

to confuse the fervour of enthusiasm with the eccentricity of a disordered genius. "Paul, thou art mad," was the comment which the Apostle's passion of exalted eloquence produced on the common-place and worldly intellect of the Roman Procurator. "He hath a devil," was the inference suggested to many dull and worldly hearers after some of the tenderest and divinest sayings of our Lord. "Brother Martin has a fine genius," was the sneering allusion of Pope Leo X. to Luther. "What crackbrained fanatics," observed the fine gentlemen of the eighteenth century when they spoke of Wesley and Whitefield. Similar, though not so coarse, was the thought which filled the mind of Christ's wondering relatives, when they heard of this sudden and amazing activity, after the calm seclusion of thirty unknown and unnoticed years. As yet they were out of sympathy with Him; they knew Him not, did not fully believe in Him; they said, "He is beside Himself." It was needful that they should be henceforth taught by several decisive proofs that He was not of them; that this was no longer the carpenter, the brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon, but the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

LESSON ELEVEN

CHAPTER XX.

JESUS AT NAIN.

IF the common reading in the text of St. Luke (vii. 11) be right, it was on the very day after these events that our Lord took His way from Capernaum to Nain. Possibly—for, in the dim uncertainties of the chronological sequence, much scope must be left to pure conjecture—the incident of His having touched the leper may have tended to hasten His temporary departure from Capernaum by the comments which the act involved.

Nain—now a squalid and miserable village—is about twenty-five miles from Capernaum, and lies on the north-west slope of Jebel ed-Duhy, or Little Hermon. The name (which it still retains) means "fair," and its situation near Endor—nestling picturesquely on the hill-slopes of the graceful mountain, and full in view of Tabor and the heights of Zebulun—justifies the flattering title. Starting, as Orientals always do, early in the cool morning hours, Jesus, in all probability, sailed to the southern end of the lake, and then passed down the Jordan

valley, to the spot where the wadies of Esdraelon slope down to it; from which point, leaving Mount Tabor on the right hand, and Endor on the left, He might easily have arrived at the little village soon after noon.

At this bright and welcome period of His ministry, He was usually accompanied, not only by His disciples, but also by rejoicing and adoring crowds. And as this glad procession, so full of their high hopes and too-often-erring beliefs about the coming King, was climbing the narrow and rocky ascent which leads to the gate of Nain, they were met by another and a sad procession issuing through it to bury a dead youth outside the walls. There was a pathos deeper than ordinary in the spectacle, and therefore probably, in that emotional race, a wail wilder and sincerer than the ordinary lamentation. For this boy was—in language which is all the more deeply moving from its absolute simplicity, and which to Jewish ears would have involved a sense of anguish yet deeper than to ours—“the only son of his mother, and she a widow.” The sight of this terrible sorrow appealed irresistibly to the Saviour’s loving and gentle heart. Pausing only to say to the mother, “Weep not,” He approached, and—heedless once more of purely ceremonial observances—touched the bier, or rather the open coffin, in which the dead youth lay. It must have been a moment of intense and breathless expectation. Unbidden, but filled with indefinable awe, the bearers of the bier stood still. And then through the hearts of the stricken mourners, and through the hearts of the silent multitude, there thrilled the calm utterance, “Young man, arise!” Would that dread monosyllable thrill also through the unknown mysterious solitudes of death? would it thrill through the impenetrable darkness of the more-than-midnight which has ever concealed from human vision the world beyond the grave? It did. The dead got up, and began to speak; and He delivered him to his mother.

No wonder that a great fear fell upon all. They might have thought of Elijah and the widow of Sarepta; of Elisha and the lady of the not far distant Shunem. They too, the greatest of the Prophets, had restored to lonely women their dead only sons. But *they* had done it with agonies and energies of supplication, wrestling in prayer, and lying outstretched upon the dead; whereas Jesus had wrought that miracle calmly, incidentally, instantaneously, in His own name, by His own authority, with a single word. Could they judge otherwise than that “God had visited His people”?

It was about this time, possibly even on this same day, that our Lord received a short but agitated message from His own great

Forerunner, John the Baptist. Its very brevity added to the sense of doubt and sadness which it breathed. "Art thou," he asked, "the coming Messiah, or are we to expect another?"

Was this a message from him who had first recognised and pointed out the Lamb of God? from him who, in the rapture of vision, had seen heaven opened and the Spirit descending on the head of Jesus like a dove?

It may be so. Some have indeed imagined that the message was merely intended to satisfy the doubts of the Baptist's jealous and disheartened followers; some, that his question only meant "Art Thou indeed the Jesus to whom I bore my testimony?" some, that the message implied *no* latent hesitation, but was intended as a timid suggestion that the time was now come for Jesus to manifest Himself as the Messiah of His nation's theocratic hopes—perhaps even as a gentle rebuke to Him for allowing His friend and Forerunner to languish in a dungeon, and not exerting on his behalf the miraculous power of which these rumours told. But these suggestions—all intended, as it were, to save the credit of the Baptist—are at the best wholly unauthorised, and are partly refuted by the actual expressions of the narrative. St. John Baptist in his heroic greatness needs not the poor aid of our charitable suppositions: we conclude from the express words of Him, who at this very crisis pronounced upon him the most splendid eulogy ever breathed over mortal man, that the great and noble prophet had indeed, for the moment, found a stumbling-block to his faith in what he heard about the Christ.

And is this unnatural? is it an indecision which any one who knows anything of the human heart will venture for a moment to condemn? The course of the greatest of the Prophets had been brief and tragical—a sad calendar of disaster and eclipse. Though all men flocked in multitudes to listen to the fiery preacher of the wilderness, the real effect on the mind of the nation had been neither permanent nor deep. We may say with the Scotch poet—

"Who listened to his voice? obeyed his cry?
Only the echoes which he made relent
Rang from their flinty caves, 'Repent! repent!'"

Even before Jesus had come forth in the fulness of His ministry, the power and influence of John had paled like a star before the sunrise. He must have felt very soon—and that is a very bitter thing for any human heart to feel—that his mission for this life was over; that

nothing appreciable remained for him to do. Similar moments of intense and heart-breaking despondency had already occurred in the lives of his very greatest predecessors—in the lives of even a Moses and an Elijah. But the case was far worse with John the Baptist than with them. For though his Friend and his Saviour was living, was at no great distance from him, was in the full tide of His influence, and was daily working the miracles of love which attested His mission, yet John saw that Friend and Saviour on earth no more. There were no visits to console, no intercourse to sustain him; he was surrounded only by the coldness of listeners whose curiosity had waned, and the jealousy of disciples whom his main testimony had disheartened. And then came the miserable climax. Herod Antipas—the pettiest, meanest, weakest, most contemptible of titular princelings—partly influenced by political fears, partly enraged by John's just and blunt rebuke of his adulterous life, though at first he had listened to the Baptist with the superstition which is the usual concomitant of cunning, had ended by an uxorious concession to the hatred of Herodias, and had flung him into prison.

Josephus tells us that this prison was the fortress of Machærus, or Makor, a strong and gloomy castle, built by Alexander Jannæus and strengthened by Herod the Great—on the borders of the desert, to the north of the Dead Sea, and on the frontiers of Arabia. We know enough of solitary castles and Eastern dungeons to realise what horrors must have been involved for any man in such an imprisonment; what possibilities of agonising torture, what daily risk of a violent and unknown death. How often in the world's history have even the most generous and dauntless spirits been crushed and effeminated by such hopeless captivity! When the first noble rage, or heroic resignation, is over—when the iron-hearted endurance is corroded by forced inactivity and maddening solitude—when the great heart is cowed by the physical lassitude and despair of a life left to rot away in the lonely darkness—who can be answerable for the level of depression to which he may sink? Savonarola, and Jerome of Prague, and Luther were men whose courage, like that of the Baptist, had enabled them to stand unquailing before angry councils and threatening kings: will any one, in forming an estimate of their goodness and their greatness, add one shade of condemnation because of the wavering of the first and of the second in the prison-cells of Florence and Constance, or the phantasies of incipient madness which agitated, in the castle of Wartburg, the ardent spirit of the third? And yet to St. John Baptist

imprisonment must have been a deadlier thing than even to Luther; for in the free wild life of the hermit he had lived in constant communion with the sights and sounds of nature, had breathed with delight and liberty the free winds of the wilderness, and gazed with a sense of companionship on the large stars which beam from the clear vault of the Eastern night. To a child of freedom and of passion, to a rugged, passionate, untamed spirit like that of John, a prison was worse than death. For the palms of Jericho and the balsams of Engedi, for the springing of the beautiful gazelles amid the mountain solitudes, and the reflection of the moonlight on the mysterious waves of the Salt Lake, he had nothing now but the chilly damps and cramping fetters of a dungeon, and the brutalities of such a jailor as a tetrarch like Antipas would have kept in a fortress like Makor. In that black prison, among its lava streams and basaltic rocks, which was tenanted in reality by far worse demons of human brutality and human vice than the "goats" and "satyrs" and doleful creatures believed by Jewish legend to haunt its whole environment, we cannot wonder if the eye of the caged eagle began to film.

Not once or twice alone in the world's history has God seemed to make His very best and greatest servants drink to the very dregs the cup of apparent failure—called them suddenly away by the sharp stroke of martyrdom, or down the long declivities of a lingering disease, before even a distant view of their work has been vouchsafed to them; flung them, as it were, aside like broken instruments, useless for their destined purpose, ere He crowned with an immortality of success and blessing the lives which fools regarded as madness, and the end that has been without human honour. It is but a part of that merciful fire in which He is purging away the dross from the seven-times-refined gold of a spirit which shall be worthy of eternal bliss. But to none could this disciplinary tenderness have come in more terrible disguise than to St. John. For he seemed to be neglected not only by God above, but by the living Son of God on earth. John was pining in Herod's prison while Jesus, in the glad simplicity of His early Galilean ministry, was preaching to rejoicing multitudes among the mountain lilies or from the waves of the pleasant lake. Oh, why did his Father in heaven and his Friend on earth suffer him to languish in this soul-clouding misery? Had not his life been innocent? had not his ministry been faithful? had not his testimony been true? Oh, why did not He, to whom he had borne witness beyond Jordan, call down fire from heaven to shatter those foul and guilty towers? Among so

many miracles might not *one* be spared to the unhappy kinsman who had gone before His face to prepare his way before Him? Among so many words of mercy and tenderness might not *some* be vouchsafed to him who had uttered that Voice in the wilderness? Why should not the young Son of David rock with earthquake the foundations of these Idumæan prisons, where many a noble captive had been unjustly slain, or send but one of His twelve legions of angels to liberate His Forerunner and His friend, were it but to restore him to his desert solitude once more—content there to end his life among the wild beasts, so it were far from man's tyrannous infamy, and under God's open sky? What wonder, we say again, if the eye of the caged eagle began to film!

“Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”

Jesus did not directly answer the question. He showed the messengers, He let them see with their own eyes, some of the works of which hitherto they had only heard by the hearing of the ear. And then, with a reference to the 61st chapter of Isaiah, He bade them take back to their master the message, that blind men saw, and lame walked, and lepers were cleansed, and deaf heard, and dead were raised; and above all, and more than all, that to the poor the glad tidings were being preached: and then, we can imagine with how deep a tenderness, He added, “And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me”—blessed (that is) is he who shall trust Me, even in spite of sorrow and persecution—he who shall believe that I know to the utmost the will of Him that sent Me, and how and when to finish His work.

We may easily suppose, though nothing more is told us, that the disciples did not depart without receiving from Jesus other words of private affection and encouragement for the grand prisoner whose end was now so nearly approaching—words which would be to him sweeter than the honey which had sustained his hunger in the wilderness, dearer than water-springs in the dry ground. And no sooner had the disciples departed, than He who would not seem to be guilty of idle flattery, but yet wished to prevent His hearers from cherishing one depreciatory thought of the great Prophet of the Desert, uttered over His friend and Forerunner, in language of rhythmic and perfect loveliness, the memorable eulogy, that he was indeed the promised Voice in the new dawn of a nobler day, the greatest of all God's herald messengers—the Elias who, according to the last word of ancient prophecy, was to precede the Advent of the Messiah, and to prepare His way.

“What went ye out in the wilderness for to see?”

“A reed shaken by the wind?”

“But what went ye out for to see?”

“A man clothed in soft raiment?”

“Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in *kings'* houses!”

“But what went ye out for to see?”

“A prophet?”

“Yea, I say unto you, and far more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee.”

And having pronounced this rhythmic and impassioned eulogy, He proceeded to speak to them more calmly respecting Himself and John, and to tell them that though John was the last and the greatest of the Old Dispensation, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he. The brevity with which the words are repeated leaves their meaning uncertain; but the superiority intended is a superiority doubtless in spiritual privileges, not in moral exaltation. The “least of that which is greatest,” says a legal maxim, “is greater than the greatest of that which is least;” and in revealed knowledge, in illimitable hope, in conscious closeness of relationship to his Father and his God, the humblest child of the New Covenant is more richly endowed than the greatest prophet of the Old. And into that kingdom of God whose advent was now proclaimed, henceforth with holy and happy violence they all might press. Such eager violence—natural to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness—would be only acceptable in the sight of God.

Many who heard these words, and especially the publicans and those who were scorned as the “people of the earth,” accepted with joy and gratitude this approbation of their confidence in John. But there were others—the accredited teachers of the written and oral Law—who listened to such words with contemptuous dislike. Struck with these contrasts, Jesus drew an illustration from peevish children who fretfully reject every effort of their fellows to delight or to amuse them. Nothing could please such soured and rebellious natures. The flute and dance of the little ones who played at weddings charmed them as little as the long wail of the simulated funeral. God’s “richly-variegated wisdom” had been exhibited to them in many fragments, and by many methods, yet all in vain. John had come to them in the stern asceticism of the hermit, and they called him mad; Jesus joined in the banquet and the marriage-feast, and they called

Him "an eater and a wine-drinker." Even so! yet Wisdom has been ever justified at her children's hands. Those children have not disgraced their Divine original. Fools might account their life as madness, and their end to be without honour; but how is the very humblest of them numbered among the children of God, and their lot among the saints!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SINNER AND THE PHARISEE.

BUT not even yet apparently were the deeds and sayings of this memorable day concluded; for in the narrative of St. Luke it seems to have been on the same day that, perhaps at Nain, perhaps at Magdala, Jesus received and accepted an invitation from one of the Pharisees who bore the very common name of Simon.

The cause or object of the invitation we do not know; but as yet Jesus had come to no marked or open rupture with the Pharisaic party, and they may even have imagined that He might prove of use to them as the docile instrument of their political and social purposes. Probably, in inviting Him, Simon was influenced partly by curiosity, partly by the desire to receive a popular and distinguished teacher, partly by willingness to show a distant approval of something which may have struck him in Christ's looks, or words, or ways. It is quite clear that the hospitality was meant to be qualified and condescending. All the ordinary attentions which would have been paid to an honoured guest were coldly and cautiously omitted. There was no water for the weary and dusty feet, no kiss of welcome upon the cheek, no perfume for the hair, nothing but a somewhat ungracious admission to a vacant place at the table, and the most distant courtesies of ordinary intercourse, so managed that the Guest might feel that He was supposed to be receiving an honour, and not to be conferring one.

In order that the mats or carpets which are hallowed by domestic prayer may not be rendered unclean by any pollution of the streets, each guest, as he enters a house in Syria or Palestine, takes off his sandals, and leaves them at the door. He then proceeds to his place

at the table. In ancient times, as we find throughout the Old Testament, it was the custom of the Jews to eat their meals sitting cross-legged—as is still common throughout the East—in front of a tray placed on a low stool, on which is set the dish containing the heap of food, from which all help themselves in common. But this custom, though it has been resumed for centuries, appears to have been abandoned by the Jews in the period succeeding the Captivity. Whether they had borrowed the recumbent posture at meals from the Persians or not, it is certain, from the expressions employed, that in the time of our Lord the Jews, like the Greeks and Romans, reclined at banquets, upon couches placed round tables of much the same height as those now in use. We shall see hereafter that even the Passover was eaten in this attitude. The beautiful and profoundly moving incident which occurred in Simon's house can only be understood by remembering that as the guests lay on the couches which surrounded the tables, their feet would be turned towards any spectators who were standing outside the circle of bidden guests.

An Oriental's house is by no means his castle. The universal prevalence of the law of hospitality—the very first of Eastern virtues—almost forces him to live with open doors, and any one may at any time have access to his rooms. But on this occasion there was one who had summoned up courage to intrude upon that respectable dwelling-place a presence which was not only unwelcome, but positively odious. A poor, stained, fallen woman, notorious in the place for her evil life, discovering that Jesus was supping in the house of the Pharisee, ventured to make her way there among the throng of other visitants, carrying with her an alabaster box of spikenard. She found the object of her search, and as she stood humbly behind Him, and listened to His words, and thought of all that He was, and all to which she had fallen—thought of the stainless, sinless purity of the holy and youthful Prophet, and of her own shameful, degraded life—she began to weep, and her tears dropped fast upon His unsandalled feet, over which she bent lower and lower to hide her confusion and her shame. The Pharisee would have started back with horror from the touch, still more from the tear, of such an one; he would have wiped away the fancied pollution, and driven off the presumptuous intruder with a curse. But this woman felt instinctively that Jesus would not treat her so; she felt that the highest sinlessness is also the deepest sympathy; she saw that where the hard respectability of her fellow-sinner would repel, the perfect holiness of her Saviour would receive.

Perhaps she had heard those infinitely tender and gracious words which may have been uttered on this very day—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And she was emboldened by being unreprieved; and thus becoming conscious that, whatever others might do, the Lord at any rate did not loathe or scorn her, she drew yet nearer to Him, and, sinking down upon her knees, began with her long dishevelled hair to wipe the feet which had been wetted with her tears, and then to cover them with kisses, and at last—breaking the alabaster vase—to bathe them with the precious and fragrant nard.

The sight of that dishevelled woman, the shame of her humiliation, the agonies of her penitence, the quick dropping of her tears, the sacrifice of that perfume which had been one of the instruments of her unhallowed arts, might have touched even the stoniest feelings into an emotion of sympathy. But Simon, the Pharisee, looked on with icy dislike and disapproval. The irresistible appeal to pity of that despairing and broken-hearted mourner did not move him. It was not enough for him that Jesus had but suffered the unhappy creature to kiss and anoint His feet, without speaking to her as yet one word of encouragement. Had he been a prophet, He ought to have known what kind of woman she was; and had He known, He ought to have repulsed her with contempt and indignation, as Simon would himself have done. Her mere touch almost involved the necessity of a ceremonial quarantine. One sign from Him, and Simon would have been only too glad of an excuse for ejecting such a pollution from the shelter of his roof.

The Pharisee did not utter these thoughts aloud, but his frigid demeanour, and the contemptuous expression of countenance, which he did not take the trouble to disguise, showed all that was passing in his heart. Our Lord heard his thoughts, but did not at once reprove and expose his cold uncharity and unrelenting hardness. In order to call general attention to His words, He addressed His host.

"Simon, I have something to say to thee."

"Master, say on," is the somewhat constrained reply.

"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay, he freely forgave them both. Tell me then, which of them will love him most?"

Simon does not seem to have had the slightest conception that the question had any reference to himself—as little conception as

David had when he pronounced so frank a judgment on Nathan's parable.

"I imagine," he said—there is a touch of supercilious patronage, of surprised indifference to the whole matter in the word he uses—"I presume that he to whom he forgave most."

"Thou hast rightly judged." And then—the sterner for its very gentleness and forbearance—came the moral and application of the little tale, couched in that rhythmic utterance of antithetic parallelism which our Lord often adopted in His loftier teaching, and which appealed like the poetry of their own prophets to the ears of those who heard it. Though Simon may not have seen the point of the parable, perhaps the penitent, with the quicker intuition of a contrite heart, *had* seen it. But what must have been her emotion when He who hitherto had not noticed her, now turned full towards her, and calling the attention of all who were present to her shrinking figure, as she sat upon the ground, hiding with her two hands and with her dishevelled hair the confusion of her face, exclaimed to the astonished Pharisee—

"Simon! dost thou mark this woman?"

"I was thine own guest: thou pouredst no water over my feet; but she, with her tears, washed my feet, and with her hair she wiped them.

"No kiss gavest thou to me; but she, since the time I came in, has been ceaselessly covering my feet with kisses.

"My head with oil thou anointedst not: but she with spikenard anointed my feet.

"Wherefore I say to you, her sins—her many sins, have been forgiven; but he to whom there is but little forgiveness, loveth little."

And then, like the rich close of gracious music, He added, no longer to Simon, but to the poor sinful woman, the words of mercy, "Thy sins have been forgiven."

Our Lord's words were constantly a new revelation for all who heard them, and if we may judge from many little indications in the Gospels, they seem often to have been followed, in the early days of His ministry, by a shock of surprised silence, which at a later date, among those who rejected Him, broke out into fierce reproaches and indignant murmurs. At this stage of His work, the spell of awe and majesty produced by His love and purity, and by that inward Divinity which shone in His countenance and sounded in His voice,

had not yet been broken. It was only in their secret thoughts that the guests—rather, it seems, in astonishment than in wrath—ventured to question this calm and simple claim to a more than earthly attribute. It was only in their hearts that they silently mused and questioned, “Who is this, who forgiveth sins also?” Jesus knew their inward hesitations; but it had been prophesied of Him that “He should not strive nor cry, neither should His voice be heard in the streets;” and because He would not break the bruised reed of their faith, or quench the smoking flax of their reverent amazement, He gently sent away the woman who had been a sinner with the kind words, “Thy faith hath saved thee: go into peace.” And to peace beyond all doubt she went, even to the peace of God which passeth all understanding, to the peace which Jesus gives, which is not as the world gives. To the general lesson which her story inculcates we shall return hereafter, for it is one which formed a central doctrine of Christ’s revelation; I mean the lesson that cold and selfish hypocrisy is in the sight of God as hateful as more glaring sin; the lesson that a life of sinful and impenitent respectability may be no less deadly and dangerous than a life of open shame. But meanwhile the touching words of an English poet may serve as the best comment on this beautiful incident:—

“She sat and wept beside His feet; the weight
Of sin oppressed her heart; for all the blame,
And the poor malice of the worldly shame,
To her were past, extinct, and out of date;
Only the sin remained—the leprous *state*.
She would be melted by the heat of love,
By fires far fiercer than are blown to prove
And purge the silver ore adulterate.
She sat and wept, and with her untressed hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blessed to touch;
And He wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.”

An ancient tradition—especially prevalent in the Western Church, and followed by the translators of our English version—a tradition which, though it must ever remain uncertain, is not in itself improbable, and cannot be disproved—identifies this woman with Mary of Magdala, “out of whom Jesus cast seven devils.” This exorcism is not elsewhere alluded to, and it would be perfectly in accordance with the genius of Hebrew phraseology if the expression had been applied to her, in consequence of a passionate nature and an abandoned life. The

The mistaken belief down through the centuries and even prevalent today that Mary of Magdala was a prostitute is not born out by the Scriptures. Dr. VBK

Talmudists have much to say respecting her—her wealth, her extreme beauty, her braided locks, her shameless profligacy, her husband Pappus, and her paramour Pandera; but all that we really know of the Magdalene from Scripture is that enthusiasm of devotion and gratitude which attached her, heart and soul, to her Saviour's service. In the chapter of St. Luke which follows this incident she is mentioned first among the women who accompanied Jesus in His wanderings, and ministered to Him of their substance; and it may be that in the narrative of the incident at Simon's house her name was suppressed, out of that delicate consideration which, in other passages, makes the Evangelist suppress the condition of Matthew and the name of Peter. It may be, indeed, that the woman who was a sinner went to find the peace which Christ had promised to her troubled conscience in a life of deep seclusion and obscurity, which meditated in silence on the merciful forgiveness of her Lord; but in the popular consciousness she will till the end of time be identified with the Magdalene whose very name has passed into all civilised languages as a synonym for accepted

* penitence and pardoned sin. The traveller who, riding among the delicate perfumes of many flowering plants on the shores of Gennesareth, comes to the ruinous tower and solitary palm-tree that mark the Arab village of El Mejdol, will involuntarily recall this old tradition of her whose sinful beauty and deep repentance have made the name of Magdala so famous; and though the few miserable peasant huts are squalid and ruinous, and the inhabitants are living in ignorance and degradation, he will still look with interest and emotion on a site which brings back into his memory one of the most signal proofs that no one—not even the most fallen and the most despised—is regarded as an outcast by Him whose very work it was to seek and save that which was lost. Perhaps in the balmy air of Gennesareth, in the brightness of the sky above his head, in the sound of the singing birds which fills the air, in the masses of purple blossom which at some seasons of the year festoon these huts of mud, he may see a type of the love and tenderness which is large and rich enough to encircle with the grace of fresh and heavenly beauty the ruins of a once earthly and desecrated life.

* Belief and a seeking to God for mercy and His grace, not penance, is the teaching of this story of Mary of Magdala. Penance is but a worthless attempt at self-payment for sin. Only belief in Christ and acceptance of mercy and grace from God is rewarded with Salvation. (Eph 2:8-9) Dr. VBK