

which He had striven to bring home to their consciences. And this was but a superficial outline of all the heart-searching power with which His words had been to them like a sword of the Spirit, piercing even to the dividing of the joints and marrow. But to bad men nothing is so maddening as the exhibition of their own self-deception. So great was the hardly-concealed fury of the Jewish hierarchy, that they would gladly have seized Him that very hour. Fear restrained them, and He was suffered to retire unmolested to His quiet resting-place. But, either that night or early on the following morning, His enemies held another council—at this time they seem to have held them almost daily—to see if they could not make one more combined, systematic, overwhelming effort “to entangle Him in His talk,” to convict Him of ignorance or of error, to shake His credit with the multitude, or embroil Him in dangerous relations towards the civil authority. We shall see in the following chapter the result of their machinations.

LESSON TWENTY-SIX

CHAPTER LI.

THE DAY OF TEMPTATIONS—THE LAST AND GREATEST DAY OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS.

ON the following morning Jesus rose with His disciples to enter for the last time the Temple Courts. On their way they passed the solitary fig-tree, no longer gay with its false leafy garniture, but shrivelled, from the root upwards, in every bough. The quick eye of Peter was the first to notice it, and he exclaimed, “Master, behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away.” The disciples stopped to look at it, and to express their astonishment at the rapidity with which the denunciation had been fulfilled. What struck them most was the *power* of Jesus; the deeper meanings of His symbolic act they seem for the time to have missed; and, leaving these lessons to dawn upon them gradually, Jesus addressed the mood of their minds at the moment, and told them that if they would but have faith in God—faith which should enable them to offer up their prayers with perfect and unwavering confidence—they should not

only be able to perform such a wonder as that done to the fig-tree, but even "if they bade this mountain"—and as He spoke He may have pointed either to Olivet or to Moriah—"to be removed and cast into the sea, it should obey them." But, since in this one instance the power had been put forth to destroy, He added a very important warning. They were not to suppose that this emblematic act gave them any licence to wield the sacred powers which faith and prayer would bestow on them, for purposes of anger or vengeance; nay, *no* power was possible to the heart that knew not how to forgive, and the *unforgiving* heart could never be forgiven. The sword, and the famine, and the pestilence were to be no instruments for *them* to wield, nor were they even to dream of evoking against their enemies the fire of heaven, or the "icy wind of death." The secret of successful prayer was faith; the road to faith in God lay through pardon of transgression; pardon was possible to them alone who were ready to pardon others.

He was scarcely seated in the Temple when the result of the machinations of His enemies on the previous evening showed itself in a new kind of strategy, involving one of the most perilous and deeply laid of all the schemes to entrap and ruin Him. The deadly nature of the plot appeared in the fact that, to carry it out, the Pharisees were united in ill-omened conjunction with the Herodians; so that two parties, usually ranked against each other in strong opposition, were now reconciled in a conspiracy for the ruin of their common enemy. Devotees and sycophants—hierarchical scrupulosity and political indifferentism—the school of theocratic zeal and the school of crafty expediency—were thus united to dismay and perplex Him. The Herodians occur but seldom in the Gospel narrative. Their very designation—a Latinised adjective applied to the Greek-speaking courtiers of an Edomite prince who, by Roman intervention, had become a Judæan king—showed at once their hybrid origin. Their existence had mainly a *political* significance, and they stood outside the current of religious life, except so far as their Hellenising tendencies and worldly interests led them to show an ostentatious disregard for the Mosaic law. They were, in fact, mere provincial courtiers; men who basked in the sunshine of a petty tyranny which, for their own personal ends, they were anxious to uphold. To strengthen the family of Herod by keeping it on good terms with Roman imperialism, and to effect this good understanding by repressing every distinctively Jewish aspiration—this was their highest aim. And in

order to do this they Græcised their Semitic names, adopted ethnic habits, frequented amphitheatres, familiarly accepted the symbols of heathen supremacy, even went so far as to obliterate, by such artificial means as they could, the distinctive and covenant symbol of Hebrew nationality. That the Pharisees should tolerate even the most temporary partnership with such men as these, whose very existence was an outrage on their most cherished prejudices, enables us to gauge more accurately the extreme virulence of hatred with which Jesus had inspired them. And that hatred was destined to become deadlier still. It was already at red-heat; the words and deeds of this day were to raise it to its whitest intensity of wrath.

The Herodians might come before Jesus without raising a suspicion of sinister motives; but the Pharisees, astutely anxious to put Him off his guard, did not come to Him in person. They sent some of their younger scholars, who (already adepts in hypocrisy) were to approach Him as though in all the guileless simplicity of an inquiring spirit. They evidently designed to raise the impression that a dispute had occurred between them and the Herodians, and that they desired to settle it by referring the decision of the question at issue to the final and higher authority of the Great Prophet. They came to Him circumspectly, deferentially, courteously. "Rabbi," they said to Him with flattering earnestness, "we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men." It was as though they would entreat Him, without fear or favour, confidentially to give them His private opinion; and as though they really wanted His opinion for their own guidance in a moral question of practical importance, and were quite sure that He alone could resolve their distressing uncertainty. But why all this sly undulatory approach and serpentine ensalivation? The forked tongue and the envenomed fang appeared in a moment. "Tell us, *therefore*, since you are so wise, so true, so courageous—"tell us, therefore, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" This capitation tax, which *we* all so much detest, but the legality of which these Herodians support, ought we, or ought we not, to pay it? Which of us is in the right?—we who loathe and resent, or the Herodians who delight in it?

He *must*, they thought, answer "Yes" or "No;" there is no possible escape from a plain question so cautiously, sincerely, and respectfully put. Perhaps He will answer, "*Yes, it is lawful.*" If so, all apprehension of Him on the part of the Herodians will be removed,

for then He will not be likely to endanger them or their views. For although there is something which looks dangerous in this common enthusiasm for Him, yet if one, whom they take to be the Messiah, should openly adhere to a heathen tyranny, and sanction its most galling imposition, such a decision will at once explode and evaporate any regard which the people may feel for Him. If, on the other hand, as is all but certain, He should adopt the views of His countryman, Judas the Gaulonite, and answer, "*No, it is not lawful,*" then, in that case too, we are equally rid of Him; for then He is in open rebellion against the Roman power, and these new Herodian friends of ours can at once hand Him over to the jurisdiction of the Procurator. Pontius Pilatus will deal very roughly with His pretensions, and will, if need be, without the slightest hesitation, mingle His blood, as he has done the blood of other Galilæans, with the blood of the sacrifices.

They must have awaited the answer with breathless interest; but even if they succeeded in concealing the hate which gleamed in their eyes, Jesus at once saw the sting and heard the hiss of the Pharisaic serpent. They had fawned on Him with their "Rabbi," and "true," and "impartial," and "fearless;" He blights them with the flash of one indignant word, "*Hypocrites!*" That word must have undeceived their hopes, and crumbled their craftiness into dust. "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Bring me the tribute-money." They would not be likely to carry with them the hated Roman coinage with its heathen symbols, though they might have been at once able to produce from their girdles the temple shekel. But they would only have to step outside the Court of the Gentiles, and borrow from the money-changers' tables a current Roman coin. While the people stood round in wondering silence they brought Him a denarius, and put it in His hand. On one side were stamped the haughty, beautiful features of the Emperor Tiberius, with all the wicked scorn upon the lip; on the obverse his title of *Pontifex Maximus!* It was probably due to mere accident that the face of the cruel, dissolute tyrant was on this particular coin, for the Romans, with that half-contemptuous concession to national superstitions which characterised their rule, had allowed a coinage to be minted for the particular use of the Jews, which recorded the name without bearing the likeness of the reigning emperor. "Whose image and superscription is this?" He asked. They say unto Him, "Cæsar's." *There*, then, was the simplest possible solution of their cunning question. "*Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the*

things that are Cæsar's." That alone might have been enough, for it implied that their national acceptance of this coinage answered their question, and revealed its emptiness. The very word which He used conveyed the lesson. They had asked, "Is it lawful to give" (*δοῦναι*)? He corrects them, and says, "Render"—"Give back" (*ἀπόδοτε*). It was not a voluntary gift, but a legal due; not a cheerful offering but a political necessity. It was perfectly understood among the Jews, and was laid down in the distinctest language by their greatest Rabbis in later days, that to accept the coinage of any king was to acknowledge his supremacy. By accepting the denarius, therefore, as a current coin, they were openly declaring that Cæsar was their sovereign, and they—the very best of them—had settled the question that it *was* lawful to pay the poll-tax, by habitually doing so. It was their duty, then, to obey the power which they had deliberately chosen, and the tax, under these circumstances, only represented an equivalent for the advantages which they received. But Jesus could not leave them with this lesson only. He added the far deeper and weightier words—"and to God the things that are God's." To Cæsar you owe the coin which you have admitted as the symbol of his authority, and which bears his image and superscription; to God you owe yourselves. Nothing can more fully reveal the depth of hypocrisy in these Jewish questioners than the fact that, in spite of this Divine answer, and in spite of their own secret and cherished convictions, they yet make it a ground of clamorous accusation against Jesus, that He had "*forbidden to give tribute unto Cæsar!*" (Luke xxiii. 2.)

Amazed and humiliated at the sudden and total frustration of a plan which seemed irresistible—compelled, in spite of themselves, to admire the guileless wisdom which had in an instant broken loose from the meshes of their sophistical malice—they sullenly retired. There was nothing which even *they* could take hold of in His words. But now, undeterred by this striking failure, the Sadducees thought that they might have better success. There was something more supercilious and offhand in the question which they proposed, and they came in a spirit of less burning hatred, but of more sneering scorn. Hitherto these cold Epicureans had, for the most part, despised and ignored the Prophet of Nazareth. Supported as a sect by the adhesion of some of the highest priests, as well as by some of the wealthiest citizens—on better terms than the Pharisees both with the Herodian and the Roman power—they were, up to this time, less

terribly in earnest, and proposed to themselves no more important aim than to vex Jesus, by reducing Him into a confession of difficulty. So they came with an old stale piece of casuistry, conceived in the same spirit of self-complacent ignorance as are many of the objections urged by modern Sadducees against the resurrection of the body, but still sufficiently puzzling to furnish them with an argument in favour of their disbeliefs, and with a "difficulty" to throw in the way of their opponents. Addressing Jesus with mock respect, they called His attention to the Mosaic institution of levirate marriages, and then stated, as though it had actually occurred, a coarse imaginary case, in which, on the death without issue of an eldest brother, the widow had been espoused in succession by the six younger brethren, all of whom had died one after another, leaving the widow still surviving. "Whose wife in the resurrection, when people shall rise," they scoffingly ask, "shall this sevenfold widow be?" The Pharisees, if we may judge from Talmudical writings, had already settled the question in a very obvious way, and quite to their own satisfaction, by saying that she should in the resurrection be the wife of the first husband. And even if Jesus had given such a poor answer as this, it is difficult to see—since the answer had been sanctioned by men most highly esteemed for their wisdom—how the Sadducees could have shaken the force of the reply, or what they would have gained by having put their inane and materialistic question. But Jesus was content with no such answer, though even Hillel and Shammai might have been. Even when the idioms and figures of His language constantly resembled that of previous or contemporary teachers of His nation, His spirit and precepts differ from theirs *toto caelo*. He might, had He been like any other merely human teacher, have treated the question with that contemptuous scorn which it deserved; but the spirit of scorn is alien from the spirit of the dove, and with no contempt He gave to their conceited and captious dilemma a most profound reply. Though the question came upon Him most unexpectedly, His answer was everlastingly memorable. It opened the gates of Paradise so widely that men might see therein more than they had ever seen before, and it furnished against one of the commonest forms of disbelief an argument that neither Rabbi nor Prophet had conceived. He did not answer these Sadducees with the same concentrated sternness which marked His reply to the Pharisees and Herodians, because their purpose betrayed rather an insipid frivolity than a deeply-seated malice; but He told them that they erred from igno-

rance, partly of the Scriptures, and partly of the power of God. Had they not been ignorant of the power of God, they would not have imagined that the life of the children of the resurrection was a mere reflex and repetition of the life of the children of this world. In that heaven beyond the grave, though love remains, yet all the mere earthlinesses of human relationship are superseded and transfigured. "They that shall be accounted worthy to *obtain* that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; but are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Then as to their ignorance of Scripture, He asked if they had never read in that section of the Book of Exodus which was called "the Bush," how God had described Himself to their great lawgiver as the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. How unworthy would such a title have been, had Abraham and Isaac and Jacob then been but grey handfuls of crumbling dust, or dead bones, which lay mouldering in the Hittite's cave! "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err." Would it have been possible that He should deign to call Himself the God of dust and ashes? How new, how luminous, how profound a principle of Scriptural interpretation was this! The Sadducees had probably supposed that the words simply meant, "I am the God in whom Abraham and Isaac and Jacob trusted;" yet how shallow a designation would that have been, and how little adapted to inspire the faith and courage requisite for an heroic enterprise! "I am the God in whom Abraham and Isaac and Jacob trusted;" and to what, if there were no resurrection, had their trust come? To death, and nothingness, and an everlasting silence, and "a land of darkness, as darkness itself," after a life so full of trials that the last of these patriarchs had described it as a pilgrimage of few and evil years! But God meant more than this. He meant—and so the Son of God interpreted it—that He who helps them who trust Him here, will be their help and stay for ever and for ever, nor shall the future world become for them "a land where all things are forgotten."

CHAPTER LII.

THE GREAT DENUNCIATION.

ALL who heard them—even the supercilious Sadducees—must have been solemnised by these high answers. The listening multitude were both astonished and delighted; even some of the Scribes, pleased by the spiritual refutation of a scepticism which their reasonings had been unable to remove, could not refrain from the grateful acknowledgment, “Master, thou hast well said.” The more than human wisdom and insight of these replies created, even among His enemies, a momentary diversion in His favour. But once more the insatiable spirit of casuistry and dissension awoke, and this time a Scribe, a student of the *Torah*, thought that *he* too would try to fathom the extent of Christ’s learning and wisdom. He asked a question which instantly betrayed a false and unspiritual point of view, “Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

The Rabbinical schools, in their meddling, carnal, superficial spirit of word-weaving and letter-worship, had spun large accumulations of worthless subtlety all over the Mosaic system. Among other things they had wasted their idleness in fantastic attempts to count, and classify, and weigh, and measure all the separate commandments of the ceremonial and moral law. They had come to the sapient conclusion that there were 248 affirmative precepts, being as many as the members in the human body, and 365 negative precepts, being as many as the arteries and veins, or the days of the year: the total being 613, which was also the number of letters in the Decalogue. They arrived at the same result from the fact that the Jews were commanded (Numb. xv. 38) to wear fringes (*tsîtsith*) on the corners of their *tallîth*, bound with a thread of blue; and as each fringe had eight threads and five knots, and the letters of the word *tsîtsith* make 600, the total number of commandments was, as before, 613. Now surely, out of such a large number of precepts and prohibitions, *all* could not be of quite the same value; some were “light,” and some were “heavy.” But which? and what was the greatest commandment of all? According to some Rabbis, the most important of all is that about the *tephillîn* and the *tsîtsith*, the phylacteries and fringes; and “he who diligently observes it is regarded in the same light as if he had kept the whole Law.”

Some thought the omission of ablutions as bad as homicide ; some that the precepts of the Mishna were all "heavy ;" those of the Law were some heavy and some light. Others considered the *third* to be the greatest commandment. None of them had realised the great principle, that the wilful violation of one commandment is the transgression of all (James ii. 10), because the object of the entire Law is the spirit of *obedience to God*. On the question proposed by the lawyer the Shammaites and Hillelites were in disaccord, and, as usual, both schools were wrong : the Shammaites, in thinking that mere trivial external observances were valuable, apart from the spirit in which they were performed, and the principle which they exemplified ; the Hillelites, in thinking that *any* positive command could in itself be unimportant, and in not seeing that great principles are essential to the due performance of even the slightest duties.

Still the best and most enlightened of the Rabbis had already rightly seen that the greatest of all commands, because it was the *source* of all the others, was that which enjoined the love of the One True God. Jesus had already had occasion to express His approval of this judgment, and He now repeats it. Pointing to the Scribes' phylacteries, in which one of the four divisions contained the "*Shema*" (Deut. vi. 4)—recited twice a day by every pious Israelite—He told them that *that* was the greatest of all commandments, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord ;" and that the second was like to it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Love to God issuing in love to man—love to man, our brother, resulting from love to our Father, God—on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

The question, in the sense in which the Scribe had put it, was one of the mere *μάχαι νομικαί*, one of those "strivings about the Law," which, as they were handled by the schools, were "unprofitable and vain." But he could not fail to see that Jesus had not treated it in the idle disputatious spirit of jangling logomachy to which he was accustomed, and had not in his answer sanctioned any of the common errors and heresies of exalting the ceremonial above the moral, or the Tradition over the *Torah*, or the decisions of *Sopherim* above the utterances of Prophets. Still less had he fallen into the fatal error of the Rabbis, by making obedience in one particular atone for transgression in another. The commandments which He had mentioned as the greatest were not special but general—not selected out of many, but inclusive of all. The Scribe had the sense to observe, and the candour

to acknowledge that the answer of Jesus was wise and noble. "Well, Master," he exclaimed, "thou hast said the truth;" and then he showed that he had read the Scriptures to some advantage by summarising some of those grand free utterances of the Prophets which prove that love to God and love to man is better than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. Jesus approved of His sincerity, and said to him in words which involved both gracious encouragement and serious warning, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven." It was, therefore, at once easier for him to enter, and more perilous to turn aside. When he had entered he would see that the very spirit of his question was an erroneous and faulty one, and that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all."

No other attempt was ever made to catch or entangle Jesus by the words of His lips. The Sanhedrin had now experienced, by the defeat of their cunning stratagems, and the humiliation of their vaunted wisdom, that one ray of light from the sunlit hills on which His spirit sat, was enough to dissipate, and to pierce through and through, the fogs of wordy contention and empty repetition in which they lived and moved and had their being. But it was well for them to be convinced how easily, had He desired it, He could have employed against them with overwhelming force the very engines which, with results so futile and so disastrous, they had put in play against Him. He therefore put to them one simple question, based on their own principles of interpretation, and drawn from a Psalm (the 110th), which they regarded as distinctly Messianic. In that Psalm occurs the expression, "The Lord (*Jehovah*) said unto my Lord (*Adonai*), Sit thou on my right hand." How then could the Messiah be David's son? Could Abraham have called Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, or any of his own descendants near or remote, his *Lord*? If not, how came David to do so? There could be but one answer—because that Son would be divine, not human—David's son by human birth, but David's Lord by divine subsistence. But they could not find this simple explanation, nor, indeed, any other; they could not find it, because Jesus was their Messiah, and they had rejected Him. They chose to ignore the fact that He was, in the flesh, the son of David; and when, as their Messiah, He had called Himself the Son of God, they had raised their hands in pious horror, and had taken up stones to stone Him. So here again—since they had rejected the clue of faith which would have led them to the true explanation—their wisdom was utterly at fault, and though they claimed so haughtily to be leaders of the

people, yet, even on a topic so ordinary and so important as their Messianic hopes, they were convicted, for the second time on a single day, of being “blind leaders of the blind.”

And they loved their blindness; they would not acknowledge their ignorance; they did not repent them of their faults; the bitter venom of their hatred to Him was not driven forth by His forbearance; the dense midnight of their perversity was not dispelled by His wisdom. Their purpose to destroy Him was fixed, obstinate, irreversible; and if one plot failed, they were but driven with more stubborn sullenness into another. And, therefore, since Love had played her part in vain, “Justice leaped upon the stage;” since the Light of the World shone for them with no illumination, the lightning flash should at last warn them of their danger. There could now be no hope of their becoming reconciled to Him; they were but being stereotyped in unrepentant malice against Him. Turning, therefore, to His disciples, but in the audience of all the people, He rolled over their guilty heads, with crash on crash of moral anger, the thunder of his utter condemnation. So far as they represented a legitimate external authority He bade His hearers to respect them, but He warned them *not* to imitate their falsity, their oppression, their ostentation, their love of prominence, their fondness for titles, their insinuating avarice, their self-exalting pride. He bade them beware of the broadened phylacteries and exaggerated tassels—of the long robes that covered the murderous hearts, and the long prayers that diverted attention from the covetous designs. And then, solemnly and terribly, He uttered His eightfold “*Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,*” scathing them in utterance after utterance with a flame which at once revealed and scorched. Woe unto them, for the ignorant erudition which closed the gates of heaven, and the injurious jealousy which would suffer no others to enter in! Woe unto them for their oppressive hypocrisy and greedy cant! Woe for the proselyting fanaticism which did but produce a more perilous corruption! Woe for the blind hair-splitting folly which so confused the sanctity of oaths as to tempt their followers into gross profanity! Woe for the petty paltry sham-scrupulosity which paid tithes of potherbs, and thought nothing of justice, mercy, and faith—which strained out animalculæ from the goblet, and swallowed camels into the heart! Woe for the external cleanliness of cup and platter contrasted with the gluttony and drunkenness to which they ministered! Woe to the tombs that simulated the sanctity of temples—to the glistening outward plaster of hypocrisy which did but render

more ghastly by contrast the reeking pollutions of the sepulchre within! Woe for the mock repentance which condemned their fathers for the murder of the prophets, and yet reflected the murderous spirit of those fathers—nay, filled up and exceeded the measure of their guilt by a yet deadlier and more dreadful sacrifice! Aye, on that generation would come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the porch and the altar. The purple cloud of retribution had long been gathering its elements of fury: upon their heads should it burst in flame.

And at that point the voice which had rung with just and noble indignation broke with the tenderest pity—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate! For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites*." Some have ventured to accuse these words of injustice, of bitterness—to attribute them to a burst of undignified disappointment and unreasonable wrath. Yet is sin never to be rebuked? is hypocrisy never to be unmasked? is moral indignation no necessary emotion of noble souls? And does not Jewish literature itself most amply support the charge brought against the Pharisees by Jesus? "Fear not *true* Pharisees, but greatly fear *painted* Pharisees," said Alexander Jannæus to his wife on his death-bed. "The supreme tribunal," says R. Nachman, "will duly punish hypocrites who wrap their *tallîths* around them to appear, which they are not, true Pharisees." Nay, the Talmud itself, with unwonted keenness and severity of sarcasm, has pictured to us the seven classes of Pharisees, out of which *six* are characterised by a mixture of haughtiness and imposture. There is the "Shechemite" Pharisee, who obeys the law from self-interest (cf. Gen. xxxiv. 19); the *Tumbling* Pharisee (*nikfi*), who is so humble that he is always stumbling because he will not lift his feet from the ground; the *Bleeding* Pharisee (*kinai*), who is always hurting himself against walls, because he is so modest as to be unable to walk about with his eyes open lest he should see a woman; the *Mortar* Pharisee (*medorkia*), who covers his eyes as with a mortar, for the same reason; the *Tell-me-another-duty-and-I-will-do-it* Pharisee—several of whom occur in our Lord's

ministry; and the *Timid* Pharisee, who is actuated by motives of fear alone. The seventh class only is the class of "Pharisees from love," who obey God because they love Him from the heart.

"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate?" And has not that denunciation been fearfully fulfilled? Who does not catch an echo of it in the language of Tacitus—"Expassee repente delubri fores, et audita major humanâ vox *excedere Deos.*" Speaking of the murder of the younger Hanan, and other eminent nobles and hierarchs, Josephus says, "I cannot but think that *it was because God had doomed this city to destruction as a polluted city, and was resolved to purge His sanctuary by fire, that He cut off these their great defenders and well-wishers; while those that a little before had worn the sacred garments and presided over the public worship, and had been esteemed venerable by those that dwelt in the whole habitable earth, were cast out naked, and seen to be the food of dogs and wild beasts.*" Never was a narrative more full of horrors, frenzies, unspeakable degradations, and overwhelming miseries than is the history of the siege of Jerusalem. Never was any prophecy more closely, more terribly, more overwhelmingly fulfilled than this of Christ. The men going about in the disguise of women with swords concealed under their gay robes; the rival outrages and infamies of John and Simon; the priests struck by darts from the upper courts of the Temple, and falling slain beside their own sacrifices; the blood of all sorts of dead carcasses—priests, strangers, profane—standing in lakes in the holy courts;" the corpses themselves lying in piles and mounds on the very altar slopes; the fires feeding luxuriously on cedar-work overlaid with gold; friend and foe trampled to death on the gleaming mosaics in promiscuous carnage; priests, swollen with hunger, leaping madly into the devouring flames, till at last those flames had done their work, and what had been the Temple of Jerusalem, the beautiful and holy House of God, was a heap of ghastly ruin, where the burning embers were half-slaked in pools of gore.

And did not all the righteous blood shed upon the earth since the days of Abel come upon that generation? Did not many of that generation survive to witness and feel the unutterable horrors which Josephus tells? to see their fellows crucified in jest, "some one way, and some another," till "room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses for the carcasses?"—to experience the "deep silence" and the kind of deadly night which seized upon the city in the intervals of rage?—to see 600,000 dead bodies carried out of the gates?—to see friends

fighting madly for grass and nettles, and the refuse of the drains?—to see the bloody zealots “gaping for want, and stumbling and staggering along like mad dogs?”—to hear the horrid tale of the miserable mother who, in the pangs of famine, had devoured her own child?—to be sold for slaves in such multitudes that at last none would buy them?—to see the streets running with blood, and the “fire of burning houses quenched in the blood of their defenders?”—to have their young sons sold in hundreds, or exposed in the amphitheatre to the sword of the gladiator or the fury of the lion, until at last, “since the people were now slain, the Holy House burnt down, and the city in flames, there was nothing farther left for the enemy to do?” In that awful siege it is believed that there perished 1,100,000 men, beside the 97,000 who were carried captive, and most of whom perished subsequently in the arena or the mine; and it was an awful thing to feel, as some of the survivors and eye-witnesses—and they not Christians—*did* feel—that “the city had deserved its overthrow by producing a generation of men who were the causes of its misfortunes;” and that “neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor *did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, since the beginning of the world.*”

Stop and take lesson test.

CHAPTER LIII.

FAREWELL TO THE TEMPLE.

IT must have been clear to all that the Great Denunciation recorded in the last chapter involved a final and hopeless rupture. After language such as this there could be no possibility of reconciliation. It was “too late.” The door was shut. When Jesus left the Temple His disciples must have been aware that He was leaving it for ever.

But apparently as He was leaving it—perhaps while He was sitting with sad heart and downcast eyes in the Court of the Women to rest His soul, troubled by the unwonted intensity of moral indignation, and His mind wearied with these incessant assaults—another and less painful incident happened, which enabled Him to leave the actual