

been dead for seventeen centuries ; Thou art not even fifty years old ; how are we to understand such words as these ? ” Then very gently, but with great solemnity, and with that formula of asseveration which He only used when He announced His most solemn truths, the Saviour revealed to them His eternity, His Divine pre-existence before He had entered the tabernacle of mortal flesh :

“ Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham came into existence, I am. ”

Then, with a burst of impetuous fury—one of those paroxysms of sudden, uncontrollable, frantic rage to which this people has in all ages been liable upon any collision with its religious convictions—they took up stones to stone Him. But the very blindness of their rage made it more easy to elude them. His hour was not yet come. With perfect calmness He departed unhurt out of the Temple.

LESSON TWENTY-ONE

CHAPTER XLI.

THE MAN BORN BLIND.

EITHER on His way from the Temple, after this attempted assault, or on the next ensuing Sabbath, Jesus, as He passed by, saw a man blind from his birth, who perhaps announced his miserable condition as he sat begging by the roadside, and at the Temple gate.

All the Jews were trained to regard special suffering as the necessary and immediate consequence of special sin. Perhaps the disciples supposed that the words of our Lord to the paralytic whom He had healed at the Pool of Bethesda, as well as to the paralytic at Capernaum, might seem to sanction such an impression. They asked, therefore, how this man came to be born blind. Could it be in consequence of the sins of his parents ? If not, was there any way of supposing that it could have been for his own ? The supposition in the former case seemed hard ; in the latter, impossible. They were therefore perplexed.

Into the unprofitable regions of such barren speculation our Lord refused to follow them, and He declined, as always, the tendency to infer and to sit in judgment upon the sins of others. Neither the

man's sins, He told them, nor those of his parents, had caused that lifelong affliction ; but now, by means of it, the works of God should be made manifest. He, the Light of the world, must for a short time longer dispel its darkness. Then He spat on the ground, made clay with the spittle, and smearing it on the blind man's eyes, bade him "go wash in the pool of Siloam." The blind man went, washed, and was healed.

The saliva of one who had not recently broken his fast was believed among the ancients to have a healing efficacy in cases of weak eyes, and clay was occasionally used to repress tumours on the eyelids. But that these instruments in no way detracted from the splendour of the miracle is obvious ; and we have no means of deciding in this, any more than in the parallel instances, why our Lord, who sometimes healed by a word, preferred at other times to adopt slow and more elaborate methods of giving effect to His supernatural power. In this matter He never revealed the principles of action which doubtless arose from His inner knowledge of the circumstances, and from His insight into the hearts of those on whom His cures were wrought. Possibly He had acted with the express view of teaching more than one eternal lesson by the incidents which followed.

At any rate, in this instance, His mode of action led to serious results. For the man had been well known in Jerusalem as one who had been a blind beggar all his life, and his appearance with the use of his eyesight caused a tumult of excitement. Scarcely could those who had known him best believe even his own testimony, that he was indeed the blind beggar with whom they had been so familiar. They were lost in amazement, and made him repeat again and again the story of his cure. But that story infused into their astonishment a fresh element of Pharisaic indignation ; for this cure also had been wrought on a Sabbath day. The Rabbis had forbidden any man to smear even one of his eyes with spittle on the Sabbath, except in cases of mortal danger. Jesus had not only smeared *both* the man's eyes, but had actually mingled the saliva with clay ! This, as an act of mercy, was in the deepest and most inward accordance with the very causes for which the Sabbath had been ordained, and the very lessons of which it was meant to be a perpetual witness. But the spirit of narrow literalism and slavish minuteness and quantitative obedience—the spirit that hoped to be saved by the algebraical sum of good and bad actions—had long degraded the Sabbath from the true idea of its institution into a pernicious super-

stitution. The Sabbath of Rabbinism, with all its petty servility, was in no respect the Sabbath of God's loving and holy law. It had degenerated into that which St. Paul calls it, a *πτωχικὸν σπόμενον*, or "beggarly element" (Gal. iv. 9).

And these Jews were so imbued with this utter littleness, that a unique miracle of mercy awoke in them less of astonishment and gratitude than of rage kindled by a neglect of their Sabbatical superstition. Accordingly, in all the zeal of letter-worshipping religionism, they led off the man to the Pharisees in council. Then followed the scene which St. John has recorded in a manner so inimitably graphic in his ninth chapter. First came the repeated inquiry, "how the thing had been done?" followed by the repeated assertion of some of them that Jesus could not be from God, because He had not observed the Sabbath; and the reply of others that to press the Sabbath-breaking was to admit the miracle, and to admit the miracle was to establish the fact that He who performed it could not be the criminal whom the others described. Then, being completely at a standstill, they asked the blind man *his* opinion of his deliverer; and he—not being involved in their vicious circle of reasoning—replied with fearless promptitude, "He is a Prophet."

By this time they saw the kind of nature with which they had to deal, and—anxious for any loophole by which they could deny or set aside the miracle—they sent for the man's parents. "Was this their son? If they asserted that he had been born blind, how was it that he now saw?" Perhaps they hoped to browbeat or to bribe these parents into a denial of their relationship, or an admission of imposture; but the parents also clung to the plain truth, while, with a certain Judaic servility and cunning, they refused to draw any inferences which would lay them open to unpleasant consequences. "This is certainly our son, and he was certainly born blind; as to the rest, we know nothing. Ask him. He is quite capable of answering for himself."

Then—one almost pities their sheer perplexity—they turned to the blind man again. He, as well as his parents, knew that the Jewish authorities had agreed to pronounce the *cherem*, or ban of exclusion from the synagogue on any one who should venture to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah; and the Pharisees probably hoped that he would be content to follow their advice, to give glory to God, *i.e.*, deny or ignore the miracle, and to accept their dictum that Jesus was a sinner.

But the man was made of sturdier stuff than his parents. He was not to be overawed by their authority, or knocked down by their assertions. He breathed quite freely in the halo-atmosphere of their superior sanctity. "*We know,*" the Pharisees had said, "that this man is a sinner." "Whether He is a sinner," the man replied, "*I do not know; one thing I do know,* that, being blind, now I see." Then they began again their weary and futile cross-examination. "What did He do to thee? *how* did He open thine eyes?" But the man had had enough of this. "I told you once, and ye did not attend. Why do ye wish to hear again? Is it possible that ye too wish to be His disciples?" Bold irony this—to ask these stately, ruffled, scrupulous Sanhedrists, whether he was really to regard them as anxious and sincere inquirers about the claims of the Nazarene Prophet! Clearly here was a man whose presumptuous honesty would neither be bullied into suppression nor corrupted into a lie. He was quite impracticable. So, since authority, threats, blandishments had all failed, they broke into abuse. "*Thou art his disciple; we are the disciples of Moses; of this man we know nothing.*" "Strange," he replied, "that *you* should know nothing of a man who yet has wrought a miracle such as not even Moses ever wrought; and we know that neither He nor any one else could have done it, unless he were from God." What! shades of Hillel and of Shammai! was a mere blind beggar, a natural ignorant heretic, altogether born in sins, to be teaching *them*! Unable to control any longer their transport of indignation, they flung him out of the hall, and out of the synagogue.

But Jesus did not neglect his first confessor. He, too, in all probability had, either at this or some previous time, been placed under the ban of lesser excommunication, or exclusion from the synagogue; for we scarcely ever again read of His re-entering any of those synagogues which, during the early years of His ministry, had been His favourite places of teaching and resort. He sought out and found the man, and asked him, "Dost *thou* believe on the Son of God?" "Why, who is He, Lord," answered the man, "that I should believe on Him?"

"Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He who talketh with thee."

"Lord, I believe," he answered, and he did Him reverence.

It must have been shortly after this time that our Lord pointed the contrast between the different effects of His teaching—they who

saw not, made to see ; and those who saw, made blind. The Pharisees, ever restlessly and discontentedly hovering about Him, and in their morbid egotism always on the look-out for some reflection on themselves, asked "if they too were blind." The answer of Jesus was, that in natural blindness there would have been no guilt, but to those who stumbled in the blindness of wilful error a claim to the possession of sight was a self-condemnation.

And when the leaders, the teachers, the guides were blind, how could the people see ?

The thought naturally led Him to the nature of true and false teachers, which He expanded and illustrated in the beautiful apologue—half parable, half allegory—of the True and the False Shepherds. He told them that He was the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep ; while the hireling shepherds, flying from danger, betrayed their flocks. He, too, was that door of the sheepfold, by which all His true predecessors alone had entered, while all the false—from the first thief who had climbed into God's fold—had broken in some other way. And then He told them that of His own free will He would lay down His life for the sheep, both of this and of His other flocks, and that of His own power He would take it again. But all these divine mysteries were more than they could understand ; and while some declared that they were the nonsense of one who had a devil and was mad, others could only plead that they were not like the words of one who had a devil, and that a devil could not have opened the eyes of the blind.

Thus, with but little fruit for them, save the bitter fruit of anger and hatred, ended the visit of Jesus to the Feast of Tabernacles. And since His life was now in danger, He withdrew once more from Jerusalem to Galilee, for one brief visit before He bade to His old home His last farewell.

CHAPTER XLII.

FAREWELL TO GALILEE.

IMMEDIATELY after the events just recorded, St. John narrates another incident which took place two months subsequently, at the winter Feast of Dedication. In accordance with the main purpose of his Gospel, which was to narrate that work of the Christ in Judæa, and especially in Jerusalem, which the Synoptists had omitted, he says nothing of an intermediate and final visit to Galilee, or of those last journeys to Jerusalem, respecting parts of which the other Evangelists supply us with so many details. And yet that Jesus must have returned to Galilee is clear, not only from the other Evangelists, but also from the nature of the case and from certain incidental facts in the narrative of St. John himself.

It is well known that the whole of one great section in St. Luke—from ix. 51 to xviii. 15—forms an episode in the Gospel narrative of which many incidents are narrated by this Evangelist alone, and in which the few identifications of time and place all point to one slow and solemn progress from Galilee to Jerusalem (ix. 51 ; xiii. 22 ; xvii. 11 ; x. 38). Now *after* the Feast of Dedication our Lord retired into Peræa, until He was summoned thence by the death of Lazarus (John x. 40, 42 ; xi. 1—46) ; after the resurrection of Lazarus, He fled to Ephraim (xi. 54) ; and He did not leave His retirement at Ephraim until He went to Bethany, six days before His final Pass-over (xii. 1).

This great journey, therefore, from Galilee to Jerusalem, so rich in occasions which called forth some of His most memorable utterances, must have been either a journey to the Feast of Tabernacles or to the Feast of Dedication. That it *could* not have been the former may be regarded as settled, not only on other grounds, but decisively because that was a *rapid* and a *secret* journey, this an eminently public and leisurely one.

Almost every inquirer seems to differ to a greater or less degree as to the exact sequence and chronology of the events which follow. Without entering into minute and tedious disquisitions where absolute certainty is impossible, I will narrate this period of our Lord's life in the order which, after repeated study of the Gospels, appears to me to be the most probable, and in the separate details of which I have

found myself again and again confirmed by the conclusions of other independent inquirers. And here I will only premise my conviction—

1. That the episode of St. Luke up to xviii. 30, mainly refers to a single journey, although unity of subject, or other causes, may have led the sacred writer to weave into his narrative some events or utterances which belong to an earlier or later epoch.

2. That the order of the facts narrated even by St. Luke alone is not, and does not in any way claim to be, strictly chronological; so that the place of any event in the narrative by no means necessarily indicates its true position in the order of time.

3. That this journey is identical with that which is partially recorded in Matt. xviii. 1—xx. 16; Mark x. 1—31.

4. That (as seems obvious from internal evidence) the events narrated in Matt. xx. 17—28; Mark x. 32—45; Luke xviii. 31—34, belong not to this journey, but to the *last* which Jesus ever took—the journey from *Ephraim* to Bethany and Jerusalem.

Assuming these conclusions to be justified—and I believe that they will commend themselves as at least probable to any who really study the data of the problem—we naturally look to see if there are any incidents which can only be referred to this last residence of Jesus in Galilee after the Feast of Tabernacles. The sojourn must have been a very brief one, and seems to have had no other object than that of preparing for the Mission of the Seventy, and inaugurating the final proclamation of Christ's kingdom throughout all that part of the Holy Land which had as yet been least familiar with His word and works. His instructions to the Seventy involved His last farewell to Galilee, and the delivery of those instructions synchronised, in all probability, with His actual departure. But there are two other incidents recorded in the 13th chapter, which probably belong to the same brief sojourn—namely, the news of a Galilæan massacre, and the warning which He received of Herod's designs against His life.

The home of Jesus during these few last days would naturally be at Capernaum, His own city; and while He was there organising a solemn departure to which there would be no return, there were some who came and announced to Him a recent instance of those numerous disturbances which marked the Procuratorship of Pontius Pilate. Of the particular event to which they alluded nothing further is known; and that a few turbulent zealots should have been cut down at Jerusalem by the Roman garrison was too common-place an event in these troublous times to excite more than a transient notice. There were

probably hundreds of such outbreaks of which Josephus has preserved no record. The inflammable fanaticism of the Jews at this epoch—the restless hopes which were constantly kindling them to fury against the Roman governor, and which made them the ready dupes of every false Messiah—had necessitated the construction of the Tower of Antonia, which flung its threatening shadow over the Temple itself. This tower communicated with the Temple by a flight of steps, so that the Roman legionaries could rush down at once, and suppress any of the disturbances which then, as now, endangered the security of Jerusalem at the recurrence of every religious feast. And of all the Jews, the Galilæans, being the most passionately turbulent and excitable, were the most likely to suffer in such collisions. Indeed the main fact which seems in this instance to have struck the narrators, was not so much the actual massacre as the horrible incident that the blood of these murdered rioters had been actually mingled with the red streams that flowed from the victims they had been offering in sacrifice. And those who brought the news to Christ did so, less with any desire to complain of the sanguinary boldness of the Roman governor, than with a curiosity about the supposed crimes which must have brought upon these slaughtered worshippers so hideous and tragical a fate.

The Book of Job stood in Hebrew literature as an eternal witness against these sweeping deductions of a confident uncharity; but the spirit of Eliphaz, and Zophar, and Bildad still survived, and our Lord on every occasion seized the opportunity of checking and reproofing it. “Do ye imagine,” He said, “that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” And then He reminded them of another recent instance of sudden death, in which “the Tower in Siloam” had fallen, and crushed eighteen people who happened to be under it; and He told them that so far from these poor sufferers having been specially criminal, they should all, if they did not repent, be involved in a similar destruction. No doubt, the main lesson which Christ desired to teach, was that every circumstance of life, and every violence of man, was not the result either of idle accident or direct retribution, but formed part of one great scheme of Providence in which man is permitted to recognise the one prevailing law—viz., that the so-called accidents of life happen alike to all, but that all should in due time receive according to their works. But His words had also a more literal fulfilment; and,

doubtless, there may have been some among His hearers who lived to call them to mind when the Jewish race was being miserably decimated by the sword of Titus, and the last defenders of Jerusalem, after deluging its streets with blood, fell crushed among the flaming ruins of the Temple, which not even their lives could save.

The words were very stern : but Christ did not speak to them in the language of warning only ; He held out to them a gracious hope. Once, and again, and yet again, the fig-tree might be found a barren cumberer of the ground, but there was ONE to intercede for it still ; and even yet—though now the axe was uplifted, nay, though it was at its backmost poise—even yet, if at the last the tree, so carefully tended, should bring forth fruit, that axe should be stayed, and its threatened stroke should not rush through the parted air.

Short as His stay at His old home was meant to be, His enemies would gladly have shortened it still further. They were afraid of, they were weary of, the Lord of Life. Yet they did not dare openly to confess their sentiments. The Pharisees came to Him in sham solicitude for His safety, and said, “Get thee out, and depart hence ; for Herod is wanting to kill thee.”

Had Jesus yielded to fear—had He hastened His departure in consequence of a danger, which even if it had any existence, except in their own imaginations, had at any rate no immediate urgency—doubtless, they would have enjoyed a secret triumph at His expense. But His answer was supremely calm : “Go,” He said, “and tell this fox, Behold, I am casting out devils, and working cures to-day and to-morrow, and on the third my work is done.” And then He adds, with the perfect confidence of security mingled with the bitter irony of sorrow, “But I must go on my course to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following ; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” And, perhaps, at this sorrowful crisis His oppressed feelings may have found vent in some pathetic cry over the fallen sinful city, so red with the blood of her murdered messengers, like that which He also uttered when He wept over it on the summit of Olivet.

The little plot of these Pharisees had entirely failed. Whether Herod had really entertained any vague intention of seeing Jesus and putting Him to death as he had put to death His kinsman John, or whether the whole rumour was a pure invention, Jesus regarded it with consummate indifference. Whatever Herod might be designing, His own intention was to finish his brief stay in Galilee in His own

due time, and not before. A day or two yet remained to Him in which He would continue to perform His works of mercy on all who sought Him ; after that brief interval the time would have come when He should be received up, and He would turn His back for the last time on the home of His youth, and “set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.” Till then—so they must tell their crafty patron, whom they themselves resembled—He was under an inviolable protection, into which neither their malice nor his cruelty could intrude.

And he deservedly bestowed on Herod Antipas the sole word of pure unmitigated contempt which is ever recorded to have passed His lips. Words of burning anger He sometimes spoke—words of scathing indignation—words of searching irony—words of playful humour ; but some are startled to find Him using words of sheer contempt. Yet why not ? there can be no noble soul which is wholly destitute of scorn. The “scorn of scorn” must exist side by side with the “love of love.” Like anger, like the power of moral indignation, scorn has its due place as a righteous function in the economy of human emotions, and as long as there are things of which we rightly judge as contemptible, so long must contempt remain. And if ever there was a man who richly deserved contempt, it was the paltry, perjured princeling—false to his religion, false to his nation, false to his friends, false to his brethren, false to his wife—to whom Jesus gave the name of “this fox.” The inhuman vices which the Cæsars displayed on the vast theatre of their absolutism—the lust, the cruelty, the autocratic insolence, the ruinous extravagance—all these were seen in pale reflex in these little Neros and Caligulas of the provinces—these local tyrants, half Idumæan, half Samaritan, who aped the worst degradations of the Imperialism to which they owed their very existence. Judæa might well groan under the petty despotism of these hybrid Herodians—jackals who fawned about the feet of the Cæsarean lions. Respect for “the powers that be” can hardly, as has well been said, involve respect for all the impotences and imbecilities.

Whether “this fox” ever heard the manner in which our Lord had characterised him and his dominion we do not know ; in lifetime they never met, until on the morning of the crucifixion, Antipas vented upon Jesus his empty insults. But now Jesus calmly concluded His last task in Galilee. He summoned His followers together, and out of them chose seventy to prepare His way. Their number was probably symbolic, and the mission of so large a number to go

before Him two and two, and prepare for His arrival in every place which He intended to visit, implies for this last journey of proclamation an immense publicity. The instructions which He gave them closely resemble those which he had issued to the Twelve. They differ from them only in being more brief, because they refer to a more transitory office; in omitting the now needless restriction about not visiting the Gentiles and Samaritans; and perhaps in bestowing upon them less ample miraculous power. They also breathe a sadder tone, inspired by the experience of incessant rejection.

And now the time has come for Him to set forth, and it must be in sorrow. He left, indeed, some faithful hearts behind Him; but how few! Galilee had rejected Him, as Judæa had rejected Him. On one side of the lake which He loved, a whole populace in unanimous deputation had besought Him to depart out of their coasts; on the other, they had vainly tried to vex His last days among them by a miserable conspiracy to frighten Him into flight. At Nazareth, the sweet mountain village of His childish days—at Nazareth, with all its happy memories of His boyhood and His mother's home—they had treated Him with such violence and outrage, that He could not visit it again. And even at Chorazin, and Capernaum, and Bethsaida—on those Eden-shores of the silver lake—in the green delicious plain, whose every field He had traversed with His Apostles, performing deeds of mercy, and uttering words of love—even there they loved the whited sepulchres of a Pharisaic sanctity, and the shallow traditions of a Levitical ceremonial better than the light and the life, which had been offered them by the Son of God. They were feeding on ashes; a deceived heart had turned them aside. On many a great city of antiquity, on Nineveh and Babylon, on Tyre and Sidon, on Sodom and Gomorrah, had fallen the wrath of God; yet even Nineveh and Babylon would have humbled their gorgeous idolatries, even Tyre and Sidon have turned from their greedy vanities, yea, even Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented from their filthy lusts, had they seen the mighty works which had been done in these little cities and villages of the Galilæan sea. And, therefore, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" and unto thee, Capernaum, "His own city," a yet deeper woe!

With such thoughts in His heart, and such words on His lips, He started forth from the scene of His rejected ministry; and on all this land, and most of all on that region of it, the woe has fallen. Exquisite still in its loveliness, it is now desolate and dangerous. The birds still

sing in countless myriads; the water-fowl still play on the crystal mere; the brooks flow into it from the neighbouring hill, "filling their bosoms with pearl, and scattering their path with emeralds;" the aromatic herbs are still fragrant when the foot crushes them, and the tall oleanders fill the air with their delicate perfume as of old; but the vineyards and fruit-gardens have disappeared; the fleets and fishing-boats cease to traverse the lake; the hum of men is silent; the stream of prosperous commerce has ceased to flow. The very names and sites of the towns and cities are forgotten; and where they once shone bright and populous, flinging their shadows across the sunlit waters, there are now grey mounds where even the ruins are too ruinous to be distinguishable. One solitary palm-tree by one squalid street of huts, degraded and frightful beyond any, even in Palestine, still marks the site, and recalls the name of the one little town where lived that sinful penitent woman who once washed Christ's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

And the very generation which rejected Him was doomed to recall in bitter and fruitless agony these peaceful happy days of the Son of Man. Thirty years had barely elapsed when the storm of Roman invasion burst furiously over that smiling land. He who will, may read in the Jewish War of Josephus the hideous details of the slaughter which decimated the cities of Galilee, and wrung from the historian the repeated confession that "it was certainly God who brought the Romans to punish the Galilæans," and exposed the people of city after city "to be destroyed by their bloody enemies." Immediately after the celebrated passage in which he describes the lake and plain of Gennesareth as "the ambition of nature," follows a description of that terrible sea-fight on these bright waters, in which the number of the slain, including those killed in the city, was six thousand five hundred. Hundreds were stabbed by the Romans or run through with poles; others tried to save their lives by diving, but if once they raised their heads were slain by darts; or if they swam to the Roman vessels had their heads or hands lopped off; while others were chased to the land and there massacred. "One might then," the historian continues, "see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped. *And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight there was, on the following days over that country; for, as for the shores, they were full of shipwrecks and of dead bodies all swelled; and as the dead bodies were inflamed by the sun, and putrefied, they corrupted the air, insomuch that the misery was not only an object of commiseration to the Jews, but*

even to those that hated them, and had been the authors of that misery." Of those that died amid this butchery: of those whom Vespasian immediately afterwards abandoned to brutal and treacherous massacre between Taricheæ and Tiberias; of those twelve hundred "old and useless" whom he afterwards caused to be slain in the stadium; of the six thousand whom he sent to aid Nero in his attempt to dig through the isthmus of Athos; of the thirty thousand four hundred whom he sold as slaves—may there not have been many who in their agony and exile, in their hour of death and day of judgment, recalled Him whom they had repudiated, and remembered that the sequel of all those gracious words which had proceeded out of His lips had been the "woe" which their obduracy called forth.

There could not but be sorrow in such a parting from such a scene. And yet the divine spirit of Jesus could not long be a prey to consuming sadness. Out of the tenebrous influences cast about it from the incessant opposition of unbelief and sin, it was ever struggling into the purity and peace of heaven, from the things seen and temporal to the things unseen and eternal, from the shadows of human degradation into the sunlight of God's peace. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit," and what a joy; what a boundless, absorbing exultation, as He thought no longer of judgment but of compassion; as He turned not with faint trust but perfect knowledge to "the larger hope;" as He remembered how *that* which was hidden from the wise and prudent had been revealed unto babes; as He dwelt upon the thought that He was sent not to the rich and learned few, but to the ignorant and suffering many; as He told His disciples, that into *His* yea, into His own loving hands, had His Father committed all power, and that in Him they would see and know the spirit of His Father, and thereby might see and know that revelation for which many kings and prophets had sighed in vain. And then, that even in the hour of denunciation not one of them might doubt His own or His Father's love, He uttered, in that same hour of rapt and exalted ecstasy, those tenderest words ever uttered in human language as God's message and invitation to His children in the suffering family of man, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

So, over a temporary sorrow there triumphed an infinite and eternal joy. There are some who have dwelt too exclusively on Jesus as the Man of Sorrows; have thought of His life as of one unmitigated

suffering, one almost unbroken gloom. But in the Bible—though there alone—we find the perfect compatibility, nay, the close union of joy with sorrow : and myriads of Christians who have been “troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed,” can understand how the Man of Sorrows, even in the days of His manhood, may have lived a life happier, in the true sense of happiness — happier, because purer, more sinless, more faithful, more absorbed in the joy of obedience to His Heavenly Father—than has been ever granted to the sons of men. The deep pure stream flows on its way rejoicing, even though the forests overshadow it, and no transient sunshine flickers on its waves.

And if, indeed, true joy—the highest joy—be “severe, and chaste and solitary, and incompatible,” then how constant, how inexpressible, what a joy of God, must have been the joy of the Man Christ Jesus, who came to give to all who love Him, henceforth and for ever, a joy which no man taketh from them—a joy which the world can neither give nor take away !

CHAPTER XLIII.

INCIDENTS OF THE JOURNEY.

WE are not told the exact route taken by Jesus as He left Gennesareth ; but as He probably avoided Nazareth, with its deeply happy and deeply painful memories, He may have crossed the bridge at the southern extremity of the Lake, and so got round into the plain of Esdraelon either by the valley of Bethshean, or over Mount Tabor and round Little Hermon, passing Endor and Nain and Shunem on His way.

Crossing the plain, and passing Taanach and Megiddo, He would reach the range of hills which form the northern limit of Samaria ; and at the foot of their first ascent lies the little town of En-gannim, or the “Fountain of Gardens.” This would be the first Samaritan village at which he would arrive, and hither, apparently, He had sent two messengers “to make ready for Him.” Although the incident is