

was, in stern retribution, to turn the river of a guilty nation into blood; the first of Jesus to fill the water-jars of an innocent family with wine.

And the other is its symbolic character. Like nearly all the miracles of Christ, it combines the characteristics of a work of mercy, an emblem, and a prophecy. The world gives its best first, and afterwards all the dregs and bitterness; but Christ came to turn the lower into the richer and sweeter, the Mosaic law into the perfect law of liberty, the baptism of John into the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, the self-denials of a painful isolation into the self-denials of a happy home, sorrow and sighing into hope and blessing, and water into wine. And thus the "holy estate" which Christ adorned and beautified with His presence and first miracle in Cana of Galilee, foreshadows the mystical union between Christ and His Church; and the common element which He thus miraculously changed becomes a type of our life on earth transfigured and ennobled by the anticipated joys of heaven—a type of that wine which He shall drink new with us in the kingdom of God, at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

LESSON SEVEN

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCENE OF THE MINISTRY.

CHRIST'S first miracle of Cana was a sign that He came, not to call His disciples *out* of the world and its ordinary duties, but to make men happier, nobler, better *in* the world. He willed that they should be husbands, and fathers, and citizens, not eremites or monks. He would show that he approved the brightness of pure society, and the mirth of innocent gatherings, no less than the ecstasies of the ascetic in the wilderness, or the visions of the mystic in his solitary cell.

And, as pointing the same moral, there was something significant in the place which He chose as the scene of His earliest ministry. St. John had preached in the lonely wastes by the Dead Sea waters; his voice had been echoed back by the flinty precipices that frown over the sultry Ghôr. The city nearest to the scene of his teaching had been built in defiance of a curse, and the road to it led through "the bloody way." All around him breathed the dreadful associations of a guilty and desolated past; the very waves were bituminous; the very

fruits crumbled into foul ashes under the touch ; the very dust beneath his feet lay, hot and white, over the relics of an abominable race. There, beside those leaden waters, under that copper heaven, amid those burning wildernesses and scarred ravines, had he preached the baptism of repentance. But Christ, amid the joyous band of His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples, chose as the earliest centre of His ministry a bright and busy city, whose marble buildings were mirrored in a limpid sea.

That little city was Capernaum. It rose under the gentle declivities of hills that encircled an earthly Paradise. There were no such trees, and no such gardens, anywhere in Palestine as in the land of Gennesareth. The very name means "garden of abundance," and the numberless flowers blossom over a little plain which is "in sight like unto an emerald." It was doubtless a part of Christ's divine plan that His ministry should begin amid scenes so beautiful, and that the good tidings, which revealed to mankind their loftiest hopes and purest pleasures, should be first proclaimed in a region of unusual loveliness. The features of the scene are neither gorgeous nor colossal ; there is nothing here of the mountain gloom or the mountain glory ; nothing of that "dread magnificence" which overawes us as we gaze on the fiery domes of tropical volcanoes, or the icy precipices of northern hills. Had our life on earth been full of wild and terrible catastrophes, then it might have been fitly symbolised by scenes which told only of deluge and conflagration ; but these green pastures and still waters, these bright birds and flowering oleanders, the dimpling surface of that inland sea, so doubly delicious and refreshful in a sultry land, all correspond with the characteristics of a life composed of innocent and simple elements, and brightened with the ordinary pleasures which, like the rain and the sunshine, are granted to all alike.

What the traveller sees, as he emerges from the Valley of Doves, and catches his first eager glimpse of Gennesareth, is a small inland sea, like a harp in shape, thirteen miles long and six broad. On the farther or eastern side runs a green strip about a quarter of a mile in breadth, beyond which rises, to the height of some 900 feet above the level of the lake, an escarpment of desolate hills, scored with grey ravines, without tree, or village, or vestige of cultivation—the frequent scene of our Lord's retirement when, after His weary labours, He sought the deep refreshment of solitude with God. The lake—with its glittering crystal and fringe of flowering

oleanders, through whose green leaves shine the bright blue wings of the roller-bird, and the kingfishers may be seen in multitudes dashing down at the fish that glance beneath them—lies at the bottom of a great dent or basin in the earth's surface, more than 500 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. Hence the burning and enervating heat of the valley; but, hence, too, the variety of its foliage, the fertility of its soil, the luxuriance of its flora, the abundant harvests that ripen a month earlier than they do elsewhere, and the number of rivulets that tumble down the hill-sides into the lake. The shores are now deserted. With the exception of the small and decaying town of Tiberias—crumbling into the last stage of decrepitude—and the “frightful village” of Mejdal (the ancient Magdala), where the degradation of the inhabitants is best shown by the fact that the children play stark naked in the street—there is not a single inhabited spot on its once crowded shores. One miserable, crazy boat—and that not always procurable—has replaced its gay and numerous fleet. As the fish are still abundant, no fact could show more clearly the dejected inanity and apathetic enervation of the present dwellers upon its shores. But the natural features still remain. The lake still lies unchanged in the bosom of the hills, reflecting every varying gleam of the atmosphere like an opal set in emeralds; the waters are still as beautiful in their clearness as when the boat of Peter lay rocking on their ripples, and Jesus gazed into their crystal depths; the cup-like basin still seems to overflow with its flood of sunlight; the air is still balmy with natural perfumes; the turtle-dove still murmurs in the valleys, and the pelican fishes in the waves; and there are palms, and green fields, and streams, and grey heaps of ruin. And what it has lost in population and activity, it has gained in solemnity and interest. If every vestige of human habitation should disappear from beside it, and the jackal and the hyena should howl about the shattered fragments of the synagogues where once Christ taught, yet the fact that He chose it as the scene of His opening ministry will give a sense of sacredness and pathos to its lonely waters till time shall be no more.

Yet widely different must have been its general aspect in the time of Christ, and far more strikingly beautiful, because far more richly cultivated. Josephus, in a passage of glowing admiration, after describing the sweetness of its waters, and the delicate temperature of its air, its palms, and vines, and oranges, and figs, and almonds, and pomegranates, and warm springs, says that the seasons seemed to compete for the honour of its possession, and Nature to have created

it as a kind of emulative challenge, wherein she had gathered all the elements of her strength. The Talmudists see in the fact that this plain—"the ambition of Nature"—belonged to the tribe of Naphtali, a fulfilment of the Mosaic blessing, that that tribe should be "satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord;" and they had the proverb, true in a deeper sense than they suppose, that "God had created seven seas in the land of Canaan, but one only—the Sea of Galilee—had He chosen for Himself."

Not, however, for its beauty only, but because of its centrality, and its populous activity, it was admirably adapted for that ministry which fulfilled the old prophecy of Isaiah, that "the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles," should "see a great light;" and that to them "who sat in the region of the shadow of death" should "light spring up." For Christ was to be, even in His own lifetime, "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of His people Israel." And people of many nationalities dwelt in and encompassed this neighbourhood, because it was "the way of the sea." "The cities," says Josephus, "lie here very thick; and the very numerous villages are so full of people, because of the fertility of the land . . . that the very smallest of them contain above 15,000 inhabitants." He adds that the people were active, industrious, and inured to war from infancy, cultivating every acre of their rich and beautiful soil. No less than four roads communicated with the shores of the lake. One led down the Jordan valley on the western side; another, crossing a bridge at the south of the lake, passed through Peræa to the fords of Jordan near Jericho; a third led, through Sepphoris, the gay and rising capital of Galilee, to the famous port of Accho on the Mediterranean Sea; a fourth ran over the mountains of Zebulun to Nazareth, and so through the plain of Esdraelon to Samaria and Jerusalem. Through this district passed the great caravans on their way from Egypt to Damascus; and the heathens who congregated at Bethsaida Julias and Cæsarea Philippi must have been constantly seen in the streets of Capernaum. In the time of Christ it was for population and activity "the manufacturing district" of Palestine, and the waters of its lake were ploughed by 4,000 vessels of every description, from the war-vessel of the Romans to the rough fisher-boats of Bethsaida and the gilded pinnacles from Herod's palace. Ituræa, Samaria, Syria, Phœnicia were immediately accessible by crossing the lake, the river, or the hills. The town of Tiberias, which Herod Antipas had built to be the capital

of Galilee, and named in honour of the reigning emperor, had risen with marvellous rapidity ; by the time that St. John wrote his Gospel it had already given its name to the Sea of Galilee ; and even if Christ never entered its heathenish amphitheatre or grave-polluted streets, He must often have seen in the distance its turreted walls, its strong castle, and the Golden House of Antipas, flinging far into the lake the reflection of its marble lions and sculptured architraves. Europe, Asia, and Africa had contributed to its population, and men of all nations met in its market-place. • All along the western shores of Gennesareth Jews and Gentiles were strangely mingled, and the wild Arabs of the desert might there be seen side by side with enterprising Phoenicians, effeminate Syrians, contemptuous Romans, and supple, wily, corrupted Greeks.

The days of delightful seclusion in the happy valley of Nazareth were past ; a life of incessant toil, of deep anxiety, of trouble, and wandering, and opposition, of preaching, healing, and doing good, was now to begin. At this earliest dawn of His public entrance upon His ministry, our Lord's first stay in Capernaum was not for many days ; yet these days would be a type of all the remaining life. He would preach in a Jewish synagogue built by a Roman centurion, and His works of love would become known to men of many nationalities. It would be clear to all that the new Prophet who had arisen was wholly unlike his great forerunner. The hairy mantle, the ascetic seclusion, the unshorn locks, would have been impossible and out of place among the inhabitants of those crowded and busy shores. Christ came not to revolutionise, but to elevate and to sanctify. He came to reveal that the Eternal was not the *Future*, but only the *Unseen* ; that Eternity was no ocean whither men were being swept by the river of Time, but was around them now, and that their lives were only real in so far as they felt its reality and its presence. He came to teach that God was no dim abstraction, infinitely separated from them in the far-off heaven, but that He was the Father in whom they lived, and moved, and had their being ; and that the service which He loved was not ritual and sacrifice, not pompous scrupulosity and censorious orthodoxy, but mercy and justice, humility and love. He came, not to hush the natural music of men's lives, nor to fill it with storm and agitation, but to re-tune every silver chord in that "harp of a thousand strings," and to make it echo with the harmonies of heaven.

And such being the significance of Christ's life in this lovely region, it is strange that the exact site of Capernaum—of Caper-

naum "His own city" (Matt. ix. 1) which witnessed so many of His mightiest miracles, which heard so many of His greatest revelations—should remain to this day a matter of uncertainty. That it was indeed *either* at Khan Minyeh *or* at Tell Hûm is reasonably certain; but at which? Both towns are in the immediate vicinity of Bethsaida and of Chorazin; both are beside the waves of Galilee; both lie on the "way of the sea;" the claims of both are supported by powerful arguments; the decision in favour of either involves difficulties as yet unsolved. After visiting the scenes, and carefully studying on the spot the arguments of travellers in many volumes, the preponderance of evidence seems to be in favour of Tell Hûm. There, on bold rising ground, encumbered with fragments of white marble, rise the ruined walls of what was perhaps a synagogue, built in the florid and composite style which marks the Herodian age; and amid the rank grass and gigantic thistles lie scattered the remnants of pillars and architraves which prove that on this spot once stood a beautiful and prosperous town. At Khan Minyeh there is nothing but a common ruined caravanserai and grey mounded heaps, which may or may not be the ruins of ruins. But whichever of the two was the site on which stood the home of Peter—which was also the home of Christ (Matt. viii. 14)—either is desolate; even the wandering Bedawy seems to shun those ancient ruins, where the fox and the jackal prowl at night. The solemn woe that was uttered upon the then bright and flourishing city has been fulfilled: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it had remained unto this day."

CHAPTER XIII.

JESUS AT THE PASSOVER.

THE stay of Jesus at Capernaum on this occasion was very short, and it is not improbable that He simply awaited there the starting of the great caravan of the pilgrims, who, at this time, were about to wend their way to the great feast at Jerusalem.

The Synoptists are silent respecting any visit of Christ to the Passover between His twelfth year and His death; and it is St. John alone who, true to the purpose and characteristics of his Gospel, mentions

this earliest Passover of Christ's ministry, or gives us any particulars that took place during its progress.

The main event which distinguished it was the purification of the Temple—an act so ineffectual to conquer the besetting vice of the Jews, that He was obliged to repeat it, with expressions still more stern, at the close of His ministry, and only four days before His death.

We have already seen what vast crowds flocked to the Holy City at the great annual feast. Then, as now, that immense multitude, composed of pilgrims from every land, and proselytes of every nation, brought with them many needs. The traveller who now visits Jerusalem at Easter time will make his way to the gates of the Church of the Sepulchre through a crowd of vendors of relics, souvenirs, and all kinds of objects, who, squatting on the ground, fill all the vacant space before the church, and overflow into the adjoining street. Far more numerous and far more noisome must have been the buyers and sellers who choked the avenues leading to the Temple, in the Passover to which Jesus now went among the other pilgrims; for what they had to sell were not only trinkets and knick-knacks, such as now are sold to Eastern pilgrims, but oxen, and sheep, and doves. On both sides of the eastern gate—the gate Shusan—as far as Solomon's porch, there had long been established the shops of merchants and the banks of money-changers. The latter were almost a necessity; for, twenty days before the Passover, the priests began to collect the old sacred tribute of half a shekel paid yearly by every Israelite, whether rich or poor, as atonement money for his soul, and applied to the expenses of the Tabernacle service. Now it was held unlawful to pay this in the coinage brought from all kinds of governments, sometimes represented by wretched counters of brass and copper, and always defiled with heathen symbols and heathen inscriptions. It was lawful to send this money to the priests from a distance, but every Jew who presented himself in the Temple preferred to pay it in person. He was therefore obliged to procure the little silver coin in return for his own currency, and the money-changers charged him five per cent. as the usual *kolbon* or *agio*.

Had this trafficking been confined to the streets immediately adjacent to the holy building, it would have been excusable, though not altogether seemly. Such scenes are described by heathen writers as occurring round the Temple of Venus at Mount Eryx, and of the Syrian goddess at Hierapolis—nay even, to come nearer home, such scenes once occurred in our own St. Paul's. But the mischief had not

stopped here. The vicinity of the Court of the Gentiles, with its broad spaces and long arcades, had been too tempting to Jewish greed. We learn from the Talmud that a certain Babha Ben Butah had been the first to introduce "3,000 sheep of the flocks of Kedar into the Mountain of the House"—*i.e.*, into the Court of the Gentiles, and therefore within the consecrated precincts. The profane example was eagerly followed. The *chanujôth* of the shopkeepers, the exchange booths of the usurers, gradually crept into the sacred enclosure. There, in the actual Court of the Gentiles, steaming with heat in the burning April day, and filling the Temple with stench and filth, were penned whole flocks of sheep and oxen, while the drovers and pilgrims stood bartering and bargaining around them. There were the men with their great wicker cages filled with doves, and under the shadow of the arcades, formed by quadruple rows of Corinthian columns, sat the money-changers with their tables covered with piles of various small coins, while, as they reckoned and wrangled in the most dishonest of trades, their greedy eyes twinkled with the lust of gain. And this was the entrance-court to the Temple of the Most High! The court which was a witness that that house should be a House of Prayer for all nations had been degraded into a place which, for foulness, was more like shambles, and for bustling commerce more like a densely-crowded bazaar; while the lowing of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the Babel of many languages, the huckstering and wrangling, and the clinking of money and of balances (perhaps not always just), might be heard in the adjoining courts, disturbing the chant of the Levites and the prayers of priests!

Filled with a righteous scorn at all this mean irreverence, burning with irresistible and noble indignation, Jesus, on entering the Temple, made a scourge of the rushes that lay on the floor; and in order to cleanse the sacred court of its worst pollutions, first drove out, indiscriminately, the sheep and oxen and the low crowd who tended them. Then going to the tables of the money-changers He overthrew them where they stood, upsetting the carefully-arranged heaps of heterogeneous coinage, and leaving the owners to grope and hunt for their scattered money on the polluted floor. Even to those who sold doves He issued the mandate to depart, less sternly indeed, because the dove was the offering of the poor, and there was less desecration and foulness in the presence there of those lovely emblems of innocence and purity; nor could He overturn the tables of the dove-sellers lest the birds should be hurt in their cages; but still, even to those who sold

doves, He authoritatively exclaimed, “Take these things hence,” justifying His action to the whole terrified, injured, muttering, ignoble crowd in no other words than the high rebuke, “*Make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.*” And His disciples, seeing this transport of inspiring and glorious anger, recalled to mind what David had once written “to the chief musician upon Shoshannim,” for the service of that very Temple, “The zeal of thine house shall even devour me.”

Why did not this multitude of ignorant pilgrims resist? Why did these greedy chafferers content themselves with dark scowls and muttered maledictions, while they suffered their oxen and sheep to be chased into the streets and themselves ejected, and their money flung rolling on the floor, by one who was then young and unknown, and in the garb of despised Galilee? Why, in the same way we might ask, did Saul suffer Samuel to beard him in the very presence of His army? Why did David abjectly obey the orders of Joab? Why did Ahab not dare to arrest Elijah at the door of Naboth’s vineyard? *Because sin is weakness*; because there is in the world nothing so abject as a guilty conscience, nothing so invincible as the sweeping tide of a Godlike indignation against all that is base and wrong. How could these paltry sacrilegious buyers and sellers, conscious of wrongdoing, oppose that scathing rebuke, or face the lightnings of those eyes that were enkindled by an outraged holiness? When Phinehas the priest was zealous for the Lord of Hosts, and drove through the bodies of the prince of Simeon and the Midianitish woman with one glorious thrust of his indignant spear, why did not guilty Israel avenge that splendid murder? Why did not every man of the tribe of Simeon become a *Goel* to the dauntless assassin? Because Vice cannot stand for one moment before Virtue’s uplifted arm. Base and grovelling as they were, these money-mongering Jews felt, in all that remnant of their souls which was not yet eaten away by infidelity and avarice, that the Son of Man was right.

Nay, even the Priests and Pharisees, and Scribes and Levites, though they were devoured by pride and formalism, could not condemn an act which might have been performed by a Nehemiah or a Judas Maccabæus, and which agreed with all that was purest and best in their traditions. But when they had heard of this deed, or witnessed it, and had time to recover from the breathless mixture of admiration, disgust, and astonishment which it inspired, they came to Jesus, and though they did not dare to condemn what He had done, yet half indignantly asked Him for some sign that He had a right to act thus.

Our Lord's answer in its full meaning was far beyond their comprehension, and in what *appeared* to be its meaning filled them with a perfect stupor of angry amazement. "Destroy," He said, "this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Destroy this Temple!—the Temple on which a king pre-eminent for his wealth and magnificence had lavished his most splendid resources, and thereby almost reconciled the Jews to an intolerable tyranny; the Temple for the construction of which one thousand wagons had been required, and ten thousand workmen enrolled, and a thousand priests in sacerdotal vestments employed to lay the stones which the workmen had already hewn; the Temple which was a marvel to the world for its colossal substructions of marble, its costly mosaics, its fragrant woods, its glittering roofs, the golden vine with its hanging clusters sculptured over the entrance door, the embroidered vails, enwoven with flowers of purple, the profuse magnificence of its silver, gold, and precious stones. It had been already forty-six years in building, and was yet far from finished; and this unknown Galilæan youth bade them destroy it, and *He* would raise it in three days! Such was the literal and evidently false construction which they chose to put upon His words, though the recorded practice of their own great prophets might have shown them that a mystery lay hidden in this sign which He gave.

How ineffaceable was the impression produced by the words is best proved by the fact that more than three years afterwards it was this, more than all His other discourses, which His accusers and false witnesses tried to pervert into a constructive evidence of guilt; nay, it was even this, more than anything else, with which the miserable robber taunted Him upon the very cross. They were obliged, indeed, entirely to distort His words into "*I am able to destroy* the Temple of God," or "*I will destroy* this Temple made with hands, and in three days will build another." He had never used these expressions, and here also their false witness was so self-contradictory as to break down. But they were well aware that this attempt of theirs to infuse a political and seditious meaning into what He said was best calculated to madden the tribunal before which He was arraigned; indeed, so well adapted was it to this purpose that the mere distant echo, as it were, of the same words was again the main cause of martyrdom to His proto-martyr Stephen.

"But He spake," says St. John, "of the temple of His body," and he adds that it was not until His resurrection that His disciples fully

understood His words. Nor is this astonishing, for they were words of very deep significance. Hitherto there had been but one Temple of the true God, the Temple in which He then stood—the Temple which symbolised, and had once at least, as the Jews believed, enshrined that Shechînâh, or cloud of glory, which was the living witness to God's presence in the world. But now the Spirit of God abode in a Temple not made with hands, even in the sacred Body of the Son of God made flesh. He tabernacled among us; "He had a tent like ours, and of the same material." Even this was to be done away. At that great Pentecost three years later, and thenceforward for ever, the Holy Spirit of God was to prefer

"Before all temples the upright heart and pure."

Every Christian man was to be, in his mortal body, a temple of the Holy Ghost. This was to be the central truth, the sublimest privilege of the New Dispensation; this was to be the object of Christ's departure, and to make it "better for us that He should go away."

Nothing could have been more amazing to the carnal mind, that walked by sight and not by faith—nothing more offensive to the Pharisaic mind that clung to the material—than this high truth, that his sacred Temple at Jerusalem was henceforth to be no longer, with any special privilege, the place where men were to worship the Father; that, in fact, it *was* the truest Temple no longer. Yet they might, if they had willed it, have had some faint conception of what Christ meant. They must have known that by the voice of John, He had been proclaimed the Messiah; they might have realised what He afterwards said to them, that "in this place was one greater than the Temple;" they might have entered into the remarkable utterance of a Rabbi of their own class—an utterance involved in the prophetic language of Daniel ix. 24, and which they ought therefore to have known—that the true Holy of Holies was the Messiah Himself.

And in point of fact there is an incidental but profoundly significant indication that they *had* a deeper insight into Christ's real meaning than they chose to reveal. For, still brooding on these same words—the first official words which Christ had addressed to them—when Jesus lay dead and buried in the rocky tomb, they came to Pilate with the remarkable story, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." Now there is no trace that Jesus had *ever* used any such words distinctly to them; and unless they had heard the saying from

Judas, or unless it had been repeated by common rumour derived from the Apostles—*i.e.*, unless the “we remember” was a distinct falsehood—they could have been referring to no other occasion than this. And that they should have heard it from any of the disciples was most unlikely; for over the slow hearts of the Apostles these words of our Lord seem to have passed like the idle wind. In spite of all that He had told them, there seems to have been nothing which they expected *less* than His death, unless it were His subsequent resurrection. How then came these Pharisees and Priests to understand better than His own disciples what our Lord had meant? Because they were not like the Apostles, loving, guileless, simple-hearted men; because, in spite of all their knowledge and insight, their hearts were even already full of the hatred and rejection which ended in Christ’s murder, and which drew the guilt of His blood on the heads of them and of their children.

But there was yet another meaning which the words involved, not, indeed, less distasteful to their prejudices, but none the less full of warning, and more clearly within the range of their understandings. The Temple was the very heart of the whole Mosaic system, the headquarters, so to speak, of the entire Levitical ceremonial. In profaning that Temple, and suffering it to be profaned—in suffering One whom they chose to regard as only a poor Galilæan teacher to achieve that purification of it which, whether from supineness or from self-interest, or from timidity, neither Caiaphas, nor Annas, nor Hillel, nor Shammai, nor Gamaliel, nor Herod had ventured to attempt—were they not, as it were, destroying that Temple, abrogating that system, bearing witness by their very actions that for them its real significance had passed away? “Finish, then,” He might have implied, at once by way of prophecy and of permission, “finish without delay this your work of dissolution: in three days will I, as a risen Redeemer, restore something better and greater; not a material Temple, but a living Church.” Such is the meaning which St. Stephen seems to have seen in these words. Such is the meaning which is expanded in so many passages by the matchless reasoning and passion of St. Paul. But to this and every meaning they were deaf, and dull, and blind. They seem to have gone away silent indeed, but sullen and dissatisfied; suspicious of, yet indifferent to, the true solution; ignorant, yet too haughty and too angry to inquire.

What great works Jesus did on this occasion we cannot tell. Whatever they were they caused some to believe on Him; but it

was not as yet a belief in which He could trust. Their mere intellectual witness to His claims He needed not; and their hearts untouched as yet, were, as He knew by Divine insight, cold and barren, treacherous and false.

Stop and take lesson test.

CHAPTER XIV.

NICODEMUS.

A CASTE or a sect may consist for the most part of haughty fanatics and obstinate bigots, but it will be strange indeed if there are to be found among them no exceptions to the general characteristics; strange if honesty, candour, sensibility are utterly dead among them all. Even among rulers, scribes, Pharisees, and wealthy members of the Sanhedrin, Christ found believers and followers. The earliest and most remarkable of these was Nicodemus, a rich man, a ruler, a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin.

A constitutional timidity is, however, observable in all which the Gospels tell us about Nicodemus; a timidity which could not be wholly overcome even by his honest desire to befriend and acknowledge One whom he knew to be a Prophet, even if he did not at once recognise in Him the promised Messiah. Thus the few words which he interposed to check the rash injustice of his colleagues are cautiously rested on a general principle, and betray no indication of his personal faith in the Galilæan whom his sect despised. And even when the power of Christ's love, manifested on the cross, had made the most timid disciples bold, Nicodemus does not come forward with his splendid gifts of affection until the example had been set by one of his own wealth, and rank, and station in society.

Such was the Rabbi who, with that mingled candour and fear of man which characterise all that we know of him, came indeed to Jesus, but came cautiously by night. He was anxious to know more of this young Galilæan prophet whom he was too honest not to recognise as a teacher come from God; but he thought himself too eminent a person among his sect to compromise his dignity, and possibly even his safety, by visiting Him in public.

Although he is alluded to in only a few touches, because of that high teaching which Jesus vouchsafed to him, yet the impression left upon us by his individuality is inimitably distinct, and wholly beyond