DAVIES,

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LONDON:
ALEXANDER AND SHEPHEARD,
21, CASTLE STREET, HOLBORN, E.C.

1885.

Alexander & Shepheard, Printers,
27, Chancery Lane, W.C.

TO THE

CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

MEETING AT

REGENT'S PARK CHAPEL,

TO WHOM

THESE DISCOURSES

WERE RECENTLY DELIVERED,

THEY ARE NOW

Very affectionately dedicated.

PREFACE.

THESE discourses were delivered at Regent's Park Chapel during the early part of this year. They were taken down in shorthand and published at the time in the *Christian World Pulpit*. I have slightly revised them, and have altered the order in which they were originally given, but have not sought to re-model the conversational style of my extemporaneous utterances. This task would have entailed more labour for one already sufficiently occupied than the advantage gained would have justified.

I lay no claim to a knowledge of the painter's art. I merely view the paintings from the stand-point of a Bible student, and with the sympathy of one who believes that the true artist can render valuable service to the cause of genuine religion by the illustration of Scriptural incidents and of Christian truth—a service which should be made still more effective by the cordial recognition and co-operation of the Christian minister.

It will be observed that the paintings selected are, as a whole, illustrative of the passive and suffering aspects of our Lord's life on earth, and of the relation which they bear for all time to human sorrow and Christian endurance.

I hope, at some future time, to publish additional discourses on Sacred Themes as illustrated by works of Fine Art, in which other phases of Revealed Truth will be considered.

DAVID DAVIES.

REGENT'S PARK CHAPEL,

June, 1885.

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE HOPE OF ISRAEL.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder."—ISAIAH ix. 6.

THE preceding chapter closes with *words of doom*—"They shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness;" this chapter opens with a *message of hope*—"Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death upon them hath the light shined." The transition is sudden and complete. There is in this world mercifully a compensating balance to all Divine denunciations, a "nevertheless" to all God's judgments, a Gospel of Grace appended to every message of doom. It is this that makes this world, and all its tragic scenes, a world of mercy.

The basis of the new hope with which this chapter opens is my text—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Such is the emphasis with which this prophecy is uttered, that it has all the appearance of a record of what has already taken place. It sounds like an evangel rather than a prediction, and might have been written by one of the four evangelists as the story of the Advent.

Yet it is a prophecy, and as a prophecy it reminds us that *the hope of the chosen people concerning themselves and their race centred in a child.* As a general fact, how many of the world's hopes and expectations have in all ages focussed in cradles. The children represent the hope of all generations. They are "a heritage of the Lord" to nations as well as to families. The first hope of our fallen race was in "the seed of the woman," and the most inspiring hope of the "father of the faithful" was in a child of promise. Previous to that gift "the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing *I go childless?*" To Abraham God's blessing seemed to hinge upon the gift of *a child.*

This hope in time culminated in a higher. "Your father Abraham," said our Lord, "rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." This expectation of Messiah's birth sustained the hope of Israel for over two thousand years. It found expression alike in the utterances of psalmists, seers, and prophets. What wonder that the New Testament, which professes to be the fulfilment of the Old, begins with the record of a birth? The Old Testament closes with the prophecy, the New Testament opens with the fulfilment. The long list of names of which the first chapter of the New Testament consists would be meaningless apart from *the* name to which they all lead, and the recorded generations, as common-place as many other generations apart from the *last birth*—so exceptional in its character and surroundings—to which they all point.

A *birth*, I say; for the advent was not like an angel's visit, or a mysterious appearance in human form, similar to those which had frequently taken place under the Old Dispensation, but Jesus was "born"—bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Nothing less than a *birth* could adequately fulfil Jewish hope. Every family, in the days when faith was alive, was on the tiptoe of expectation every Jewish mother listened with throbbing heart for the announcement, *possibly to her*, of the birth of the Prince and Deliverer of Israel. Hence, when the birth was at length announced, the salutation of Elizabeth to Mary, which she gave "with a loud voice," expressed a Jewish woman's highest ideal of honour and blessedness: "Blessed art thou among women; and whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Hence, too, when *this* child was born, and angels announced His birth, the usual order of precedence was reversed. Most of our early commentators were struck by this strange exception. It is not "the mother and her Child" that the angel of the Lord speaks of, but "the Child and His mother." The child was the *possessor*. Mary was *His*, and the star which the wise men saw in the East was *His*. "He came unto *His own*," and yet—wondrous paradox, so full of beauty as it is of mystery!—*that* Child is *ours*, for, listen—

"Unto *us* a child is born." The Jews narrowed the word *us*, and applied it exclusively to themselves. Men are ever narrowing Divine words within a small compass, and imparting to them their own littleness. The word "us" was handed down from age to age in a narrow and yet narrower form, until He who was to be born came and restored to it its original meaning. He taught men that "us" meant all. He called Himself the "Son of Man." He was born to be the hope of the human race, and thus the fulfilment of God's promise to Abram, that in him and his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

In this announcement, "Unto *us* a child is born," we have the Gospel in Isaiah. Angels borrowed this sermon of Isaiah eight hundred years later, but, like other borrowers of the kind, did not improve it in the borrowing. "Unto *you* is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord," exclaimed the angels over the fields of Bethlehem. In point of chronology they were the gainers, but in point of pathos Isaiah stood unapproached. The angels had to speak on the very day of advent in the *second* person—"unto *you*"; Isaiah, eight hundred years before, could speak with all the directness and tenderness of the *first* person—"unto *us*." Angels may excel in *strength*, but man in pathos. Angels can render glorious service, but they cannot preach as man can. Consecrated man is master of the pulpit.

"A son is *given*." We have here not only a birth, but also a *gift*. This great One of whom Isaiah speaks is not the offspring, the production of our race, but the *gift* of heaven. Humanity in this respect is bankrupt. It can produce no saviour, no deliverer who shall free it from its greatest bondage. Hence God blesses our race with an exceptional birth, and enriches it with a life which shall be divine as well as human. He gives *His* son, who shall also be *ours*.

This is God's greatest and best gift. It is the gift that involves the greatest condecension. Here the great God touches the cradle and the manger and transfigures them. By the incarnation He glorifies infancy, the humblest domestic scenes, and the tenderest ties. In this cradle what marvellous blendings of the simplicities of earth with the mysteries of heaven! He is the "babe in swaddling clothes" and "the Ancient of Days"! "A child is born" and "a son is given," and yet His name is "called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." The same paradox is presented by the words of our text.

"And the government shall be upon His shoulder." Now the paradox of Jewish faith consisted in this—that it focussed at once in *a cradle* and *a throne; a child and a king.* Hence the birth in which that ancient hope found fulfilment *was the birth of a King.* The question of the wise men was grandly expressive. Like Isaiah's prophecy, it centred alike in a *child* and a *king.* "Where is he that is *born—king?*" It was a question which made it impossible for the chief priests and scribes whom Herod called to ignore the identity of the One asked for, however much they may have wished it. They said, "In Bethlehem of Judæa, for it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a *Governor, and shall rule My people Israel.*" The birth foretold by prophets and sought for by the Magi was the birth of a *Ruler.*

At the very heart of the Jewish religion was the belief in kingship—a *Divine* kingship or a theocracy. The Divine throne was the centre of the Jewish cosmogony. This great spiritual fact was symbolised by "the outward visible sign" of human kingship. God permitted the Jewish people to choose human kings to enable them the more fully to trust in the great central truth of Divine government and rule. But all human symbols are imperfect. Their kings died like other men. But their true King did not die. They sought to make the outward symbol of government as complete as possible, hence they adopted hereditary kingship. The human, and, in this case, the Jewish heart, is impatient of an interregnum. There is a feeling in man that the throne should at no period be empty. This feeling ever tends towards hereditary rule. The prophet, in the text and in the verses which follow, points to a King to the increase of "whose government and peace there shall be no end." It is a kingdom which knows of no interregnum. In contrast to all other kings and royal personages, who soon die and pass away, He ever lives.

It is such a king that the Jewish people yearned and looked for. Hence, when the wise men came with the question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" it not only moved Herod, but all Jerusalem with him. It was a question which, coming from the quarter it did, flashed upon them like a sheet of lightning, and rekindled the dying embers of Jewish faith. The Jews looked eagerly for a king who should bear upon his shoulder the burden of perpetual government. This yearning for a king is one of the deepest in the heart of nations. The history of the past in all its surprisals and tragedies is the record of nations seeking a king; and the dream of the divine right of kings is but the outcome of a feeling down deep in man that the king he needs must come from God. Hence, when prophets spoke of the Messiah who was to come, and who would satisfy in Himself the deepest yearnings of our race, they rejoiced to speak of Him as "the King."

Alas! that when He came men did not recognise Him in the humble garb He wore. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." They placed a cross upon the shoulder that was to bear the ensign of rule, and a crown of thorns upon His royal brow. Yet, all was well, for what could be a better symbol of His kingship than the cross, since His is "the kingdom and *patience*, and He is a "Prince and a *Saviour*"—"the kingdom" because "the patience," a "Prince" because a "*Saviour*"? Thus only the shoulder that could bear the cross could bear this government.

His sacred brow, too, bore the only crown which man could place there and He accept—*a crown of thorns*, symbol alike of our sin and misery and of His royalty who has overcome us by the might of His compassion, and become our King by the shedding of His blood. What becomes the brow of the Man of Sorrows and King of sorrowing humanity like a crown of thorns? There *are* thorns in the choicest crowns which men can put upon the heads of their monarchs. When the King of sorrowing men is crowned let there be no band of gold or cluster of precious jewels to hide the thorns beneath. Let it be laid upon His brow in all its naked and solemn significance. That crown must derive all, *all* its glory from the royal head that wears it.

Our Lord exclaimed some time before His hour had come, "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again." He based his kingly claim upon that twofold power. "Therefore doth My Father love

Me," He exclaimed, "because I lay down My life that I might take it again." Therefore do we love Him, too, because He laid down His life for us. By His great sacrifice He unites heaven and earth, God and redeemed man, to Himself by an indissoluble bond. It is from His cross that He sways His sceptre over us. The love that redeems is the love that rules, and the ecstatic response of His loving subjects to all the claims He makes upon their homage is "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be *glory and dominion for ever and ever.*"

This two-fold hope of the Jews, centring alike in a cradle and a throne, a child and a King, is perfectly consistent, once we understand the nature of Kingship. The cradle predicts the cross. Once God has condescended to touch the manger and the crib, we are prepared to see Him even touch the cross and bearing it. There is no depth of condescension which He will not fathom, no height of self-sacrifice which He will not reach. The story of Divine love is harmonious throughout. We are not surprised that the great God who submitted Himself to the humblest conditions of human birth should also, in the same spirit, endure the cross, despising the shame. It is to the illustration of this theme that we accept the paintings under our consideration as valuable aids.

Sacred Themes and Famous Paintings.

I.—"*ANNO DOMINI; OR, THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.*"

(*Painting by* EDWIN LONG, R.A.)

"And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother," &c.—MATT. ii. 13.

THUS early in the New Testament the great truth is taught that *Heaven is very near to sincere spirits and to earnest seekers after truth.* We find in the beginning of this chapter that sincere men in the distant East, far beyond the pale of the Jewish nationality—in Persia it may be—disciples of Zoroaster, who saw God in the light and recognised the Divine in every luminary, received an intimation from the skies, and were led by a star to the feet of Him whose star it was. Thus did God adapt Himself to the conceptions of those men who, according to the light they had, sincerely sought Him if haply they might find Him.

Again, we learn from Luke, that God sent an angel to announce the advent to lowly shepherds who watched their flocks by night, and who were denied the privileges extended to the Rabbis and others learned in the law. Following this announcement, the angelic host burst upon the vision and the "Gloria in Excelsis" stole upon the ear of those simple-hearted men, who thus received revelations denied alike to Herod, the priests, and scribes. How much nearer were God and angels to the sheepcotes than to the throne of the impostor or the altars of self-righteous priests!

The Angel of the Lord appeared also very early to Mary and Joseph, and now speaks again to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word." Angels do not appear to men like Herod save to strike them—as one did another Herod—with God's curse. They are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

There is another truth to which I would call your attention—viz., *That the birth of Jesus Christ stands unparalleled in history.*—It is associated with the superhuman from the beginning. The announcement to Mary, the song of the angels, the star in the East, the warnings given by angels in the visions of the night—all point to its exceptional character. From the outset it seems as if this Child brings so much of God and of the heavenly world with Him that He cannot be approached save through superhuman media.

Nevertheless, this birth and its surroundings present a startling paradox. There is a supernaturalness about the birth which we do not find about any other, and yet its earthly surroundings are exceedingly humble. The angelic announcement prompts the shepherds to visit a lowly manger. The Magi came from the East, led by nothing less than a heavenly light; yet they were led to a babe in swaddling clothes.

We meet with a similar paradox in our text. The child has been spoken of by the angel as "a Saviour which is Christ the Lord," and yet the angel appears in a dream to Joseph and says, "Arise, take the young child and his mother, *and flee into Egypt*, for Herod will seek the young child *to destroy Him*." What! Can Herod destroy the child who is "Christ the Lord"? Is He the long-looked for Messiah of Israel, the one in whose birth all heaven is interested, and yet has He to be snatched away stealthily by night—a helpless infant—from the wrath of a human despot! There is a withdrawal here which perplexes us at first. "The flight into Egypt" seem to be incongruous words when taken in connection with all that has preceded. Yet it is but a continuation of the great paradox, and prophetic of the whole life of Him who to the last was a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and was "without a place to lay His head"; who laid His claims to Kingship not upon any outward grandeur or imposing surroundings, but whose royalty was the royalty of One who wore a crown of thorns; who converted His cross into a throne, who was the King of sorrowing humanity, because, in redeeming us, He tasted the bitterest sorrow, and having overcome the sharpness of death has opened the Kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Now, let us look into the *circumstances connected with this flight*. It is natural that it should be into Egypt. Egypt had for ages been a place of refuge for helpless and oppressed Jews. It was, too, within three days' journey of Bethlehem; thus within this brief period, Joseph, Mary, and the Babe could find safe shelter beyond the jurisdiction of Herod.

There are certain facts which we should bear in mind, concerning the country thus visited. The Egypt of that day had three prominent features at least :—The river Nile, the pyramids, and the gorgeous temples with their elaborate hieroglyphics and ceremonials. Anything which seeks to represent Egypt during this period, and which does not give prominence to these is essentially an imperfect portraiture of it.

Again, Egypt *had new rulers*. The Pharaohs had long since passed away, and after them the Ptolemies. The history of Egypt had been chequered for centuries,—being one of subjection to various foreign po—wers,and even the reign of the Ptolemies, which seemed to revive the memory of its former palmy days, and to inaugurate a new era of learning, ended tragically in the death of Cleopatra, and the transference of the kingdom to the power of Rome. At this time Egypt had been a Roman province for over thirty years. The prophecy of Ezekiel had been fulfilled—" And there shall no more be a prince of the land of Egypt." Any painting, therefore, that would represent the political life of Egypt at that time, must represent Roman power—to wit, the Roman chariot and the Roman soldier with helmet and spear.

Again, with regard to *the religion* of the country, although the king, as we have already stated, had died out, *the priest had not passed away*. The priests of Egypt had even in the period of the Pharaohs increased in power, and usurped one by one the prerogatives of the king, until at length they supplanted the ruling monarch. Rome was ever ready to tolerate the priest as long as he did not clash with Roman interests. Egypt, therefore, cannot be represented without the high priest and attendant devotees.

The gods which were generally worshipped were Isis, her son Horus, and her husband Osiris. The Egyptian conceptions of these gods seem to reveal strange and weird dreams, yet suggestive of the true revelation. We ought to be ready to trace in ancient religions those promises of better things which God seems to have given to some degree to all nations. There was Isis, also her son Horus, who was often represented as placing his finger upon his lips, expressive of the mystery of his being. There, too, was Osiris, the earth-god, who embodied their conception of an incarnation, death and resurrection from the dead, as represented in the apparent reign of death on the earth in winter and the subsequent triumph of life in spring. What was this but a faint promise of that true revelation that would be given to all men of Him who took upon Himself our nature, died, and rose again from the dead? We accept gratefully such glimmerings of light prophetic of better things which the great God gave to all peoples, showing that, to use the words of Paul, "He left not Himself without witness" in His relation to "all nations." He never gave the world wholly up to darkness and error—that world which it was His purpose ultimately to bless, and for whose redemption He was but preparing the way throughout the ages.

Another distinguishing feature of the religious life of Egypt at this time was *the strange admixture of gods.* The religion of Egypt at this time was not so pure as it was from the ancient Egyptian standpoint. Egypt had for the last fifteen hundred years lost its isolation—first by its successes, and then by its reverses. It was brought into contact with other nations; its commerce was extended; it carried its arms into other lands; captives were brought back; Jews and foreign mercenaries were imported; the leading aristocratic families visited other lands, and brought back with them Asiatic customs and superstitions. Thus to the ancient gods of Egypt were added gods from other lands. Demonology, too, had been introduced. There were the exorcisms of Thoth and other strange deities. The worship of the god Apis, the bull—or, as the Psalmist in sublime satire expresses it, "an ox that eateth grass"—had been elaborated in later ages; and in addition to these were the images of all conceivable creatures in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth. A strange admixture of deities, a motley and degrading company of gods have we here!

I think that in the painting called "Anno Domini; or, The flight into Egypt," all this and more is shown with marvellous accuracy and force. Unlike the old masters, who scarcely ever seem to have consulted history in depicting ancient scenes, this painter has carefully enquired into the real condition of Egypt at the time Joseph and Mary and the babe took their flight thither in *the* "Year of Our Lord," and thus has represented on canvas much that must have been witnessed by Joseph and Mary during their sojourn there. Of course, there are critics who will say: "But there is no part of Egypt where so large a temple, two huge pyramids, the river Nile and the mountains beyond could be seen at once." There are prosaic men who never see the poetry of anything, men who speak of the painter as if he were but a chronicler of events and narrator of incidents, and not also, like the poet, a creator—one who in the exercise of that exalted gift, *imagination*, crowns the real with the ideal, the former only reaching its chief glory when it culminates in the latter. The question is not whether the scenery and the skilful grouping of the painting are the exact reproduction of what Joseph might have seen at one time, but whether during his sojourn in Egypt he did not come into contact with the great facts illustrative of Egyptian character and the spirit of the age which are depicted on that canvas.

It is from this standpoint that, as a Christian minister, I attach the greatest value to this painting. I can only join with others who are far more conversant with the art of the painter in admiration of the artistic excellence of that work; but as a minister of the Gospel I admire it most of all for the accurate conception it gives us of some of the forces—especially as embodied in perhaps the most imposing and vigorous religious system existing at that time on the earth—with which the Christian religion, as represented by that humble pilgrim band, would so soon come into contact.

Man has wondrous power. Unlike every other creature on earth, he has the gift of speech. It is his high privilege to express his thoughts in words, and to incarnate in a phrase a conception or an idea. As painter, too, he has the gift of imaging that which is invisible, of embodying great truths, and illustrating the working of great principles. We accept gratefully any service which this high art can render in making clear to us the significance of a Scripture narrative or truth, or in presenting to us, in the form of a living picture, the relationship which Christianity, at the very beginning, held with the most august religion of the world, as well as the way in which it went forth to meet and to conquer it.

The painting of which we speak is of high value in that respect. It is hard to express it in a name. As the portraiture of the great central fact, from which not only the events of time, but also the secret of the world's redemption is dated, it is significantly called "Anno Domini;" but that does not express the whole. One could wish that the painter had had the courage of his genius, and, in imitation of the great musician who gave to the world his "songs without words," had given his "Painting without a name." There would have been no danger that it would not be understood.

Those who have seen it will recall it to mind—a gorgeous procession emerges from the sacred precincts of an imposing temple, and wends its way from left to right along the entire length of the canvas. It is evident from the hieroglyphics on the walls and architraves of the temple and pylon that it is an Egyptian temple. It is at a time, too, when the Egyptian religion has been greatly elaborated. The plain square building of ancient days is replaced by an elaborate structure with the courts and sanctuaries of later days. At the head of the procession are female minstrels, with sistrums, lyres, tabors, and dual flutes. The gods already mentioned, and many more, borne by zealous devotees, the high priest and inferior priests, and the Roman chariot with its occupant, form also a prominent part of this vast and imposing procession.

Contrasting beautifully with this pomp of Egyptian ritual, which occupies the middle distance of the picture, are Joseph, Mary, and the Infant Jesus, in the immediate foreground. Indeed, a prominent feature of the painting is its effective contrasts. The leading and most imposing image borne in that grand procession upon the shoulders of priests—one an Ethiopian—is the golden one of Isis bearing her son Horus on her knees, while in the immediate foreground, and within a few paces of her, is the quiet, simple, and graceful figure of Mary, clad in the dark blue linen garb worn by the women of Bethlehem, and bearing her babe upon her knees and seated upon a tired ass. The face of Mary, who is represented as a Jewess of fair complexion, is by far the most tender, pure, and beautiful countenance in the whole picture. Joseph, with deep traces of anxiety upon his expressive, well-cut countenance, walks wearily by her side, with staff in hand and well-worn sandals upon his feet. Meanwhile, he replaces, with his right hand, the robe round the child, thus revealing just enough of careful solicitude to complete the tender, simple grace so characteristic of that little group.

To that gorgeous procession sweeping along the path which has just been crossed by this little company, there was nothing in them to draw attention, save their humble garb, weary look, and utter want of sympathy with that gaudy display. The painter departs from the coarse conception of the old masters, and places no nimbus round the head of the child or mother. One or two damsels seem to look at them with an air of interest from the procession; but that is all. Yet there we have a picture of the beginning of that kingdom of which the King Himself, said later on, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."—So the *King* cometh not with observation, but in the form of *a helpless babe.*

How strikingly does this contrast with the elaborate apocryphal legends, illustrated profusely by Italian painters, of lions and leopards adoring the Holy Child, of daring robbers being terrified in His presence, of palm trees bowing their heads at His command, and giving to Him their dates, and of the statues of the idol gods of the land falling down at His advent into a temple with an awful crash like that of Dagon before the ark! How sublime the simplicities of Christian truth and Christian art!

Again, a little in front, and right across the pathway of the humble exiles from Bethlehem, is another mother with her child. In this case it is a poor woman seated upon the ground a little distance from the procession; there is a dying child upon her lap. Her countenance is the picture of utter despair; with almost closed eyes, and uplifted face, that bears an anguish more terrible than that of death, she all but falls backward. She has hoped long and hoped in vain. Near her is a little captive girl, who intently holds the image of Osiris before the face of the dying child, with the hope that it may impart life and health. Meanwhile, there are other little girls close by, selecting other images for the same purpose. There on the ground, too, and near the dying child, are three or four idols which have been cast aside because they have proved of no avail. It is generally supposed that this incident is suggested by the legend that when Joseph took his flight to Egypt, Mary took the sick child of a robber into her arms and healed him; that this child, following his father's example, became a robber, but that at length he died as the penitent thief upon the cross, and heard the words from the lips of Him who was once an exile child, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." This is a pretty conceit and pathetic in its way. I do not know, however, whether the painter has committed himself to this as an adequate explanation of that little group. I would rather believe that with a true human instinct and Christian insight, he felt that he could not represent all of the religious life of Egypt by the pomp and grandeur of that procession; but that, on the other hand, he must also represent the misery and disappointment of those without who vainly trusted in false gods. There, nearer still to the procession, we see others, stooping or lying prostrate. Among others a lady of high position has been carried on a couch by stalwart slaves, and placed as near as possible to the procession, with the hope that Isis or other gods may, as they pass, restore her to health. But all appears to be in vain. Thus amid all the glittering pageant of gods, of priests, and votaries, we trace either the keen agony or blank sadness of a disappointed trust.

Between Mary and the agonising mother there are two little children seated on the ground, the one selecting idols from the little store, the other offering one to Mary; but Mary's eye rests not upon them, nor yet upon the golden image of that mother goddess that is being just carried by high on the shoulders of the priests, but upon that disappointed, heart-broken mother before her. The mother of Him who in later days pitied the sorrows of all suffering and bereaved ones is represented, with all the intuition and delicacy of Christian art, as centering her vision not admiringly upon gorgeous display, but pityingly upon misery and woe.

The painter has caught the true conception of the kingdom of God as introduced into the world by the birth of our Lord. Christianity is represented as coming in quietly but certainly, as the dawn comes in. It comes into contact with superstition, with all that is gorgeous in heathen ceremony and worship, but with the calm certainty of triumphing over all.

It is far from promising as you look at the picture; for, notwithstanding the disappointment depicted on some countenances, on others there is the joyousness of hope and the innocence of trust. For instance, near the stalwart Ethiopian, who seems to believe far more in driving a trade with the images he carries on his tray than in all this display and ceremonial, there is a young lover of fine bearing, who has just purchased an amulet, and is now placing this so-called "Eye of Osiris" round the neck of his betrothed, a beautiful maiden, with the assurance that this would secure constancy. Again, one cannot look at those who form the procession without recognising among them, especially the minstrels, some of intense earnestness and glowing enthusiasm. "Will a nation change its gods in a day?"

But we look into the face of the Child on Mary's knees, and there we trace a haziness—far other than the dreaminess of genius—about the eyes expressive of mystery. We are made to feel that we have not yet realised all the conditions and high significance of this representation. All that the painter wants to convey by this haziness is that neither he nor we can fully understand this child. The surroundings are humble and simple; but in this face there is an expression which the painter does not try to depict, because he knows he cannot. The very beauty of it is in its expressive vagueness. Thus the supernatural is expressed not by the ordinary crude, rough-and-ready representation of a nimbus round the head, but by the more refined and reverent representation of the tender mysterious outlook of the as yet hidden *Being* within. This Child looks out of the picture at you. Everyone who looks carefully into the painting must observe this. It is the only figure in the whole picture which looks at the spectator. The Infant occupies the centre of the painting, and there we have the *eye* of the picture—that through which it becomes expressive. Oh, how different this "Child and His mother" from Isis and her child! *This* child places no finger upon his lips in a mysterious fashion; but there is somehow an expression of divinity in the eye which seems to open into infinite depths—depths which we dare not pry into or scrutinise. We do not know what to expect from this Child on Mary's lap. Oh, the wonderful blending in Him of simplicity and mystery!

And so we find a harmony of mystery from the very beginning to the close of this life. No human ingenuity could have produced such a series of events and written such a life as that which we find in the Gospels. The Jewish authorities were disappointed and offended at every turn. They expected a king, not a Child surrounded by all the signs of poverty and helplessness. He, too, in later years was but a carpenter. Did He not toil for years in that workshop at Nazareth? Was He not the brother of James, and Joses, and Juda, and Simon? Were not His sisters there with them? And yet—yet—whence does this Man do these mighty deeds? They were offended alike by the simplicity and mystery of Jesus Christ. He admitted that He was a King, and yet affirmed that His kingdom was not of this world. He repudiated what other men considered to be the essential functions of kingship. It is in sacrifice throughout that He appears as King. He went about healing men by touching them; He came into contact with all kinds of misery and poverty; His royal steps were in the humblest paths of life; He never, so far as we know, entered the palace of a king, but He constantly entered the cots and huts of fishermen and the like. He came into contact with human life in its least imposing forms. All these facts represent but one harmonious testimony, that when God sent His Son into the world He ordained that He should gain nothing from those surroundings which impart greatness to other men, but that those conditions which have been supposed to be the greatest possible calamity in life should be those which would add greatness and dignity to his character. The flight into Egypt is but a part of a whole. It is a retreat, a giving up, the manifestation of apparent weakness, but, nevertheless, a prediction of the great fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would, by giving up all, become the Redeemer and King of men. And the point where He touches us most, and subdues us into reverence and submission, is this—that though being in the form of God, He emptied Himself of His glory, "and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

II.—"*THE MAN OF SORROWS.*"

(*Painting by* Sir NOEL PATON.)

"A man of sorrows."—ISA. liii. 3.

IN this chapter we have a prophetic epitome of the story of Christ's life and death. It is the Gospel by Isaiah. The side of Christ's personality which is specially brought to light here is that of a great Sufferer. He is represented as a sorrowing Saviour: "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." This was Isaiah's way of expressing what John wrote in the Prologue to his Gospel: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

"*A Man of Sorrows*" is the pathetic side of the Revelation of Jesus Christ—the human aspect of it which is nearest to us, and touches the tenderest chord in these human hearts of ours. It is a leading theme in pulpit ministrations, and it is the theme to the illustration of which Sir Noel Paton has devoted his genius in the exquisite painting to which I call your attention this evening. To the painter, ere he sat down to produce this work of art, many questions would suggest themselves. Among them, doubtless, would be these:—

First, *What shall be the scene?* Of course, the artist would naturally think of many scenes in our Lord's life more or less appropriate for such a representation. He might have chosen that incident recorded in the Saviour's life when reaching the spot where the road from Bethany crosses the shoulder of Olivet, and where, all at once, the dazzling splendour of the holy city, with its magnificent temple and gorgeous palaces, rich withal in historic interest, burst upon His view, He nevertheless wept bitter tears as He poured forth, by way of plaintive accompaniment, the agony of a rejected love in words of irreparable doom. Or, he might have represented Jesus in the upper room giving His farewell discourse to His chosen few, when, with the shadow of the Cross upon Him, "He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." Or he might have pictured the Christ, when He exclaimed to the over-confident Peter, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me thrice"; or when He uttered those words to all present near the close of His long discourse, which seemed to have been given all but in vain, "Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh—yea, is now come—that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone." Or the painter might have thought of the sorrowful walk from the upper room to Gethsemane; or of Christ's experience within the garden, among its darkest shades, when the light of the full paschal moon gave a weird aspect to everything around, and when, from the depths of His awful loneliness, He exclaimed to the three privileged disciples, whom He found asleep at the close of each agonising prayer, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" and, "Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Or the artist might have pictured the "Man of Sorrows" in the Judgment Hall, when, denied by Peter. He "looked upon" him with the look of anguish and of pity which made Peter go forth into the dark and weep bitterly. Or he might have represented Him, as Doré has done, "Leaving the Prætorium," with the cross in the foreground and athwart His path; or as walking the *Via Dolorosa* with the heavy cross upon His shoulder, beneath which His physical frame trembled, just at that moment before the multitude placed it wantonly upon the shoulder of the Cyrenian, whom they compelled to bear it. Or, lastly, the painter might have represented Him upon the cross, wearing a crown of thorns, with pierced hands and feet, just at the close of the ninth hour, when "the Man of Sorrows" cried, with a loud voice, "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"—a cry that brought down light from the heavens, for "From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land *until the ninth hour.* And about the ninth hour *Jesus cried.*" "*Until*" then, and no longer. It is the last glimpse we have of the Christ as an *agonising, sorrowing* Man. All is *light* after that.

These and other instances in the life of our Lord might have been taken by the painter with thorough appropriateness and consistency; and no one could have blamed him. But he has adopted another course. He has acted evidently upon the great principle that *the greatest burdens of life are not those which are borne before the public gaze;* that even in the experience of the Man of Sorrows, who bore the greatest cross of all, the cross which was made of wood and placed upon His shoulder was not the heaviest, but that which rested heavily upon His soul; and that the most trying period of agony and sorrow through which He had to pass was not when He was observed of men, but when He was indeed "alone." The painter seems to have recognised the great truth which we all must have proved to some extent, that *man tastes deepest of sorrow in loneliness*, that the cross which weighs heaviest on any shoulder that bears a cross at all is not the one which the world can see, but which is borne out of sight, when "the heart knoweth its own bitterness."

Thus Sir Noel Paton has represented "The Man of Sorrows" as *isolated from His fellows*, far away from the habitations of men, and shut out of the world. All the surroundings, or what are called environments, are in harmony with the picture of loneliness. Around Him, and closing upon Him, are the everlasting hills—craggy, cold, and bare. A glance reveals the fact that the beautiful earth has been torn open by inward convulsions, and its fair brow furrowed with ravines, and scarred by the teeth of conflicting elements. The whole picture is one of desolation. In its centre and foreground is represented "The Man of Sorrows" sitting upon a jagged rock. And, oh, what sorrow is depicted there! Those large, full, liquid eyes brim over with tears; every expression of the countenance is charged with grief; the lips are wan, and a deep furrow crosses that young, manly brow. The swollen veins in the neck and temple, the powerful muscular action in the right hand, as, with open fingers, it rests heavily upon the rock, and in the left clenched tightly as it presses upon the thigh, and in the feet as they tread the earth convulsively underneath—for the Man of Sorrows is represented with head uncovered and feet unsandalled—all these tell the story of an awful tension, of a withering sorrow.

Closely and inseparably connected with the question of scene is that of *the period in our Lord's life* in which He could most appropriately be represented as the Man of Sorrows. The artist chose the *Eve of the Temptation*, and thus selected the *greatest transitional period* of our Saviour's life—that beginning with the Baptism, and closing with the Temptation. We all know with what weight burdens press upon us in the great transitions or crises of being, especially on *the eve* of such crises. The most trying hour is that which *immediately precedes* the actual hour of testing. When life has opened up before us its higher missions and ministries, its larger opportunities, and consequently its greater responsibilities and temptations, there has come to us on the eve of such an event a painful sense of anxiety—all the greater because the hour for decisive action has not yet arrived. The artist adopts this principle in deciding when to represent "*The Man of Sorrows.*" It is just as the day for the *first and decisive conflict* with the Tempter begins to dawn that in the cold, grey twilight, after the weary watching of the night, the Son of Man is represented as "*The Man of Sorrows.*"

Thus, *the time of day chosen is the twilight of morning.* There is something in the twilight that is consistent, not only with solemn but also with sad thoughts and feelings. The dawn was the ancient time for morning worship, and the gloaming for evening devotions. In this picture the dawn is represented, ere as yet the sun has risen, as it does in the East, in rapid flight. The picture, therefore, represents but a moment or so. The mists of the night cling clammily to the rocky sides of the hills; there is but a dim, yellow light in the distance, just enough to tell that the day is at hand. All is grey and chill, sombre and sad; but withal there is a serenity—though that looks cold—about the sky; and thus the air seems to throb with possibilities.

The artist in all the accessories has sought to perfect and intensify the central picture. What a great power there often is in surroundings to add significance to the central fact! How often do we find in our environments the finest expression of our unuttered thoughts and feelings! Some writer—I forget who, and forget the exact details of the narrative—gives us an instance of a man in loneliness and sorrow, having within a fearful conflict of doubt and fear, and standing somewhere among the eternal hills whose rocky columns shot heavenward. All at once a storm passed over; the heavens darkened, and the heavy clouds glanced in lightning, and roared in thunder, and down upon the lonely man the rain descended in torrents; he looked up to heaven, and exclaimed, "Thank God! that is just what I felt. Thank God for expressing it!" Nature helped that man to express his grief—or, rather, expressed it for him. The storm within found its expression in the storm without. That man, doubtless, had the insight of a poet, was a child of Nature, catching an inspiration from its storms and tempests; but those of us who cannot lay claim to that know something of the power of surroundings to intensify or to express our feelings. "By the rivers of Babylon," said the Psalmist, "there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." There are few spots so much in harmony with pensive grief as the river side. Have you, when you have been sad at heart, lingered by the deep, dark, flowing river, as it has proceeded in a kind of semi-audible *hush* on its way to the sea? Your tears have flowed, too, as you have said, "Yes, that river seems to be in sympathy with me; there is something in the whole scene that harmonises with my feelings. Any human approach would have been an intrusion just now; almost anything other than the gentle flowing of this river would have been a harsh discord." "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, *we wept;*" they could not weep until they found such expressive surroundings; *then* they wept. Those rivers were the best possible accompaniment to their grief. What a safety-valve to sorrow the exiles found there!

So in this painting. The mountainous and rugged heights, the wild ravines, the sterile desolation all round this human Sufferer, are in perfect harmony with the central conception —"The Man of Sorrows." The cold grey morning light, as well as the studied absence of every human presence—indeed, of every living being save *the One*—conspire to intensify and perfect the picture of sorrow.

But all these do not explain the sorrow. We are thrown back upon the central figure; *but even that does not explain itself.* What is the secret of all? Why those tears upon that pure countenance? Innocence and intense grief are written upon it; but there is no trace of regret or the shadow of sin. We have seen in some faces the secret of their sorrow. Not a vestige here. This is one of the master features of the painting. What can account for the sorrow? You look to the picture in vain for the solution. The painting is a problem, an enigma. It is purposely so. The painter presents to us *the great fact*, not its explanation. He goes to Inspired Writ for that, and thus refers the perplexed spectator to the words of Isaiah, uttered more than 2,500 years ago, as supplying the key to the whole painting: "He hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities; . . . and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of *us* all." These are the words which Sir Noel Paton adopts.

"Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." How shall this false estimate of Him be corrected? Look at the picture; that Man of Sorrows looks up and holds communion with the skies; see the half-open mouth expressive of expectation, and those eyes so full of tears and yet so full of vision. Verily He is not alone—the Father is with Him; for from the heavens, and from a source other than the sun, there descends through a rift in the clouds a shaft of light that looks like the light of the Father's countenance, and rests upon the face of this Sorrowing One. This human countenance thus lit up by the light of the Divine countenance is the painter's sublime answer to the old-world estimate of the Man of Sorrows. What need of any more?

Here we must express our regret that a painter who could originate such a conception as that, an artist of such profound spiritual intuitions and exquisite artistic refinement as we conceive Sir Noel Paton to be, should have, in this picture, out of deference probably to the old masters of his art, introduced the unsatisfactory and, to our mind, crude conventional nimbus to express the divinity of the Great Sufferer. It seems to us to be out of character with the delicate refinement and deep spiritual insight of the whole painting. No doubt the artist would have his own reasons to give for this; but, to us, that descending shaft of light coming mysteriously through the rift of cloud, and bringing to relief so much of the hidden beauty, strength, and divinity of that sorrowing countenance, is a thousand times more expressive than any nimbus which artist's hand can make to glow upon the canvas. If an artist cannot *suggest* divinity—for no more *can* be done by human art—other than by a nimbus round the head, so much the worse for the painting, and for the nimbus, too. This painting is sublimely beyond the need of such a mechanical and conventional shift. On that account we regret the adoption of it all the more by one whose genius has charmed us.

I have spoken of this great painting as a problem—a painting *calling a man to reflection rather than immediate decision.* And, after all, the highest end of art—whether it be speech, written word, music, painting, sculpture—is to lead the thoughts and aspirations of men to something higher than the art itself. Here the artist has succeeded. "Surely He hath borne *our* grief and carried *our* sorrows; . . . and the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all," are the words which he accepts as the key to this great production. The explanation of that sorrow is, that *it is vicarious suffering*—and there is a significance to be given to it when applied to *Him* which cannot be attached to it when applied to any one else. There is, however, a general sense in which much of the world's suffering is vicarious. The noblest type of endurance which the world knows is vicarious. Every holy, self-denying man, to the measure that he resembles the Divine Man Christ Jesus, knows what it is to bear and suffer for others. It is one of the glories and joys of Christian life that man is willing to endure for others. But far above all others is this true of Jesus Christ? His incarnation was for *us;* every step of the way He trod was for *us;* the cross He bore was the cross of a sinful world which humanity could not bear for itself; the sacrifice He offered in offering Himself was a sacrifice which the world could neither find nor offer; He was "*The Man of Sorrows*," because He came to save, to redeem, to atone for sorrow ing men.

Let us read again the words of Isaiah: "He was despised and rejected of men." Who has heard that pathetic air in Handel's *Messiah* without being thrilled through and through: "He is despised—*despised!*—and rejected of men—a Man of Sorrows!" There is nothing so tender within the whole compass of that oratorio. These inspired words are charged with infinite pathos; they only required the touch of a master hand to make them fill the air with the most tender and pathetic music.

"We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God," &c. This was not only the world's estimate of *Him*, but it has been its estimate of every "man of sorrows." This is one of the choice bits of theology to which the world has clung for centuries with tenacious grasp; hence it has generally followed that every "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" has been "despised and rejected of men," and men "have hid their faces from him." Even the Church of Christ adopted the flippant creed, and followed the custom of the world too long and too closely. It is the old story of the priest and Levite going with pious tread to the temple and seeing the poor sufferer by the wayside—*a* man of sorrows—but hiding their faces from him as they pass by on the other side. The Christian Church has been nineteen centuries learning this prominent lesson which the Incarnation, the life and death of our Lord, were intended to teach. The great Saviour not only adopted our nature but adopted *suffering, sorrowing* human nature, so that all have to look to *the* Man of Sorrows before they can find their *Saviour.* Christ has touched human life at its bitterest point of experience, has identified Himself with sorrowing ones, and thus has sought to make it impossible for any one who has found his Saviour in Him to ignore the claims of those whom He calls brethren, and for whom He came to suffer and die. The answer which the Christ finally gave upon the Cross to the old cheap creed, to which Isaiah refers with sad heart, was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" and "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." How unlike the utterances of one "stricken, smitten of God" are these of the dying Christ!

And so we learn that *the greatest suffering is there associated with the purest and divinest life;* and, further, that by treading the path of sorrow, wearing the crown of thorns, and shedding His blood, Jesus has wrought redemption for us. This is the explanation of Isaiah which is adopted by the painter. Other painters have represented Christ as attended by all the symbols of suffering—the scourge, the crown of thorns, the pierced feet, and the bleeding side—but this painter does not give the visible symbols; he turns to the Inspired Word, and practically says, "That is the explanation of my painting." The man Christ Jesus suffered that *we* might be redeemed; He bore not His own sin, but *ours.* "He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him; and with His stripes *we* are healed." The emphatic words throughout are "*our,*" "*we.*" But the story is not only one of suffering, but also of *satisfaction, justification*, and *victory:* "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath poured out His soul unto death."

We bow before "the Man of Sorrows" as before the Son of God and the Redeemer of our race. We remember that He has suffered, and thus learn to trust the more in Him, knowing that "in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." Our hearts, too, are overcome by the might of His compassion, and we exclaim, "O Christ! Thou hast died that we may live, the redeemed to praise Thee; in Thy sorrow and suffering we recognise the greatest revelation of Thine Infinite pity, and in what Thou hast done the pledge of all that Thou wilt do for us, since Thou hast ascended on high, leading captivity captive, to give gifts unto men. Be it ours to be partakers of the Divine Nature, to be more like Thee, and, going forth among men, to recognise in every sufferer one with whom Thou seekest to identify Thyself, and concerning whom Thou wilt say at last, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'"

III.—"*THE SHADOW OF DEATH.*"

(*Painting by* W. HOLMAN HUNT.)

"But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."—LUKE xii. 50.

THIS is the *burden of an unaccomplished task*, and the *first announcement of a hidden sorrow*. The thought of the great consummation of self-sacrifice in its tragic form and awful mystery had, doubtless, burdened His spirit many a time, and the consciousness of the terrible event that tarried in its coming had accompanied Him like a dark shadow, but until now He had maintained a rigid reserve and an unbroken silence. This is the first announcement, even to those who are nearest to Him; by-and-by they will understand more fully what He means; for the present enough is revealed.

Thus I start with the re-statement of a truth to which I referred in my last discourse. As the greatest burdens of every noble life are not borne in the full glare of public observation, but in the sacred hush of loneliness, so with regard to the greatest of all lives, that of Jesus, the heaviest cross was not that borne on the way from the Prætorium to Golgotha—Simon the Cyrenian could bear that for Him—but that which no man could bear for Him, and which He, therefore, bore Himself, bore on His Spirit during the long period of fixed purpose and earnest anticipation of the great crisis. Nor can this be confined to His earthly life, He was a "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." His cross spanned the ages, and His sacrifice on Calvary had in it the cumulative force of millenniums.

When, therefore, Mr. Holman Hunt, in this picture, represents Jesus of Nazareth closing the toil of the day, and possibly of life as a carpenter, in His obscure workship, and in the hour of weariness, as He stretches forth His arms, casting a shadow upon the wall behind Him as the clear and full light of Syrian day is rapidly departing, he is representing in his own way a truth with which every student of the life and work of Christ must be familiar—that the consciousness of a terrible death did not dawn upon Him for the first time when arraigned before Pilate, but ever attended Him in the conscious hours of His earthly existence, as it had been present with Him in His eternal purpose.

The scene is the carpenter's humble dwelling and workshop at Nazareth. The floor is one of trodden earth, sand and mud. In the foreground, and as the central figure, is Jesus the Carpenter, in an upright attitude, and in the full vigour and bloom of youth, at the close of the day, as I have already intimated, in utter weariness, and extending His arms by way of momentary relaxation. The drawing and colour of this figure are exceedingly vivid. The setting sun casts a light of surpassing brilliance, and throws a sharply defined shadow of the wearied carpenter so full upon the tool rack upon the wall behind, that the hands appear as if they were nailed to the veritable cross, while some drills rising perpendicularly from the centre of the cross-beam form the upper limb of the instrument of torture.

His head is thrown backwards and toward the right. His countenance is expressive of exhaustion and resignation, while in the half-open mouth there is traceable great tension, amounting to self-forgetful absorption in some all-important theme or fact. His grey-blue, lustrous eyes, looking upwards into the heavens, are full of sad entreaty, and yet fixed with steadfast purpose, and luminous with keen, incisive vision. It would seem as if those eyes are fixed upon an awful and perplexing mystery, into which, however, they will gaze steadfastly until they pierce it through. Near Him is the carpenter's bench, a great earthenware waterpot with a bunch of aromatic herbs, a rush-seated chair, and a trestle upon which rests a plank half sawn, the saw still resting in the cleft. Behind Him, and above two small arched windows, is a pierced star, suggestive of that which had heralded His birth, while at His feet, among the shavings which cover the floor, is the red fillet with double tassel called the aghal, with which He was accustomed to bind His long wavy locks during the hours of earnest toil.

On the left, kneeling down among the shavings of that humble dwelling, is Mary, the mother of Jesus, opening an ivory casket, her right hand holding up the cover, thus revealing its contents—an eastern crown, a censer, an urn for holding precious spices, and gorgeous Oriental robes and ornaments—the gifts of the wise men on their mysterious visit thirty years ago. She is clad in the common blue dress of the women of Nazareth, and bears upon her head the ordinary white linen turban, and upon her arms the well-known blue glass beads of Hebron. She has scarcely opened that ivory chest, and disarranged the upper folds of a robe with her left hand, when her attention is suddenly arrested by the shadow which the figure of her Son—whose back is turned towards these symbols of earthly glory—casts upon the wall on her right. In the corner of the room between her and that shadow, are suggestively painted a bundle of long reeds, such as in pictures of the crucifixion Jesus is represented as holding in His hand as the sceptre of the thorn-crowned King. The slender form of Mary kneeling with her back toward her Son and partly toward us, her easy natural attitude only intensified by the startled turn of the head toward the shadow on the wall, thus revealing her thoughts while concealing her face, are represented with consummate skill.

We like the picture all the more because the only countenance we can see is that of Jesus Christ. The face of Mary has, as a rule, occupied too prominent a place in Christian paintings. We like this painting, too, all the better for the lowly surroundings which it presents. The scene is a humble workshop. Mary, so far from being represented as sitting upon a throne crowned and bejewelled, as she is so often represented by the old masters, is here presented to us in the homely garb and head-dress of the poor women of Nazareth, and kneeling amid surroundings of honest toil and honourable poverty. The picture thus commends itself to us first of all because of its *reality*—its unflinching adherence to fact, and its loyal devotion to local truth.

In passing, we would gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness as Protestant Christians to that "brotherhood of pre-Raffaellite painters" who, in profound loyalty to Nature and fact, in the courage of their deliberate convictions, and in the might of an earnest purpose, have broken the bonds of convention, and represented the great facts of our religion more as they were, and less as the old masters had pictured them. Raffaelle was a great painter, no doubt, and deserves, as such, to be held in high esteem by posterity. He departed from the fantastic exaggeration of his predecessors; the crown and jewels of Mary, to wit, were put aside, but he, nevertheless, failed to devote his genius to the faithful representations of facts. Mary is represented as an Italian mother. His pictures abound in anachronisms and incongruities, and bear evident traces of popish influence. For instance, Mr. Ruskin calls attention to the fact that Raffaelle, in representing our Lord as appearing after His resurrection to the seven disciples by the sea of Galilee, places the *twelve* apostles on the canvas, Peter occupying the prominent position among them, in order to maintain the popish doctrine of Peter's pre-eminence, &c. It will thus be seen that whatever may be thought of Raffaelle as master of his art, he cannot be accepted as a competent, or, at least, safe guide in his representations of Scripture events. The followers of Raffaelle did not avoid his serious faults, and thus Christian art was repudiated by the great Protestant reformers as being utterly at variance with the facts and spirit of the Gospel. We maintain the same attitude. We cannot accept Raffaelle and his successors as Christian teachers, or their paintings as helpful to the study of Scripture, and above all to the study of our Lord's recorded life. The veriest child who is taught the incidents of that wondrous life will readily trace the incongruities with which such paintings abound. We owe it to that brotherhood of pre-Raffaellite artists—Holman Hunt, Millais, Rossetti, and others — that now, consistent with our views of truth, and the desire that the life of Christ and Scriptural incidents should be faithfully recorded, we can study their sacred paintings and accept them as helps to the understanding of Scripture. We hail the day in which Christian art has recognised the desirability of being true to fact, and when the traditions of painters, like the traditions of other men, give place to the truth as it is in Jesus.

Thus, the stern truthfulness of this painting charms us. We know that it has shocked some. But let us test the value of such sensitiveness. We know from the gospels that as a matter of fact the Saviour of men was once a humble carpenter, who toiled day by day to earn His bread; we also know that Mary was not a queen, crowned with gold and clad in gorgeous robes, but that she was a poor woman of Nazareth, a carpenter's wife and a carpenter's mother. Are we shocked by these *facts?* Are we shocked by the story of the manger, of the flight into Egypt, the return to Nazareth, and by the designation "carpenter" as applied to Christ? If not, then let Christian art be true to Christian history. Let us not think that the Christianity of to-day must rest on any other basis than simple, austere truth, and that it can triumph on any other lines than those which are laid down by Infinite Wisdom in the events of the birth and of the life of humiliation that followed.

Men were shocked in His day with His lowly birth and humble toil. "Jesus of Nazareth" was a painful enigma to His contemporaries. He had been known among them as a carpenter, but now He manifested such wisdom, and performed such mighty works, as were utterly inconsistent with the traditions of that calling. There were certain conventionalisms to which they—like most of us—clung dearly, certain local and social sentiments which they did not let go readily, although toil was held more honourable by the Jews than any ancient people. They had supposed that wisdom and power belonged to certain privileged classes, moved in certain circles and grooves, and were the outcome of a certain training. The carpenter's shop was not among the recognised places in which men sought a teacher, much less a Saviour. Hence they asked, "Is not this the carpenter?" &c.

What a wonderful Gospel is this, then, which deliberately defies human conventionalisms, and bids the world recognise in the carpenter's shop the place where for years He who was the Saviour of the world remained unknown, and from which He went forth to bear his cross! It is the same Gospel as that which bade the Magi and the shepherds alike look to the manger for their King.

The painting under our consideration emphasizes that; and it is a significant fact that among those who have purchased engravings of it, *working men* seem to predominate. They love to think of the great Saviour as having tasted of *toil* as well as of sorrow. The painting is, I believe, presented to the Corporation of Manchester, and there those hardy, vigorous, and strong-minded artisans love to look on the Carpenter of Nazareth and learn what *honour* the Divine One conferred upon labour, and what *dignity* upon honest toil in that He Himself engaged in it.

They learn, too, from it the *sacredness which may attach to honest poverty*, the poverty that will not admit of indulgence, but is grateful for the necessities of life. There is a part of a pomegranate on the bench, the humble refreshment of which Jesus must have often partaken. The modest garb in which

Mary, too, is clad, and all the accessories of the painting show an ordinary humble home. Thus the Redeemer of the world was not only during His public ministry but also throughout life identified with poverty. What a *preliminary* Gospel, at least, is this to those who are engaged in toil and happy in comparative poverty!

But this leads them a step further. *The transition in our Lord's life* which that painting represents is familiar to them. He is about to leave the burden of toil for a far heavier one; and He has known this all along. In the carpenter's shop there had been an unseen cross upon His shoulders. And now He is about to leave the humble home where He had been for thirty years, and the widowed mother who, for all that period, had pondered in her heart strange and conflicting things. It is the last evening of toil in the workshop, and yet, as any true workman would think, *not the last act.* I do not think for a moment that the artist desired to convey that impression. The saw is in the board, which is but partly sawn, and one's conception of our Lord is this, that even as a carpenter He would not close that portion of His life with any task unfinished, or the workshop in confusion, that He who, later on, in anticipation of a greater task, exclaimed, "I must do the work of Him who hath sent me while it is day," when He left the humble workshop at Nazareth, left it with every task finished. It is, however, the last view we have of Jesus as the toiling one, and just preceding the severance of close bonds of home and kindred for the sake of bearing His cross.

It is at this moment that Mary is represented as being startled by the shadow as she is about to look into that casket with which there was associated a strange and unfulfilled history. Some are displeased with this. Such a casket in such a workshop? they ask. They forget that the sacred narrative is instinct with paradox, and that the picture to be faithful cannot but be paradoxical. Is it at all unlikely that, having received these treasures in the manger, she should have kept them in her humble home, that a woman of such retentive nature, of whom we read that she kept alike the sayings of the shepherds and of her youthful Son in her heart, should have also kept these symbols of royalty through all these years of waiting? It was *her* duty to keep the treasures, it was the duty of *Another* to fulfil the promise given by angelic lips. The artist represents her as having kept them. What the wise men gave her in addition to gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the artist conjectures to be a crown, a censer, robes, &c., such gifts as the Magi were likely to bring. The exigencies of art demand that there should be some such representation.

All that the artist cares to show, however, seems to be that Mary's thoughts are fixed upon the past, upon certain incidents in her history which make the present exceedingly perplexing. Doubtless she remembers the announcement of the angel, the prophecy of Simeon, the story of the shepherds, and, above all, now the visit of the Magi. She belonged to a royal family, "reduced," as we should say in modern phraseology; but the birth of her Son was announced as that of the long-looked-for King of Israel. Since then thirty years have passed away, and events seem to contradict the announcement of Gabriel and the song of the angels. Her heart is perplexed, and probably weary of waiting. The great mystery of the birth has not yet been solved. Mary cannot understand why those gifts should have ever been brought, following as they did the angelic announcement and song, if her Son to the close of His life is to be a carpenter. While she thus ponders, the shadow upon the wall arrests her attention; she turns and sees by that shadow that her Son is weary and overcome with exhaustion. That toil which reached the point of exhaustion she knows is the penalty of sin. It is a fulfilment of the words spoken to Adam, "By the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread." There her great Son, the Son of promise, bears in common with others at least the *first* penalty of sin. Shall He bear the *second*—death—and "return unto the ground"? She finds a new significance in the words of Simeon, "a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." In her Son's exhaustion she sees the possibility, nay probability, that, sinless as He is, death is yet before Him. We are not concerned to know whether Mary anticipated more, and the painter is not concerned to tell us. He calls that shadow "The Shadow of Death," not "The Shadow of the Cross," by which it is so frequently called, and thus confused with another painting, tender, but of less significance than this. "What?" Mary may well have asked, "after all I have heard and seen, is He to be a Son of weariness to the last, and close all in the rest of death?" The shadow seems to say "Yes, the one is prophetic of the other." Mary looks at that. We do not see her countenance, but we think we understand something of the conflict of feeling in that motherly heart.

We again look at the central figure, and we think we can see in the "It is finished" of the weary Carpenter a prophecy of that other "It is finished," which He is yet to exclaim with outstretched arms. For His is not only a face of weariness, but also of strong purpose. He is about to begin another period of toil and weariness. The workshop has fulfilled its purpose. Its toil has been a preparation. There, too, chiefly upon the window and partly upon the bench, the painter, with true insight, has represented a scroll of the ancient Scriptures partly unrolled—while on the shelf beneath are other scrolls—telling the story of another and higher preparation which in its result confounded priests, rabbis, and people, when they exclaimed, "What wisdom is this which is given unto Him?"

The preparation is now complete. This is the hour of transition. The consciousness of larger duties, and of a heavier burden, rushes upon Him. He is about to step out into the world as the Saviour of men, and to bear all that that involves. Ere He leaves that workshop the burden of as yet a hidden ministry is resting upon Him. From this time forth until the hour when He will bear His cross from the Prætorium the consciousness will grow upon Him in depth and intensity that He has "a baptism to be baptized with," and how is He "straitened until it be accomplished!" We rightly speak of the cross and Calvary as the instrument and scene of suffering; but in doing so we too often ignore the hidden burden which rested upon His soul during long years of preparation, and especially those three years of public ministry of which until now He was not able to give a hint to His disciples, and now in such general terms that they did not understand their significance. This was the burden which to the very last moment He bore alone. Such exclamations as "How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?"—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now "—"Ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone"—reveal to us the great Saviour of men bearing His cross alone, patiently, unobserved, without the sympathy of even His disciples, because they could not enter into the meaning of that anguish. This is the baptism that He has to be baptized with, of which He is so conscious. It is the loneliness of Jesus Christ in sorrow, and the suspense of an unaccomplished task that we have here. This very suspense intensifies the anguish. The moment for performing the greatest act of self-sacrifice has not yet arrived; to use His own words, His "hour is not yet come," and the burden becomes all the heavier for the tardy advance toward Calvary, where He will lay it down for ever.

"A baptism to be baptized with." We differ with regard to the mode of baptism when we think of it as an ordinance of the Christian Church; but there is no one who suggests that there is any other meaning to be attached to baptism here than immersion in suffering and sorrow. Christ has announced in the preceding verse that He has come to set the world on fire—a fire that shall purify the good and consume the evil in the world. He adds, "What will I"—or what can I desire more—"if it be already kindled?" as if He said, "This is, indeed, the consummation of My desire, the goal of My high ambition; but before that can come to pass I have 'a baptism to be baptized with,' I have to be submerged in grief, overwhelmed with anguish, 'and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!'" This is the burning desire of One who is all but consumed with an earnest purpose, which as yet cannot find free and adequate expression. When at length the hour came for the fulfilment of this purpose, He steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem. In that steadfast setting of face there was the enthusiasm of One who was ready for the final test, the determination of One yearning for "the hour," which had in it boundless issues. "The Shadow of Death" had accompanied Him long enough; let the *great reality* now come; let it "*be accomplished*"—"*finished.*" This was the earnest desire of One who was ready for His task, and longing for its completion.

Into the details of the picture we will not further enter, save to say that to one who can only judge them from their true resemblance to the things which they are supposed to represent, they are realised with wonderful precision, and reveal a perfect mastery of archæological drawing and modelling. It has been my misfortune not to have seen the painting for thirteen years, and my memory has only been refreshed by a brief glance at the engraving, which, alas! leaves a sense of blank upon the mind, since it necessarily fails to produce the glowing colour and natural hues which pervade the original painting. To say this is to say much concerning the production of that artist, of whom Mr. Ruskin somewhere says that he "was the first that cast true sunshine on the grass."

In connection with this faithful representation of natural scenery, there is one thing more in the painting to which I would call your attention, and with that I close. Mr. Hunt, with that special aptitude of his for introducing a bit of charming scenery into most of his pictures, whether it be by a window, an open door, or otherwise, presents a wide expanse of landscape through the two arched windows behind Jesus, one of which is made with great tact to form a kind of nimbus round His head. The spectator is permitted to see that landscape. It is a piece of scenery which to Jesus must have united the present with the past and the future. I will not for a moment discuss the question as to whether that precise landscape could by any probability be seen from the house of Mary; that would be a trifling and barren discussion. The present village is too low down in an amphitheatre of hills to command this view. There is only one opening revealing an expanse of country from that elevation, and that is to the west. But higher up, nearer the summit of the hill, is one of the most charming landscapes in Palestine. That landscape you can see through those windows. It is one which our Lord must have often viewed. You look in a southward direction and can see the hills of Galilee, the hill of Precipitation, over the brow of which the people of Nazareth sought to cast the Christ headlong; beyond this you see the great plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon, the battle-field of the ages, and on the west the Mountains of Gilboa, of such tragic interest, because, on its high places Saul and Jonathan and the flower of the Jewish army were slain—an event which has been immortalised by David's deathless wail, "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings; for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul as though he had not been anointed. . . . Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided. . . . How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O, Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. . . . How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" Crossing that plain there is a distant road which we cannot see, leading from the north to Jerusalem far beyond—Jerusalem the murderess of the prophets, over which the Christ would shed bitter tears, and beyond whose walls He was at length to shed His blood. There, as you look out of that little workshop, you look toward the city far away where the shadow on the wall is to find its full and final significance; and thus the outlook is made to emphasize and illustrate the scene within.

Any picture conceived with reverent fidelity to the recorded facts of our Lord's life, which also by the adoption of any pure symbolism centres our vision on Christ and not on Mary, and upon the cross as the central object of our hope and of God's revelation of love, we accept as an aid to our devotions, and as helpful to our studies of that Great Life and Wondrous Death. I commend this theme to you to-night. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper which we are about to observe but symbolises His death; the symbols are of no importance apart from the help they afford in realising the great historic and permanent fact. It is our privilege to-night to enter into the high significance of all, for without the breaking of His body there is no redemption, and without the shedding of His blood there is no remission of sins. May we see upon the cross the stricken Christ, and recognise in Him our all-sufficient Redeemer, "For it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

IV.—"*CHRIST LEAVING THE PRÆTORIUM.*"

(*Painting by* Gustave Doré.)

"And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him."—Mark xv. 20.

WE have now arrived at a period in which the suffering aspect of our Lord's life is brought into special prominence. We have on a previous occasion spoken of Him as "The Man of Sorrows," bearing His burden alone, and far away from human observation and sympathy. We have also spoken of "The Shadow of the Cross"—or the consciousness of the approaching period which Jesus specially designated *His Hour*—as resting like the shadow of a great darkness upon His spirit, absorbing His thoughts more and more, and giving a direction to all His aspirations, but as yet unobserved by those who knew Him best, and but very imperfectly realised by His mother.

To-night we have to dwell upon an event which all who witnessed it acknowledged as a crisis in that great life, and readily associated with a cross of torture and of shame. The world, as a rule, recognises the existence of a cross only by some outward symbol which represents it. "Hearts that break and *give no sign*" are not recognised as sorrowing hearts by the bulk of men and women; and thus threefourths of the world's sorrow passes unobserved, borne as it is in loneliness and out of sight by heroic souls, who never announce the intensity of their grief, or the weight of their care. The world's more superficial sorrow is proclaimed on every street corner in the whining tones of professional beggary and by a superfluity of rags and dirt; but, as a rule, the deepest sorrow of men—like the Man of Sorrows—does "not strive nor cry," neither does any man hear its "voice in the streets." Such a sorrow can only be recognised by the world, if ever, when it culminates in a crisis—a break-down in health, shattering of nerve, and consequent incapacity for duty. Only then do men learn that it has been at work, and has left behind its marks.

The poet continues:—

> "O hearts that break and give no sign,
> *Save whitening lip and fading tresses.*"

At most, men only see the breaking heart to the extent that they note "the whitening lip" and the "fading tresses"; not always then. How many hearts, too, break which have not even told the story in that silent way!

The greatest of all sufferers bore His burden unobserved, until the hour in which He left the Prætorium for Golgotha. Men did not see His cross until the wooden instrument of torture was brought forth by the Roman soldier and placed upon His shoulder. When He gave the first clear intimation of its presence to His disciples on His last journey to Jerusalem, the foremost of them exclaimed, "This be far from Thee!" And even when, after His last discourse in the upper room, He proceeded with them to Gethsemane, it was His lot to bear His great burden alone and out of sight, for even the three nearest Him were fast asleep while He was sorrowful unto death.

But *now* Jesus has to bear the cross in the *full glare of public observation.* The surging multitude find no difficulty now in associating Jesus of Nazareth with a cross. There it is, a visible, tangible thing; but it appears before them as a new and self-evident fact. Gustave Doré, in the choice of this incident in our Lord's life, selects a subject which is the easier to depict graphically, and brings with it the more convincing proof of its reality because of its tangible surroundings. It is an incident which affords the artist the opportunity of representing the crown of thorns upon the head of Jesus, the blood staining alike His sacred brow, His long flowing hair, and snow-white robe. It affords the painter, moreover, the opportunity of intensifying the central conception by the isolation of Jesus from all around, as well as by the contrast which His countenance presents to the variety of angry and ferocious faces by which He is surrounded. This moment, too, makes it possible for him to introduce the cross into the scene ere as yet it has been placed on the shoulder of Jesus, and thus the artist is enabled to represent the majestic tread of the Christ as He approaches that cross which blocks His path. The conception is rendered complete by the representation of the stern Roman soldiers keeping back everything and everybody from that path save Jesus and His cross.

Judging from the earlier sketch, which is to be seen in the Doré Gallery, the introduction of the cross into the scene and the isolation of Jesus Christ as the central object of observation, involved technical difficulties which could only be overcome by departing from the more accurate representation of fact as given in the earlier studies—viz., the procession of Roman soldiers with their spears immediately behind Jesus.

As the picture, however, now stands, the conception gains greatly in expression by the change made, and appeals with far greater force to the ordinary observer than a more subtle representation of the Man of Sorrows, but lacking these imposing surroundings, possibly could do. It is this quick perception of the conditions of effect, and the daring genius to produce them graphically, even at the cost of lacking sometimes strict accuracy and finish, that place this great artist foremost among the most popular painters of the present generation. He may be wanting in historical accuracy of detail, but his picture glows with the spirit of his theme, and that is what the public want above all else. The public appreciation is heightened by the colossal dimensions of this painting and the life-size representation of those who take part in the awful transaction so powerfully depicted.

There are three things in my theme for to-night which are illustrated by this great painting :—

I. Our Lord proceeds on His last journey, and is about to *lay down His life as a young man.* The face of that central figure is young, full of suffering and sorrow, pale and worn with sleeplessness, with three successive and wearisome trials, scourgings, and savage ill-treatment. The Great Sufferer wears no wrinkle upon His brow, and no trace of decay upon His countenance. As we learn from Gospel story, He is at most but thirty-three years of age. Thus the greatest life and life-work this world has ever witnessed closed at that early period. The Saviour of the world finished His work when as yet He was in the full vigour of youthful manhood. I shall never forget the feeling that came over me when I reached my thirty-fourth birthday; it came upon me as with a lightning flash that I had lived longer in the world than the man Christ Jesus;—and *what had I done?* I was filled with shame. I suggest the solemn consideration to you, young men and women, to-night. Your Lord, as man, passed away from the world probably before He was thirty-three, certainly before He was thirty-four, years of age. We have but condensed narratives of even that brief period of His life which is recorded; but we cannot read them without being impressed with the way in which He condensed work into the briefest possible space of time. Constantly, especially in the record by Mark, we find ourselves in the rush of His activity, and borne on by the current. The time was short, and the work was great. He came to devote His life at full flow to work and to sacrifice. His gift was to be Himself, and Himself at His best. Oh, what an inspiration for young men should His example be! When God sent His Son into the world to do the work which had to be done, and to offer the sacrifice which had to be offered, He ordained that He should do all under the age of thirty-three. There should be no ebb in His energy; but Calvary, the scene of His death, should witness the highest tidal wave of His youthful life, and therefore the sacrifice of the highest humanity at its highest point.

As the Father has sent Him into the world, so He has sent us. Young men, what have we done? Of course, there are aspects of our Lord's character which are infinitely beyond our reach—the Divine. We look upon them at a great distance with reverence and wonder. But there are other aspects within our reach—those which are supplied by the constant and unwearying activities of Jesus Christ, and by His consecration to the work given Him to do within the brief period allotted for work. His exclamation was, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work;" and, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." Shall that be our life motto? Remember that most men who have blessed the world have laid the foundation of their kingdoms—if I may so express it—at an early age. They have, by way of preparatory work and discipline, developed their plans, gone down deep for foundations, and laid massive stones out of sight before they have been thirty years of age. I believe that almost every great inspiration comes to a man when he is young. He may, and does, lack experience in early days, and in later years has to modify his plans in many instances; but even then his early labour has been well spent; and what he did before he was thirty years of age decides to a large extent what he can do before he dies, though he live to the age of eighty. Let that one lesson come to us with the first glimpse of that youthful central figure in the painting—a lesson indeed intensified by the activity, I know not whether by the consecration or not, of the artist himself—to employ all our youthful energies in the best and highest services, and to make such use of the vigour of youth, that when the mellowness of old age comes it shall be superadded to the energetic work of earlier days.

Again,

II. In that Figure in the midst of such surroundings we recognise *the centre of powerful and conflicting feelings.* There is no one unmoved among the vast throng represented upon that expanse of canvas. We see around Jesus different faces expressive of every type of intense feeling. Upon the right and in the foreground of the picture we recognise, in a little group huddled together by the violence of the mob behind, and the pressure of the Roman soldiers in front to keep back the crowd, the women who in days gone by ministered to the Christ of their substance, and to the last are faithful in their adherence to Him. Among them is Mary, the mother of Jesus, one of the finest conceptions in the whole picture, subdued with sorrow, pale with intense anguish, but withal calm and patient, desiring, as it would appear, to cast a motherly glance at her Great Son on this last lonely journey; but just as the Roman guard press her and others backward with rude force, she all but closes her eyes and looks to the earth. Looking at that countenance just then, it is not difficult to imagine that the woman who for thirty years had "kept those sayings in her heart" would now reflect over mysterious dispensations, and upon the darkest problem of all, in which all that was perplexing seemed to culminate in a tragic close. Humbly clad in the customary white and blue garb of the women of Bethlehem and Nazareth, there she stands, the representation of all those virtues which we have learnt to attribute to Mary without deifying her, and the embodiment of that motherly affection which never gives up hoping and never gives up loving. Her presence, with that of the other women, in the midst of that tumultuous throng, brings with it purity, strength, patience, and domestic tenderness, which help to brighten up that picture so dark with guilt, bitterness, violence, and falsity.

Behind Mary and the other women are men of the coarsest features, who, with open mouths, shout words of execration, —probably, " Away with Him ! Crucify Him ! "—sounds that must have been cruelly harsh and discordant upon the ears of that mother, who had heard thrilling messages concerning her great Son, and glowing prophecies concerning His destiny. On the other side of the path, on the left foreground, we see, among many, one whom I would recognise, though perhaps wrongly, as John, the beloved disciple, who gazes with a look of tender sadness toward the Christ as He descends the steps. Near him is a poor old man, weary, worn, and haggard, leaning upon his staff, bearing upon his countenance evident tokens of wasting sickness, and looking as if expecting a blessing from the great Healer on what seems to be His last journey.

Near these, but concealing himself sullenly near the masonry from the gaze of Christ, stands one upon whose countenance remorse and desperation are very painfully depicted. We recognise him as Judas ; though, in point of fact, I suppose, he had hung himself before this ; but the painter is evidently anxious to introduce him into the throng to complete the picture of the conflicting feelings surging around the great Central Figure.

Above and on each side of the steps which our Lord descends there are many other groups. On the right hand, in the middle distance, are represented, in brilliant colours, men of the vilest type with voluptuous and ferocious countenances expressive of cruel delight in the scene before them and the event which is about to take place. They seem to loathe the Christ, and display such an amount of malignant vulgarity in their expression of their hatred as is scarcely within the scope of art to depict or humanity to display. Those occupying a similiar position on the left are scarcely of a superior type.

On the steps are three chief priests. Christ's robe touches one of them as He descends the steps. That one is possibly Caiaphas, who looks upon Christ with a subtle admixture of hatred and contempt. Next to him, probably, is Annas his aged father-in-law, leaning, apparently, upon his staff; and near him is another—Alexander it may be—who bears the dignity of the high priesthood. At the top of the long flight of steps is Pilate, in his dusky scarlet toga, and near him Herod and a few Jewish dignitaries. With a wave of the hand he seems to repudiate all responsibility in the matter, and to repeat such words as those which he uttered when he washed those hands by way of protest: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." He has been terrified into consent—the name of Tiberius Cæsar on Jewish lips, accompanied by an indirect threat, was enough. He knew that the Emperor was as full of suspicion and misanthropy as he was of leprous sores; and that he, who had been still further embittered by the discovery of treachery on the part of Sejanus, the very patron of Pilate, would, at the least complaint against Pilate, be likely to send him into exile. The relationship between him and the Emperor had already become sufficiently strained. The Jews cried, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whoso maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." The chief priests, too, answered, "We have no king but Cæsar." Pilate trembled and consented. He claims our pity. Religious motives never entered into the question in his case; he was a typical Roman, looking upon all religions with equally tolerant indifference; hence, lacking those motives which would have made him strong to resist the pressure of circumstances, he reluctantly gave way. But now, as if remembering his wife's strange dream, and looking pensively after that great Sufferer whom he has condemned against his convictions, and who is beginning that brief journey which can only end in blood, he seems to be moved to protestation, and waves his hand as he bitterly but vainly renounces any share in the matter.

On each side are massive structures, essentially classic in style. This, of course, is at variance with all we know of the architectural features of Jerusalem. In this respect Doré must not be our guide. Probably he never aimed to be, and never considered it a part of his task to enter into the details of the architecture of Jerusalem at that period. He would probably never think of troubling himself with such minutiæ. Those of us who take a different view regret that on this account he is not a safe guide as a *historic* painter.

Again, on the summit of the hill at whose foot we stand, just where the hazy outline touches the blue sky, we see dimly through the veil of volcanic darkness other buildings. The whole topography is imaginary, and reveals no attempt at accuracy. The painter would doubtless repudiate such a claim. The aërial representation is exceedingly powerful and awe-inspiring. The air is full of dark prophecy, the clouds gather and thicken, and everything seems to predict such darkness as that which the Evangelists record. The blue sky whitens into cloud, and the cloud darkens into storm—a storm that is charged with awful potencies and possibilities. It is one of the most terrible aspects of atmospheric gloom which can be represented on canvas, such as to imbue the observer with a sense of awful solemnity and with an expectation of some great event. All this adds an emphasis to every expression of feeling depicted upon the countenances of that vast, tumultuous throng.

But there is one thing which brings these varied expressions on the countenances of all into prominent relief. It is that Central Figure. You cannot look at the painting without being impressed with the fact that Jesus Christ brings out of the true heart that which is best in it, and, by way of awful contrast with His purity and gentleness, that which is worst in the hearts of His foes. The very presence of Jesus Christ is an awful revelation of that which is worst in human nature.

It is a *silent* contrast. There is no word spoken. He had already rebuked Herod, Pilate, and the chief priests by His persistent silence. In reply to all their curious inquiries, challenges, and false accusations, "He answered them nothing." He is silent still. The howling, tumultuous mob are answered by the dignity and sublimity of silence. The only words that He has to utter are to the women who weep for Him from mistaken conceptions of the nature of His sufferings, and they are words of infinite tenderness :—"Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Alas, the throng had already exclaimed, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Let His blood be upon us and our children!"—an awful prayer uttered in a terrible rage! Be it so. Their wish would be granted. The chief priests had shouted, "We have no king but Cæsar!" The God of heaven gave them Cæsar, till they were full weary of the iron rod with which he tyrannised over them, and of the cruel hoof with which he trod them underfoot. He gave them Cæsar, until at last, in the agony ofremorse, and in the desperation of hopelessness, they rose up against their king, but only to result in their holy city being devastated, every stone in its walls laid low, and their blood saturating the holy spot where for ages God's temple had stood. The blood of the Christ was upon them. It was what they asked for and got. Now, as we look at this picture they shout, "Crucify Him!" and the shout rings throughout the ages as the prophecy of their doom. Varied, indeed, are the feelings which sway this throng; but none are indifferent to the presence of Him who is to bear His cross; He is to them "a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death."

Again:

III. Amid all, *Jesus sees nothing but the goal:* "Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." He does not look upon the throng, but to a distant object which we do not see. He looks toward Calvary. This is the end of all, the point toward which He has been making His way from eternity; that in which His love would find its consummation and His self-sacrifice be made manifest before the world. The awfulness of anticipation and suspense is over, and the hour for accomplishment is come. Already there is the tread of triumph there. See how He descends those steps! What majesty! It is like a victor's triumphal entry. He walks as if He is on His way to a throne and along a royal path. The stern representatives of the greatest world-empire open wide the way, so that the Christ may not have any further hindrances on His onward march. Every step has in it the dignity of power, and the emphasis of One who exclaims, "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it up again." *

That is a wonderful countenance for its purity, calmness, and tenderness, very expressive of the character of Him

* The following is an extract from one of my published sermons:—"'Despised the shame.' What a commentary on these words is Gustave Doré's wonderful picture of 'Christ leaving the Prætorium!' The central figure is Christ on the way to Golgotha, descending the steps which lead from the Prætorium to the court beneath. He is clad in a flowing, snow-white, and seamless robe, and bears upon His bleeding brow the crown of thorns. He appears in all the Majesty of a Royal Sufferer. What serene calmness, what sublime dignity, what subdued sorrow in that Divine countenance! In the background the heavens are dark and lowering, and the air is charged with fearful elements. Far back in the gloom, Herod and Pilate, the representatives of the Jewish and the Gentile worlds, are seen in unholy alliance. Near the Great Sufferer, and slightly behind Him, are three high priests in solemn conclave. In the foreground, and partly cast athwart His path of suffering, is the cross, the instrument of torture. The Roman soldiers divide the multitude who throng on every side; and the surging crowd fall back to make way for the Great Sufferer. As you look upon that picture, a feeling comes over you that the painter has thrown very effectively on canvas the grand idea that the world's Great Sufferer *must have room*, that all must give way for Him in His path of Love—although it be a *Via Dolorosa*—as they would for a king on his way to his throne. On the countenances of the thronging multitude are depicted all shades of feeling—diabolic gratification, scorn, remorse, admiration, sympathy, grief, hopelessness. But, amid all, stands that wonderful Central Figure, with a countenance which is all the more calm and heavenly for the soft shade of holy sorrow in it that tones down the brightness of the love and hope with which it is irradiated. The shade of sadness is chiefly traceable in those eyes which, withal, seem fixed upon a goal unseen by us, and unobserved by any of the motley crowd that throng the scene. This is a masterpiece of Christian art, a marvellous picture of that Divine One in human form, who in that critical hour, 'for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.'"—*The New Name and other Sermons*, pp. 268 and 269.

who, "when He was reviled, reviled not again." But we wish there were more strength in it in harmony with those words of Christ's to which we have just referred. It is too weak. With that one exception, it is a wonderfully expressive representation of the countenance of the world's Redeemer.

The cross which is placed athwart His path is to be made sacred by His touch. It was, until now, the worst instrument of torture, and the object of the greatest shame. Only brigands and rebels of the lowest type were crucified upon the cross. It was a punishment reserved for the vilest of criminals. Christ touched *this* and transfigured it, so that wherever the name of Jesus is known, the cross has ceased to be an instrument of torture. We speak of Him and of His cross as if He only had been crucified in the history of man, although we know that, in addition to endless crucifixions among other nations, there were thousands of Jews, the very children of those who now hounded Christ to death, crucified soon after this outside the walls of the Holy City, so many we are told that there was no more room for crucifying, and not sufficient wood for crosses. All these, and myriads besides, are ignored, and men speak of "*the crucifixion*" as if this were the only crucifixion, of "*the cross*," as if this were the only cross ever lifted up, forgetting even the two other crosses erected at the same hour and place. Jesus Christ has by His sacrifice for sin made the cross an object to glory in, so that to-day the very name of the cross is associated with the divinest love and the greatest self-sacrifice. In that cross, and all that it represents, centre the hopes of dying humanity, and from it goes forth the power that alone can redeem our race.

In a subsequent discourse we will refer to Doré's "Vale of Tears;" an allegorical painting of exceptional power and pathos. Gustave Doré's pictures appeal mightily to the imagination. Thus, when he comes to allegory, the imagination, unfettered by the conditions of historical accuracy, has full play, and throws on canvas, as in the case of the "Vale of Tears," marvellous conceptions of human misery and of Christ's power to save and to bless. One cannot but regret that that great genius passed away so early in life before he had time fully to develop his resources, and, above all, to tone down that rich imagination of his by which he embodied in his paintings grand conceptions of truth and duty, and which only required the mellowing influence of a few more years to soften into wondrous harmony and beauty. But enough. We thank God for all efforts to reproduce on canvas, as well as in words and music, the message of Divine love to our poor fallen race. Be it ours to receive that message in all its fulness, and derive aid to its proper appreciation from whatever direction it may come. Above all, may we seek the unerring guidance of that Spirit of Truth whom the great Saviour has sent into the world, and who takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to all teachable and reverent spirits.

V.—"*CALVARY.*"

(*Painting by* MICHAEL MUNKACSY.)

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding those things."—LUKE xxiii. 46—49.

(Read also I JOHN iii. 16.)

IN the forty-fourth verse we read—"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." Darkness at noon! Mid-day becomes midnight. The clouds gather and hide the awful tragedy from the eye of heaven. It is the hour and the power of darkness.

It is with much hesitation that I take this event for our theme. Tragic as it is, by reason of its thrilling surroundings, it is still more awful in its own mysterious significance. Hence we would bow the head with reverence, and take our shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

This is the hour of transition. The clouds which we saw gather as the Christ left the Prætorium, in that awful aërial perspective so powerfully depicted by Gustave Doré, have now covered the sky, and darkness fills the air. The savage play of passion which surged around the great Saviour as He descended the steps from the Prætorium on the way to Calvary has now subsided. The uncontrollable anger of the rulers and of the mob has been satiated with the deed of blood. The hoarse cry, "Crucify Him!" has been hushed in the darkness. The deed is done. The heavy blows of the executioner's axe are heard no more; the cry "Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani!" has already rent the air and pierced the darkness, and now there is audible only the low whispers of the assembled throng and the suppressed sobs of the Marys.

It is now that the last exclamations—"It is finished," and, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit"—are heard. These triumphant cries touch earth and sky. Gleams of light tremble in the darkness, the veil of the Temple is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the earth quakes, and many graves give up their sainted dead. There is divinity in that voice which draws forth a response from heaven and earth.

It is the hour of transition to that multitude, too, from the excitement of a deed to the reflection which follows its accomplishment; that hour in the life of every man who has been guilty of a great crime—when the enthusiasm necessary to perform a cruel deed has been expended in its performance, and when, in the terrible reaction, man falls back upon his miserable self to reflect and to realise the full significance of his act. Such is the bitter experience which now overtakes the unruly mob, and which possesses the hearts and minds of those rulers who have led them on to the deed of blood. The three hours of darkness have given them time to reflect. Those hours have been to them like an eternity. Many have left the scene, have slunk away in the darkness; others dare not go lest the open earth receive them into its darker depths.

I am not likely soon to forget my visit yesterday to the hall where Munkacsy's painting, entitled "Calvary," is exhibited. I entered the room a few minutes before noon. Just then the sun shone brightly in the heavens, the morning clouds were dispersed, and all seemed to give promise of a bright afternoon in Spring. But I had no sooner entered the room, and looked at that picture—with its three crosses, its moving agitated throng, and its black sky above, painted in darkest colours and only relieved by a silvery gleam lining the summits of the distant hills, and a subdued yellow hue in mid-sky—than a dimness began to fill the room and a gloom to envelop that wonderful picture. The spectators could but faintly distinguish each other, the darkness thickened and descended, only a few figures remained dimly visible on the canvas—the Christ, the malefactors, the Marys, John, the executioner, and a few of the more prominent figures—the others had disappeared. Just then the heavens sent forth a sound, the clouds flashed lightning which for an instant lit up the whole scene, but only left it darker than ever. A clock in the neighbourhood was heard to toll slowly and solemnly the mid-day hour. It seemed as if it would never finish—everything appeared so tragic and real—and when it finished, what an awful silence! The hush of a great darkness rested upon us; not a word was uttered. Then

I thought of those words which I have just read: "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." I remembered that on that ever-memorable hour, so imperfectly, at best, depicted by human art, there was a darkness far greater than that which, amid such surroundings, had subdued us. I was greatly impressed, and felt as if I were no longer in London amid the pulsations of the commercial world of the nineteenth century, but very near Calvary, witnessing for myself the great tragedy of the ages. The thunderstorm passed, the light gradually returned, the dark shadows of the picture which had disappeared revealed themselves, and the full details came to light. But the impression of that brief, dark interval remained, and for that experience the scene on Calvary will be more real, and the surroundings more vivid to me as long as I live. The painting is in itself the most living picture I have ever seen. Every figure is instinct with life, there seems to be no canvas, but a moving, startled and excited throng, a quaking earth, three crosses, and a dark terrible sky. The associations of yesterday conspired to make that reality complete and irresistible.

Looking at that painting we see the three crosses erected at different angles. The central figure is, of course, that of our Lord. We do not care to look at it too closely; but we see that as yet His side has not been pierced; the Roman soldier, with spear in hand, is seated at a little distance to the left of the Saviour, amazed at the sight. Much less do we care to scrutinise that countenance too minutely; there is, as there should be, a mystery about it. It bears the signs of more than physical anguish, and His brow bears the marks of that emblem of royalty which is peculiarly His—the crown of thorns. The impress of death is fast settling upon those sacred features, and the open mouth which has just uttered the triumphant cry of the dying Victor is now silent. What a contrast between His countenance and those of the malefactors on both sides! His is the face of one whom we have already heard exclaim: "I have power to lay down my life, I have power to take it up again." That countenance expresses, even in death, the strength of patience and the triumph of self-sacrifice; while the countenances of the malefactors—one to a very shocking extent—bear the brutal stamp of a life of crime.

The picture abounds with such contrasts. At the foot of Christ's cross, and nearest of all to Him, is Mary, His mother. She is too weak to tell her sorrow; but, placing her pale, beautiful countenance upon her clasped hands, which rest upon His pierced feet, she closes her eyes, is dumb in her grief, and looks as if the heart that had kept the Divine secrets for more than thirty years must now break, and as if the prophecy of Simeon is at length fulfilled,—that a sword should pierce through her own soul. Upon her left, and by her side, is Mary Magdalene, in a frenzy of grief, with long, flowing, auburn hair, and with her countenance buried in her hands. The contrast here between silent and demonstrative grief is striking. To their left stands Mary, the mother of John and James. In her puckered brow, her piercing glance, and her keen, strong, expressive countenance, as, with outstretched arms, she looks out to the Christ, who has just uttered His last words, there is a subtle blending of surprise and anguish which must find open expression. On the right of the three women is John the beloved disciple, the only representative of the apostolic company, more feminine in appearance than we should have expected, but mute in grief, bearing manfully the mystery of the hour, and standing near, not his mother, but that other sacred charge so recently committed to him by those lips now silent in death.

There is another figure behind the Cross—on its shadowy side—leaning against it, convulsed with grief. And so the group gathers round this central cross. Here, again, we are struck with a contrast. There are none who gather round the other crosses; there is no attractive power in them. It is the central cross that draws, thus early giving partial fulfilment to the great Sufferer's prediction: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." On the left of Jesus is the impenitent thief, already dead. The ponderous way in which that dead body hangs is most graphically portrayed. On the right of Jesus is the penitent thief, bearing, it is true, upon his countenance the brand of crime, but with a ray of hope lighting up, and subduing the worst lines of, his guilty countenance, as he turns towards the Christ in whom he has placed all his trust.

In the centre of the picture, and by way of contrast to the devoted group round the cross, is the stalwart executioner taking his departure. Bearing a ladder, made of poles and rungs of crooked growth, and untouched by plane, which is carelessly poised upon his right shoulder, and carrying a Roman axe in his left hand, this man of stolid, brutal countenance scowls at the women as he tramps steadily and carelessly by, evidently proud of his unholy calling. Upon the whole canvas there is no countenance—those of the malefactors not excepted—more repulsive and barbaric.

A Roman soldier is seen busily clearing the way with his spear for this hero of the hour, a lad close by looks with curious awe upon the executioner, while others are engaged with other thoughts. Beyond these is the mounted Roman centurion, looking with keen surprise upon the central cross. That centurion has presided over the executions. He had doubtless done similar duty before. He was no novice at the work. He had, also, seen many a brave soldier die upon the battle-field, seen many a heroic Roman fall, and, as his blood flowed forth, writing "Vici!" (I have conquered!) on his shield; but he had never seen a death like this. He had never heard such a triumphant exclamation—claiming kinship with the Divine—as "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and never so gracious a petition from dying lips for the foe as "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Hence the startled centurion exclaims: "Truly this was the Son of God;" and thus, too, with one hand outstretched in wonder and the other placed to his right ear, as if to catch the faintest whisper that may yet proceed from those Divine lips, he stands before us as one of the most prominent and effective figures in the whole painting. Contrasting with him, and at a little distance to his right, is another mounted Roman officer, who tries to conceal beneath the dignity and strength of his powerful aristocratic countenance every sign of emotion, but only succeeds in part, for misgiving or dissatisfaction is plainly traceable in every line.

In the centre and foreground there is one very prominent man, whose open hands and strained position, as in startled attitude he looks backward toward the cross, present a triumph of artistic skill. He starts out of the canvas like a living being. Near him, and in the left foreground of the picture, there are two rulers of the people, who walk gently down the slope of the hill, and at variance with each other. One is a venerable man with white flowing beard, upon whose knitted brows and strong intellectual countenance, as he looks downward to the earth, is depicted a sad and painful misgiving. He evidently thinks that they have not heard the last of that death, that the blood of the innocent Sufferer will still cling to their skirts, and that the darkness of the last three hours was not meaningless, but was the frown of heaven. He is one of the finer spirits of the age—Gamaliel it may be. On his left, and nearer the spectator, is a younger man, who is blatant and self-assertive, and who, with a wave of the hands, dismisses all doubt, and affirms that He who had so misled the people and called Himself God must needs be put to death. So effectively is he produced that we seem to hear those dogmatic and violent words as they are projected from his wide and open mouth. Behind these are two others, one of whom, the younger and the nearer to us, might well be Joseph of Arimathea, who, with hands slightly uplifted and eyes fixed upon the central cross, is powerfully drawn to the great Sufferer. Near him is an elder of the people, who, as he strokes his beard with his left hand, casts a side glance at the Christ, his upturned countenance revealing a subtle admixture of gratification and surprise. Behind them and slightly to their left, beyond and just in a line with the extreme end of the executioner's ladder, are two other leaders of the people. They are half concealed in the throng. One is exceedingly sad, perplexed, and timid—he may be Nicodemus—the other is one of those sleek, smirking men who are never shocked by any deed, but are satisfied that all is for the best so long as their interests are unaffected. To their right is a Jew on horseback, who still exults in the crucifixion, and who bears upon his countenance a cruel grin which he might have borrowed from perdition—it is so diabolic. To his right are two others, who think and feel very differently.

In the left foreground is a mounted sheikh, who, as he is about to leave, has been arrested by that last cry, and suddenly looks back. Upon his keen, powerful countenance indignation and misgiving struggle fiercely for the mastery. It is the face that has the most of conflict in it in the whole of the vast canvas. To his right, on the extreme left of the picture, is a man who, with a sinister, treacherous face and terrified look, hurries down the hill. Desperation is stamped upon that brow, and the fires of hell are kindled in that breast, whose covering is convulsively grasped by his guilty hands. Judas, now a suicide, could not have presented a sadder picture when he hurried from the presence of the chief priests and elders to hang himself. This man may have been one of the false witnesses against the Christ, who sold his conscience and, worst of all, the world's Saviour, for greed. Or can it be Barabbas, "the world's choice"? Whoever he is, he can exist no longer there; he flies anywhere, anywhere—it may be—out of the world.

Brethren, this picture is true now. The cross of Christ still divides the world. The Gospel is the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, to men to-day. See everywhere its twofold ministry. *It draws more than ever before.* The number of those who gather round the cross has increased a millionfold. The watchword of redeemed thousands is, "The love of Christ constraineth us." The story of the Cross in all its tragic mystery and pathetic significance has brought them to His feet. *It also repels* as of old. The man depicted as rushing from it in the desperation of guilt is a representative of a class to-day that numbers its myriads. How many who have crucified anew the Lord of glory, and trodden under foot the Son of God, have sought to flee from His presence in the agony of remorse! It is not only in the Judgment Day that men shall say to the mountains and rocks: "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." They flee and hide from the Saviour's presence *now*. A religious service is the most terrible thing they can endure; and the proclamation of Christ as the Saviour is the one unbearable message against which they close their ears and from which they hide away.

The Cross *awakens conscience* still, as in the case of the centurion; it also *hardens*, as in the case of some of the rulers of the people. It melts or makes hard as adamant. Such a love cannot be resisted save at the cost of sacrificing our finest sensibilities and noblest impulses. It draws forth *adoring wonder* from those who trust in it; it also calls forth *angry blasphemy* from those who will not accept it. We have not far to go in this city to witness both.

But, brethren, how much brighter the cross appears to the adoring throng who surround it now than it appeared to the little group who, with loving hearts, gathered round it in that hour of gloom, eighteen centuries ago. The light that streams from the resurrection morn has transfigured the cross. In the brief space of three days these very Marys became messengers of the resurrection. In forty days the apostles, who all—save one—had been scattered every one to his own, were given the commission of the Risen Christ. And in later days we hear John—now mute, and pensive with grief at the Cross—exclaim, in the full assurance of faith: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our life for the brethren."

It is to this "*conclusion of the whole matter*" (*an inspired afterthought*) by one who had witnessed its progress from the beginning, that I now call your attention.

We have here (1) *The announcement of a new revelation* or *the science of true religion.* The theme is *love.* The word, as we know, is new in the Greek tongue, and hitherto unknown in the classics. It is the direct product of Christianity as the virtue of which it is expressive is distinctly Christian. A new creation had dawned upon the world, a new word, therefore, must be projected into human speech.

"Hereby *know* we love" (R. V.), said John. It had existed before, but man had not known it until Christ died. All energies are invisible, and every principle must become incarnate before we can "perceive" or "know" it. Every invisible energy has its own favourite medium of manifestation. As such love has, it cannot be defined in words; it must be embodied in a deed or life. Even God could not define love so that man could understand it. It must become "*manifest* in the flesh." Now love's favourite medium of manifestation is sacrifice. Love has ever a cross, a Calvary. It ever asks, "What can I give or suffer?" Sacrifice is greatest when it is the sacrifice of a life; and the sacrifice of a life is greatest when it is the sacrifice of one's own life. Bring the Divine gift to this test. "Hereby perceive we the love of God *because He laid down His life for us.*"

The death of our Lord is spoken of here as a sacrifice for us. It is therefore spoken of as the revelation of His love. It is this mighty upheaval, if I may so express it, that brings to light what was hitherto hidden. The projections of shelving rock upon the very surface of "Calvary," as represented in the picture, suggest a figure. The geologist reads with intense interest the different strata that traverse yon high cliff, for he sees there the graveyards of buried worlds bearing upon their stony tablets in grand hieroglyphics the "In Memoriam" of ages. But all these were brought to light by one mighty convulsion. That upheaval only reveals a part of what lies under foot everywhere in grand characters written in tables of stone. Even thus, would I say with reverence, the death of our Lord is that one mighty upheaval which brings to light the eternal foundations of "love" as it exists primarily in God the fount of all compassion.

To change the figure:—The love of God flows in unbroken current in heaven. There is no sin there to surmount, no fall to span, and, therefore, there is no opportunity presented for the manifestation of its highest possibilities. It might have thus gone on in its even, mighty, grand, unbroken flow, and men never see it, and angels only see it in part. Those who have visited the Niagara tell us that a few miles above the falls no none can imagine what volume of water that mighty stream contains, and of what force it is capable. Before you *know* Niagara you must see it rush over the precipice, and hear it roar in waterfalls, and brawl in cataracts, as it leaps down into the depths beneath, and loses itself in a pillar of cloud. So angels see the steady current of Divine love on the plains of heaven; but it is as it descends over the steeps of light in cataracts to earth that angels desire to look into it. And here even "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

2. *We have here the statement of a new duty*, or the *art of true religion.*—The verse begins with theology, it ends with duty; it begins with a creed, it ends with practice. The religion of Jesus Christ is essentially practical.

This little word "and" connects our life with Christ's—the infinitely small with the infinitely great. This is in harmony with all Divine working. Take the telescope, and you see God's wonders in the almost infinitely great and distant; take the microscope, and you none the less see Divine wonders in the infinitesimally small and near. The light that glistens in the dewdrop and sparkles in the infant's eye comes from the sun in the distant heavens. John here traces back the principle which should govern our little lives to the divinest and greatest example. Thus the cross of Christ becomes an inspiration to duty. Our Lord said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." The cross reveals the compass of that word "as." Cross-bearing becomes a new fact in history. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." It could be the law of no one else; only He who bore so heavy a cross could give so great a commandment. Rob us of the cross, and you rob us of the motive force for the highest philanthropy and self-denial. The love that redeems is the love that inspires; the love that reveals is the love that transforms;

the fuller the revelation, the higher the duty; and the more abundant the grace, the greater the commandment. The commandment never comes to us so mightily by precept as by example; and no example is so powerful as that of self-sacrifice.

Christ has taken the grand initiative, and while offering for us a sacrifice which only He could offer—for it is the atonement for our sins—He has also presented to us an example that we should follow His footsteps, and the commandment coming through the medium of that great example comes to us with all the pathos and force of a Gospel. The steps of the Christ are far in advance of ours; but be it ours to follow on to know the Lord. What centuries it has taken the Church of Christ to comprehend, in a small measure, the spirit of the Master and the genius of His Gospel! When He gave the first intimation of the Cross to His disciples, Peter, the foremost among them, rebuked Him and said, "This be far from thee." He would have a Gospel without a Cross, an Evangel without a Gethsemane and a Calvary. "Get thee behind me, Satan," exclaimed the Master. It was the old Satanic whisper which He had heard in the wilderness, although now it proceeded from the lips of a disciple. There could be no salvation without a sacrifice, no remission of sins without the shedding of blood, and no hope for the world without the Cross.

And, to-day, there can be no ministry of love to the world in the name of Christ, save in so far as those who are engaged in it are imbued with His spirit, and in some humble way are partakers of His sufferings. This condition should be accepted by us not only as a duty, but also as a privilege. Pardon a personal allusion. Some time since I was passing through mysterious dispensations, and felt keenly the shadow of a great bereavement. One evening as I retired to rest, I was troubled with doubt and fear; and with the question "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious?" in my soul if not on my lips I fell asleep. During the night I had a dream. Methought I was amid the scenes of my childhood, in a hollow surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills, and I dreamt that I had to bear a burden up a steep hillside along a narrow and rugged path which I well knew. It was a hard task; the burden was heavy and there were many stones and other hindrances in the way. I began to murmur, when methought an angel touched me upon the shoulder, and in tones more tender than I had ever before thought an angel's voice capable of, said, "Do you not know that this is the path along which Jesus bore His cross? Yonder is Calvary." "It cannot be," I said; "It is," replied the angel. Calvary appeared then to be within sight, and the whole scene seemed to have a new significance. The very stones in the path, and the roots of trees which had upheaved it, all of which had tried me so much only a moment before, became now objects of intense interest. I mused and wondered whether Christ's sacred feet had rested upon that stone and that,—then my feet should. My burden was forgotten in the joy of being permitted to tread the path the Saviour trod, and when very near Calvary, in my dream, I awoke. But my fear had vanished in my slumbers. It was only a dream, but to me it was also a parable. I give it with the hope that it may be so to you, teaching you that we are most like our Lord, and enter most fully into His fellowship when with joy we bear whatever cross He places upon our shoulder. With what wondrous patience He bears with us, bringing us up as by a gentle inclined plane to the level of our privileges and responsibilities! May the story of "Calvary" be more and more a transforming power as well as an Evangel of Divine Love; and may the love that has redeemed us make us like our Redeemer in sympathy with the sorrowing and charity toward the fallen!

VI.—"*THE VALE OF TEARS.*"

(*Painted by* Gustave Doré.)

"The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."—Matt. iv. 16.

Read also John i. 4, and John viii. 12.

I AM inclined to think that the verse which is generally associated with Gustave Doré's picture, "The Vale of Tears," "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," does not convey so precisely the conception which the artist has sought to embody on canvas as the words which I have just read for my text.

I accept this verse as representing :—

I. The condition of humanity without Christ.

II. The nature of the blessing which Christ's advent into the world brought with it.

I. *The condition of the human race without Christ.* Of course, these words on the lips of the prophet who first uttered them, as also of the evangelist who refers to their fulfilment, had a primary meaning, but, on the principle that no prophecy "is of any private [or *special*] interpretation," these words have also a wide significance. Christ's advent into the world not only affected the condition of those with whom by His personal ministry He was thus early brought into contact, but also of the whole human race whose nature He assumed. The verse describes graphically, not only the state of certain benighted districts, but of the whole world without the Christ. He, and He only, is "the light which lighteth every man coming into the world."

Thus our text graphically describes the condition of humanity by sin:—"Sat in darkness. . . . Sat in the region and shadow of death." I think that this great fact has been wonderfully represented in the picture to which I call your attention this evening. All the light we see in that deep, rugged gorge streams from the Christ and His cross; *all else is dark.* It is a fearful representation of misery, desolation, ruin, and death. There it is, a narrow ravine, flanked on each side and fortified in front by rugged cliffs and scarred buttresses of rock. This gorge is thronged with people. At the extreme end Christ appears bearing His cross, which, like Himself, beams with translucent light. Near to Him, and on the right of the spectator, are prostrate forms expressive of the utmost despair—some not even looking at the light, being all but blinded by its sudden appearance. Near to these are the aged and decrepit, especially one with his right knee upon the ground, and leaning heavily upon his staff, while another with his arm cast over the shoulder of his fellow leans upon him as if ready to fall. These, too, scarcely catch the light, for they look sadly toward the earth. Near them, to the right, is a hermit, who has in seclusion sought light and blessedness, and who, with uplifted hand, points to the Christ and exults in His light. Leaning upon him, wearied with journeyings oft, and carrying a staff of palm-tree in his hand, is the palmer, who looks with ecstatic joy upon Him whom he has never seen before.

He has visited a thousand holy spots, and kneeled upon many a sacred place which he supposed Christ had touched during His earthly sojourn; but now he sees *Him*, and is lost in the glorious vision. To his left is a mitred bishop, startled by the light, and crossing his hands upon his breast as he tramples under foot the miserable fire of thorns which he had kindled wherewith to lighten the dark valley, he now rejoices in the true light. Beyond him, in the immediate background, we see a little group gaze with keen interest and surprise upon him as he quenches the fire of his own making and looks to Christ and Christ only. At a little distance to his left, and nearer us, is a kneeling prisoner still in chains. We see but his profile. He is startled, and for the moment knows not what meaning to attach to the light and to that mysterious Presence whence the light comes. Near him is the king, whose royal robes of gold, scarlet, and ermine overhang the prisoner. Yet he wears no longer his crown, and with his right arm arching over and resting upon his brow, and with countenance pallid with despair, he looks upon the Great Crossbearer. Near him, upon the left, and leaning upon him in a falling attitude, is the poet or minstrel. The lyre is at his feet, and the laurels are yet green upon his brow; but, dying from a wound which the shaft of envy or the dagger of open foe has inflicted, he casts his last glance of helplessness towards the light.

Behind him is the crusader, clad in armour, but, with helmet doffed, revealing a wound upon his forehead which he has received in conflict, and with hands uplifted hailing the advent of the Lord, but meanwhile, with the chivalry of the true crusader, looking with tender pity upon the two mothers near. The one lifts up her dead or dying child towards the light, the other dying prostrate on the earth, with one hand lifts up her living child, and with the other points to the Saviour and His cross. Behind the crusader are the representatives of the law and philosophy in pensive attitude, and behind the mother whose child is dying, or dead, is possibly her father, but, more probably, the physician who is seeking to aid or comfort her, when, lo ! light and joy come from another direction. Still further to the right there are groups, on distant shelves of rock on the rugged sides of the valley, in whose countenances, so far as they can be traced, are expressed varied and conflicting feelings.

We come to the immediate foreground, whence the eye gradually travels to the extreme left of the picture. This is the darkest corner of the painting. It is where the gorge descends by a sudden slope into a lower one. Here the canvas is thronged by representatives of various races and conditions of people, who hurry, half-hopingly and half-despairingly, toward the light. There is scarcely enough light here to trace their features. The eye must gradually expand its pupil to catch the few rays reflected from these sad countenances. At the extreme corner, farthest from the Christ, is the fallen woman. In the pallid countenance of this Magdalene there is a subtle blending of beauty and guilt, of desire to be blessed, and of utter hopelessness that she ever shall be blessed. As she casts a look over her shoulder towards the light she represents one of the saddest figures in the whole picture. Her very position, alone and the farthest from the Christ, is expressive of the difficulty which such an one finds, owing to the cold looks and cruel suspicions of others, to return to the light. Oh, brethren, is that true? Is the woman who has lost a good name to be deserted and driven farthest from the great Saviour because we men and women—Christians as we call ourselves—will not let her hope?

Near her are representatives of numerous classes and conditions of men from different lands and times—the aged philosopher, the slave in bonds, the lame, the maimed, and among them two mothers and their children. One mother, carried onward in the sweep of the current, is blind, and, looking up vainly for the light, places her right hand upon the shoulder of her boy. The other mother carries her child. Her countenance is one of the saddest, most tender, and most beautiful in the whole picture. These repeated representations of motherhood form one of the chief glories of this great work of art. The picture is full of domesticity, and glows with maternal affection in the midst of the densest darkness. That artist who as a son tenderly loved his mother because he knew something of her love toward him, gives, in different forms, a prominence to *the mother and her child* in almost all his great paintings.

But to return to that throng. Some are cast down in the struggle, and all but trodden under foot; others in the unequal race limp on their crutches; among others are men whose countenances are marvellously like those whom we saw in that mocking throng when the Christ descended from the Prætorium to the open space beneath. The stamp of darkness is upon their brow, and the story of woe is written on every lineament of their features. At the head of this motley crowd is a gentle, loving maiden, encouraging their hope, and leading them toward the light.

To the left, in the middle distance of the picture, there is a miserable group who verily "*sit* in darkness . . . and *sit* in the region of the shadow of death." We here emphasize the word "sit" in our text. Some in this picture *walk*, others *stand;* but these *sit.* They have given up hoping—they sit helplessly in the dark; and with despair, and nothing but despair, written upon their brow, they do not seek the light. These figures are ill-defined, and doubtless for a reason. They are lepers. Their leprosy is delicately concealed by the veil of indistinctness. They are in a dark place, and at a distance from us. There is only one of their number who shows any signs of hope. He has got up to hail the presence of the Saviour, and to catch if it be but a ray of that light.

Near this miserable group, and separating them from the others already described as climbing up the steep from the darkness into the light, is a blasted tree, the trunk of which is broken midway, and which sends out its naked arms, but shows no sign of life. There, in the darkest spot of all, just where this tree casts its deadly shadow, and behind the sorrowful Magdalene, we dimly see the serpent, symbol of the Old Tempter, crawling hurriedly into the thickest darkness—the only living thing in that painting who runs away from the light.

That is, as far as we have been able to express it in words, the painter's representation of the world without Christ and His cross. Read the twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses of this chapter. Giving to the words more than their literal meaning, and attaching to them the broader significance of which they are so capable—since all physical diseases were but typical of the more dire spiritual diseases of our race—you have in them an exact counterpart of this painting.

"Jesus went about . . . healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. . . . And they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those which had the palsy; *and He healed them.*" That is the dark background upon which the Evangelist presents the coming light; that is the state of misery and woe which the Evangelist would picture as that to which Christ came—the very need which had in itself sufficient attractive power to draw Infinite Beneficence. Therefore, when the painter, in the language of his art, represents humanity as being struck with misery and plagues at the time in which the "Light of the World" appears, he is but representing the state of the world without the Saviour, the condition of humanity before He, who bore the cross, came to it to redeem it and to heal all its backslidings.

Verily, this is a "Vale of Tears." All nations and all classes of people have had to walk in it, and in thick darkness, until the light of Christ has shone upon them.

We look upon Doré's painting as a very powerful expression of this truth. The fact that he died before it was quite finished has not materially withdrawn from its value as an allegorical painting. This great painter never seems to have had patience to finish the details of his paintings according to the traditions of his art. It might have been as well had other hands in matters of detail completed his conceptions. His was that creative faculty—an *imagination* which dashed upon canvas in bold outlines its daring conceptions, while he himself asserted that "finish" was but a question of distance, or focus, and that if people would but stand at the right distance—fifty or sixty feet, in the case of his largest picture—the paintings *were* finished. The career of this great man as a painter is a mystery. He never passed through the recognised schools of his art; he set at defiance many of their acknowledged traditions; and the question was asked, "Who taught this man painting?" Yet, while critics quibbled, *he painted*, and thousands were charmed by his productions. He was a born painter, not the product of a school; and where there was no need of strict historical accuracy, and where imagination had free scope, he produced marvellous results. He startled men with the majestic sweep of his uncurbed imagination and with the bold execution of his daring hand.

In this painting, as in others, men may point to minute defects and want of finish; but they cannot deny that the painter has thrown a living creation upon the canvas. Be this painting what it may be, it is a *living* painting—there is life in it which appeals to life, and not in vain. Gustave Doré was an original, daring man, and a master of effect. It is evident, too, from this painting that he knew not a little of the sorrows of this life. We are reminded that previous to the production of this work he had been bereaved of his mother, to whom he was so tenderly devoted, and, moreover, that he had lost the old, trusted servant and friend of his youth. He had tasted of the bitterness of trial, and had felt the chill of death's shadow as it rested upon his heart and hearth. The very trials which befall us are often those which qualify us for the higher ministries of life. It was so with Doré. This was his last painting. He could not have produced it many years earlier, before he knew the bitterness of life's bitterest tears. We see the tenderness of his nature in this last painting as we do not in the others. It was with the vision that comes in the night of sorrow, and the tenderness begotten of fellow-suffering, that the artist took up the brush for this his last work—a work which for years to come cannot fail to be a message of consolation to many sorrowing ones who view it.

Having dwelt upon the darker aspect of the picture, let us consider—

II. *The blessing which Christ confers by His advent into the world.* He brings life and light with Him: "The people which sat in darkness *saw great light;* and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death *light is sprung up.*" According to John, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Our Saviour Himself exclaimed, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." How harmonious, and how true, are these varied utterances!

The painting to which we refer conveys the same truth. All the light that enters that ravine comes from Christ and His cross. Above are the lowering clouds. They touch the scarred and rugged sides of the valley as they descend beneath their heavy burden. There is no ray of light that comes from the sky; the darkness above is impenetrable. *It is Christ that gives the light.* This painting is a marvellous representation of Christ as "The Light of the World"—the theme so graphically depicted from another standpoint by Holman Hunt in his famous picture.

Around Jesus and His cross there is no nimbus; but there is a rainbow. This is beautifully expressive. Above are the clouds, heavy with their burden, shedding tears on the desolate vale; and there the light which streams from the cross and the crucified One, reflected and refracted in the tears of clouds, forms a gracious rainbow. That rainbow is the offspring of the storm and the light. There is no colour in it. It is a rainbow of the night, such an one as in this country we only see once or twice probably in a lifetime. I have seen it once, and on that canvas I recognise a faithful reproduction of it. What a bow of the covenant does that rainbow become to all who in that dark valley receive the light, and "follow on to know the Lord," whose "going forth is prepared as the morning!"

Jesus now *bears* His cross. It is not merely placed athwart His path, as in the painting of "Christ Leaving the Prætorium." There the painter apparently felt that to place the cross upon the shoulders of the Great Sufferer would withdraw from the representation of His majestic movement; but he feels that no longer. Henceforth Christ and His cross must never be severed. Now He bears His cross, not as an instrument of torture, but as a *trophy of triumph.* There is no other hope for us, or light from any other source, that shall gladden and satisfy the heart. Have you ever been, or seen another, in great sorrow, and have you found true light come to you from any other direction than Christ and His cross? Have you ever heard any one sing "songs in the night" inspired by any other hope than that which Jesus inspires? Appeal to history. In the history of the world has anything brought light into the Vale of Tears to compare with that which the vision of the cross has brought?

At the extreme end of this valley there is another which turns abruptly to the right, into which that cross dips, and along which Jesus appears to have come. Opposite that valley, and in the vale where so many sorrowing and suffering ones have gathered, there are signs of verdure. Thus are we led to believe that along that unseen valley the light streams, and transfigures even "The Vale of Tears" at its extreme end. We have, in our experience, seen some dear ones at that juncture, where the cross is seen in the painting, just as they were about to take the *last* turn, and enter upon the final stage of their pilgrimage. All at once a light came; we could not see whence. It was a side light; but in each case the countenance was transfigured, so that, like Stephen's in similar circumstances, it was "as it had been the face of an angel." There they were, within reach of heaven's own light; but we could not see it, save by reflection. They "stood in the light of God"; "His seal was on" their "brow."

Christ has trodden all the path before us. We have but to follow Him. The more we follow on to know Him, the greater the light and joy we shall receive. He exclaims, "I am the light of the world." Many of us have realised that He is *our* light. He entered our hearts like the light. There was no noise or bustle; but He came and, lo! old things passed away and all things became new. "He said, Let there be light, and there was light."

But how many of us have *not* received Him? "This is the condemnation [or "*damnation*"], that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, *because their deeds are evil.*" Therein lies the philosophy of it all. Those bad habits which some of you have formed, sinful thoughts which you have cherished, and evil deeds which you have performed, will not let you come into the light. Like the serpent in the painting they crawl anywhere, anywhere out of the light; and you must lurk with them or abandon them for ever. Oh, the tender pathetic appeal of the Christ, the echo of which will sound as the terrible judgment of the last great day: "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." May we hear and obey the appeal now, so that we may never hear its withering words of condemnation hereafter.

VII.—"*MORS JANUA VITAE*"—*DEATH, THE GATE OF LIFE.*

(*Painting by* Sir NOEL PATON.)

"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."—2 TIM. iv. 7.

THIS is a grand story simply told. It is the summary of a great life represented under three figures—as a conflict, a race, and a trust—and in all these respects are the words a fitting epitome of the life of the great apostle of whom we read: "In labours more abundant, in strifes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often; in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

The figures used in this verse are frequently employed to illustrate the true Christian life. For instance, we have the figure of a *conflict* developed in Bunyan's "Holy War," of a *pilgrimage* or journey in his "Pilgrim's Progress," while we have the figure of a *trust* in Milton's "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained." It is impossible to separate these figures altogether. I refer to Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" as grandly illustrative of the truth that the Christian life is a journey; but how often is conflict introduced into that graphic narrative! I have also spoken of Milton's "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" as expressive of the fact that human life on earth has been, from the beginning, one of high trust and confidence, but as we have followed the poet in his high imagery, how often has the battle burst upon our vision and the clang of arms sounded in our ears! Nay, we cannot separate these figures; we must unite them together in one harmonious conception. This is what the Apostle Paul does in our text.

The figure of a *battle* used on this occasion was not new to him. There was something in the sound of warfare which inspired him; there was a military ring about the representation of life as a conflict which charmed his heroic nature. He had often spoken before of the Christian life as a warfare; had said to Timothy, only two chapters preceding this, "Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." In his maturer years, when he calmly reviewed the past, as well as in his earlier days when, in the full flush and daring of youthful expectancy, he looked to the future, the idea of Christian life as a battle was uppermost. All the great leading spirits of the ages, especially the so-called "Fathers of the Church," have caught this idea. The latter were the first to call the Ordinance of Baptism, and of the Lord's Supper, *Sacraments*. The word was taken from the Roman camp. In military circles *sacramentum* was the vow which every Roman soldier took when entering the service of his country—a vow threefold in its character: First, that he would never desert the standard; second, that he would never turn his back toward the foe; third, that he would never disobey or forsake his commander. With that heroic chivalry so characteristic of the early Christians, they practically said, "There is no word which can so forcibly express the high significance of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper, which are received by u sas sacred pledges of loyalty and fidelity. Each shall be to us a *sacramentum*—a vow—that we will never desert our standard, never turn our back toward the foe, never disobey our Commander."

Sir Noel Paton, in "Mors Janua Vitae," has given expression to the same idea of Christian life. This is a small painting, judged by measurement; but Sir Noel, distinguished for his exquisite power of minute delineation, enters fully into details, puts as much into a square inch as some painters do into a square foot. Beyond that I will not express an opinion about the painting as a work of art; I am not qualified to do so. I am probably as little qualified to speak of the draughtmanship, the colouring, and the details of that painting from an artistic standpoint, as most of those who have a special fondness for criticising sermons in newspapers are qualified for that task. I look at the painting from another point of view—that of a Christian teacher, and as such I claim a right to express my views of it.

First, I accept it as expressing very forcibly the truth to which we have already alluded—*That the Christian life is a life of conflict.* In the foreground of that picture is a Christian knight—a knight armed as in ancient days. We can scarcely imagine a poet or painter representing a Christian clad in the garb of a modern soldier; the whole conception would be far too prosaic, and would afford no scope for poetry, and but little room for high sentiment. What a caricature it would be to represent the Christian soldier as standing by a cannon of so many pounders! To some extent this would be true of all modern military equipments. The ancient idea of bravery as represented by a knight clad in armour, fighting hand to hand with the foe, can scarcely be conveyed by representations of the modern soldier.

Sir Noel Paton therefore pourtrays the Christian as an ancient knight, and answering somewhat to the description given by Paul (in Ephes. vi. 14—17) of the Christian warrior. He is represented at the close of life, and on his knees, but still clad in armour. Behind him is the Valley of Shadows; yonder is a star peeping out through the darkness far back, and through the cleft of the hills that close in upon the valley we see a setting light, as if the painter wanted to describe life's setting sun, or perhaps the waning light of earth. Through the darkness of the valley between the knight and that waning light behind, we see shadowy representations of tombs; but the Christian knight has passed by all these, and now at the end of the valley which is made light by the angel turning aside the veil that separates it from the land of light, he is on his knees but with armour still on—only the helmet doffed and the sword sheathed and laid aside for ever, since all conflict is at length over. Thus does the artist seem to express the further truth—that the Christian life is a life of conflict *to the last moment;* that it is not a battle at the outset, or for a brief period, only, but that also until the angel draws aside the veil that hides the light, until the Christian soldier has to enter into his reward, it is fight!—fight!—fight! every step of the way.

Look at his armour! The helmet now by his side is severely dented and battered in the battle. It tells the tale of hard conflict passed. See his cloak flung back over his shoulders, full of cuts where the sword of the foe has touched it! Look at his weird countenance, with half-opened lips and eager, expectant eyes expressive of hope, but, nevertheless, with weariness written upon it, telling of a long and tedious course! The shaggy hair thrown carelessly back, and the thin sinewy hands, tell the same tale of arduous fighting all now passed. It is hard to conceive a truer picture of the Christian life as one of daily conflict than that.

It also faithfully represents the Christian life as one of *individual* conflict—just what Paul expresses in the text: "I have fought a good fight," &c. One friend said to me, when looking at the picture some years ago, that he was very much disappointed, as he expected to see many more figures in it. In this respect, as well as in others, this painting is a very different one from "Anno Domini." That contains, possibly, two hundred and fifty figures; in this there is only one human figure and one angelic. There is only one knight in the painting. It is necessarily so. The fight of faith must be fought single-handedly. We must strike each blow ourselves; let no young Christian believe that he can fight life's battle by proxy. Above all, every faithful representation of a Christian soldier passing from the battle-field into his reward must contain but *one* man. We must enter the Valley of the Shadows and pass through it alone, as far as any *human* attendant is concerned. The mysterious journey through the dark ravine must be undertaken and accomplished by each one for himself. Thus at the close of life, and at the end of the valley nearest heaven, the Christian knight is represented alone, save that an angelic presence opens the way into the light. He has been alone in the battle, he is now alone in laying down the armour for the palm of victory.

Again, there is another truth taught by that picture:—That the Christian life is one of *increasing assurance of victory*. The certainty of triumph grows upon the Christian knight. Sir Noel Paton himself, in those brief words which he has written descriptive of the painting, tells us that, while the knight was in the valley far back in the darkness, the angelic presence which is so near to him now, and looks so beautiful in the light of that other world, appeared as a strange "dark shadow" beckoning him on. That is a grand conception. Death as a rule comes to the Christian first of all with a *dark*, *shadowy* aspect. When the Christian enters the valley he is often not very triumphant. There is a "dark shadow" that fills his heart with misgiving, if not with an element of terror. There are, I know, varying experiences. Sometimes there is scarcely a misgiving throughout; in other instances, death scarcely ceases to appear as a "dark shadow," even when the Christian soldier is very near the border of the Land of Promise. As a general truth, however, death comes to most Christian soldiers as an unwelcome intruder at first. It appears to him very much as the Christ Himself must have appeared to His disciples when He walked on the waves of the Sea of Galilee, and when they exclaimed, "It is a spirit"—a *demon*—"and were filled with fear." How often has the Christian felt that there is an unfriendly presence, something very strange and dark, near as the first shadow of the gloomy valley steals over him! It is not an ordinary sickness; there is something exceptional about it; a trembling gets hold of even the good man, and he wants a Christian friend on the very borderland to pray with him, and to go with him as far as he can. It is the old story of a "dark shadow"; but by-and-by it will become a more welcome visitor, and will appear as the angel of light opening into the better land. Even death appears in a new light—the light that streams from heaven—and is transfigured by it, while the kneeling knight is ready to exclaim in rapturous surprise,

"Tell me, my soul, can this be death!"

This truth is emphasized by the fact that the Christian knight represented as having laid down sword and helmet is a *young man.* In one sense—a sense in which the painter and the preacher would find it difficult to express adequately —*every true Christian dies young.* He is not exhausted by the decrepitude and decay of ebbing life, and with the enthusiasm of hope died out of him, but young to the last in the sense of having a bright and joyous expectancy, such as is expressed in the words of our text and of the following verse: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. *Henceforth there is laid up for me*," &c. It is pre-eminently the characteristic of youth to look forward. We have the keen expectancy of youth depicted in the countenance of this dying knight. It is a countenance wasted, it is true, by disease, but by that subtle disease which is peculiar to youth, and which seems to etherealise its victim, and leave behind a touch of surpassing beauty. So that, notwithstanding the wasted appearance, there is the fire of youth in that eye and its fresh imprint upon that brow.

There are cases when Christians go to their "grave like as a shock of corn cometh in his season"—then it is comparatively easy to die. In other instances the *young* are called hence. Then, willingly, to lay down the armour and to pass away from the scene of activity is an act of mighty faith. It was one of the trials of Moses that he was called upon to lay down his armour when as yet "his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated," when, in short, he felt *young*. This very fact in an allegorical painting imparts special force to it. It is to a *young man* dying, not a pensioned soldier, but a man who comes fresh from the conflict, who has not had time to unloose his armour, and who with the inspiration of youth and the hopefulness of early days, is about to lay all down at the bidding of his unseen Lord, that the angel opens wide the veil that lets a flood of glory rush upon him, thus satisfying his need and rewarding his trust.

There is another truth taught us by the vivid representation of the helmet lying at the side of the kneeling knight. It is not only dented, but upon it are the peacock's feather and falcon wings a-peak. The peacock's feather! How expressive of *vanity!* This teaches each of us a lesson. The last thing we cast aside altogether is this vanity. How frequently does success, even in the most sacred work, stick a peacock's feather upon our helmet! How often does the very victory over the foe occasion the need of another victory over the pride which is too ready to enter the heart of the victorious soldier! We all of us know partly what this means from personal experience. But, perhaps, we are more keenly observant of others in this respect. A good man occasionally stands up and tells his hearers in glowing words what he has been enabled to do. "The Lord be praised" is a phrase which he constantly interjects; but the whole tone of his remarks seems to intimate that, important as it is to praise the Lord, it is also important for all to remember that the good man who speaks did much worth recording. We readily sympathise with him; we have found ourselves guilty of the same fond feeling. It is nevertheless important to remember that this is but the peacock's feather in the Christian's helmet. In this respect, again, the painter has entered into the secret of Christian life, even in one of its most insinuating infirmities, with marvellous delicacy of touch, and clearness of portraiture.

Let us look again at the Valley of the Shadows as represented here. Not only are tombstones dimly depicted in the distance, but also, just near the veil which the angel turns back, and in the very light which rushes through the opening, is another tombstone, mossgrown and cruciform, from which a butterfly rises out of its chrysalis, symbolical of the resurrection from the dead—of life succeeding death.

Again we look at the young knight who receives the full rush of that heavenly light. The tears of the valley are still in his eyes; but they are touched with an unearthly beauty! The spectator is left to conjecture what the glory of that light must be, the reflection of which in human tears is so beautiful. Have you not seen something akin to that in life? You have seen the Christian weep, but weep with such joy that you have wondered what the joy of heaven must be since it wears so charming an aspect even in the tears of earth.

There, too, in the Valley of Shadows, between the cruciform tombstone and the veil, is the overblown deadly hemlock, dark as death; while crossing its stem, but *inside* the veil, is a group of white lilies, and above, on the other side of the opening, are the wild roses, expressive in the artist's language of the purity of heaven.

We rejoice to know that Art is becoming more and more consecrated, and that, in the paintings of to-day, we have a far higher conception of Christian truth than in the ancient paintings. Most ancient paintings present such shocking incongruities to the Bible student and the man of spiritual discernment, as to a large extent to mar their artistic value. One of the great gains of modern painting is that such incongruities are becoming fewer every day. We are profoundly grateful for Christian Art. We know that Art was not encouraged among the Jews in ancient days. There were special reasons for this. The Jews were idolatrous in tendency, and lacked the spiritual discernment to distinguish between the symbolic and the real, and thus they were forbidden to make themselves "graven images or any likeness of anything." We find the wisdom of this precaution in the history of other civilised nations. Art became the source of idolatrous conceptions and practices, and even in the early Christian Church, and in the Church of Rome to-day, there was, and is, a similar tendency; but to the measure that we are able to accept Art as descriptive or illustrative of sacred truths, and not as having any intrinsic spiritual efficacy or worth, to that extent only does it, like Christian poetry and Christian music, become a valuable aid. The great God blesses us in numerous ways, and many are the avenues through which truth may reach the heart. Let us not seek to close any of these avenues through which great and hallowing influences may flow to man.

Christianity is not dependent upon Art, but she will speak through Art when Art will bend the knee and become her handmaid. Art, however, is dependent upon Christianity—that I would have you remember. To the extent that the artist repudiates or ignores this Sacred Book, to that measure does he limit his capacity for producing anything that is inspiring and great. On the other hand, in proportion as he receives his impressions from the teaching of the Great Teacher, and as master of his art reproduces them on canvas, is he successful, and to a certain class of men specially successful, in conveying the highest truths. If we turn to music—perhaps the divinest of all arts—the most sublime music is sacred music. What can approach the

Messiah, the *Creation*, *Elijah*, *Judas Maccabeus*, &c.? The earth cannot, save in its connexion with Divine revelation, supply themes Divine enough for the highest song. We must come to this Book—the Word of God—to find inspiration high enough to immortalise song. And what of the paintings of ancient days? The grandest works of art which have lived throughout the ages, and have come down to us, are drawn from this Book, and, notwithstanding their imperfections, they are kept and treasured by the Christian Church.

It is from this standpoint that we attach such value to the painting to which we now refer.

We have spoken of the angel standing in the path leading from the valley to the bright land beyond. Observe that the side of the angel which is nearest heaven is aglow with heaven's own light, while the other, which is towards the valley, is a skeleton, but so marvellously, because so delicately, draped and shielded with the shadows of the valley—otherwise the sublime would have been marred by its proximity to the ghastly—that it is only by scrutinising that we see the skeleton hand resting upon the shoulder of the dying knight. But we see enough there, and through the delicate drapery covering that side of the angelic presence, to recognise the contrast between the aspect of the angel heavenward and earthward—the life *there* and the death *here*.

On the clasp which adorns the breast of the angel, and fastens the garment of light, the Saviour is represented as wearing the crown of thorns upon His head, and surrounded with the inscription, "*I am the resurrection and the life. Believest thou this?*" As we look upon the face of that dying knight, which is so expressive of belief and trust, we seem to hear him respond, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; "*I have kept the faith*"—"*I do believe.*" His life has not only been a life of conflict but also of *trust.* This imparts additional significance to the conflict. There is something which he has had "to keep," and in the keeping of which he has had to fight. The Divine voice came to him oft and oft during the struggle: "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown;" now he is able to reply at the close of all, "I *have* fought a good fight! . . . *have* kept the faith;" and his is the further confidence that there *is* "kept" and "laid up" for him a "crown of righteousness." With this twofold assurance of *having* "kept" and of *being* "kept," the Christian knight passes away into his reward.

Of course, all human representations of such great themes are essentially imperfect; but would that our lives came up to the standard so graphically represented by this artist, who seems to have consecrated his art to the service of Christ, and whose highest conception of true art, to use his own words, is to "purify and bless." How imperfect our lives have been, and how infinitely they fall below this true ideal!

> "Oh! how many a glorious record
> Had the angels of me kept,
> Had I done instead of doubted,
> Had I warred instead of wept."

Christ is our Leader. In the conflict He leads every step of the way, and in the dark valley we may follow His footsteps, and, though no human friend can sustain, His presence shall go with us. Nothing shall befall us which shall take from us our consolation, our joy, and our certainty of victory. In the last hour, *Death shall be the Gate of Life.* Let not this surprise us. The law that death is the condition of increasing life pervades this world. It is, too, the great Law of our Redemption, that the greatest life is the outflow of the greatest death. Let us not think it strange if the appointed way for all Christ's faithful ones to the life beyond is also through the portal of death; but in due time may we all know by happy experience the certainty and sublimity of this truth!

Alexander & Shepheard, Printers, 27, Chancery Lane, W.C.

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