

A Life of St. John for the Young eBook

A Life of St. John for the Young

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Contents

A Life of St. John for the Young eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	7
Page 1.....	8
Page 2.....	10
Page 3.....	12
Page 4.....	14
Page 5.....	16
Page 6.....	18
Page 7.....	20
Page 8.....	22
Page 9.....	24
Page 10.....	26
Page 11.....	28
Page 12.....	30
Page 13.....	32
Page 14.....	34
Page 15.....	35
Page 16.....	37
Page 17.....	39
Page 18.....	40
Page 19.....	41
Page 20.....	42
Page 21.....	44
Page 22.....	45



[Page 23.....46](#)

[Page 24.....48](#)

[Page 25.....50](#)

[Page 26.....51](#)

[Page 27.....53](#)

[Page 28.....55](#)

[Page 29.....57](#)

[Page 30.....58](#)

[Page 31.....60](#)

[Page 32.....62](#)

[Page 33.....63](#)

[Page 34.....65](#)

[Page 35.....67](#)

[Page 36.....69](#)

[Page 37.....70](#)

[Page 38.....71](#)

[Page 39.....72](#)

[Page 40.....74](#)

[Page 41.....75](#)

[Page 42.....77](#)

[Page 43.....79](#)

[Page 44.....81](#)

[Page 45.....83](#)

[Page 46.....85](#)

[Page 47.....86](#)

[Page 48.....87](#)



[Page 49..... 89](#)

[Page 50..... 90](#)

[Page 51..... 92](#)

[Page 52..... 93](#)

[Page 53..... 94](#)

[Page 54..... 96](#)

[Page 55..... 98](#)

[Page 56..... 99](#)

[Page 57..... 100](#)

[Page 58..... 101](#)

[Page 59..... 103](#)

[Page 60..... 105](#)

[Page 61..... 106](#)

[Page 62..... 108](#)

[Page 63..... 110](#)

[Page 64..... 112](#)

[Page 65..... 114](#)

[Page 66..... 116](#)

[Page 67..... 118](#)

[Page 68..... 119](#)

[Page 69..... 120](#)

[Page 70..... 122](#)

[Page 71..... 124](#)

[Page 72..... 126](#)

[Page 73..... 128](#)

[Page 74..... 130](#)



[Page 75..... 132](#)

[Page 76..... 134](#)

[Page 77..... 135](#)

[Page 78..... 136](#)

[Page 79..... 138](#)

[Page 80..... 139](#)

[Page 81..... 140](#)

[Page 82..... 142](#)

[Page 83..... 143](#)

[Page 84..... 145](#)

[Page 85..... 146](#)

[Page 86..... 148](#)

[Page 87..... 149](#)

[Page 88..... 151](#)

[Page 89..... 153](#)

[Page 90..... 154](#)

[Page 91..... 156](#)

[Page 92..... 157](#)

[Page 93..... 158](#)

[Page 94..... 160](#)

[Page 95..... 161](#)

[Page 96..... 162](#)

[Page 97..... 163](#)

[Page 98..... 165](#)

[Page 99..... 167](#)

[Page 100..... 169](#)



[Page 101..... 171](#)

[Page 102..... 172](#)

[Page 103..... 174](#)

[Page 104..... 176](#)

[Page 105..... 177](#)

[Page 106..... 178](#)

[Page 107..... 179](#)

[Page 108..... 181](#)

[Page 109..... 182](#)

[Page 110..... 183](#)



Table of Contents

Section	Page
Start of eBook	1
BY GEORGE W. JACOBS & CO	1
CHAPTER I	2
CHAPTER II	2
CHAPTER III	2
CHAPTER IV	2
CHAPTER V	2
CHAPTER VI	2
CHAPTER VII	2
CHAPTER VIII	2
CHAPTER IX	3
CHAPTER X	3
CHAPTER XI	3
CHAPTER XII	3
CHAPTER XIII	3
CHAPTER XIV	3
CHAPTER XV	4
CHAPTER XVI	4
CHAPTER XVII	4
CHAPTER XVIII	4
CHAPTER XIX	5
CHAPTER XX	5
CHAPTER XXI	5
CHAPTER XXII	5
CHAPTER XXIII	5
CHAPTER XXIV	5
CHAPTER XXV	6
CHAPTER XXVI	6
CHAPTER XXVII	6
CHAPTER XXVIII	6
CHAPTER XXIX	7
CHAPTER XXX	7
CHAPTER XXXI	7
CHAPTER XXXII	7
CHAPTER XXXIII	7
A Life of St. John	9



Page 1

BY GEORGE W. JACOBS & CO

PREFATORY NOTE

The recorded incidents of the Life of St. John are few. Almost all those of which we certainly know are related in the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, The Epistles of St. John, and The Revelation. Some of the traditions concerning him are in such harmony with what we do know that we are almost ready to accept them as historic.

The known events though few, are very distinct. They are the beautiful fragments of a great picture. The plan of this volume does not include those which pertain to him in common with the twelve disciples. Such a record would practically involve the story of the life of our Lord. This is limited to those events in which his name is mentioned, or his person otherwise indicated; to those in which he was a certain or implied actor; to those in which we may suppose from his character and relations he had a special interest; to those narratives whose fulness of detail makes the impression that they are given by an eye-witness; to those in which a deeper impression was made on him than on his fellow-disciples, or where he showed a deeper insight than they into the teachings of the Lord, and is a clearer interpreter; to those records which add to, or throw light upon, those of the other three Evangelists; and especially to those things which reveal his peculiar relation to Jesus Christ.

Another limitation of this volume is its adaptation, in language, selection of subjects and general treatment, to young people, for whom it is believed no life of John, at any rate of recent date, has been prepared. It is designed especially for those between the ages of ten and twenty, though the facts recorded may be of value to all.

The attempt is made to trace the way by which John was led to, and then by, Christ. We first see him as a boy with Jewish surroundings, taught to expect the Messiah, then watching for His coming, then rejoicing in finding Him, then faithful and loving in serving Him; becoming the most loved of His chosen ones. We see the Christ through John's eyes, and listen to the Great Teacher with his ears. Christ and John are the central figures in the scenes here recorded.

The full table of contents suggests the variety and scope of the topics presented.

In the mind of the writer the interest of many of the scenes described has been greatly deepened by memories of the paths in which he has followed in the footsteps of the Master and His disciple.

The many quotations of words, phrases and texts—which are from the Revised Version—are designed to direct the young to Scripture forms with which they should become familiar; and sometimes to emphasize a fact or truth, or to recall a former incident.



Grateful acknowledgment is made especially to the works of Farrar, Edersheim and Stalker, for facts, and germs of thought which have been simplified in form and language for the interest and instruction of the young, in the hope that they may thereby be led into deeper study of one of the noblest of human lives.

G.L.W.

Philadelphia, July, 1900.



Page 2

CONTENTS

Page~

CHAPTER I

A home in the blessed land, by the sacred sea

A Fitting Study for the Young—The Glory of all Lands—Divisions of Palestine—Galilee—People of Galilee—Gennesaret and its Surroundings—Comparisons—Jewish Sayings—McCheyne—Towns, Villages and Palaces—Fisheries—Bethsaida 19

CHAPTER II

Five boys of Bethsaida—rambles about home

Five Apostles of Jesus—Two Pair of Brothers—Salome—Brothers Indeed—Views from a Hilltop—View of the Lake—Poetic Description—Rambles North of the Lake—On the West—Keble's Poem—Answer to the Poet's Question—The Sower—Object Lessons of the Great Teacher—Mount of Beatitudes—Nature's Influence on John—Philip 24

CHAPTER III

John's royal kindred

Salome and Mary Sisters—John and Jesus Cousins—Visit to Bethsaida—Visit to Nazareth—A Picture of the Boy Jesus—The Picture a Help—A Phrase to Remember—A Kinsman of John and Jesus—Education—The Messiah 31

CHAPTER IV

The great expectation in John's day

Prophecy Concerning the Messiah—Jewish Mistakes—Roman Conquest—Judas of Galilee—The Five Bethsaidan Boys—John and Peter 35

CHAPTER V

Early influences on character



Special Influences on the Five—Scripture Students—Rabbi Like Simeon, or a Teacher—Prophetess Like Anna—Home Teaching—From the Five to Two—Salome and Her Sons—Review—Boyhood Traits—Imperfections—Perfection 39

CHAPTER VI

First visit in Jerusalem

Jewish Boy at Twelve—Interest in the First Pilgrimage—John's Journey—The Jordan Ford—City, Temple and Altar—John and Saul—Silent Years—Parental Thoughts Concerning John 44

CHAPTER VII

John's view of the coming messiah

John's Old Testament Studies—First Gospel Promise—Promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—Promise to David—Mary and Immanuel—Names and Titles of the Messiah—John's Misreading of the Old Testament—Christ's Sufferings 48

CHAPTER VIII

Jesus the hidden messiah



Page 3

The Infancy of Jesus Forgotten—Our Ignorance of Christ's Childhood—The Boy in the Temple—The Carpenter's Silent Years 53

CHAPTER IX

“The prophet of the most high”

Elizabeth and Her John—A Father's Prophecy—The Prophet in the Wilderness—Young Men of Galilee—The Hermit—His Galilean Disciples—His Public Ministry—His Hearers—His Preaching—St. John the Baptist—St. John of Galilee 57

CHAPTER X

The messiah found

“Jesus from Galilee to Jordan”—Baptism of Jesus—Temptation—“Behold the Lamb of God”—Andrew and John with the Baptist—Our First Knowledge of John of Galilee—Parting of the Baptist and Jesus—The Two St. Johns and Jesus—Following Jesus in the Way—Blessed Invitation Accepted—Precious Memories—Change of Discipleship—Silence of John—Disciples at Emmaus—Brothers Brought to Jesus—Memorials of Andrew—John's Memories of His First Day with Jesus—Philip—Nathanael—Jesus' First Disciples—John the Nearest to Him 63

CHAPTER XI

John A wedding guest

Invited Guests to a Marriage Feast—Words of Mary and Jesus Concerning Wine—Three Commands of Jesus—First Miracle—Belshazzar's Feast—Believing Disciples—Believing Samaritans—What John Might Have Written—First Miracle, for Innocent Joy—John and Mary at the Feast—Mary's Thoughts of John and Her Sons—Her Thoughts of Jesus 72

CHAPTER XII

John and Nicodemus

Reasons for a Night Visit to Jesus—John's Possible Abode in Jerusalem—Nicodemus Goes Thither—His Conversation With Jesus—Seven Great Truths—Golden Text of the Bible—Golden Truth of John—Tradition of Nicodemus 79



CHAPTER XIII

St. John and the Samaritaness

John's Record—With the Master—Valley and Well—A Personal Privilege—John With Jesus at the Well—Memories of the Region—Abraham—Thoughts of the Future—A Samaritaness—Strange Request—Living Water—Greater than Jacob—Difference in Waters—Woman's Request—Jesus a Prophet—Place and Spirit of True Worship—"Messiah Cometh"—John an Earnest Listener—Jesus' Revelation of Himself—Changed Name for the Well—Wonder of the Disciples—The Samaritaness a Gospel Messenger—Unknown Meat—John's Watchful Eye—His Story of the Well—A Memorable Hour for Him 84

CHAPTER XIV



Page 4

The chosen one of the chosen three of the chosen twelve

Two Pair of Brothers Mending Nets—Call of Four Disciples—Fishers of Men—A Partner in Fishing—Followers of Him—True Brothers—Family Ties—The Twelve Chosen—First Disciples, First Apostles—The Inner Circles—Peter and John—John—Aaron's Breastplate—Apostolic Stones 92

CHAPTER XV

John in the home of Jairus

A Father's Cry—Reason for Hope—Sad Message—Strength of Faith—"Fear Not"—Curious Crowd—The Twelve and the Three—Jealousy—Ambition—A Coming Change—John One of Three—"Tahtha Cumi"—A Lesson for John—A Future Scene—Influence of a Secret 97

CHAPTER XVI

John A beholder of Christ's glory

Family Prayer—Sayings of Men Concerning Jesus—Saying of Peter—A Great Need—Christ's Prophecy of His Death—Apart by Themselves—Not Tabor, but Hermon—Thoughts of the Nine and of the Three—Heavy with Sleep—Answers to Two Prayers of Jesus—Transfigured—Moses and Elijah—Moses' Shining Face—The Lord's Shining Figure—The Shechinah—A Strange Proposal—Voice from the Clouds—Touch and Word of Jesus—Descent from Hermon—A Great Secret—Peter's Memory of the Transfiguration—John's Record—Greater than John the Baptist or Moses—Moses and the Shechinah—Ungranted Request, but Answered Prayer—Hermon, a Mount of Prayer 101

CHAPTER XVII

St. John's imperfections

Four Reasons for Recording Failings—Jealousy and Pride—Intolerant Spirit—Two Questions, What? and Who?—First and Last—An Object Lesson—The Child-Spirit—Startled Disciples—John's Confession—Lesson Not Learned—Hospitality—Samaritan Hatred—Hospitality Refused—Indignant Brothers—A Story of Elijah—Fiery Spirit of James and John—Rebuked by Jesus—Ambitious Brothers—Mother's Request—Sons' Request—Sorrowing Lord's Reply and Thoughts—Two Thrones—Though Imperfect, a Grand Character 111



CHAPTER XVIII

John and the family of Bethany

John's View of a Family Group—His Relation to It—A Sad Message and the Reply—The Lord's Delay and Concealed Purpose—A Possible Thought of John's—John and Thomas—"Our Friend"—"Sleepeth"—John an Eye-witness—Mary and Jesus—"Jesus Wept"—Mourning Disciple—Glorified Father and Son—Jesus with Martha at the Tomb—Repeated Command, "Arise"—The Release from the Tomb—John a Companion in Joy—John's Memory of Mary—Lazarus' Tomb and Jesus' Cross—A Tradition of Lazarus

120



Page 5

CHAPTER XIX

John's memorial of Mary

A Scene in Bethany—An Unfinished Picture—John with Manuscripts of Matthew and Mark—A Great Event not Understood—A Joyful Meeting—A Supper in Honor—A Fitting Place—Omitted Names—An Unnamed Woman Named—Mary's Cruse—Interested Witnesses—An Unusual Anointing—An Unwoven Towel—Odor of the Ointment—Judas the Grumbler—Jesus' Defence of Mary—A Prophecy—John the Preserver of Mary's Name—Prophecy Fulfilled—Judas and Mary—Judas and the Chief Priests—A Group of Three—A Sublime Action—A Group of Four 128

CHAPTER XX

John A herald of the king

The Messiah-King—The Prophetic Colt—The Lord's Need—The Lord's Heralds—Hosannas—Disciples' Thoughts—Changed Earthly Scenes—Lamb on Earth and in Heaven—A Prophecy Recalled—Twice a Herald 138

CHAPTER XXI

With the master on Olivet

The Lord in His Temple—His Farewell to It—Admiring Disciples—Sad Prophecy—The Two Pair of Brothers on Olivet—A Sacred Memory—The Poet Milman's View from Olivet—Unanswered Question—The Coming Fall of Jerusalem—The Poet Heber's Lament Over Jerusalem 142

CHAPTER XXII

John A provider of the Passover

The Betrayer—A Lamb and a Place—Not Judas, but Peter and John—A Secret Sign—The Goodman of the House—A New Friendship—Upper Room—"Furnished"—"Prepared"—Paschal Lamb—Child Memories—John and the Baptist—Temple Worship—Obeying Silver Trumpets—Slaying of the Lamb—Chant and Response—Lamb and Lamps—Alone with Jesus—Jerusalem Chamber—John and the Upper Room 148



CHAPTER XXIII

John's memories of the upper room

The Open Door of the Upper Room—Door Ajar—Revelation by John—Two Statements by Luke—Cause of Contention—John's Relation to the Quarrel—Sittings at the Table—John and Judas Beside Jesus—Two Things About Jesus—Grieved Spirit—Bethany Recalled—A Great Contrast—Love and Reproof—Lesson Ended—A Sacred Relic—A Guest an Enemy—Troubled Spirit—"Verily, Verily"—Looking and Doubting—John's Gaze—"Is It I?"—Peter and the Great Secret—Jesus' Hint of the Great Secret—Meaning of the Sop—Judas and Satan—Departure of Judas—"It Was Night"—A New Name—A New Command—Farewell Words and Prayer and Song—Closed Door to be Opened Again 154

CHAPTER XXIV

St. John with Jesus in Gethsemane



Page 6

An Eye-witness—Departure from the Upper Room—Kidron—Gethsemane—Olive Trees—John's Memories—Garden Owner—Charge to the Nine—Mt. Moriah—Final Charge—A Prophecy—Companions in Glory and Sorrow—A Sad Change—John Beside Jesus—Sorrowful Soul—Charge to the Three—Jesus Alone—Jesus Seen and Heard—Garden Angel—Agonizing Prayer—Sleeping Disciples—Midnight Scene—Sleeping for Sorrow—Awakening Call—Flesh and Spirit—Repeated Prayer—Victory—"Arise"—Path of Prayer—Gathered Band—Lighted Way—Empty Upper Room—John's Contrasted Memories—Betrayal Sign—Warning Cry—Unshrinking Purpose—The Meeting—Traitor's Kiss—Marred Visage—Repeated Question and Answer—Two Bands—One Request—Peter's Sword—Changed Voice—A Captive and Legions of Angels—The Fleeing Disciples 163

CHAPTER XXV

John in the high Priest's palace

Flight of the Nine—Captive Lord—Peter and John Following—The Palace—Disciple Within and Disciple Without—Peter Brought In—The First Denial—John's Watch of Peter—Peter's Tears—His Restlessness—His Sin and John's Silence—Three Turning and Looking—John's Pity for Peter—John and Pilate—Christ a King—"What is Truth?"—The Mocked King—"Behold the Man"—"Behold your King"—John the Faithful Watcher and Comforter 176

CHAPTER XXVI

John the lone disciple at the cross

Following the Cross—Jesus Bearing the Cross—Wearing the Thorny Crown—Great Multitude Following—"Daughters of Jerusalem"—Calvary—John's Memories—Group of Four Enemies—Seamless Coat—Casting Lots—Jesus and the Gamblers—Three Marys and Salome—John their Companion—A Contrast—Other Apostles—John and Salome—A Mother's Love—Mary's Thoughts—Sword of Anguish—Comfort in Sorrow—Lonely Future—Loyal Son—New Relation—Mary's Return from the Cross—Why John Her Guardian—A Poet's Words to John—In the New Home 184

CHAPTER XXVII

John the lone disciple at the cross—continued



“I Thirst”—“It Is Finished”—The Bowed Head—The Women and John—His Anxious Thoughts Relieved—Pierced Side—Two Prophecies—Prayer in Song—Joseph of Arimathaea—Nicodemus—Two Secret Friends of Jesus—Two Gardens—The Stone Closing the Tomb—Two Mourners at the Tomb—John’s Thoughts on Leaving the Tomb 195

CHAPTER XXVIII

John at the tomb



Page 7

John and Mary Magdalene—Mary's Mistaken Inference—Her Report to Peter and John—Their Hastening Toward the Tomb—John Alone at the Tomb—Silent Witnesses—Peter's Entry and Discovery—John Within the Tomb—The Rolled Napkin—Seeing and Believing—Lingering in the Tomb—The Return from the Tomb—Weeping Mary—Silence of Angels—Mary and the Angels—Jesus Unknown to Mary—"Mary" and "Rabboni"—John's Two Records of Mary—Day of Days—Evening Benedictions—Pierced Side—Close of John's Gospel 204

CHAPTER XXIX

"What shall this man do?"

An Added Chapter—Old Scenes Revived—Following Peter—Stranger on the Shore—John and Peter—John's Remembrance of the Miracle—"Fire of Coals"—Reverent Guests—"Lovest Thou Me?"—"Feed My Lambs and Sheep"—An Interested Listener—A Prophecy—John Following Peter—Question and Answer—Mistake Corrected by John—Partial Answer to Peter's Questions—A Former Hour Recalled 212

CHAPTER XXX

St. John A pillar-apostle in the early Christian church

On a Mount in Galilee—The Great Commission—Waiting for the Promised Comforter—Words of the Baptist Recalled—A Revived Hope and a Question—Jesus' Reply—The Ascension—Angels' Question—"The Upper Chamber"—Luke's Lists of the Apostles—The Lord's Mother, Brethren and Sisters—The Day of Pentecost—A Great Miracle—Pentecostal Gifts to John—Evening Prayer—Beautiful Gate—Lame man—A Gift Better than Alms—John Twice a Prisoner—Prison Angel—Preaching of Philip—John Sent to Samaria—John and the Samaritaness—His Changed Spirit—Death of James—The Pillar Apostles 219

CHAPTER XXXI

Last days

Last Record—Meeting of Paul and John—Years of Silence—Leaving Jerusalem—New Home in Ephesus—City and Temple—Paul and John—Churches of Asia Minor—John in Patmos—Solitude—The Lord's Day—Aid to Meditation—Calm and Turmoil—A Voice and a Command—A Contrast—"As One Dead"—The Eagle—John's Three Kinds of Writings—The Revelation—John's Gospel—His First Epistle—The Apostle of Love—His



Second Epistle—The Apostle of Childhood—“Little Children, Love one Another”—John’s Death 231

CHAPTER XXXII

A retrospect

Boyhood—The Disciple—What John Saw—What He Heard—What He Made Known—John a Reflector of Christ—Alone in History—Our Glimpses of Him—In Everlasting Remembrance on Earth—With His Lord in Heaven 241

CHAPTER XXXIII



Page 8

Legends and traditions of st. John

St. John and the Robber-Chief—St. John and the Partridge—“Little Children, Love One Another”—Miraculous Preservation from Death—The Empty Grave—The Heaving Grave 251

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

St. John *Domenichino. Frontispiece*

Map of the Land Where St. John Lived 19

Sea of Galilee *Old Engraving* 20

Site of Bethsaida *From Photograph* 22

Calm on Galilee *From Photograph* 26

Virgin, Infant Jesus and St. John
(*Madonna della Sedia*) *Raphael* 32

Christ and St. John *Winterstein* 35

Simeon and Anna in the Temple *Old Engraving* 39

The Boy John *Andrea del Sarto* 41

Jerusalem *Old Engraving* 43

Joshua's Host Crossing the Jordan *Old Engraving* 45

The Prophet Isaiah *Sargent* 55

The Boy Jesus in the Temple *H. Hofmann* 58

A Street Scene in Nazareth *From Photograph* 60

Visit of Mary to Elisabeth *Old Engraving* 62

The Wilderness of Judea *From Photograph* 64

Traditional Place of Christ's Baptism *From Photograph* 67

The Baptism of Jesus *Old Engraving* 68

The First Disciples *Ittenbach* 83



- The Marriage at Cana *Old Engraving* 85
- Belshazzar's Feast *Old Engraving* 87
- The Hill of Samaria *Old Engraving* 90
- Jacob's Well *From Photograph* 92
- The Miraculous Draught of Fishes *Old Engraving* 94
- Raising the Daughter of Jairus *H. Hofmann* 99
- The Transfiguration *Old Engraving* 106
- Moses on Mt. Pisgah *Artist Unknown* 109
- Bethany *Old Engraving* 120
- Resurrection of Lazarus *Old Engraving* 126
- Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. *Gustave Dore* 133



Page 9

- Christ and St. John *Ary Scheffer* 140
- The Last Supper *Benjamin West* 156
- In Gethsemane *Gustave Dore* 163
- The Valley of Jehoshaphat *Old Engraving* 165
- Christ Before Caiaphas *Old Engraving* 167
- Christ Before Pilate (Ecce Homo) *H. Hofmann* 170
- Christ Bearing His Cross *H. Hofmann* 185
- The Virgin and St. John at the Cross *Old Engraving* 192
- The Descent from the Cross *Rubens* 195
- In the Sepulchre *H. Hofmann* 199
- Jesus Appearing to Mary Magdalene
(Easter Morning) *B. Plockhorst* 202
- The Descent of the Spirit *Old Engraving* 206
- St. Peter and St. John at the Beautiful Gate *Old Engraving* 211
- Ephesus *From Photograph* 227
- The Isle of Patmos *Old Engraving* 231
- Smyrna *Old Engraving* 234
- Pergamos and the Ruins of the
Church of St. John *Old Engraving* 242
- Ruins of Laodicea *Old Engraving* 246

[Illustration: MAP OF THE LAND WHERE ST. JOHN LIVED]

A Life of St. John

CHAPTER I

A Home in the Blest Land, by the Sacred Sea



“Blest land of Judaea! Thrice hallowed in song,
Where the holiest of memories pilgrim like throng,
In the shade of thy palms, by the shores of thy sea,
On the hills of the beauty, my heart is with thee.”

—*Whittier.*

A Galilean boy, a fisherman, a follower of Jesus, one of the twelve Apostles, one of the favored three, the beloved one, the Apostle of love, the Apostle of childhood, the one of all men who gave to mankind the clearest view of Jesus Christ—such was St John.

For young people he is a fitting study. To aid such is the purpose of this volume.

Let us first glance at the land where he lived, surrounded by influences that directed his life, and moulded his character.

Palestine was called by God Himself “The Glory of All Lands.” He made it the home of His people the Jews, who long waited for the promised time when it should have greater glory by becoming the home of the Messiah, the Son of God. Before He was born the Jews were conquered by the Romans, and governed by them instead of the Jewish judges and kings. The country was divided into three parts. The southern was called Judaea; the middle, Samaria; and the northern, Galilee, which was the most beautiful part. It contained the hills of Galilee, and the plain and sea of Gennesaret, hallowed by the presence of Jesus, and what He there did.

Page 10

At the time of which we write, two thousand years ago, Galilee was not inhabited wholly or chiefly by Jews. Other peoples, called Gentiles, were mixed with the Jewish race which continued to cultivate the land, and to tend the vineyards and olive-yards, and to dwell in the fisherman's huts and moor their boats on the sandy beach. Some Jews were artisans, working at their trades in the smaller towns. But there were vast crowds of foreigners whose life was a great contrast to that of the Jews. Their customs were those of the nations to which they belonged. They spoke their own languages. They worshiped their own false gods. Their amusements were such as they were accustomed to in their distant homes. This was especially true of the Romans who had theatres, chariot races, and gladiatorial combats, by the peaceful waters of Galilee.

[Illustration: SEA OF GALILEE *Old Engraving* Page 21]

There were also Greeks who had sought new homes far from their native land. Many Arabians came from the deserts on swift horses, in roving bands in search of plunder. They wore brightly-colored dresses, and flashing swords and lances, carrying terror wherever they went. Egyptian travelers came with camels loaded with spices and balm. The bazaars were crowded with merchandise from India, Persia and Arabia. Long caravans from Damascus passed through Galilee, with goods for the markets of Tiberius on Lake Gennesaret, and the more distant cities of Jerusalem, Caesarea and Alexandria.

The gem of Galilee and of Palestine itself, is the Lake of Gennesaret, or the Sea of Tiberius. Its length is twelve and three-fourths miles; its greatest width, seven and one-fourth; its greatest depth, one hundred and sixty feet. On the west is the beautiful Plain of Galilee. On the east are rounded hills; and rugged mountains which rise nine hundred feet above the waters, with grassy slopes, and rocky cliffs barren and desolate. Bowers of olive and oleander deck the base of the hills whose sides yield abundant harvest. Around the lake is a level white beach of smooth sand. Gennesaret has been fittingly compared to a sapphire set in diamonds; and to a mirror set in a frame of richness and beauty.

“He hath made everything beautiful,” says Solomon concerning God. It is a well-known saying of Jewish writers, “Of all the seven seas God created, He made choice of none but the Lake of Gennesaret.” It was called the “beloved of God above all the waters of Canaan.”

The writer of this volume gratefully recalls blessed memories of Gennesaret, wishing his young friends could view with their own eyes those scenes which he asks them to behold through his own. Then could they join him in singing with the saintly McCheyne,

“How pleasant to me thy deep blue wave,
O Sea of Galilee!



For the glorious One who came to save,
Hath often stood by thee.

* * * * *



Page 11

“O Saviour, gone to God’s right hand,
Yet the same Saviour still,
Graved on Thy heart is this lovely strand,
And every fragrant hill.”

At the period of which we speak the region was full of people. Nine large towns, each containing fifteen thousand inhabitants, bordered on the lake. Numerous populous villages lined the shores, or nestled in the neighboring valleys, or were perched on the hilltops. Fishermen’s huts—which were mere stone sheds—fringed the lake. They stood in every rift of rock, and on every knoll, with their little cornfields and vine ledges extending to the sandy beach.

[Illustration: SITE OF BETHSAIDA *From Photograph Page 23*]

On the seashore, among the chief buildings, were palaces for Roman princes, and quarters for Roman soldiers. The waters were covered with boats for pleasure, merchandise and fishing. Four thousand floated at one time on the narrow lake. Vast quantities of fish were caught in the waters, supplying not only the people of Galilee, but the populous city of Jerusalem, especially when crowded with pilgrims; and were even sent to distant ports of the Mediterranean. We shall see John’s interest in such labors.

On the north-western shore of Gennesaret is a beautiful bay sheltered by hills and projecting cliffs. The sight is such as would be a fisherman’s delight—a little haven from storm, with a broad beach of sand on which to moor his boats. There is no place like it in the region of Galilee. Close to the water’s edge, it is supposed, was the town of Bethsaida, probably meaning House of Fish.

CHAPTER II

Five Boys of Bethsaida—Rambles About Home

“Walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother.”—*Matt. iv. 18.*

“And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother.”—*v. 21.*

“Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.”—*John i. 44.*

Bethsaida was honored as being the home of five of the Apostles of Jesus. We know nothing definitely concerning them until their manhood. We wish we knew of their childhood. It is only because of their relation to Jesus that they have been remembered. Had it not been for this they would, like many other boys of Galilee, have lived on the shores of Gennesaret, fished in its waters, died, and been forgotten. These

five Bethsaidan boys were two pairs of brothers and a friend. The names of one pair were Andrew and Peter. They were the sons of Jonas, a fisherman. As they grew up they were engaged with him in casting the net and gathering fish, by day or by night, and thus securing a livelihood without thought of change of occupation. It was a Jewish custom for boys to learn a trade or business, which was generally that of their fathers.

Page 12

The names of the other pair of brothers were James and John. Their father was named Zebedee. He also was a fisherman having so much prosperity in his business that he employed servants to help him. Judging by what we know of the family they must have been highly respected by the people among whom they lived.

We do not know the exact date of John's birth. He was probably younger than James, and several years younger than Peter.

The mother of James and John was named Salome. We know more of her than of her husband. She was a warm friend of Jesus, ministering to Him when He was living, and was one of the few who cared for His dead body. Her sons seemed to be greatly attached to her. All were of kindred spirit, having like thoughts, feelings and plans.

James and John were brothers indeed, companions until the death of James separated them. The feelings of boyhood must have been greatly strengthened in later scenes, and by influences which we shall have occasion to notice. As we know of them as daily companions in manhood, we think of the intimacy and affection of boyhood. It will help us to gain an idea of their companionship, and the influences of their surroundings, if we notice some things with which they were familiar in the region of their home.

Standing on one of the hills behind Bethsaida they beheld a magnificent panorama. In the northeast Hermon rose like a mighty giant, called by the people of the land the "Kingly Mountain." They knew it by the name Moses had given it—"the goodly mountain." They were to know it by the name which Peter would give in after years, "The Holy Mount," so called for a blessed reason of which all of them were to learn. Down from its snowy glittering sides a thousand streamlets blended in larger streams combining in the Jordan, which flowed through marshes and Lake Merom until it entered Gennesaret near their home. Eastward, across the lake, the rugged cliffs of Gadara cut off their view. Perhaps at this very hour the winds from Hermon rushed through the gorges, first ruffling the placid waters of the lake, and then tossing them as if in rage. They little thought of a coming time when they themselves would be tossed upon them until they heard a voice saying, "Peace be still." And now

"The warring winds have died away,
The clouds, beneath the glancing ray,
Melt off, and leave the land and sea
Sleeping in bright tranquillity.
Below, the lake's still face
Sleeps sweetly in th' embrace
Of mountains terraced high with mossy stone."

[Illustration: CALM ON GALILEE *From Photograph* Page 26]



In another hour they watch the more quiet movements of pleasure boats,—gay barges and royal galleys—and trading vessels, and fishing boats,—all crowding together seemingly covering the lake.

As it narrows in the southern distance, the Jordan commences the second stage of its journey of one hundred and twenty miles through rugged gorges. As it leaves the quiet lake, we can almost hear them saying to it



Page 13

“Like an arrow from the quiver,
To the sad and lone Dead Sea,
Thou art rushing, rapid river,
Swift, and strong, and silently,
Through the dark green foliage stealing,
Like a silver ray of light.”

Descending from the hill we may follow James and John in their rambles in the region near their home. On the northern extremity of the lake, among the colossal reeds, and meadow grass and rushes, they watch the little tortoises creeping among them; and the pelicans which make them their chosen home; and the blue and white winged jays that have strayed from the jungles through which the Jordan has pushed its way; and the favorite turtle-doves; and the blue birds so light that one can rest on a blade of grass without bending it; and the confiding larks and storks which, not fleeing, seem to welcome the visitors to their haunts. Here grow oleanders of such magnificence as is seen nowhere else in the country, twenty feet high, sometimes in clumps a hundred feet in circumference; and “masses of rosy red flowers, blushing pyramids of exquisite loveliness.”

Our ramblers follow the western shore to the shallow hot stream, where boy-like,—or manlike as I did—they burn their hands in trying to secure pebbles from its bottom. They rest under the shade of an olive or a palm. They gather walnuts which are in great abundance; and grapes and figs, which can be done ten months in the year; and oranges and almonds and pomegranates.

They wander through meadows rich in foliage, and gay with the brightness and richness of flowers which retain their bloom in Galilee when they would droop in Judaea or Samaria.

We hear the poet Keble asking them,

“What went ye out to see
O'er the rude, sandy lea,
Where stately Jordan flows by many a palm,
Or where Gennesaret's wave
Delights the flowers to lave,
That o'er her western slope breathe airs of balm?”

“All through the summer night,
These blossoms red and white
Spread their soft breasts unheeding to the breeze,
Like hermits watching still,
Around the sacred hill,
Where erst our Saviour watched upon His knees.”



To the poet's question James and John would answer that they "went out to see the blue lupin and salvia, the purple hyacinth, the yellow and white crocus, the scarlet poppy, and gladiolus, the flowering almond, the crimson and pink anemone."

They also saw the cultivated fields, and the sower casting his seed which fell on the hardened pathway, or barren rocks, or bounteous soil. They watched the birds from mountain and lake gather the scattered grain. They thought not of the parable into which all these would be weaved; nor of Him who would utter it in their hearing near where they then stood. They saw the shepherds and their flocks, the sparrows and the lilies, that became object lessons of the Great Teacher yet unknown to them. In their rambles they may have climbed the hill, only seven miles from their home, not thinking of the time when they would climb it again; after which it would be forever known as the Mount of Beatitudes.



Page 14

Such were some of the charming and exciting scenes with which John was familiar in his early life, and which would interest his refined and observing nature, of which we know in his manhood. They must have had an important influence in the formation of his character.

We have spoken of five Bethsaidan boys—Andrew and Peter, James and John—and a friend. His name was Philip. We know but little of him. What we do know is from John. He tells us that “Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.” Perhaps he was their special friend, and so became one of the company of five, as he afterward became one of the more glorious company of twelve. We shall find three of these five in a still closer companionship. They are Peter, James and John. One of these shall have the most glorious honor of all. It is John.

CHAPTER III

John's Royal Kindred

It seems almost certain that Salome and Mary the mother of Jesus, were sisters. Royal blood was in their veins. They were descendants of David. The record of their ancestry had been carefully preserved for God's own plans, especially concerning Mary, of which plans neither of the sisters knew until revealed to her by an angel from God. We think of them as faithful to Him, and ready for any service to which He might call them, in the fisherman's home of Salome, or the carpenter's home of Mary. Mary's character has been summed up in the words, “pure, gentle and gracious.” Salome must have had something of the same nature, which we find again in her sons.

If Salome and Mary were sisters, our interest in James and John deepens, as we think of them as cousins of Jesus. This family connection may have had something to do with their years of close intimacy; but we shall find better reason for it than in this kinship. There was another relation closer and holier.

We wonder whether Jesus ever visited Bethsaida, and played with His cousins on the seashore, and gathered shells, and dug in the sand, and sailed on Gennesaret, and helped with His little hands to drag the net, and was disappointed because there were no fish, or bounded with glee because of the multitude of them.

We wonder whether James and John visited Jesus in Nazareth, nestled among the hills of Galilee. Did they go to the village well, the same where children go to-day to draw water? Did James and John see how Jesus treated His little mates, and how they treated Him—the best boy in Nazareth? Did the cousins talk together of what their mothers had taught them from the Scriptures, especially of The Great One whom those mothers were expecting to appear as the Messiah? Did they go together to the synagogue, and hear the Rabbi read the prophecies which some day Jesus, in the same synagogue, would say were about Himself?

Page 15

Jesus was the flower of Mary's family, the flower of Nazareth, of Galilee, of the whole land, and the whole world. Nazareth means flowery—a fitting name for the home of Jesus. It was rightly named. So must James and John have thought if their young cousin went with them to gather daisies, crocuses, poppies, tulips, marigolds, mignonette and lilies, which grow so profusely around the village. Did they ramble among the scarlet pomegranates, the green oaks, the dark green palms, the cypresses and olives that grew in the vale of Nazareth, and made beautiful the hills that encircled it? Did they climb one of them, and gain a view of the Mediterranean, and look toward the region where John would live when his boyhood was long past, in the service of his cousin at his side?

[Illustration: VIRGIN, INFANT JESUS, AND ST JOHN (Madonna della Sedia) *Raphael* Page 31]

A great artist, Millais, painted a picture of the boy Jesus, representing Him as cutting His finger with a carpenter's tool, and running to His mother to have it bound up. Did John witness any such incident? How little did he think of a deeper wound he was yet to behold in that same hand.

We cannot answer such questions. These things were possible. They help us to think of Jesus as a boy, like other boys. James and John thought of Him as such only until long after the days of which we are speaking.

While thinking of John and Jesus as cousins, we may also think of a kinsman of theirs, a second cousin of whom we shall know more. John was to have a deep interest in both of the others, and they were to have more influence on him than all other men in the world.

There were some things common to them all. They were Jews. According to Jewish customs they were trained until six years of age in their own homes. Their library was the books of the Old Testament. They learned much of its teachings. They read the stories of Joseph, Samuel and David. At six they went to the village school, taught by a Rabbi. Some attention was paid to arithmetic, the history of their nation, and natural history. But, as at their homes, the chief study was the Scriptures. They were taught especially about One—"Of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." Let us remember those words for we shall hear them again. That One was called the Messiah—He whom we call Jesus, the Christ, the Saviour of the world. He had not then come. We look back to the time when He did come: those boys looked forward to the time when He *would* come. The Messiah was the great subject in the homes of the pious Jews, and in the synagogues where old and young worshiped on the Sabbath.

[Illustration: CHRIST AND ST. JOHN *Winterstein* Page 34]

CHAPTER IV



The Great Expectation in John's Day

Moses wrote of a promise, made centuries before the days of John, to Abraham—that in the Messiah all the nations of the earth,—not the Jews only—should be made happy with special blessings. Isaiah and other prophets wrote of the time and place and circumstances of His coming, and of the wonders He would perform.



Page 16

The Jews understood that the Messiah would descend from David. They believed that He would sit “upon the throne of David,” ruling first over the Jews, an earthly ruler such as David had been, and then conquering their enemies; thus being a great warrior and the king of the world.

But they were sadly mistaken in many of their ideas of the Messiah. They had misread many of the writings of the prophets. They had given wrong meanings to right words. They made real what was not so intended. They overlooked prophecies about the Messiah-King being despised, rejected and slain, though God had commanded lambs to be slain through all those centuries to remind them of the coming Messiah’s cruel death. Each of those lambs was a “Lamb of God.” Remember that phrase; we shall meet it again. They looked for wonders of kinds of which neither Moses nor the prophets had written. Many did not understand what was meant by the kingdom of God in the hearts of men, as differing from the earthly kingdom of David. They did not understand that Messiah’s kingdom would be in the hearts of all people.

With such mistaken views of the Messiah at the time of which we are writing, the Jews had not only the great expectation of the centuries, but the strong belief that Messiah was about to appear.

A great event had happened which made them especially anxious for His immediate coming. The Jewish nation had been conquered by the Romans. The “Glory of All Lands” was glorious only for what it had been. Galilee was a Roman province which, like those of Judaea and Samaria, longed for the expected One to free them from the Roman yoke, and show Himself to be the great Messiah-Deliverer of the Jews. They were prepared to welcome almost any one who claimed to be He. Such an one was at hand.

In those days appeared a man who has been known as Judas of Galilee. He had more zeal than wisdom. In his anger and madness at the Romans he was almost insane. He was an eloquent man. He roused the whole Jewish nation. Multitudes welcomed him as the promised Messiah. Thousands gathered around him; many of them fishermen, shepherds, vine-dressers and craftsmen of Galilee. They followed him throughout the entire land with fire and sword, laying waste cities and homesteads, vineyards and cornfields. Their watchword was, “We have no Lord or master, but God.”

But this rebellion against the Roman government failed. Judas himself was slain. Villages in Galilee—Bethsaida probably one of them—became hospitals for the wounded in battle. The whole region was one of mourning for the dead. There was terrible disappointment concerning Judas of Galilee. None could say of him, “We have found the Messiah.” “We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write.” Again think of these words; they are yet to be spoken concerning another.



What the five young Galileans of Bethsaida saw and heard of these events must have made a deep impression on them. They were old enough to be young patriots interested in their nation. Their sympathies would be with those trying to free their people from Roman power. Perhaps their thoughts concerning Messiah became confused by the false claims of Judas, the pretender, and his deluded followers.



Page 17

But this did not destroy their confidence in the Scriptures. They believed the prophecy it contained would yet be fulfilled. At this time John is supposed to have been about twelve years of age. Had he been older, the temperament which he afterward showed, and which sometimes misled him, allows us to think that he might have been drawn into the rebellion. Peter also in his fiery zeal might have drawn his mistaken sword. They might have become comrades in war, as they did become in peace. For many years they continued their Scripture studies, without however gaining the full knowledge of the Messiah and His kingdom, to which at last they attained.

[Illustration: SIMEON AND ANNA IN THE TEMPLE *Old Engraving* Page 39]

CHAPTER V

Early Influences on Character

As we trace the history of the five youthful Bethsaidans, it seems almost certain that some special influence or influences helped to shape their characters, and to unite them in thought, purpose and effort; and so secure marked and grand results. This union was not a mere coincidence. Nor can it be accounted for by their being of the same nation or town, and having the same education common to Jewish boys. There was something which survived the mere associations of boyhood, and continued to, or was revived in, manhood. The influence whatever it was must have been special and powerful. What was it? In that little village were their faithful souls praying more earnestly than others, and searching the Scriptures more diligently, finding spiritual meanings hidden from the common readers, and so understanding more correctly, even though not perfectly, who was the true Messiah, and what He would do when He came? Or, was there some rabbi in Bethsaida like Simeon in Jerusalem, of whom it could be said, “the Holy Ghost was upon him,” and “he was waiting for the consolation of Israel”—the coming of the Messiah? Or, was there a teacher of the synagogue school in Bethsaida, instructing his pupils as no other teacher did? Or, was there some aged Anna, like the prophetess in the Temple, who “served God with fastings and prayer,” who going about the village full of thoughts concerning the Messiah, “spake of Him to all them that looked for His coming”? Or, was it in the homes of the five that we find that special influence? Did Jonas talk with his sons as few other fathers did, while Andrew and Peter listened most attentively to his words? Did Zebedee and Salome, as Jonas, prepare by teaching their sons for the coming time when the two pairs of brothers should be in closer companionship than the family friendship of these Galilean fishermen and business partnership could secure? Was Peter, full of boyish enthusiasm, a leader of the little company; or did John in quiet loveliness draw the others after himself? Did Philip have such family training as had the other four, or was he guided by the lights that came from their homes?

Page 18

And now in thought we disband the little circle of five, to be reunited elsewhere after many years. We glance into the home of James and John. We have already spoken of Salome's royal descent, and of the sympathy between her and her sons. With what deep interest we would listen to her teachings and watch the influence on them as they talked together of David their ancestor, and of how they were of the same tribe and family to which the Messiah would belong. Salome understood much about Him, more probably than most mothers: but she was much mistaken about what was meant by His Kingdom. She thought He would rule like David on an earthly throne. Her sons believed as she did, and so were as sadly mistaken. It was long before they discovered their mistake. That was in circumstances very different from what were now in their minds.

[Illustration: THE BOY JOHN *Andrea del Sarto* Page 41]

Thus far we have attempted to restore the surroundings of John in his early days, which did much in shaping his early life, and fitting him for the great work he was to perform. We have glanced at the country and town in which he lived. As we see them through his eyes, he appears the more real to us. We have watched the little circle of his intimate friends, on whom he must have had an influence, and who influenced him. We have glanced at his home with his parents and brothers. We have tried to gain some idea of what and how much he had learned, especially concerning the Messiah. We are now prepared to look at him alone, and try to get a more distinct view of his character.

We are not told what kind of a boy John was. We are told of many things he said and did when he was a man. These help us to understand what he must have been when young. Though there be great changes in us as we grow older, some things remain the same in kind if not in degree. Judging by certain things in John's manhood, we form an idea of his childhood. We may think of him as a lovable boy. His feelings were tender. He was greatly interested in events which pleased him. He was quick and active. He was modest and generally shy, yet bold when determined to do anything. He was not ready to tell all he felt or knew. He was helpful in his father's business. He thought and felt and planned much as his mother did. He was thoughtful and quick to understand, and sought explanation of what was not easily understood. He was frank in all he said, and abhorred dishonesty, especially in one who professed to be good. Above all he was of a loving disposition, and this made others love him. He was beloved because he loved.

[Illustration: JERUSALEM *Old Engraving* Page 44]

Page 19

Yet John was not perfect, as we shall see in another chapter. We know of some things he said and did when a man, which help us to understand the kinds of temptations he had in his younger days. They were such as these; contempt for others who did not think and do as he did, judging them unjustly and unkindly, and showing an unkind feeling toward them; a revengeful spirit, ready to do harm for supposed injury; selfishness; ambition—wanting to be in honor above others. His greatest temptation was to pride. But at last he overcame such temptations. What was lovable in childhood became more beautiful in manhood. He more nearly reached perfection than any other of whom we know—by what influence, we shall see.

CHAPTER VI

First Visit to Jerusalem

At twelve years of age a Jewish boy was no longer thought of as a child, but a youth. Before he reached that age he looked forward to an event which seemed to him very great. It was his first visit to Jerusalem. Peter was probably older than James or John. With boyish interest they listened to the report of his first pilgrimage to the Holy City. When the time came for James to accompany him, John's interest would increase as he heard his brother's story; and much more when he could say, "Next year I too shall see it all." And when at last he, probably the youngest of the five Bethsaidan boys, could be one of the company, a day of gladness indeed had come. With his father, and perhaps his mother, he joined the caravan of pilgrims, composed chiefly of men and boys. Their probable route was across the Jordan, then southward, through valleys and gorges, and along mountain-sides which echoed with the Psalms which were sung on these pilgrimages, called "Songs of Degrees."

At Bethabara, nearly opposite Jericho, the travelers recrossed the Jordan. There John might think of that other crossing many years before when Joshua led the hosts of Israel between the divided waters; and when Elijah smote them with his mantle, and there was a pathway for him and Elisha. John was to add to his memories of the spot. At a later day he would there witness a more glorious scene.

[Illustration: JOSHUA'S HOST CROSSING THE JORDAN *Old Engraving Page 45*]

At last from the Mount of Olives, at a turn in the road, he had his first view of the Holy City; its walls and seventy towers of great height, and the Holy House—the Temple of God, with which in after years he was to become familiar. There he saw for himself of what he had often heard;—the Holy Altar and lamb of sacrifice—reminders of the coming Messiah; the offering of incense; and the many and varied forms of stately worship.

Page 20

At the time that John made this visit to Jerusalem, there was a celebrated school known as that of Gamaliel, who was the most noted of the Jewish Rabbis, or teachers. Boys were sent to him from all parts of Palestine, and even from distant countries in which Jews lived. There was one such boy from the town of Tarsus, in the Roman province of Cilicia in Asia Minor. Though living in a heathen city, surrounded by idolatry, he had received a Jewish training in his home and in the synagogue school, until he was old enough to go to Jerusalem to be trained to become a Rabbi. Like John he had learned much of the Old Testament Scriptures, but it does not appear that he had the special influences which we have imagined gave direction to the thoughts and plans of the five boys of Galilee. In his boyhood he was known as Saul; afterward as Paul. He and John in their early days differed in many things; in the later days they became alike in the most important thoughts, feelings, purposes and labors of their lives. And because of this they became associated with each other, and are remembered together as among the best and greatest of mankind.

It is possible that John visited the school of Gamaliel, and that the boy from Bethsaida and the one from Tarsus met as strangers, who would some day meet as friends indeed. It is more probable that they worshiped together in the temple at the feast, receiving the same impressions which lasted and deepened through many years, and which we to-day have in what they wrote for the good of their fellow-men.

When John returns from Jerusalem to his home we lose even the dim sight of him which our imagination has supplied. During the silent years that follow we have two thoughts of him,—as a fisherman of Galilee, and as one waiting for the coming of the Messiah. His parents' only thought of him is a life of honest toil, a comfort in their old age, a sharer in their prosperity, and an heir to their home and what they would leave behind. They little think that he will be remembered when kings of their day are forgotten; that two thousand years after, lives of him will be written because of a higher relationship than that of mere cousinship to Jesus; and that their own names will be remembered only because John was their son. Only God sees in the boy playing on the seashore, and in the fisherman of Gennesaret, the true greatness and honor into which He will guide him.

CHAPTER VII

John's View of the Coming Messiah

In our thoughts of Jesus we have chiefly in mind the things that happened at the time of His birth and afterward. We read of them in the Gospels. John had the Old Testament only, containing promises of what was yet to happen. We have the New Testament telling of their fulfilment.

Thus far we have spoken of Jesus as John knew Him—as a boy in Nazareth, the son of Mary, and his own cousin. We have also spoken of John's ideas of the Messiah. As yet



he has not thought as we do of Jesus and the Messiah being the same person. It is not easy for us to put ourselves in his place, and leave out of our thoughts all the Gospels tell us. But we must do this to understand what he understood during his youth and early manhood, respecting the Messiah *yet to come*.

Page 21

Let us imagine him looking through the Old Testament, especially the books of Moses and the prophets, and finding what is said of Him; and see if we can what impressions are made on this young Bible student of prophecy. His search goes back many years. He finds the first Gospel promise. It was made while Adam and Eve, having sinned, were yet in the Garden of Eden. It was the promise of a Saviour to come from heaven to earth, through whom they and their descendants could be saved from the power of Satan and the consequences of sin. We do not know how much our first parents understood of this coming One: but we feel assured that they believed this promise, and through repentance and faith in this Saviour, they at last entered a more glorious paradise than the one they lost. That promise faded from the minds of many of their descendants and wickedness increased. But God had not forgotten it. John could find it renewed by him to Abraham, in the words, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed,"—meaning that the Messiah should be the Saviour of all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews. The promise was renewed to Isaac, the son of Abraham; and then repeated to his son Jacob, in the same words spoken to his grandfather. Jacob on his dying bed told Judah what God had revealed to him, that the Messiah should be of the tribe of which Judah was the head.

Many years later God made it known to David that the Messiah should be one of his descendants. This was a wonder and delight to him as he exclaimed, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house! for Thou hast spoken of Thy servant's house for a great while to come." John must have been taught by his mother that they were of the honored house of David. They, in common with other Jews, believed that the "great while to come" was near at hand.

John read in Isaiah of her who would be the mother of the Messiah, without thought that she was his aunt Mary. He read that she should call her son Immanuel, meaning "God with us," without thinking this was another name for his cousin Jesus. John would find other names describing His character. His eye would rest on such words and phrases as these—"Holy One;" "Most Holy;" "Most Mighty;" "Mighty to Save;" "Mighty One of Israel;" "Redeemer;" "Your Redeemer;" "Messiah the Prince;" "Leader;" "Lord Strong and Mighty;" "King of Glory;" "King over all the earth."

Most of all John would think again and again of a wonderful declaration of Isaiah, writing as if he lived in John's day, saying, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the exercise of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David."

Had John known that these words of Isaiah referred to Jesus, he might have repeated them, not as a prophecy, but with a present meaning, saying, "The Child *is* born!" As he read the prophecy of Haggai, uttered more than five hundred years before—"The desire of all nations shall come"—he might have exclaimed, "He *has* come!"

Page 22

In John's reading in the Old Testament it seems strange to us that some things made a deeper impression on him than did others, and that he understood some things so differently from what we do, especially about the Messiah's kingdom. He noticed the things about His power and glory, but seems to have misread or overlooked those about the dishonor, and suffering and death that would come upon Him. We read in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, how He was to be "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, ... wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, ... brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers, ... and make His grave with the wicked." We know that all this happened. We think of a suffering Saviour. We wonder that John did not have such things in his mind. But in this he was much like his teachers, and most of the Jews. Though, as we have imagined, his family and some others were more nearly right than most people, even they did not have a full knowledge or correct understanding of all that the Old Testament Scriptures taught, concerning these things.

But at last John learned more concerning Christ than any of them. We are yet to see how this came to pass. For the present we leave him in Bethsaida, increasing in wisdom and stature. So is also his cousin in Nazareth, of whom let us gain a more distinct view before He is revealed to John as the Messiah.

CHAPTER VIII

Jesus the Hidden Messiah

"There has been in this world one rare flower of Paradise—a holy childhood growing up gradually into a holy manhood, and always retaining in mature life the precious, unstained memories of perfect innocence."—*H.B. Stowe*.

The aged Simeon in the Temple, with the infant Jesus in his arms, said, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord, ... in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"—the expected Messiah. But it was not for Him to proclaim His having come. The aged Anna could not long speak "of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem," or anywhere else. For awhile the shepherds told their wonderful story, and then died. The angels did not continue to sing their hymn of the Nativity over the plains of Bethlehem. The Wise Men returned to their own country. Herod died, and none thought of the young child he sought to kill. The hiding in Egypt was followed by a longer hiding of another kind in Nazareth. The stories of those who gathered about the infant cradle were soon forgotten, or repeated only to be disbelieved. Mary, and her husband Joseph—who acted the part of an earthly father to the heaven-born child—carried through the years the sacred secret of who and what Jesus was.

Page 23

We long to know something of the holy childhood. We have allowed our imagination to have a little play, but this does not satisfy our curiosity, nor that desire which we have concerning all great men, to know of their boyhood. What did He do? Where did He go? What was His life at home, and in the village school? Who were His mates? How did He appear among His brothers and sisters? So strong is a desire to know of such things that stories have been invented to supply the place of positive knowledge; but most of them are unsatisfactory, and unlike our thoughts of Him. Thus much we do know, that, "He grew in wisdom and stature" not only, but also "in favor with God and man."

It has been finally said; "Only one flower of anecdote has been thrown over the wall of the hidden garden, and it is so suggestive as to fill us with intense longing to see the garden itself. But it has pleased God, whose silence is no less wonderful than His words, to keep it shut." That "one flower" refers to Jesus' visit to Jerusalem just as He was passing from childhood to youth, when He tarried in the Temple with the learned Rabbis, asking them questions with which His mind was full, and making answers which astonished them.

[Illustration: THE PROPHET ISAIAH *Sargent* Page 50]

A most interesting question arises in connection with that visit; Did Jesus then and there learn that He was the Messiah? When He asked His mother, "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house," or, "about My Father's business?" did He have a new idea of God as His Father Who had sent Him into the world to do the great work which the Messiah was to perform?

There were eighteen silent years between His first visit to Jerusalem, and the time when, at thirty years of age, he made Himself known as the Messiah. They were spent as a village carpenter. He was known as such. No one suspected Him to be anything more. In His work He must have been a model of honesty and faithfulness. We can believe that "all His works were perfect, that never was a nail driven or a line laid carelessly, and that the toil of that carpenter's bench was as sacred to Him as His teachings in the Temple, because it was duty."

In His home He was the devoted eldest son. It was of that time that the poet sings to Mary;—

"O, highly favored thou, in many an hour
Spent in lone musings with thy wondrous Son,
When thou didst gaze into that glorious eye,
And hold that mighty hand within thine own.

"Blest through those thirty years when in thy dwelling
He lived as God disguised with unknown power,



And thou His sole adorer, His best love,
Trusted, revering, waited for His hour.”
—*H.B. Stowe.*



Page 24

Joseph had probably died, and the care of Mary fell especially on Jesus. But in the carpenter's shop, in the home, and wherever He was, He had thoughts and feelings and purposes hidden from all others. They were such as no mere human being could have. He was alone in the world. In silence and solitude His communions were with His Father in heaven. Calmness and peace filled His soul. His great work was before Him, ever present to His thought. So was His cross, and the glory which should come to God, and the blessedness to man, when His work on earth was done. As John long after declared, "He was in the world and the world knew Him not." As a great King He had come from heaven, and was waiting for a certain one to proclaim His coming. Toward that herald let us turn and with John listen to his voice.

CHAPTER IX

"The Prophet of the Most High"

"Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, ... "Yea, and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready His ways."—*Luke* i. 67, 76.

"There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all men might believe through him."—*John* i. 6, 7.

"He was the lamp that burneth and shineth."—*John* v. 35.

"In devotional pictures we see St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist standing together, one on each side of Christ."—*Mrs. Jameson*.

Salome and Mary had a cousin named Elizabeth. Her home was not in Galilee, but in Judaea—the southern part of the Holy Land—probably near Hebron, possibly near Jerusalem. She had a son also named John. He was so called because the angel Gabriel, who had told Mary to call her son Jesus, had said to Zacharias, an aged high priest, the husband of Elizabeth, concerning their son, "Thou shalt call his name John." This name means "The Gift of God." Born in their old age he seemed especially such to them. He was a gift not only to his parents, but to his country and mankind. While Zebedee and Salome had not been told what their John should become, Zacharias and Elizabeth had been told the future of their John. The angel declared, "He shall be great." Had he said only this, we might think he meant great in power, or learning, or in other things which men call great, but which the Lord does not. Gabriel said, "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord."

Mary visited the home of Elizabeth and the happy cousins praised God for what He had revealed to them concerning their sons.

The greatness to which Elizabeth's son was to attain was that of a prophet—greater than Elijah, or Isaiah, or any other who had lived before him. With exultation Zacharias said to him, "Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High."



Page 25

God had arranged that he should be ready to proclaim the coming One just before the Messiah should appear among men. For this reason he was called the Fore-runner of the Messiah. But though Jesus was in the world, the time for His appearance as the Messiah had not yet come.

John was greatly saddened by what he saw of the wickedness of men, even those who professed to be the people of God, and their unfitness to receive Him for whom they were looking. Led by the Spirit of God, John retired to the wilderness of Judaea, in the region of the Dead Sea and the Jordan, for meditation and communion with God. But he was not entirely concealed. There were a few who heard of his sanctity and wisdom, sought instruction from him, and abode with him, becoming his disciples. He seems to have had special influence over young men. Our Bethsaidan boys have now grown to be such since we saw them in their early home, and as school and fisher boys. They were now toiling at their nets with their fathers, closer than ever in their friendship for each other, still waiting and watching for Him whom they had been taught from their earliest days to expect. We think of their interest in the rumors concerning the prophet of Judaea.

[Illustration: THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE *H. Hofmann* Page 54]

As the two pair of brothers talk together, we can hear one of them saying, "I must see and hear and know for myself. I will lay aside my fishing, and go to the wilderness of Judaea." To this the others reply, as on another occasion to Peter, "We also come with thee." Leaving the quiet shores of Gennesaret, they follow the road each has traveled annually since twelve years of age on his way to the feast in Jerusalem.

They met the hermit in the wilderness. His appearance was strange indeed. His hair was long and unkempt; his face tanned with the sun and the desert air; his body unnourished by the simple food of locusts and wild honey. His raiment was of the coarsest and cheapest cloth of camel's hair. His girdle was a rough band of leather, such as was worn by the poor,—most unlike those made of fine material, and ornamented with needlework. His whole appearance must have been a great contrast to his gentle and refined namesake from Galilee.

The solemn earnestness of the prophet, and the greatness of the truths he taught, were well calculated to excite the greatest interest of the young Galileans. They looked upon him with increasing conviction that he was "a prophet of God." Instead of returning to their homes, they remained in Judaea and attached themselves to him, and became known as his disciples. In their new service there was a new bond of union for themselves, which—though they then knew it not—would lead to another yet stronger.

At last "the word of the Lord came unto" John, when he was about thirty years old, calling him to a more public ministry. So "He came into all the country about Jordan." Beginning in the south he moved northward from place to place.



Page 26

Rumors concerning the new strange prophet spread rapidly. "There went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan." Shepherds left their flocks and flocked around him. Herdsmen left their fields, and vine-dressers their vineyards, and Roman soldiers their garrisons, for the wilderness. Rabbis left their parchments in the synagogue, the schoolroom and the home, to hear the living voice of a teacher greater than any one of them. Self-righteous Pharisees and common people followed them. Some sought the preacher only from curiosity; some to hear the truth. John's preaching was summed up in two phrases,—“Repent ye,” and “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

[Illustration: STREET SCENE IN NAZARETH *From Photograph Page 55*]

His preaching was bold, clear, earnest, and forcible. Many yielded to the power of his preaching. They were baptized by him; for this reason he was known as St. John the Baptist, or the Baptizer.

John of Galilee was one of those who obeyed the injunction “Repent ye.” With all his lovable qualities which we have imagined in his childhood—his refinement, his faithfulness in his home and synagogue, and his honest toil—he saw that within himself which was not right in the sight of God. He repented of his sins and sought forgiveness. A lovely character became more lovely still, to be known as the loving and beloved one. He was ready to welcome the Messiah of whom the Baptist told. He had no fears that another Judas of Galilee had arisen. He believed that the promises concerning the coming One were being fulfilled. He was a faithful disciple of the prophet and forerunner, to whom he must have been a great joy, but who was ready to have him, whenever the time should come, transfer his following to the Lord of them both. For how long a period the two Johns continued together, we do not know, but it was drawing to its close.

[Illustration: VISIT OF MARY TO ELISABETH *Old Engraving Page 58*]

CHAPTER X

The Messiah Found

“They found Him not, those youths of noble soul;
Long seeking, wandering, watching on life’s shore,
Reasoning, aspiring, yearning for the light.

* * * * *

“But years passed on; and lo! the Charmer came,
Pure, simple, sweet, as comes the silver dew,
And the world knew Him not,—He walked alone,



Encircled only by His trusting few.”
—*H.B. Stowe.*

“We”—Andrew and John—“have found the Messiah.”—*Andrew to Peter.*

“We”—Andrew and Peter, James and John, and Philip—“have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth.”—*Philip to Nathanael.*

“The fulness of the time was come,” not only when “God sent forth His Son,” but “when the Son should reveal Himself to the world.” So Jesus came forth from His retirement in Nazareth to enter on His public ministry.



Page 27

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John to be baptized of him.” What a meeting! Probably the first in their lives. It is no marvel that John said, “I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?” But he obeyed Jesus’ bidding, “Suffer it to be so now.” “So He was baptized of John in Jordan.” Then followed the prayer of the Son of God; and then “the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him”; and then the voice of the Father, saying, “Thou art my beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased.” Let us remember that voice: we shall hear it again.

And then for forty days and forty nights Jesus was hidden completely from the face of man, alone on the Mount of Temptation, with wild beasts, until ministering angels come to Him from heaven.

He returned to the region where the Baptist was preaching. “John seeth Jesus coming to him.” His eye is turned away from the multitude thronging about him, and is fastened upon Jesus only. His thought is of Him of whom Isaiah wrote long before—“He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” Pointing to Jesus he exclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!”

The Galilean disciples were doubtless present, and were deeply moved by their Master’s exclamation. Because of their previous training in their homes, and in the wilderness with the prophet, it must have kindled in them deeper emotion than it did in any others of that astonished throng. But it was to become deeper still. This was especially true of two of them.

[Illustration: THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA *From Photograph Page 59*]

The next day, probably a Sabbath, was to become a memorable day in the history of the two and of their master. It was a morning hour. We think of the three as alone, before the multitudes had gathered, or the day’s ministry of preaching and baptizing had begun. They walked along the bank of the river communing together of Him whom they had seen the day before. In the distance John saw the Figure again. In awe and reverence, and with a fixed gaze, “John was standing, and two of his disciples; and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God!” The exclamation was in part that which they had heard in the presence of the multitude; but that was not enough. It was as if John had said, “Behold the Messiah for whom our nation has waited so long; Him of whom our Scriptures have told us; Who has been the theme in our homes from childhood; of whom I have been the prophet and herald. He it is of whom I have taught you, my disciples, as you have followed me in the wilderness until I now can bid you behold Him. Henceforth follow Him.”

John says that one of the two was Andrew. There is no doubt that the other was himself. We shall notice in his writings that he never uses his own name. This incident is our first definite knowledge of him. All we have said hitherto is what we think must

have been true, judging from circumstances of which we do know, and from his character revealed after this time.



Page 28

We long to know whether “Jesus as He walked” came near the Baptist, and with what salutation they met, and what were their parting words, for this seems to be the last time of their meeting. If Mary and Salome were sisters, and Elizabeth was their cousin—as we use the term—John of Galilee and Jesus were related to John the Baptist in the same way. But there was a closer relationship than that of family. In this Jesus was the connecting link between the two Johns. “One on each side of Christ”—this was their joy and their glory. One was the last prophet to proclaim His coming: the other was to be the last evangelist to tell the story of His life on the earth.

When the Baptist the second time uttered the cry, “Behold the Lamb of God!” “the two disciples heard Him speak and followed Jesus.” Their old master saw them turn from him without a jealous, but with a gladsome thought. Encouraged by him, and drawn by Jesus, with reverential awe, in solemn silence or with subdued tone, they timidly walked in the footsteps of the newly revealed Master. The quickened ear before them detected their footsteps or conversation. “Jesus turned and saw them following,” as if to welcome their approach, and give them courage. He then asked them a question, “What seek ye?” It was not asked because He was ignorant, but to encourage them in familiar conversation, as He did at other times. Their answer was another question, “Rabbi, where abidest Thou?” They longed for a fuller opportunity than that on the road to be taught by Him. “Come and see,” was His welcome reply. “They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day.” First by a look, then a question, then an invitation, then hospitality, they were drawn to Him, and into His service.

[Illustration: TRADITIONAL PLACE OF CHRIST’S BAPTISM *From Photograph Page 63*]

Often in after years must Andrew and John have recalled that walk with Jesus, and “rehearsed the things that happened,” and said one to another, “Was not our heart burning within us while He spake to us in the way?” So afterward did other two, of Emmaus, when “Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.” But the eyes of Andrew and John were not “holden that they should not know Him.” The pleasing dream of years was past: they were wakening to a glorious reality. Their following of Him in that hour has been claimed to be “the beginning of the Christian Church.”

That day of abiding with Jesus was the first of many days these disciples spent with Him, knowing Him more and more perfectly, and the truth which He alone could reveal. They were then passing from the school of the Baptist to that of the Greatest Teacher. What was said in those sacred hours? John has reported other private interviews with Jesus, but concerning this one his lips are sealed. Did he tell of his surprise and joy to learn that He, Jesus, the son of his aunt, Mary, was the Messiah of whom his mother, Salome, had taught him from his early days? Were there any memories of childhood—of the sandy beach of Bethsaida, or the hills of Nazareth; or, were all such thoughts buried in newer and deeper question? Was there any hint of their future relation too

sacred for others then to know? Was this the beginning of that sweet intimacy so private then, but of which the whole world should hear in all coming time?



Page 29

After the evening meal in Emmaus the two disciples there “rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem,” with joyful and quickened steps to report the glad tidings of what they had seen and heard. Andrew and John were to be of the number who, in three years, would hail these disciples from Emmaus. Like them, Andrew and John hastened away from the sheltering booth on the Jordan bank on a like errand. But they went not together, nor to an assembled company. They each went in search of his own brother—Andrew for Peter, and John for James. Andrew found his brother first. Afterward John found his: so we infer from his narrative. Each carried the same tidings, “*We have found the Messiah!*”

[Illustration: THE BAPTISM OF JESUS *Old Engraving* Page 64]

Andrew is thought to have asked leave to bring his brother. “He brought him to Jesus.” When John wrote that simple statement, he did not think how much was included in it concerning Peter and his own relation to him. As little did Andrew think to what the promptings of his brotherly affection would lead. His mission seems to have been that of bringing others to Christ—his own brother, the lad with five loaves and two fishes, and certain Greeks who desired to see Jesus. John only has made note of these three incidents. In so doing he has given to us the key to the character of his friend, and caused him to be held in everlasting remembrance. Andrew is remembered in the cross that bears his name; in his anniversary day; in the choice of him for the patron saint of Scotland; in orders of knighthood, and in Christian societies of brotherhood named after him, as an example and inspiration to the noblest of Christian endeavor—that of bringing old and young to Christ.

It is John alone who wrote of that memorable day on the Jordan. His impressions were deep and lasting. The record of them is so fresh and minute that we seem to be perusing a notebook which was in his hands when these events were transpiring. His memory is distinct of the exact location of each; of the attitudes and movements of the actors,—as when “John stood,” and “Jesus walked,” and “Jesus turned”; of the fixed and earnest look of Jesus—as on Andrew and John in the way, and Peter in the place of His abode. John remembered the words of the Baptist, and of his two disciples, and of Jesus. He remembered the day not only, but that “it was about the tenth hour when he accepted the invitation to come and see where Jesus was tarrying.”

All these pictures hung unfading on the walls of John’s memory. This was not strange. It was the day and the hour for which he looked through all his early years, and to which he looked back in his latest. Then was the beginning of a most blessed relationship, alone in the history of mankind; that which was to make his name immortal, and radiant with a halo which encircles none other.



Page 30

“The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.” So writes John, recalling to us the Galilean group of Bethsaidan boys. When we became familiar with their names, there was no prospect that the two pairs of brothers and their friend would head the roll of disciples of the Messiah for whom they were looking. But such a day had come. We know not that Philip had a brother whom he could bring to Jesus, as did Andrew and John, but he was as full of wonder and joy as they. Like them he must go in search of some one to whom he could repeat their exclamation. The search was not long. John tells the result. “Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found Him.” But this simple declaration is not enough for Philip. He recalls those Scripture scrolls in his home and the Rabbi’s school, and the synagogue, that told of the coming Messiah, and so he exclaims, “We have found Him of whom Moses and the Law, and the Prophets did write”—thus repeating the phrase we were to remember till we should hear it again. Nathanael, coming to Jesus declared in wonder and admiration, “Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.” His name was added to those of the Galilean group.

The disciples now numbered five or six—Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and probably James. These were one half of a completed circle to surround Jesus. All but one of them were of the Bethsaidan band. John has drawn lifelike pictures of them, more complete than those of the other apostles,—except that of Judas, whom he contrasts with all the rest. We have thought of James and John as nearest to Jesus in kinship. We are already beginning to think of John as nearest in discipleship.

CHAPTER XI

John a Wedding Guest

“There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and Jesus also was bidden, and His disciples to the marriage.”

“The mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine.”

“The ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine.”

“This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”—*John*
ii. 1-3, 9, 11.

Again John notices the very day on which occurred a remarkable event, of which he had a vivid recollection. It was the third, as is probable, after the departure of Jesus from Jordan for Galilee.



He was invited to a wedding in Cana. His disciples were invited also, we may suppose out of respect to Him. James and John might have been there without the rest. It is possible that they were relatives of the family, as their aunt Mary is thought to have been. She was there caring for the guests, and what had been provided for them. The marriage feast lasted several days. Jesus and His disciples



Page 31

were not present at the beginning. After their arrival, Mary discovered that the wine had given out. Like the sister of another Mary, in whose house Jesus was a guest, she was troubled because it looked as if the family had not provided for all the company. She had probably been a widow for several years, and as Jesus was her oldest Son, she had gone to Him for advice and help when in trouble at home. So now “when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine.” We are not to suppose that she intended to ask Him to do a miracle. Perhaps she simply said, “What shall we do?” as many a housekeeper has said when in doubt. He made a reply which seems harsh and unkind, unless we understand His meaning, and imagine His words to have been spoken in a kind tone, and with a kind and loving look. She was not offended by His reply. Thinking He might do something—she knew not what—she said unto the servants, “Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.”

It might be said of Him at this time, as it was at another, “He knew Himself what He would do.” He gave three simple commands to the servants. The first was, “Fill the water-pots with water.” They did as Mary had said, and obeyed Him. Watching them until the jars were full, He said, “Draw out now and bear unto the ruler of the feast.” This was probably a special friend of the family, who with Mary was directing it. While Jesus’ command was being obeyed, His first miracle was performed. “When the ruler had ‘tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was,’ ... he called the bridegroom,” and in a playful joke praised the goodness of the wine which he imagined had purposely been kept to the last.

“The water now become wine” is the brief statement of the first of the thirty-six recorded miracles of our Lord. It was seen by the six disciples. They witnessed the first of the miracles since those in the days of Daniel, of which they had read in their Scriptures, one of the last of which was at the impious feast of Belshazzar. There the holy cups from Jerusalem were used in praising false gods of silver and gold, in the hands of the king and his lords, as they read the handwriting on the wall, interpreted by Daniel. How different the feast in Cana. There was no fear there. When the disciples saw the cup in the hands of the hilarious governor, and heard his playful words, they were not in a sportive mood. Theirs was that of astonishment and reverence at the miracle. No Daniel was needed to interpret the meaning of that water changed into wine. John tells us what they understood thereby—that “Jesus manifested His glory.” He showed the power which belongs to God only.

John immediately adds, “And His disciples believed on Him.” This is the first time they are spoken of as such. As yet they were disciples only. At the end of the blessed week in which they had “found the Messiah,” there had been formed a close companionship which was to become closer still. But the time had not yet come for them to leave their homes and business, and attend Him wherever He went. They were not yet Apostles. The marriage feast had become to them more than a social festival. Their Lord had

intended that it should be so. Their faith in Him on the Jordan, was strengthened in Cana.

Page 32

“This *beginning* of miracles,” says John. What was this beginning? It was not the healing of the sick, nor raising of the dead, nor supplying a hungry company with bread, nor furnishing a necessary drink. There was no display. Jesus stretched forth no rod over the water-jars, as did Moses over the waters of the Nile when the same Divine power changed them into like color, but different substance, and with a different purpose. The first manifestation of His glory was for “the increase of innocent joy.”

When John had read the story of Jesus in the first three Gospels, and found no record of this miracle, did he not feel that there had been a great omission which he must supply? Nowhere else does Jesus appear just as He did at that feast, though other incidents of His life are in harmony with it. It is sometimes said He “graced” that marriage feast, as royalty does by mere presence. But He did more. He entered into the innocent festivities, and helped to their success. A glance into that village home is a revelation of Jesus in social life, and His interests in human friendships and relations.

We must remember that it was only innocent pleasures that He helped to increase, in which alone we can seek the presence of His Spirit, and on which alone we can ask His blessing.

This marriage feast must have been of special interest to John, if, as is supposed, the family was related to Mary and probably to him. This would seem to be her first meeting with Jesus since He bid her farewell in Nazareth, and left the home of thirty years, to be such no longer.

Did not Mary, mother-like, call John aside from the festive scene and say to him, “What has happened at the Jordan? tell me all about it.” I seem to hear John saying to her; “It is a wonderful story. Of some things I heard, and some I both saw and heard. You know of the ministry of your cousin Elizabeth’s son John—of his preaching and baptizing. Jesus was baptized by him. Immediately they both had a vision of ‘the Spirit of God descending upon Him; and lo! a voice from heaven saying, This is My beloved Son.’ Then John was certain who Jesus was. He told the people about the vision, saying, ‘I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God.’ And one day when my friend Andrew and I were with him, he pointed us to Jesus saying, ‘Behold the Lamb of God,’ whom we followed, first to His abode on the Jordan, and then here to Cana. We were disciples of John, but now are *His* disciples, and ever shall be. You know, aunt Mary, how from childhood I had thought of Him as my cousin Jesus, and loved Him for His goodness. From what my mother has told me, which she must have learned from you, there has been some beautiful mystery about Him. It is all explained now. Hereafter, I shall love Him more than ever, but I shall think of Him, not so much as my cousin Jesus, as the Messiah for whom we were looking, and as the Son of God.”



Page 33

How the mother-heart of Mary must have throbbed as she listened to her nephew John's story of Jesus on the Jordan. How it must have gone out toward him, because of his thoughts about her son, and his love for Him. How grieved she must have been as she thought of her own sons who did not believe as John did concerning their brother Jesus. The time was to come when Jesus would make her think of John, not so much as a nephew, as a son.

In that festive hour, Mary too learned the lesson that human relationships to Jesus, however beautiful, were giving way to other and higher. The words He had spoken to her at the feast, like those He had uttered in the Temple in His boyhood, and the things that had happened on the Jordan, showed her that henceforth she should think, not so much of Jesus as the Son of Mary, as the Son of God.

In thoughts she must have revisited the home of Elizabeth, whose walls, more than thirty years before, had echoed with her own song, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

CHAPTER XII

John and Nicodemus

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto Him by night."

"We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen."—*John* iii. 1, 2, 11.

"There is Nicodemus, who visited Jesus by night—to the astonishment of St. John—but who was soon afterward Jesus' friend."—*John Watson*.

"The report of what passed reads, more than almost any other in the gospels, like notes taken at the time by one who was present. We can almost put it again into the form of brief notes.... We can scarcely doubt that it was the narrator John who was the witness that took the notes."—*Alfred Edersheim*.

Three incidents mentioned by John only comprise all we know of Nicodemus. In each of them he refers to him as coming to Jesus by night. That visit seems to have made a deep impression on John. We may think of Him as present at the interview between the Pharisee and the "Teacher come from God."

We are not told why Nicodemus came at a night hour. Perhaps he thought he could make sure of a quiet conversation, such as he could not have in the daytime. Perhaps he did not want to appear too friendly to Jesus until he knew more about Him, though he already had a friendly feeling toward Him. Perhaps he was afraid of the Sanhedrin, the



highest Jewish Court. Most of its members hated Jesus and had commenced their opposition to Him, which was continued during His life, and resulted in His death. Not so felt Nicodemus, though a member. At a later day he opposed their unjust treatment of Him. If he did not think of Jesus as the Messiah, he yet thought of Him as a prophet, "a teacher come from God." He was anxious to know more. So cautiously and timidly he sought Jesus in the night.



Page 34

We suppose that, at the time of Jesus' death, John had a home in Jerusalem. It has been thought possible that when and before he became a disciple of Jesus he had an abode there, attending to the business connected with the sale of fish from his home in Galilee. There Jesus might be found in the guest-chamber on the roof of the oriental house which was reached by an outside stair. Nicodemus had no invitation, such as Andrew and John had to Jesus' abode on the Jordan, but he had an equal welcome to John's home, whither he had come on a like errand, though with different views of Jesus, to learn of Him. He sees still burning in the upper chamber the night lamp of Him whom he is to know as "the light of the world." He ascends the stair, stands at the door and knocks; and it is opened. Apparently without lengthy salutation, or introduction, he makes known his errand in the single sentence, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these signs that Thou doest, except God be with Him." He might have added, "What shall I do?" Jesus gave a very solemn answer to his question,—“Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He taught him that doing certain things, and not doing others, was not enough; he must *be* good. To be good there must be a change of spirit. As a child has a beginning of its earthly life, he must have the beginning of a spiritual life, or he cannot be fitted for the kingdom of God in this world or that which is to come. That great change comes “from above,” from God Himself.

Listen to some of the wonderful truths Jesus taught to Nicodemus. They are for us as well as for him. 1. Those who do not have this change of spirit must “perish.” 2. But none need to perish, for “eternal life” has been provided. 3. This life is through the suffering and death of the “Son” of God. 4. God “gave His only begotten Son” to do all this. 5. God did this because He “so loved the world.” 6. This “eternal life” can be had only by “believing on” the Son of God. 7. “Whosoever” so believes may have eternal life.

All this is included in one sentence:

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

This is the golden text of St. John's Gospel, and of the whole Bible. Through all the ages it has sounded, and will sound to the end of time, as the gospel itself.

John must have been a most attentive listener to all that Jesus said. This was at the beginning of His Lord's ministry. Fresh truths easily impressed him. They were the buddings of which he was to see the bloom, of whose fruitage he would partake most abundantly, and which he would give to others long after the echo of the Great Teacher's words had died in the chamber where he and Nicodemus heard them.

It was long after that nightly visit that John wrote his account of it, including the golden text whose keyword was *Love*. It is supposed that he wrote his Epistle about the same

time. That text was so present in his thought that he repeated it in almost the same words: "Herein was the Love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."



Page 35

At the close of his long life, in which he had learned much of the power and justice and holiness and goodness of God, it seemed to him that all these were summed up in the one simple saying, "God is love."

[Illustration: THE FIRST DISCIPLES *Ittenbach* Page 67]

When John bade Nicodemus good-night, he could not look forward to the time, nor to the place where we see them together again. John the lone apostle with Nicodemus and his Lord at the beginning of His ministry, is the lone apostle at the cross. Then and there, he recalls the first meeting of the three as he beholds the Rabbi approaching. This is his record; "Then came also Nicodemus, who at the first came to Jesus by night."

There is a tradition concerning Nicodemus that after the Resurrection of Jesus, his faith in Him was strengthened. The "teacher come from God" he now believed to be the Son of God. The timid Rabbi became a bold follower of the Lord whom he once secretly sought. For this he was no longer permitted to be a ruler of the Jews. He was hated, beaten, and driven from Jerusalem. At last he was buried by the side of the first martyr Stephen, who had baptized and welcomed him into the fellowship of the Christian Band.

CHAPTER XIII

St. John and the Samaritaness

"He cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar.... Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said unto her, Give Me to drink."—*John* iv. 5-7.

"Probably John remained with the Master. They would scarcely have left Him alone especially in that place; and the whole narrative reads like one who had been present at what passed."—*Edersheim*.

The vale of Sychar is one of the most interesting spots in the Holy Land. Jacob's well is one of the sacred sights about whose identity there is no dispute. I count the Sabbath when my tent overshadowed it one of the most memorable of my life. It was a privilege to read on the spot John's story of the Master tarrying there, and of the truths there revealed.

John tells us that Jesus, on His way from Judaea to Galilee, passed through Samaria, arrived at Jacob's well, and "being wearied with His journey sat thus on the well," while His disciples went "away unto the city to buy food."

It is not necessary to suppose that all of the six went to the neighboring city. Probably John remained with the Master. His narrative is one of the most distinct word-paintings in the whole Gospel story. He writes like one who saw and heard all that passed, not



only when the other disciples were with him, but also and especially what happened when they were absent from the well.

[Illustration: THE MARRIAGE AT CANA *Old Engraving* Page 72]

John tells us that Jesus “was wearied with His journey.” The observing, tender-hearted disciple saw and remembered his Master’s weariness. In this simple, brief record, he reminds us of Jesus’ humanity, and so how much He was like ourselves. How much of his Lord’s weariness and suffering the sympathizing disciple was yet to witness.



Page 36

We may think of John alone with Jesus, seated in an alcove which sheltered them from the sun. They may often have been thus found in loving companionship. With what delight would we read of those private interviews. How sacred and precious they must have been to John.

At the well, what subjects there were for conversation, suggested by memories of the spot. Here Abraham had erected his first altar in Canaan to the true God, whom Jesus was about to reveal more perfectly. This was the parcel of ground which Jacob had bought, and in which he had buried the false gods of his household. Here Joseph had been a wanderer seeking his brethren. This was the place which Jacob when dying had given to his son Joseph, on whose tomb Jesus and John looked as they talked together. The twin mountains of Ebal and Gerizim looked down upon them, reminders of the days of Joshua, when the two Israelitish bands called to each other in solemn words, and the valley echoed with their loud "Amen." Not every Jew could have the personal interest in that well, such as the two weary travelers could claim, through the family records of their common ancestor even to Abraham. It was not on account of John that these records had been kept, but of the "Son of Man" at his side, whom he had learned to look upon as "the Son of God." As they sat together John could not look into the future, as his Master could, and think of the time when they would be in the region together with an unfriendly reception; nor of that other time when John would come to it again and have a friendly reception, but with memories only of his Lord.

[Illustration: BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST *Old Engraving* Page 74]

But their visit alone did not last until the return of His disciples. It was suddenly interrupted. "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water." She was no fitting companion for them. She was not prepared to enter into their thoughts and feelings. She was an ignorant woman of the lower order of society, sinful, and not worthy of the respect of those who knew her. "Give me to drink," said Jesus—fatigued, hungry, thirsty. She gazed upon Him with astonishment. She knew by His appearance and dress that He was a Jew. She supposed that any such would be too full of hatred and pride to ask even such a simple favor of a Samaritan. Her answer showed her surprise. He gently spoke of her ignorance of Him, and of a richer gift than the one He asked, and which He was ready to bestow. It was "living water"—"the grace and truth of which He was full." Changing her manner toward Him, and addressing Him more respectfully, she asked, "Art *Thou* greater than our father Jacob?" She meant, "Surely Thou art not greater." How strange this must have sounded to John as his eye turned from her, to Him before whom Jacob would bow in adoration could he have joined that circle on the spot where he had built an altar many years before. Jesus explained more fully the difference between the water for which He had asked, and that which He would give. He had asked a very small favor of her; He would bestow the greatest of gifts, even eternal life.



Page 37

Not fully understanding Him, and yet believing He was some wonderful person, she repeated His own request, but with a changed meaning,—“Sir, give me this water.” Perhaps to make her feel her sinfulness and to lead her into a better life, He showed her that though He was a stranger, He knew her past history. Her astonishment increased and she exclaimed, “Sir, I perceive that Thou art a Prophet.” Ashamed, she quickly changed the subject.

She and her people claimed that Mount Gerizim was the holy place of the Holy Land; while the Jews said that Jerusalem was “the place where men ought to worship.” She wanted the Prophet she had so unexpectedly met to decide between them. With calmness, solemnity and earnestness, He made a sublime declaration to her, meant for Jews, Samaritans and all men. It was this: “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.... The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshipers. God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

But this did not satisfy her. It was all so new and strange, so different from what she and her people believed, that she was not prepared to accept it from an unknown stranger, though he seemed to be a prophet. She thought of One greater than she thought He could be, One who was wiser than any prophet then living, or who ever had lived, One who she believed was to come. So, with a sigh of disappointment, her only reply was, “I know that Messiah cometh; ... when He is come, He will declare unto us all things.”

How the quickened ear of John must have made his heart thrill at the name Messiah. Until a few weeks before, he too had talked of His coming, but already had heard Him declare many things which no mere prophet had spoken. Is he not prompted to break the silence of a mere listener? Is not his finger already pointed toward Jesus? Are not the words already on his tongue?—“O woman, *this is He*,” when Jesus makes the great confession he made before Pilate, saying to the Samaritaness, “I that speak unto Thee, am He.”

So it was that He whose coming the angels in their glory announced to the shepherds in Bethlehem, He whom the Baptist proclaimed to multitudes on the Jordan, He whose glory was manifested to the company in Cana, made Himself known to this low, ignorant, sinful, doubting, perplexed stranger, in words “to which all future ages would listen, as it were with hushed breath and on their knees.”

These words of Jesus to the woman, “I am He,” closed their conversation, so unexpected to her when she came with her water-pot, in which she had lost all interest. Her mind and heart had been filled instead. She had drawn from Him richer supplies than Jacob’s well could ever contain. From that hour she thought of it, not so much as Jacob’s well as the Messiah’s well.



Page 38

The disciples returning from the city, coming within sight of Jesus, “marveled that He was speaking with a woman.” The people then and there had a mistaken idea that to do so was very improper. The disciples were the more astonished because she was a Samaritan. But they had such a sense of His goodness, that they did not dare to ask, “Why talkest Thou with her?”

She was interrupted in her conversation with Jesus, by the coming of the disciples. She left her water-pot at the well. Too full of wonder and gratitude to stop to fill it, or to be hindered in carrying it, she hastened to the city with the good news of what she had seen and heard. So had Andrew and John each carried the good news to his brother saying, “We have found the Messiah.” She believed she had found Him. But the good news seemed almost too good to be true, and she wanted the men of the city to learn for themselves. So she put her new belief in the form of a question, “Is not this the Christ?” A great number obeyed her call, and believed with her that Jesus was the Messiah.

[Illustration: THE HILL OF SAMARIA *Old Engraving* Page 84]

Meanwhile the disciples asked Him to eat of the food they had brought. But His deep interest in the woman, and joy in the great change in her, was so great that for the moment He felt no want of food. So He said to them, “I have meat to eat that ye know not.” ... “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me.” Never again did the disciples marvel that their Master talked with a woman, or with a sinner of any kind. We seem to see John, weary and hungry as his Master, but unmindful of bodily discomforts, because of his intense interest in what is passing. His record does not give his own experiences, but we can imagine some of them. His watchful eye detects every movement and expression of his companions,—the calm, earnest, loving, pitying look of Jesus; and the excited, scornful, surprised, joyful, constantly changing looks of the woman. He first marks her pertness of manner; then the respectful “Sir”; then the reverence for a prophet; and at last the belief and joy in the Messiah.

Whether or not John was witness to all that passed at the well, or whether Jesus gave him the minute details, or whether the Samaritaness, during the two days that Jesus and His disciples remained in Sychar, told Him all, his story is one of the most lifelike in the Gospels, teaching the greatest of truths.

If that noon hour at Jacob’s well was a memorable one for the woman, it was also for John. For him Christ was the Well of Truth. Of it he was to drink during blessed years. Standing nearest to it of any mortal, receiving more than any other, he was to give of it to multitudes thirsting for the water of life.

CHAPTER XIV

The Chosen One of the Chosen Three of the Chosen Twelve

Page 39

“Walking by the sea of Galilee, He saw two brethren, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And He said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left the nets, and followed Him. And going on from thence He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. And they straightway left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”—*Matt.* iv. 18-22.

“He was the Supreme Fisher, and this day He was fishing for them.”—*Stalker.*

“When it was day, He called His disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom also He named apostles, Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip....”—*Luke* vi. 13, 14

“Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John.”—*Matt.* xvii. 1.

“One of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.”—*John* xiii. 23.

“We know not all thy gifts,
But this Christ bids us see,
That He who so loved all,
Found more to love in thee.”

Once more we find the two pair of brothers on the shore of Gennesaret, not together, but within hailing distance. All night long they have toiled at fishing without any reward. The morning has dawned. Wearied and with the marks of labor on their persons and their garments, their empty boats drawn upon the beach, they are mending their nets which have been torn by the waves, and cleansing them from the sand which has been gathered instead of the fishes they sought.

[Illustration: JACOB'S WELL *From Photograph* Page 91]

Meanwhile a multitude of people in the neighboring field is listening to the Master. The fishermen may hear His voice, but their nets must not be left in disorder; they must be put in readiness for another trial, which, though they know it not, will be most abundantly rewarded.

They cannot go to Him, but He comes to them with a greeting and a command, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.”

The time had come for Him to gather His first disciples more closely about Him for instruction and preparation and service in His kingdom. They had seen proofs of His Messiahship. They had been with Him long enough to know something of His work and

teachings, and what was included in His call to follow Him. They understood it meant leaving their boats and nets by which they had earned their daily bread, and even leaving their homes, and going with Him wherever He went, trusting Him for support, ready to do anything to which all this would lead them. Their belief in Him, and their love for Him, were enough to secure immediate obedience to the new command.



Page 40

In their faithfulness in their duties in their former life, in the carefulness in mending their nets, in the patience and perseverance during the nights of fruitless toil, in their thoughtfulness, skill and experience in catching fish—in such things Christ found likeness of what He would make them to become—fishers of men. From their old business He would teach them lessons about the new,—of His power, the abundance of His store, and the great things they were to do for Him and their fellow-men. Before they leave it, He makes Himself a kind of partner with them. Having used Simon's boat for a pulpit for teaching, He tells him to launch out into the deep and to let down his net. It encloses a multitude of fishes. Andrew and James with their brothers whom they had called to Jesus, the first company to follow Him from the Jordan, are the first to do so in a new and fuller sense from the shores of Gennesaret, where they first learned of Him.

There is something touching in the special reference to the call of the sons of Salome, whose relation to Mary first interested us in them. It is said of Jesus, "He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother and He called them. And they immediately left their father in the ship with the hired servants. They forsook all and followed Him."

[Illustration: THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES *Old Engraving* Page 94]

What reminders do we here have of the past! James and John, true brothers in childhood, united in business in early life, now hand in hand commence life anew. Having become the help, and much more the companions of their father they must leave him to the companionship of hired servants. But in this hour of sundering family ties, the loving father and loving sons rejoice in Jesus as their Master whom they all willingly obey.

He chose twelve whom He called Apostles. Such was the glorious company, composed of young men, the most honored in all earthly history, to be His closest companions, His missionary family. During the remainder of His life He would train them; and when leaving the world trust their faithfulness and devotion in extending His kingdom. The two pair of brothers and their early friend Philip are the first named of the Apostles. The early Bethsaidan group composed almost one-half of the apostolic company. But within that circle there was another. Three of the twelve were chosen by the Lord for closer intimacy. They were to be special witnesses of His greatest power, His most radiant glory, and His deepest sorrow upon earth. They were Peter, James and John. Two of the three, Peter and John, were to be united in special service for their Lord while He was with them, and so continue after He was gone. But of the twelve Jesus drew one closest to Himself, most loved and the most glorious of them all: it was John.



Page 41

In seeking a reason for Christ's fixing the number of His disciples, some have found a fancied one in the twelve precious stones of Aaron's breastplate. The most precious stone would represent John, the chosen one of the Great High Priest. In his own vision of the new Jerusalem "the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones." "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb." It was that Lamb of God to which he had been pointed on the Jordan, and to which he points us as he beholds Him by the "glassy sea." As John read those names did he not recall the day when Jesus chose twelve whom "He named Apostles"?

CHAPTER XV

John in the Home of Jairus

"He suffered no man to follow with Him, save Peter, and James, and John. And they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue."

"And taking the child by the hand, He saith unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel I say unto thee, Arise. And straightway the damsel rose up, and walked."—*Mark v. 37, 38, 41, 42.*

The first scene in which we find John as one of the favored three is in the house of mourning. It was the home of Jairus in Capernaum. He was a ruler of the synagogue. "He had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying." He hastened to Jesus, fell at His feet, worshiped Him, and besought Him saying, "Come and lay Thy hands on her that she may be healed; and she shall live."

Did he not have in mind Peter's wife's mother, living in the same town, and how Jesus "came and took her by the hand and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her"? Jesus started for the house, followed by a throng, some doubtless full of tender sympathy for their townsman, and some curious to see what the wonder-worker would do.

A messenger from Jairus' home met him saying, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." But the father's faith in Jesus was not limited to the power to heal. Could not the hand that had already touched the bier of the widow's only son, be laid on his only daughter, with life-restoring power? Could not the command spoken in Nain "I say unto thee, arise," be repeated in Capernaum, and in like manner be obeyed? Without heeding the messenger's question about troubling the Master, he cried out yet more earnestly, "My daughter is even now dead; but lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live." But the father's entreaty was unnecessary, for Jesus was already responding to the messenger's words as, turning to Jairus, He said, "Fear not, only believe."



How eagerly the curious crowd hastened toward the ruler's home, because of a possible miracle, even raising the dead. But they were not to be witnesses of such display of Divine power. Yet even if the throng be excluded, might not the Twelve, following close to Jairus and Jesus, expect admission to the home? What was the surprise and disappointment of nine of them to be forbidden admission by Him whom they were following. But so it was. "When He came to the house He suffered not any man to enter in with Him, save Peter, and John and James, and the father of the maiden, and her mother."



Page 42

[Illustration: RAISING THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS *H. Hofmann* Page 99]

This is the first we know of this distinction in the apostolic band. We almost hear the nine saying, "Why is this?" Can it be that, in that hour, at the door of this house of mourning, there was awakened the feeling of jealousy which afterward appeared? Did it inspire in the three a sense of superiority, and ambition to be higher in position than the rest in the kingdom of their Lord? Did James and John especially hope for promotion above the nine, and even the ten including Peter? So it will appear. But all this was to pass away when the band better understood the nature of their Lord's kingdom, and possessed more of His spirit.

The death-chamber was too sacred a place for numbers, even for the nine, whose admittance would be more fitting than that of the hired mourners whom Jesus excluded with them. He had His own wise reasons for the choice of the three. We do not wonder that John was one of them. With all his manifest failings—which he at last overcame—he was the most like his Master. In that death-chamber the Lord was to show His "gentleness and delicacy of feeling and action" such as John could understand, and with which he could sympathize.

"And taking the child by the hand, He saith unto her, Talitha, cumi." We are glad that Mark has preserved for us the very words that must have thrilled the heart of John. They had been interpreted, "My little lamb, my pet lamb, rise up." In them was a lesson for John. They were a revelation of his Master's tenderness toward childhood. It was a needed lesson, which he finally learned.

As John and Peter saw the returning life of the little maid, and heard their Master's command "that something should be given her to eat," they thought not of the time when they should stand together again near the same spot with the same Master, Himself risen from the dead, and hear Him utter another command, "Feed My lambs."

As they with James followed their Lord out from the death-chamber—such no longer—and heard His charge "that no man should know" what had happened, the very secrecy drew more distinctly the line of the inner circle about the three. It was not to be erased during the Lord's earthly sojourn with the twelve.

CHAPTER XVI

John a Beholder of Christ's Glory

"We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father."—*St. John* i. 14.



“We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory ... when we were with Him in the holy mount.”—2 *Peter* i. 16-18.

“As brightest sun, His face is bright;
His raiment, as the light, is white,
Yea, whiter than the whitest snow.
Moses, Elias, spake with Him.
Of deepest things, of terrors grim,
Of boundless bliss, and boundless woe,
Of pangs that none but Christ may know.



Page 43

“A voice sublime I panting hear,
A voice that conquers grief and fear,
Revealing all eternity;
Revealing God’s beloved Son,
Born to redeem a world undone;
Filled with God’s fulness from on high,
To gain God’s noblest victory.”
—*Trans. Kingo of Denmark.*

We may think of the twelve as Christ’s family with whom He often prayed apart from the multitude. One such occasion was in Caesarea Philippi. The prayer was followed by two earnest and solemn questions. “He asked the disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of Man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

How strange these sayings must have sounded to St. John and his Jordan companions, who had been directed by the Baptist to their Messiah. Three of them were soon to witness Elijah’s tribute to Him, as being more than the “Son of Man.” Such already had He become to them. He was more interested in the opinions of the disciples than in those of the multitude. So He asked with emphasis, “But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.”

But in the mind of Jesus even this blessed revelation was not enough for His believing yet frail disciples. Even the three, the most enlightened of the twelve, needed a clearer vision of Him and His kingdom, and strength for trials they were to endure. So they needed His prayers.

“From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things, ... and be killed.” He needed prayer also for Himself. So “Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves.” The favored three, who had witnessed His power in the raising of Jairus’ daughter, were to be witnesses of his glory. Luke says He “went up into the mountain to pray.” Not Tabor,—for which mistaken tradition has claimed the honor—but Hermon was doubtless the “high mountain.” This kingly height of the Lebanon range was a fitting place for Jesus the King. The glittering splendor of its snows is a fitting emblem of His character. It was the highest earthly spot on which He stood. From it He had His most extensive views. Here He had His most exalted earthly experience. Peter rightly named it “the Holy Mount” because of its “glory that excelleth” all other mountains.

We do not know the thoughts or feelings or words of the nine when Jesus “taketh with Him the three.” We wonder whether their wonder was at all mixed with jealousy. As



they saw the three “apart by themselves,” their lessening forms ascending Hermon, and at last hidden from their view by the evening shades, can it be that the dispute began which cast a gloom over their Lord when He descended from that mountain of glory?



Page 44

And the three themselves—what were their emotions as they looked down upon their companions in the plain below, and upward to the height whither their Master was bringing them. Did they whisper together concerning the word He had just spoken—that He must die. They must have had such mingling of feelings as they never had before.

It was the evening after a Sabbath. At the close of the weary summer day, after the long and steep ascent of the mountain, and in the strong mountain air, it is no wonder that the three disciples were “weighted with sleep.”

Luke not only tells us that Jesus went up “to pray” but also that “He prayed.” Would that John had recorded that prayer, as he did those supplications in the Upper Room and in Gethsemane. “As we understand it,” says Edersheim, “the prayer with them had ceased, or merged into silent prayer of each, or Jesus now prayed alone and apart.”

On the banks of the Jordan, where Jesus and the three had met, while He “was praying, the heavens were opened,” and the dove-like form descended upon Him, and His Father’s voice was heard. And now “as He prayed,” there came an answer, immediate and glorious: “He was transfigured before them.”

The disciples though “weighted with sleep,” “having remained awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him.” It was many years after this vision that John, speaking for the three, testified, “We saw His glory.”

“The fashion of His countenance was altered.” “His face did shine as the sun.” “His garments became exceeding white; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them,” “white as the light,” “glistening,” “dazzling.”

“Behold there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him.” How did the disciples know the Lawgiver and the Prophet? We are not told. There may have been given them some supernatural powers of discernment. They may have known by the conversation between Jesus and His celestial visitants, as, in earthly language with heavenly tone, they “spoke of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem,” of which He had told them on the plain below.

It was that Moses who fifteen hundred years before came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the law in his hands, when Aaron and the children of Israel stood in awe before His shining face. But now He had come, not from the mount which Paul describes as “darkness,” but unto that other whose snowy whiteness has given it the name of Lebanon. He had come from Heaven, to yield homage to Him to whom He would sing with us,

“My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in Thy Word;

But in Thy life the Law appears,
Drawn out in living Characters.”

“The children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon Moses for the glory of His face.” In the “excellent glory” by which Peter describes the scene on Hermon, the whole figure of His Lord was bathed in light. But the glory of that vision was not yet complete. A cloud, brighter than any on which the moon was shining, enwrapped Jesus and Moses and Elijah. It was no other than the Shechinah, once more returning to the earth,—“the symbol of Jehovah’s presence.”

Page 45

This cloud overshadowed the disciples. As its light gleamed upon them, they were filled with reverential fear. They were ready to do the heavenly visitors immediate and humble service. But the mission of the two was ended. Their last words of comfort to Jesus had been spoken. If they could be detained, it must be done quickly. So, awed and confused by the strange vision, yet longing for its continuance, the disciples, Peter being the spokesman, proposed to make booths for their Master and His two heavenly visitors. But the two had gone, and the crown of glory that had enveloped them spread to the disciples, filling them with yet increasing awe. The silence that had followed Peter's call was broken. "There came a voice out of the cloud, This is My Beloved Son; hear ye Him." Startled by such a response, "they fell on their face and were sore afraid." They did not dare to look about them. The Cloud of Glory lifted. How long they lay prostrate and trembling, we do not know. At last a hand gently touched them. It was the hand of Jesus. His voice bid them, "Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only."

[Illustration: THE TRANSFIGURATION *Old Engraving* Page 106]

The Transfiguration was over. Its grand purpose was accomplished. Master and disciples were prepared for the labors and trials to which they must return. The night ended. As the morning sun glistened on the peaks of Hermon, while darkness yet overspread the plain below, Jesus descended with the three, to the nine awaiting their return.

"And as they were coming down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of Man should have risen again from the dead. And they kept the saying, questioning among themselves what the raising again from the dead should mean."

Peter's and John's memories of that vision of their Lord were ever distinct and precious. When it was no longer a secret, Peter wrote in ecstasy of the hour in which they "were eyewitnesses of His majesty, ... when they were with Him in the holy mount."

Let us notice the record by John. In the beginning of his gospel he says "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." By this he means that the Son of God became a man, and lived among men who witnessed His life. But of all the events of that life which John had seen, there was a special one in his mind, which not all men had witnessed. So he adds, "We beheld His glory." This probably refers to the Transfiguration and the Shechinah, which he and Peter and James had seen. And then he thinks of how much greater Jesus was than John the Baptist, "a man sent from God," "to bear witness of" Him. He thinks also of the great Lawgiver of whom he says, "the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

We imagine that ever after the Transfiguration, John thought of Moses and the Shechinah together. Had he with his companions been permitted to build three

tabernacles or booths, "one for Moses," what delightful visits John would have made him there, like that one which he had made in the abode of Jesus on the banks of the Jordan.



Page 46

[Illustration: MOSES ON MT. PISGAH *Artist Unknown* Page 109]

I seem to hear Moses telling John something of his own history when on the earth, and teaching him lessons from it in words like these: "This is not the first time I have heard the Lord's voice, from out this cloud of glory. Out of the burning bush He called me, 'Moses, Moses.' At Sinai He said, 'Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud.' And again He appeared in 'a pillar of a cloud,' and said, 'Behold thou shall sleep with thy fathers.' I saw not that cloud again on earth until you beheld it. My thoughts were about death. I prayed about it, not as your Master and mine has done in preparation therefor, but that I might not then die. This was my prayer: 'Let me go over I pray Thee and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon,'—the very mountain where we now are. But the Lord would not hear me. I prayed yet again more earnestly, and the Lord said unto me, 'Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.' From yonder mountain of Nebo He showed me all the land we now see from Hermon; and then I died. The Lord buried me in yonder land of Moab. No man knoweth my sepulchre unto this day. I died, my great hope of forty years disappointed. My repeated earnest prayer was ungranted then, but it has not been unanswered. This 'goodly' Lebanon, to which I looked from Nebo with longing eyes, is more 'goodly' now than when it sadly faded from my dying vision. You, John, are one of the witnesses to the answer to my dying prayer. Never did the Shechinah at Horeb, or Sinai, or the Tabernacle, seem so resplendent as on this Mount Hermon. Here it has enwrapped Elijah and me, the favored two whose mission Gabriel might have envied. We were sent down from heaven to talk with Jesus concerning His death, of which He has told you. In view of it He has lead you, the favored three hither to pray. It was while He prayed that ye 'beheld His glory.' Not only for me, but much more for Him, is Hermon *the mount*—'The Holy Mount,' because the mount of Prayer, and therefore the mount of Transfiguration."

CHAPTER XVII

St. John's Imperfections

"Master, we saw one casting out demons in Thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us."—*John*.

"Lord, wilt Thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?"—*James and John*.

"Grant us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand, in Thy glory."—*James and John*.

"And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John."—*Mark* x. 41.



Page 47

John was not perfect. There were unlovely traits in his otherwise noble character. It is not pleasant to write of his faults. We would gladly be silent concerning them. But there are four reasons for making record of them. 1. If we think of his virtues and not of his faults, we do not have a just view of his character; it is one-sided; we have an imperfect picture. 2. We see how Jesus loved him notwithstanding his imperfections. While hating his sins he loved the man. 3. Remembering John's faults, we give him all the more credit when we see how he overcame them, and what he became under the example and teachings of Jesus. 4. Having failings ourselves, we are encouraged by the full and truthful story of John's life, to overcome our own sins. Such are good reasons why the imperfections of good men like David and Peter and John are recorded in the Bible.

In speaking of John's boyhood, we hinted at some of his faults. Let us now notice them more particularly as given by the Evangelists. Sometimes he was evidently included when Jesus rebuked the disciples for some wrong they had said or done. On one occasion, he alone is mentioned; on two others he and his brother James are rebuked together. The first recorded incident, showing imperfection, is soon after the descent from Hermon. Jesus seems to have accompanied Peter to his home in Capernaum, to which the other disciples followed them. The favor which Christ showed the three in taking them to the mount may have caused a feeling of pride in them, and of jealousy in the nine. Pride was John's besetting sin, as we shall see. A great privilege had been granted him. Without telling the secret of Hermon to his fellow-disciples, he may, by improper word or act, or both, have shown a feeling of superiority, which displeased them, as the same spirit did on another occasion. At any rate, something led to a dispute who should be the greatest in the kingdom which they believed their Lord was to establish. This was a sad revelation of the ambitious spirit of these good men. It was probably on the way to Capernaum that an incident happened in which John seems to have been the chief actor. He exhibited a spirit of intolerance—a want of patience and forbearance toward a man whom they met. He was a disciple of Christ, in whose power he had such faith that he was enabled to cast out evil spirits in His name. He was doing a good work such as Christ gave His apostles power to do. They prided themselves in it, and felt as if they only had a right to it. So John, speaking for the rest, as if he had authority, forbade this man to use the power any more. On their reaching the house of Peter, Jesus asked, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" Perceiving that He knew their thoughts, they were silent with shame, until one of them, yet unconquered by His question of reproof, asked Him "Who is the greatest?" He did not answer the question immediately. As if in preparation for something

Page 48

special, "He sat down and called the twelve" about Him; He uttered one reported sentence, "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and minister of all." And then "He called a little child to Him and set him in the midst of them." It was His object lesson. Through it He rebuked and taught them. He made childhood a test of character. With solemnity and earnestness He declared, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

That child-spirit included simplicity, meekness, harmlessness, obedience, dutifulness, trustfulness and, especially at this time, humility.

The Lord's declaration must have startled the disciples. They thought of themselves as His chosen ones, superior to others, having special powers, and destined to special honors which none other might claim. In a spirit contrary to His declaration, they were contending who should be the greatest in His kingdom. He revealed to them, then and there, the nature of that kingdom which they had so greatly misunderstood.

Upon one at least, Christ's lesson was not altogether lost. That was John. He recalled his proud and unjust treatment of the humble man whom he had forbidden to do good work in the name of Christ. He saw that his own spirit had been contrary to that of which Christ had just spoken. He finally confessed his fault. But the lesson of his Master was not perfectly learned, or if learned, was not, as we shall see, perfectly obeyed. Though the beloved, he was still an imperfect, disciple, as is shown in another incident.

At the time when Jesus lived, and in the country where He journeyed, travelers were generally welcomed as guests in any home. Though strangers, they were treated as friends. This was a necessary kindness because there were no hotels such as we have in our day and country.

But to this hospitality there was a noted exception. We have noticed the hatred of the Samaritans to the Jews. This was especially shown to pilgrims going up to Jerusalem to attend the feasts.

Jesus was on His last journey thither. As ever, He was teaching and healing on the way. His own heart was burdened with the thought of what He was to endure, but He was steadfast in His purpose to reach the Holy City, willing there to suffer and to die. Nearing the first Samaritan village, He sent messengers before Him to prepare for Himself and His company. Even the common hospitality was refused, and that in a most unfriendly manner. The Master was treated as a teacher of falsehood. Even the kind healer was not permitted to enter the village. He was a Jew on His way to

Jerusalem. In the minds of the villagers, this was more than enough to balance all the good in Him.



Page 49

James and John especially were indignant at the unkind treatment. They felt keenly the insult to their Lord, whom they believed was on His way to Jerusalem to establish His Kingdom, and was worthy of the most generous hospitality and the sincerest homage. They had a fresh remembrance of the glory in which they had seen Him on the Holy Mount in company with Elijah. They were reminded of that prophet's experience more than nine hundred years before. It was this: Ahaziah, a king of Israel, was seriously injured by a fall from the balcony of his house. He sent to inquire of the false god Baalzebub whether he should recover. God sent Elijah to reprove him for his idolatry and insult to Himself. The king sent a captain with fifty men to seize the prophet, but they were consumed by fire from heaven. Another captain and his fifty men were also destroyed in like manner.

Such a punishment James and John would call down on the Samaritans. They felt that it would be just. If fitting for the enemies of Elijah, how much more for those of Jesus. They were ready to give the command which God permitted Elijah to give, if Jesus would allow them to do likewise. And so, being displeased, provoked, revengeful, with a fiery spirit, they said to Him, "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?" But Jesus "turned and rebuked them," and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

It was contrary to the spirit of meekness and love manifest in His declaration to them, "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And so He inspired them with another spirit, as He quietly led them "to another village." We sadly turn to another scene in which imperfection in the beloved disciple is especially revealed.

The favored brothers had not yet learned perfectly the lesson of humility which their Lord had tried to teach them. They were still devoted to Him, following Him, loving Him. But they still misunderstood what He said about His death, and His kingdom, in which they hoped for the most honored places. They wanted to be assured of promotion above their fellow-disciples. They were earnest in an unholy desire. They had a bold, ambitious request to make of the Lord. It was the chief occasion on which their pride was revealed. We have two accounts of it. In one of them the mother Salome appears as the speaker. She brings her sons to Jesus, prostrates herself before Him, and offers this petition, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy Kingdom." She had a loving mother's pride. She was the aunt of Jesus, and perhaps felt that because of this relationship, her sons had a right which the other Apostles could not claim. She had given them to His service, and had proved her own love and devotion to Him by following Him with other women of Galilee, ministering to His comforts. Meanwhile James and John, according to another account, themselves urged their mother's request saying, "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand, in Thy glory."



Page 50

Mother and sons shared in the spirit of self-seeking and self-exaltation. But we must not forget that it was faith in Him as the Messiah, and in His coming “glory,” that led them to show it, though in a mistaken way.

In sorrow and tenderness, and pity for their ignorance, Jesus replied, “Ye know not what ye ask.” While His eye rested on them, His thoughts were on another scene. It was a cross with Himself upon it, and a malefactor on each side, instead of the brothers in their pride. As John at last stood by it, did he recall the hour of his mistaken ambitious request, which had never been repeated. There had been no need that the Lord should say to him, as to Moses, “Ask me not again,” yet like Moses, he was to receive a most glorious answer in another form. In his pride, with an earthly throne in mind, he had asked, “Grant that I may sit with Thee in Thy glory?” Having conquered his unholy ambition there was fulfilled in him the promise of His Lord in glory, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne.”

The time came when there was no longer occasion for the other ten apostles to be “moved with indignation concerning James and John,” because of their pride and ambitious seeking. This John is the disciple whom, with all his imperfections, Jesus loved most of all; this the man known as the most lovable of men; this the one who well-nigh reached human perfection through his ardent and ever increasing love for Jesus; this the one who is called *the Apostle of Love*.

CHAPTER XVIII

John and the Family of Bethany

“He entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at the Lord’s feet, and heard His word.”—*Luke* x. 38, 39.

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha.”—*John* xi. 1.

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”—v. 5.

“Jesus ... said, ... Lazarus is dead.”—v. 14.

“Jesus wept.”—v. 35.

“He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth.”—vs. 43, 44.

“As he (John) gives us so much more than the synoptists about the family at Bethany, we may infer that he was a more intimate friend of Lazarus and his sisters.”—A. *Plummer, D.D.*



In four sentences Luke draws an unfinished picture of a family group, whose memory has become especially precious because of what John has added to it. His probable familiarity with the family made this possible. No wonder if he felt that the original picture must be enlarged and retouched. The place where that family lived had become to him too sacred a spot to be called simply “a certain village.” Martha was more than “a certain woman,”

Page 51

who though hospitable, was distracted in her housekeeping. Mary was fairer than Luke had painted her. John had seen her do more than sit at Jesus' feet. He manifestly felt that the resurrection of Lazarus was too great an event to be omitted from the gospel story, as it was by the other Evangelists who, when they wrote, might have endangered the life of Him whom the Jews sought to destroy. John's heart demanded a stronger tribute to Mary than Matthew or Mark had given. Let him be our guide to the blessed home. With his eyes let us see Jesus' relation to it, and with his ears listen to the Master's words there spoken.

[Illustration: BETHANY *Old Engraving* Page 120]

As he opens the door we see a family of wealth, refinement, hospitality and affection. Its members are of kindred spirit with him: and so would be attracted to him, and he to them. But there was a special bond of union. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." Such is the tender passing remark of John who elsewhere calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." These four form a group of special objects of Christ's affection. They ardently loved Him. We may suppose that John's relation to the family of Bethany was closer than that of any other disciple. This fitted him to make us familiar with their characters, and many incidents of their home.

John was with Jesus in Bethany in Peraea, when there came the sad, brief, confiding message from Mary and Martha, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Doubtless it touched the heart of the apostle as well as that of his Master, whose response he records: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." We are reminded of John's own words concerning the change of water into wine: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory."

Jesus' plan for Lazarus included a delay of two days in Bethany of Peraea. Meanwhile His heart went out toward Bethany in Judaea. So did John's. But, though Jesus tarried, it can be said, as on another occasion, "He Himself knew what He would do." While John was wondering, waiting and watching, perhaps he remembered how the nobleman's son was healed in Capernaum when Jesus was in Cana, and thought it possible that the messenger would be told to say to the sisters, "Thy brother liveth."

When at last Jesus proposed to His disciples that they all go to Judaea, John's love may have contended for a moment with fear, as they protested, because of danger from His enemies: but it was for a moment only. When Jesus said, "Let us go unto him," we almost wonder that it was not John the loving, nor Peter the bold, but Thomas the sometimes unready, that said concerning Jesus, "Let us also go that we may die with Him." But we imagine that John was the readiest to go, and kept the closest to his Master in the pathway to Bethany in Judaea.



Page 52

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” said Jesus. Though all of the disciples were thus addressed, we think of John as especially including Jesus and himself in that word “our,” because of the nearness of their relation to the afflicted family. And then that other word “sleepeth”—it must have carried him, as well as James and Peter, back to the home of Jairus, where they heard the same voice to which they were now listening say, “The child is not dead but sleepeth.”

We almost wonder that the three did not turn to their fellow-disciples and say that “Jesus had spoken of the *death* of Lazarus,” while “they thought that He spake of taking rest in sleep.” But evidently not so; and when Jesus “said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead,” doubtless John was the saddest of them all, because of his special interest in him. The full record—the only one of what transpired in that sad, joyful home—shows how closely John watched every movement of Jesus and the sisters, and how carefully he noted what they said. We may give credit to his memory, even with the aid which he says was promised the disciples in their remembrance. He notes the coming of Martha to meet Jesus, while “Mary sat still in the house;” Martha’s plaintive cry, “Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;” the conversation between her and Jesus concerning the resurrection; the sudden change from it to His asking for Mary; Martha’s return to the house and whispering in her sister’s ear, “The Master is come and calleth for thee;” the hurried obedience to the call—all these incidents are recorded by John with the particularity and vividness of an eyewitness.

It appears as if Jesus would not perform the intended miracle until the arrival of Mary. John’s account of their meeting is full of pathos. He watches her coming, notices the moment she catches sight of Him through her tears, and her first act of falling down at His feet, and her repetition of Martha’s cry, “Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.” He looks into the faces of both as “Jesus sees her weeping.” He contrasts Mary’s real and deep sorrow with the outward and heartless outcries of pretended grief, at which Jesus “groans in spirit,” because a seeming mockery in the presence of His loving friend. John measures the depth of the Lord’s “troubled” spirit by His outward movements. He opens to us His heart of hearts in the brief, tender record, “Jesus wept.” Where in the whole story of His life do we gain a keener sense of His humanity, especially His tenderness and sympathy. What a revelation we would have missed if John had been silent, but the emotion of His own heart had been too deep to allow any such omission. “Jesus wept.” As Professor Austin Phelps declares, “The shortest verse in the Bible is crowded with suggestions.”

While John is our guide to the tomb of Lazarus, and more than that, the sincere mourner with the afflicted sisters, he is yet more the disciple of Jesus, receiving new and lasting impressions of divine truth and of his Master, which are embodied in his story.



Page 53

John recorded seven miracles of our Lord. The first was that of turning water into wine. The last was the raising of Lazarus. In both of them He points us to the same glorious purpose. He says that in the first, Christ “manifested forth His glory,” and that the second was “for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” And now standing with Martha by the yet unopened tomb, John hears their Lord remind her of His assurance that if she believed, she “should see the glory of God.” That hour had come. The Lord had commanded, “Take ye away the stone.” John was most attentive to every act of the passing scene. His eyes glanced from the stone to his Lord. As soon as the command concerning it was obeyed Jesus lifted His eyes upward, and said, “Father”—calling upon Him with whom He was to be glorified.

John had stood at the bedside of the only daughter of Jairus, and heard the command, “Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.” By the bier of the widow’s only son he had probably heard that other, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” And now standing by the open door of the tomb of the only brother, was He not listening for a like command? He had not long to wait. The prayer of his Lord was ended. The tone of prayer was changed to that of command. “He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth. And he that was dead came forth.” John describes his appearance. He was “bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin.” When Jesus saith unto them, “Loose him and let him go”—away from the excitement and curiosity of the heartless mourners—who was so ready as John to obey the command, while welcoming his friend back to life? Who could so fittingly escort him from the darkened tomb to the relighted home, with the sisters still weeping—but for joy.

In John’s old age when he recalled this resurrection scene, he seems to have had a special memory of the younger sister’s sorrow. He speaks of the “Jews which came to Mary” in the hour of her sadness.

But His memory of that resurrection day was tinged with gloom. He traced back, from the cross on Calvary to the tomb in Bethany, the way by which his Lord had been led by His enemies. “From that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death.”

[Illustration: THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS *Old Engraving* Page 126]

It is tradition, not John, which tells us concerning Lazarus that the first question which he asked Christ after He was restored to life was whether He must die again; and that being told that he must, he was never more seen to smile. But John, better than tradition, tells of another scene in which we imagine his smiles were not restrained. To it let us turn.

CHAPTER XIX

John’s Memorial of Mary

“When Jesus was in Bethany, ... there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster cruse of exceeding precious ointment, and she poured it upon his head, as He sat at meat.”—*Matt.* xxvi. 6, 7.



Page 54

“Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”—*Matt. xxvi. 13.*

“It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair.”—*John xi. 2.*

“There is something touchingly fraternal in the momentary pleasure which He (Christ) appears to have taken in the gift of the alabaster box.”—*Austin Phelps.*

“Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And He that brought him back is there.

“Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Rose from the living brother’s face,
And rests upon the life indeed.”
—*Tennyson.*

That is an impressive picture drawn by Saints Matthew and Mark, of a scene in Bethany, where an unnamed woman brought a flask of ointment which she poured on the head of Jesus, thus exciting murmuring and indignation against her, who was defended by Him, with assurance of perpetual remembrance of her deed.

Yet a comparison of the accounts of these two Evangelists with the story given by John, suggest the thought that he was not satisfied with the picture. His remembrance of the things that happened before and after that scene, his friendship for the family of Bethany, his understanding of the Master’s feelings and thoughts, his sense of justice to himself and to his fellow-disciples, the omission of an important figure in the grouping, and especially his tender sympathy for the unnamed heroine of the story—these things demanded in his mind additions and re-touchings to make the picture complete.

Let us imagine ourselves before him while he is reading the manuscripts of Matthew and Mark, long after they were written. He tells us of incidents, unmentioned by them, that enlarge and make clearer our view of the scene. We note the impressions we may suppose were made on him at the time of the event, and were still fresh in his old age when he tells the story.

“I remember distinctly”—so he might say—“this scene in Bethany, both what these two writers report, and what they do not. The hour was drawing near when my Lord must die. So He had told me; but somehow I did not understand that this must be. It seems



strange to me now that I did not, as well as one of my friends did, who realized the nearness of the sad hour. I had arrived with Him at Bethany 'where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead.' It was a great joy to meet again the friend whom I had welcomed from the tomb."

Page 55

It is true, as here written by Mark, that Jesus “sat at meat.” But this does not tell the whole story. The people of Bethany wished to unite in doing Him honor: “So they made Him a supper there.” It was fitting that it should be “in the house of Simon” whom Jesus had healed from leprosy, and who was probably a relative or special friend of the family loved by Jesus. I wonder that their names do not appear in the story given by these two Evangelists: I could not forget them. I remember how “Martha served” at the table, as if in her own home, seeming more of a hostess than a guest; and how “Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him” who had bid him rise from the tomb; and how Mary showed her gratitude for her brother’s restoration, and love for his Restorer. To me that supper loses half its interest without the mention of these names, so suggestive of near relation to the Lord. Here I read, “There came unto Him a woman.” That is indeed true; but I find no hint of who this unknown woman was. Could Matthew probably present, have forgotten it? Had Mark absent, never been told?

Matthew says she had “an alabaster cruse of precious ointment,” which Mark explains was “spikenard very costly.” This also is truly said, for I learned that “Mary ... took a *pound* of ointment of spikenard very precious.” This she could well afford. Some have suggested that perhaps, like oriental girls of fashion, she had bought it in her pride, but after coming under the influence of Jesus, had left it unused. But I am more inclined to believe she intended it from the first as an expression of overflowing love.

Mark says “she broke the cruse.” I remember, as she crushed the neck of it, all eyes were turned upon her, watching her movements. Lazarus, reclining at the table, gazed upon her with brotherly interest; and Martha, moving around it glanced at her with sisterly affection. There was one man whose expression was something more than curiosity. In it there was a shade of displeasure.

These two Evangelists tell that Mary “poured the ointment upon” and “over” the “head” of Jesus. This was a common custom in rendering honor and adoration. But it did not satisfy Mary, if the Lord could only say with David, “Thou anointest my *head*.” Her anointing was so profuse that He could say,—as Matthew testifies that He did—“She poured this ointment upon My body.” But I would testify to another act, fuller yet of meaning. She “anointed the *feet* of Jesus.” This meant far more than the washing of feet, as an humble act of hospitality and honor. It was an unusual act of adoration. I saw bathed in spikenard what I have since seen bathed in blood. But that was not all. Making of her long tresses a fine but unwoven towel, “she wiped His feet with her hair”; kneeling in devotion where she had loved to sit in learning.



Page 56

I noticed the glowing rapture in her face, and an occasional glance into that of her Lord, unmindful of the presence of all others, while He looked kindly upon her. It was then that I discovered that “the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.” But, alas, not so with the perfume of her deed. “There were some that had indignation among themselves, ... and they murmured against her”: so says Mark. “When the disciples” saw Mary’s deed “they had indignation”: so says Matthew. It is true that signs of dissatisfaction came from the group of the disciples, but it is the voice of one of them that has ever since rung in my ears, to whom “the unworthy grumbling should be assigned.” In justice to the disciples he should not be unnamed. Mary was still in the act of her devotion to Jesus. “But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, which should betray Him, saith, ‘Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?’ This he said, not because he cared for the poor”—not he—“but because he was a thief and, having the bag, took away what was put therein.” He it was who from the first showed displeasure at Mary’s act. His words were both an exclamation and a question, a sort of soliloquy, and yet addressed to anybody who might hear and answer: but they needed no answer. It was too late to gather up the ointment already used, and sell it for the poor or for any other purpose. But Judas’ purpose I well understand. I see through his hypocrisy now more clearly than I did then.

[Illustration: TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM *Gustave Dore* Page 138]

With the sharp, reproving voice of Judas, Mary glanced into his angry face. This would have filled her with terror had she not immediately looked into that of Jesus beaming upon her. One hand of His was over her, as if in protection and benediction, while the other waved in a reproving gesture. As I read how He answered the question of Judas with another, “Why trouble ye her?” and then commanded, “Let her alone”; and then declared, “She hath wrought a good work upon me,” I recall the changing expressions of His face, and His tones of indignation and affection.

I was startled by the reason He gave for letting her alone,—that she might preserve what remained of the ointment, not for the poor, but to be used for His burial, near at hand.

She it was of whom I have spoken who understood better than I or any of my fellow-apostles, that our Lord’s life was nearing its end.

I find here in the records of Matthew and Mark the assurance of the Lord concerning the unnamed woman of whom they have written. It is this, “Verily I say unto you, ‘Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.’ Let it be known that this woman was Mary of Bethany, then at Jesus’ feet. Henceforth let her name be linked with her deed.”



Page 57

Thus ends the words we have imagined St. John might have spoken with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark in his hand. The additions to their story are suggested by his own Gospel. He has drawn a beautiful picture of Mary, in brighter colors and more delicate shades than has any other. To him artists are chiefly indebted for their ideas of her. His own character was so completely in harmony with hers that he understood what his fellows did not. By them she was misjudged and condemned; he saw and admired the sweetness of her spirit, and the purity and nobleness of her motive. Upon the monument reared by other Evangelists, he inserted her name. In her he saw a reflection of her Lord and his. His memory and his record alone secured for her in particular the fulfilment of the Lord's prophecy concerning the remembrance of her deed. Every Christian home in the whole world has been, or will be, filled with the spiritual fragrance of her offering. But the prophecy is more than fulfilled. That which she hath done is not only "*spoken of*," for in many a home inspired by her spirit, her name has been given as a memorial of her whom John distinguished from all others as "that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair." It was of Mary that Jesus said, "She hath done what she could."

John's picture of her is all the brighter because of his dark background of Judas. He has forever associated their names in contrast. In his mind, the anointing was ever suggestive of the betrayal. He remembered how the "thief" asked his hypocritical question at the moment of the greatest perfume; and how Judas was planning the betrayal while Mary was meditating on the death to which it would lead. It appears almost certain that Judas, stung by the Lord's reproof of him and defence of Mary, ready to sell his Lord's body for a less sum than he valued the ointment, turned from the feast in anger, hastening to the chief priest with the cursed question and promise, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?" Wheresoever the gospel is preached throughout the whole world, that also which *this man* hath done is spoken of—but not for a memorial of him.

John's picture of Mary, Judas and Jesus is a most suggestive grouping. What harmony and contrast! What light and shade! What revelation of love and hate, of friendship and enmity, of devotion and sacrilege! To no other scene does Christ sustain quite the same relation. The friendship of His first feast—that of Cana—is deeper and tenderer in His last, at Bethany.

There is something sublime in this Son of God having all power, pleading with Judas that Mary might be permitted to continue her service of love for Him.

Add John's own likeness to the three at whom we have been looking, and what a grouping we have—Jesus with His loved Mary, and John the most beautiful illustration of human friendship, and Judas the *betrayed*. Let imagination complete what no artist has attempted.



Page 58

When John recalls the odors of Mary's ointment filling the house, he seems to catch a refrain from Solomon's song, and addresses it to her,—“Thine ointments have a goodly fragrance; thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the maidens love thee.”

It is not the “maidens” alone, especially the Marys of Christendom, that “love” her, but all to whom the gospel is preached, who join in John's refrain, while thanking him for his “memorial of her.”

CHAPTER XX

John a Herald of the King

PROPHECY:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: ... lowly, and riding upon ... a colt.”—*Zech.* ix. 9.

PROPHECY FULFILLED:

“He sent two of his disciples, saying, Go your way into the village over against you; in the which as ye enter ye shall find a colt tied: ... loose him, and bring him.... And they brought him to Jesus: and they threw their garments upon the colt, and set Jesus thereon.”—*Luke* xix. 30, 35.

PROPHECY UNDERSTOOD:

“These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him.”—*John* xii. 16. “Daughter of Zion! Virgin Queen! Rejoice! Clap the glad hand and lift th' exulting voice! He comes,—but not in regal splendor drest, The haughty diadem, the Tyrian vest; Not arm'd in flame, all glorious from afar, Of hosts the chieftain, and the lord of war: Messiah comes!—let furious discord cease; Be peace on earth before the Prince of Peace!”

—*Heber's Palestine.*

Zechariah foretold the coming of Christ five hundred years before the angels over Bethlehem heralded His birth. The prophets saw Him as the Messiah-king, but not such a ruler as most of the Jews of Christ's day expected. Even the disciples, believing Him to be the Messiah, had mistaken views of His kingdom. Yet He was the King foretold by



the prophets; the Son of David who sang of Him as the “King” and as the “Lord’s anointed”; the Messiah or Christ; the king of the Jews not only, but of all men. As such He would make a triumphal entry into the “City of the Great King.” This would not be in the pride and pomp of an earthly conqueror, but in the “lowly” manner which Zechariah had foretold.

All the accounts of Jesus’ journeyings leave the impression that He went a-foot. Only once do we know that He rode; that was in fulfilment of prophecy. That prophecy He purposed to fulfil the day after the feast of Bethany. This was intended by Christ to be His royal and Messianic entry into Jerusalem. The hour had come. A colt unused, and so fitted by custom for sacred purposes,



Page 59

was ready for His use. Having left the village “He sent two of His disciples to bring it to Him.” These two are understood to be Peter and John, for whose united service He would soon call again. We may think of the owner of the colt as friendly toward their Master. When told by the disciples, “The Lord hath need of him,” he was ready to serve Him by the loan of his beast. That “need”—whatever the owner or the disciples thought—was not so much to aid in Christ’s journey as to make true the prophetic words concerning Him, “Thy King cometh ... riding upon ... a colt.”

The two disciples “brought him to Jesus, and they threw their garments upon the colt, and set Jesus thereon.”

We may think of Peter and John, having arranged for the royal ride, as heralds of their Lord, leading the procession from Bethany, and the first to greet with signal and shout the other coming from Jerusalem.

Beside their King, perhaps leading the colt on which they had placed Him, they would be the first to tread where “a very great multitude spread their garments in the way,” and others “branches from the trees,” and yet others “layers of leaves which they had cut from the fields”—thus carpeting the road winding around the slope of Olivet.

Were not Peter and John leaders in song when “at the descent at the Mount of Olives the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God,” and especially when “the City of David” came into view? The joyful strains were from the Psalms of David—“Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the Highest Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our Father David. Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.”

[Illustration: CHRIST AND ST. JOHN *Ary Scheffer* Page 155]

In that last strain it would almost seem as if the angelic song of thirty-three years before, over the plain of Bethlehem, had not yet died away, and was echoed from Olivet.

In that hour did John and James have thoughts about sitting one on the right hand and the other on the left in a kingdom which seemed near at hand? Did they and the other disciples, who had been disappointed because their Lord had refused on the shore of Galilee to be made king, imagine that He certainly would now be willing to be crowned in Jerusalem?

When John wrote his account of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he recalled the prophecy concerning it. It is claimed that he speaks of himself and Peter in particular when he says, “These things understood not the disciples at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written, and that they had done

these things unto Him.” This was a frank confession of his own dulness and ignorance: it is also an assurance of his later wisdom.

We see John on the highway of Olivet, a chosen disciple to aid His Lord in the hour of His earthly glory. We shall see him, even down to old age, in a yet nobler sense, a Herald of the King.



Page 60

CHAPTER XXI

With the Master on Olivet

“Some spake of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings.”—*Luke* xxi. 5.

“One of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings! And Jesus said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.” “As He sat on the Mount of Olives over against the Temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and, What shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?”—*Mark* xiii. 1-4.

The Temple was the most sacred of all places, even before the Lord of the Temple entered it. His presence became its chiefest glory. In the hour when the waiting Simeon at last could there say “he had seen the Lord’s Christ,” it had a new consecration, and a beauty which its richness of materials and adornments had never given. In the hour when He there said to His mother, “Wist ye not that I must be in My Father’s House?” or, “I must be about My Father’s business,” it was more consecrated still. Twice He had cleansed it from the profanation of unholy worshipers. Within it He had spoken as no man had ever done. It had been a theatre of His divine power.

That was a sad and solemn hour in the last week of His life when, as Matthew says, “Jesus went out and departed from the Temple.” That was His farewell to it. With sadness He thought not only that He would never return to it for a blessed ministry of word and healing, but that the place itself would be destroyed. As He led His disciples from it, their minds were also upon the Holy House: but their thoughts were not His thoughts. They had long been familiar with its magnificence, from the day when each of them, at twelve years of age, for the first time had gazed upon it in wonder and admiration. We do not know why, as they were turning away from it and walked toward Olivet, “some spake of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings,” nor why “one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, behold what manner of stones, and what manner of buildings!” But so they did. Doubtless they were surprised and disappointed that the Lord did not respond with like spirit to their enthusiastic exclamations. Were not such richness and beauty worthy of even His admiration? Why His momentary silence? Why His sadness of expression, as He looked toward the Temple, beholding it as they bid Him do, but manifestly with different purpose and feeling from what they intended? His appearance seemed most inconsistent with the glorious view. His response was startling,—“Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.”



Page 61

The astonished disciples were silenced, but an unspoken question was in the minds of some of them. Christ turned aside and ascended the mountain, taking with Him the chosen three, Peter, James and John. On this occasion Andrew is added to the private company. Once more we see by themselves the two pair of brothers with whom in their boyhood we became familiar in Bethsaida. We are reminded of the days when they sat together on the sea-shore, the time when they were watching for the coming of the Messiah with whom they now "sat on the Mount of Olives over against the Temple." Two days before, in the road below He had also prophesied of the destruction of the city, as He gazed upon it through His tears. Now He was on the summit, directly opposite the Temple, from which the city was spread out before Him. To me it is still a delight in thought, as it was in reality, to stand where they sat, and look down upon the same Temple area, and think of the Holy and Beautiful House, as it appeared before the sad prophecy had been fulfilled.

On this spot the poet Milman makes Titus to stand just before the destruction of Jerusalem, with determination and yet with misgiving, looking down on the city in its pride and the Temple in its gorgeousness, and saying:

"Yon proud City!

As on our Olive-crowned hill we stand,
Where Kidron at our feet its scanty waters
Distills from stone to stone with gentle motion,
As through a valley sacred to sweet Peace,
How boldly doth it front us! How majestically!
Like as a luxurious vineyard, the hillside
Is hung with marble fabrics, line o'er line,
Terrace o'er terrace, nearer still, and nearer
To the blue Heavens. Here bright and sumptuous palaces,
With cool and verdant gardens interspersed;
Here towers of war that frown in massy strength;
While over all hangs the rich purple eve,
As conscious of its being her last farewell
Of light and glory to the fated city.
And as our clouds of battle, dust and smoke
Are melted into air, behold the Temple
In undisturbed and lone serenity,
Finding itself a solemn sanctuary
In the profound of Heaven! It stands before us
A mount of snow, fettered with golden pinnacles!
The very sun, as though he worshiped there,
Lingers upon the gilded cedar roofs;
And down the long and branching porticoes,
On every flowery, sculptured capital,
Glitters the homage of His parting beams.

.... The sight might almost win
The offended majesty of Rome to mercy.”



Page 62

But Roman majesty was not to be won to mercy. To the Twelve, Christ had foretold the destruction of the city. And now when the four were alone with Him, they “asked Him privately, tell us when shall these things be.” For wise reasons Jesus did not tell. But one of them at least would learn both when and what these things would be. This was John. His tender and loving heart was to bleed with the horrible story of the fall of Jerusalem. There hunger and famine would be so dire that mothers would slay and devour their own children. Multitudes would die of disease and pestilence. Rage and madness would make the city like a cage of wild beasts. Thousands would be carried away into captivity. The most beautiful youths would be kept to show the triumph of their conqueror. Some of them would be doomed to work in chains in Egyptian mines. Young boys and girls would be sold as slaves. Many would be slain by wild beasts and gladiators. Saddest of all would be the Temple scenes. Though Titus command its preservation his infuriated soldiery will not spare it. On its altar there would be no sacrifice because no priest to offer it. That altar would be heaped with the slain. Streams of blood would flow through the temple courts, and thousands of women perish in its blazing corridors. The time was to come when John, recalling his question on Olivet and his Lord’s prophecy concerning Jerusalem, could say,

“All is o’er, Her grandeur and her guilt.”

Was he the one of the disciples who hailed the Master, saying, “Behold what manner of stones, and what manner of buildings!”? If so, with what emotions he must have recalled his exclamation after the prophecy of their destruction had been fulfilled. Outliving all his fellow-apostles the time came when he could stand alone where once he stood with Peter and James and Andrew, not asking questions “When shall these things be?” and, “What shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?” but repeating the lament of Bishop Heber over Jerusalem in ruins:

“Reft of thy son, amid thy foes forlorn,
Mourn, widow’d Queen; forgotten Zion, mourn.
Is this thy place, sad city, this thy throne,
Where the wild desert rears its craggy stone;
Where suns unblessed their angry luster fling,
And way-worn pilgrims seek the scanty spring?
Where now thy pomp, which kings with envy viewed?
Where now thy might which all those kings subdued?
No martial myriads muster in thy gate;
No suppliant nations in thy temple wait;
No prophet bards, thy glittering courts among,
Wake the full lyre, and swell the tide of song:
But lawless force and meagre want are there,
And the quick-darting eye of restless fear,
While cold oblivion, ’mid thy ruins laid,
Folds its dank wing beneath the ivy shade.”

CHAPTER XXII



Page 63

John a Provider for the Passover

“He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and make ready for us the Passover, that we may eat.”—*Luke xxii. 8.*

“And they went ... and they made ready the Passover.”—*v. 13.*

The last time we saw Judas was when he left the feast of Bethany, murmuring at Mary's deed, angry at the Lord's defence of her, and plotting against Him. “From that time He sought opportunity to betray Him.”

“The day ... came on which the Passover must be sacrificed.” A lamb must be provided and slain in the Temple for Jesus and His disciples. Moreover a place must be provided for them to eat it. This preparation would naturally fall on Judas, the treasurer of the company, whom at a later hour the disciples thought Jesus instructed to buy some things for the feast. The place in Jesus' mind was yet a secret, unknown to the disciples, including Judas who could not therefore reveal it to His enemies. Who shall be entrusted with the service which He needed, and be in sympathy with Him in the solemn approaching hour? Not Judas. The two who had been the heralds of the King should be His messengers. So “He sent Peter and John saying, Go and make ready for us the Passover that we may eat.” Again and again we shall find Peter and John together in circumstances of joy and sorrow, trial and triumph. Their first question was a very natural one, “Where wilt Thou that we make ready?” The Lord's secret was not at once revealed. He gave them a sign by which their question would be answered—another proof of His divine fore-knowledge. He told them to go into the city, entering which they would find a man bearing a pitcher of water. Him they were to follow to the house he entered, and tell its owner of His purpose to keep the Passover there. In a furnished room they were to prepare for His coming. They were full of curiosity, but had no doubt concerning the result of their errand. They trusted Him who had entrusted them with it.

Soon at the public fountain they were watching for the servant who should be their guide. Having done “as Jesus appointed them,” they “found as He said unto them.” As instructed they said “unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?”

“The goodman of the house” is the only name by which this owner has been known. Some have thought He was Joseph of Arimathaea; others the Father of Saint Mark; others Mark himself. It is the name by which Jesus has called Him; that is honor enough. Without doubt he was a friend of the Lord. Perhaps like Nicodemus he had come to Him privately for instruction. He was ready to do what he could for His necessities when homeless in Jerusalem. He was ready to give Him a place of protection when, that very night, His enemies were seeking His life. Peter and John may never have met this unnamed disciple before. If so, it was doubtless the beginning

of an acquaintance close and tender between them and him who was “the last host of the Lord, and the first host of His Church.”



Page 64

He showed them “a large upper room.” It was probably reached, as in many oriental houses, by outside stairs. It was the choicest and most retired room. The goodman led the disciples into it. They found it “furnished” with a table, and couches around it on which Jesus and His company could recline. But this probably was not all. The table was “prepared” with some of the provisions required for the feast. These included the cakes of unleavened bread, the five kinds of bitter herbs, and the wine mixed with water for the four cups which it was the custom to use.

But there was something more which Peter and John must do to “make ready” for the feast. It was the most important thing of all. It was to prepare the “Paschal Lamb.” With such a lamb they had been familiar from childhood. As their fathers brought it into their homes, and their mothers roasted it, and parents and children gathered about it in solemn worship, the Bethsaidan boys had no thought of the day when the Messiah would bid them prepare for the feast of which He Himself would be the host, at the only time apparently when He acted as such.

When John was pointed by the Baptist to Jesus, he had no thought that He would prepare the last Lamb for Him whom He was to see sacrificed as “the Lamb of God.” No wonder that Jesus sent Peter and John to make ready, instead of Judas the usual provider, who in the same hour “sought opportunity to betray Him.”

We follow them from the house of the goodman toward the Temple. Nearing it they listen with mournful solemnity to the chanting of the eighty-first Psalm, with its exhortation to praise,—“Sing aloud unto God our strength. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on the solemn feast day.” Then they listen for the threefold blast of the silver trumpets. By this they know that the hour has come for the slaying of the lambs. Peter and John enter the court of the priests, and slay their lamb whose blood is caught by a priest in a golden bowl, and carried to the Great Altar.

Of this they must have been reminded a few hours later when Christ spoke of His own blood shed for the remission of sins. John must have remembered it when he saw and wrote of the “blood and water” that flowed from the pierced side of his Lord. While the lamb is being slain the priests are chanting, and the people responding, “Hallelujah: Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.”

The lamb of sacrifice, slain and cleansed and roasted, is carried by the two disciples on staves to the upper room. After lighting the festive lamps, they have obeyed their Lord’s command, “Make ready the Passover.”

Meanwhile He and the remaining ten, as the sun is setting, descend the Mount of Olives, from which He takes His last view of the holy but fated city. The disciples follow Him, still awed by what He had told them of its fate, and with forebodings of what awaited Him and them. Among them was the traitor carrying his terrible secret, bent on

its awful purpose which is unknown to the nine, but well known to the Master. Thus they go to the upper room where Peter and John are ready to receive them.



Page 65

In Jesus' message to the goodman He said, "I will keep the Passover at thy house with My disciples." They were His family. He chose to be alone with them. Not even the mothers Mary and Salome, nor Nicodemus on this night, nor the family of Bethany, could be of His company. No Mary was here to anoint His feet with ointment; nor woman who had been a sinner to bathe them with her tears. Lazarus was not one of them that sat with them; nor did "Martha serve." It was the twelve whom He had chosen, and who had continued with Him. It was to His apostolic family that He said, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." And so "He sat down with the twelve" alone, the only time—as is supposed—that He ever ate the Passover meal with His disciples.

That room became of special interest to John. Sent by his Master to find it, he was mysteriously guided thither. There he was welcomed by the good owner of the house, who united with him in preparation for the most memorable feast ever held. It is there that we see him in closest companionship with his Lord. It was the place in Jesus' mind when He said, "Go and make ready for us the Passover." "Where shall we go?" asked John. He found answer when he entered that upper room. Because of his relation thereto it has been called "St. John's Room"—more sacred than any "Jerusalem Chamber," so named, or any "St. John's Cathedral!"

CHAPTER XXIII

John's Memories of the Upper Room

"When the hour was come, He sat down, and the apostles with him."—*Luke* xxii. 14.

"There was at the table reclining in Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved."—*John* xiii. 23.

Three Evangelists leave the door of the upper room standing ajar. Through it we can see much that is passing, and hear much that is said. John coming after them opens it wide, thus enlarging our view and increasing our knowledge.

Luke says of Jesus, "He sat down and the apostles with Him." That is a very simple statement. We might suppose all was done in quietness and harmony. But he tells us of a sad incident which happened, probably in connection with it. "There arose also a contention among them which of them is accounted to be greatest." The question in dispute was possibly the order in which they should sit at the table. They still had the spirit of the Pharisees who claimed that such order should be according to rank.

We wonder how John felt. Did he have any part in that contention; or had he put away all such ambition since the Lord had reprovved him and his brother James for it? Or was



his near relation to the Lord so well understood that there was no question by anybody where John might sit—next to the Master?

Let us notice the manner of sitting at meals. The table was surrounded by a divan on which the guests reclined on their left side, with the head nearest the table, and the feet extending outward.



Page 66

“There was at the table reclining in Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.” This is the first time John thus speaks of himself. He never uses his own name. His place was at the right of the Lord. There he reclined during the meal, once changing his position, as we shall see. Judas was probably next to Jesus on His left. This allowed them to talk together without others knowing what they said.

John begins his story of the upper room as a supplement to Luke’s record of the contention. He first tells two things about Jesus,—His knowledge that His hour “was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father,” and His great and constant love for His disciples. With these two thoughts in mind, how grieved He must have been at the ambitious spirit of the Apostles. He had once given them a lesson of humility, using a little child for an object lesson. That lesson was not yet learned; or if learned was not yet put into practice. So He gave them another object lesson, having still more meaning than the first.

But before making record of it John, as at the supper in Bethany, points to Judas. We are reminded of the traitor’s purpose formed while Mary anointed and wiped Jesus’ feet. So awful was that purpose, so full of hatred and deceit, that John now tells us it was the devil himself who “put into the heart of Judas ... to betray Him.” “Humanity had fallen, but not so low.”

John seems to have well understood his Master’s thoughts and interpreted His actions in giving the second object lesson. He noticed carefully, and remembered long and distinctly, every act. Was there ever drawn a more powerful picture in contrast than in these words,—“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; and He took a towel, and girded Himself. Then He poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.”

This was the service of a common slave. It is easy to imagine the silent astonishment of the disciples. The purpose of Jesus could not be mistaken. It was a reproof for their contention. The object lesson was ended. John continued to closely watch His movements, as he took the garments He had laid aside and resumed His seat at the table. The very towel with which the Lord had girded Himself, found a lasting place in John’s memory, worthy of mention as the instrument of humble service. What a sacred relic, if preserved, it would have become—more worthy of a place in St. Peter’s in Rome than the pretended handkerchief of Veronica.

[Illustration: THE LAST SUPPER *Benjamin West* Page 158]

Christ’s treatment of one of the disciples at the feet-washing left a deep impression on John’s mind. With sadness and indefiniteness the Lord said, “He that eateth My bread lifted up his heel against Me”: one who accepts My hospitality and partakes of the



proofs of My friendship is My enemy. For that one whoever it might be, known only to himself and to Jesus, it was a most solemn call to even yet turn from his evil purpose. But the faithless one betrayed no sign; nor did Jesus betray him even with a glance which would have been a revelation to John's observant eye.



Page 67

It is John who tells us that as they sat at the table “Jesus ... was troubled in spirit.” The apostle closest to Him in position and sympathy would be the first to detect that special trouble, and the greatness of it, even before the cause of it was known. But that was not long. “Jesus said, Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray Me.” Such is John’s record of Christ’s declaration. It is in His Gospel alone that we find the double “Verily” introducing Christ’s words, thus giving a deeper emphasis and solemnity than appears in the other Evangelists. A comparison of this declaration of Christ as given by the four, illustrates this fact. John immediately follows this statement of the betrayal with another, peculiar to himself. It shows his close observation at the time, and the permanence of his impression. What he noticed would furnish a grand subject for the most skilful artist, beneath whose picture might be written, “The disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake.” As John gazed upon them, raising themselves on their divans, looking first one way, then another, from one familiar face to another, exchanging glances of inquiry and doubt, each distrustful of himself and his fellow, he beheld what angels might have looked upon with even deeper interest. There has been no other occasion, nor can there be, for such facial expressions—a blending of surprise, consternation, fear and sorrow. Was John one of those who “began to question among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing”? Did he take his turn as “one by one” they “began to say, ... Is it I, Lord?” If so it must have been in the faintest whisper; and so the blessed answer, “No.” But we must believe that Jesus and John understood each other too well for any such question and answer. The definite answer was not yet given to any one by the Master, yet with an awful warning, He repeated His prediction of the betrayal.

Peter was impatient to ask Jesus another question. At other times he was bold to speak, but now he was awed into silence. Yet he felt that he must know. The great secret must be revealed. There was one through whom it might possibly be done. So while the disciples looked one on another, Peter gazed on John with an earnest, inquiring look, feeling that the beloved disciple might relieve the awful suspense. “Peter therefore beckoneth to him, and saith unto him, Tell us who it is of whom He speaketh.” So “He, leaning back, as he was, on Jesus’ breast, saith unto Him, Lord, who is it? Jesus therefore answereth, He it is for whom I shall dip the sop and give it him.” Did John on one side of Jesus hear the whispered question of Judas on the other, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He watched for the sign which Jesus said He would give. The morsel was given to Judas. That was more than a sign, more than kindness to an unworthy guest; it was the last of thousands of loving acts to one whom Jesus had chosen, taught and warned—yet



Page 68

was a traitor. Of that moment John makes special note. Having told us that at the beginning of the supper “the devil ... put into the heart of Judas ... to betray,” he says, “After the sop, Satan entered into him.” As he saw Judas, with a heart of stone and without a trembling hand, coolly take the morsel from that hand of love, he realized that the evil one had indeed taken possession of him whose heart he had stirred at the feast of Bethany.

It must have been a relief to John when he heard the Lord bid Judas depart, though “no man at the table knew for what intent.”

“He then having received the sop went out straightway,”—out from that most consecrated room; out from the companionship of the Apostles in which he had proved himself unfit to share; out from the most hallowed associations of earth; out from the most inspiring influences with which man was ever blessed; out from the teachings, warnings, invitations and loving care of his only Saviour. “When Satan entered into him, he went out from the presence of Christ, as Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.” As John spoke of the departure, no wonder he added, “It was night.” His words mean to us more than the darkness outside that room illumined by the lamp which Peter and John had lighted. They are suggestive of the darkness of the traitor’s soul, contrasted with the “Light of the World” in that room, to whose blessed beams he then closed his eyes forever. Night—the darkest night—was the most fitting symbol for the deeds to follow. Possessed by Satan, Judas went out to be “guide to them that took Jesus.” To them, two hours later, He who was the Light of the World said, “This is your hour and the power of darkness.”

It was when “he was gone out” that Christ called the disciples by a new name, and gave them a new commandment. In both of them John took a special interest which he showed long after. That name was “Little Children.” The word which Christ used had a peculiar meaning. This is the only time we know of His ever using it. It was an expression of the tenderest affection for His family, so soon to be orphaned by His death. When John wrote his Epistles, he often used the same word, whose special meaning he had learned from his Lord, to show his own love for his fellow-Christians.

The new commandment was this—“That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” The command itself was not new, for it had been given through Moses, and repeated by Christ, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” But Christ gave the disciples a new reason or motive for obeying it. They were to love one another because of His love for them. As John grew older he became a beautiful example of one who obeyed the command. In his old age he urged such obedience, saying, “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”



Page 69

Through the door of the Upper Room left ajar by three Evangelists, we catch glimpses of the group around the table of the Last Supper. Through it as opened wide by John we hear the voice of Jesus as He utters His farewell words. He comforts His disciples and tells of heavenly mansions. He gives His peace in their tribulations. He promises the Holy Spirit as a Comforter. He closes His address, even in this hour of sadness and apparent defeat, with these wonderful words, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

And now as John still holds open the door, we hear the voice of prayer, such as nowhere else has been offered. It is ended. There are moments of silence, followed by a song of praise. Then John closes the door of the Upper Room, which we believe was opened again as the earliest home of the Christian Church. There we shall see him again with those who, because of his experience with his Lord in that consecrated place, gave him the name of “The Bosom Disciple.”

[Illustration: IN GETHSEMANE *Gustave Dore* Page 163]

CHAPTER XXIV

With Jesus in Gethsemane

“He went forth with His disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden.”—*John* xviii. 1.

“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto His disciples, Sit ye here while I go yonder and pray.”—*Matt.* xxvi. 36.

“And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, ... and He saith unto them, ... abide ye here, and watch.”—*Mark* xiv. 33, 34.

“And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed.”
v. 35.

John was our leader to the Upper Room. And now he guides us from it, saying, “Jesus ... went forth with His disciples.” That phrase “went forth” may suggest to us much more than mere departure. The banquet of love was over. The Lord’s cup of blessing and remembrance had been drunk by His “little children,” as He affectionately called them. He was now to drink the cup the Father was giving His Son—a mysterious cup of sorrow. It was probably at the midnight hour that Jesus “went forth” the last time from Jerusalem, which He had crowned with His goodness, but which had crowned Him with many crowns of sorrow.

Other Evangelists tell us that He went “to the Mount of Olives,” “to a place called Gethsemane.” John shows us the way thither, and what kind of a place it was. Jesus



went “over the ravine of the Kidron,” in the valley of Jehoshaphat. At this season of the year it was not, as at other times, a dry water-bed, but a swollen, rushing torrent, fitting emblem of the waters of sorrow through which He was passing. Whether the name Kidron refers to the dark color of its waters, or the gloom of the ravine through which they flow, or the sombre green of its overshadowing cedars, it will ever be a reminder of the darker gloom that overshadowed John and His Master, as they crossed that stream together to meet the powers of darkness in the hour which Jesus called their own.



Page 70

The garden of Gethsemane was an enclosed piece of ground. We are not to think of it as a garden of flowers, or of vegetables, but as having a variety of flowering shrubs, and of fruit-trees, especially olive. It might properly be called an orchard. On the spot now claimed to be the garden, there are several very old gnarled olive-trees. Having stood beneath them, I would be glad to believe that they had sheltered my Lord. But I remember that when the prophecy concerning Jerusalem was fulfilled, the most sacred trees of our world were destroyed.

[Illustration: THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT *Old Engraving* Page 164]

Who was the owner of that sacred garden? He must have known what happened there "ofttimes." Perhaps, like the "goodman of the house" in Jerusalem, he was a disciple of Jesus, and provided this quiet retreat for the living Christ, in the same spirit with which Joseph of Arimathaea provided a garden for Him when He was dead. To these two gardens John is our only guide. From the one he fled with Peter in fear and sadness: to the other he hastened with Peter in anxiety followed by gladness.

When at the foot of Hermon, Jesus left nine of His disciples to await His return. Now one was no longer "numbered among" them, as Peter afterward said of him "who was guide to them that took Jesus." At the entrance to the garden Jesus paused and said to eight, "Sit ye here while I go yonder and pray." So had Abraham nineteen hundred years before, pointing to Mount Moriah, visible from Olivet in the moonlight, said "unto his young men, Abide ye here ... and I and the lad will go yonder and worship."

That very night Jesus was to ascend that very Mount on His way as a sacrifice, without any angel to stay the sacrificial hand.

At the garden gate there was no formal farewell, but a solemn final charge, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." Jesus knew that the hour had come in which should be fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy. Sadly He had declared in the Upper Room, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

He dreads to be entirely alone. He longs for companionship. He craves sympathy. In whose heart is it the tenderest and deepest? There is no guessing here. The names are already on our lips. Answer is found in the home of Jairus and on Hermon. Those whom He had led into the one, and "apart" onto the other, He would have alone with Him in the garden. So "He taketh with Him Peter and James and John." These companions of His glory shall also be of His sorrow.

As Jesus advanced into the garden, the three discovered a change in Him—a contrast to the calmness of the Upper Room and the assurances of victory with which He had left it. He "began to be sore amazed and sorrowful and troubled," and "to be very heavy." We have seen John apparently quicker than others to detect his Lord's



thoughts and emotions. We imagine him walking closest to His side, and watching as closely every change of His countenance and every motion that revealed the inward struggle. And so when Jesus broke the silence, he was somewhat prepared to hear Him say to the three, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

Page 71

[Illustration: CHRIST BEFORE CAIAPHAS *Old Engraving* Page 176]

The moment had come when He must deny Himself even the little comfort and strength of the immediate presence of the three. So saying, "Tarry ye here and watch with Me," He turned away. They must not follow Him to the spot of His greatest conflict. There He must be alone, beyond the reach of human help, however strong or loving. Even that which He had found in the few moments since leaving the garden entrance must end. Their eyes followed Him where they might not follow in His steps. It was not far. "He went forward a little." "He was parted from them about a stone's cast"—probably forty or fifty yards. This separation implies sorrow. They were near enough to watch His every movement as He "kneeled down" and "fell on His face to the ground" They were near enough to hear the passionate cry of love and agony, "O, My Father." This is the only time we know of His using this personal pronoun in prayer to His Father. He thus showed the intensity of His feeling, and longing for that sympathy and help which the Father alone could give.

On Hermon the glories of the Transfiguration were almost hidden from the three disciples by their closing eyes. And now weariness overcame them in the garden. They too fell to the ground, but not in prayer. They tarried indeed, but could no longer watch.

They had seen Moses and Elijah with their Lord on the Holy Mount, but probably did not see the blessed watcher in the garden when "there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him" in body and soul. So had angels come and ministered unto the Lord of angels and men in the temptation in the wilderness.

"Being in agony He prayed more earnestly" until mingled blood and sweat fell upon the ground. The heavenly visitants on Mount Hermon in glory had talked with Him of His decease now at hand. The cup of sorrow was fuller now than then. He prayed the Father that if possible it might pass from Him. Then the angel must have told Him that this could not be if He would become the Saviour of men. He uttered the words whose meaning we cannot fully know, "Not My will, but Thine, be done."

The angelic presence did not make Him unmindful of the three. "He rose up from His prayer," and turned from the spot moistened by the drops of His agony. With the traces of them upon His brow, "He came unto the disciples." How much of pathos in the simple record, "He found them sleeping." Without heavenly or earthly companionship, His loneliness is complete.

"'Tis midnight; and from all around,
The Saviour wrestles 'lone with fears;
E'en that disciple whom He loved,
Heeds not His Master's griefs and tears."

The head that reclined so lovingly on the bosom of the Lord in the Upper Room now wearily rests on the dewy grass of Gethsemane. The eyes that looked so tenderly into His, and the ear that listened so anxiously for His whisper, are closed.

Page 72

As Jesus stood by the three recumbent forms held by deep sleep, and gazed by the pale moonlight into their faces which showed a troubled slumber, He knew they “were sleeping for sorrow.” In silence He looked upon them until His eye fastened—not on the beloved John—but on him who an hour ago had boasted of faithfulness to His Lord. The last utterance they had heard before being lost in slumber was that of agonizing prayer to the Father. The first that awakened them was sad and tender reproof—“Simon, sleepest *thou*? Couldst thou not watch one hour?” In the Master’s words and tones were mingled reproach and sympathy. In tenderness He added, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Because of the spirit He pardoned the flesh. The question, “Why sleep ye?” was to the three, as well as the charge, “Rise and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”

Let imagination fill out the outline drawn by the Evangelists:—“He went away again the second time and prayed; He came and found them asleep again; He left them and went away again and prayed the third time; and He cometh a third time and saith unto them, ‘Sleep on now and take your rest.’” If we may suppose any period of rest, it was soon broken by the cry, “Arise, let us be going; behold he that betrayeth Me is at hand.” They need “watch” no longer. Their Lord’s threefold struggle was over. He was victor in Gethsemane, even as John beheld Him three years before, just after His threefold conflict in the wilderness.

As they rose from the ground the inner circle that had separated them, not only from the other Apostles but from all other men, was erased. We do not find them alone with their Lord again. They rose and joined the eight at the garden gate.

Recalling Gethsemane we sing to Jesus,

“Thyself the path of prayer hast trod.”

The most sacred path of prayer in all the world was in Gethsemane. It was only “a stone’s cast” in length. The Lord trod it six times in passing between the place where He said to the three, “tarry ye here,” and that where He “kneeled down and prayed.” One angel knows the spot. Would that he could reveal it unto us.

[Illustration: CHRIST BEFORE PILATE (Ecce Homo) *H. Hofmann* Page 182]

When Jesus was praying and the three were sleeping, Judas reported himself at the High-Priestly Palace, ready to be the guide of the band to arrest his Master. There were the Temple-guard with their staves, and soldiers with their swords, and members of the Sanhedrin, ready to aid in carrying out the plot arranged with the betrayer. It was midnight—fit hour for their deed of darkness. The full moon shone brightly in the clear atmosphere; yet they bore torches and lamps upon poles, to light up any dark ravine or shaded nook in which they imagined Jesus might be hiding. If any cord of love had ever bound Judas to his Master, it was broken. That very night he had fled from the Upper



Room, which became especially radiant with love after his departure. To that room we believe he returned with his murdering band. But the closing hymn had been sung, and the Passover lamps extinguished two or three hours before. The consecrated place was not to be profaned with murderous intent. Another place must be sought for the victim of hate and destruction.



Page 73

John in his old age recalled precious memories of it, because Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples. But he had a remembrance of another kind. It is when speaking of this midnight hour that he says, "Judas also which betrayed Him knew the place." Thither he led his band—to Gethsemane.

"Lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand," said

Jesus to the three, as He saw the gleams of the torches of the coming multitude. His captors were many, but His thought was especially on one—His betrayer. Again John reads for us the mind of Jesus, as he did when the "Lord and Master washed the disciples' feet." He would have us understand the calmness of the fixed purpose of Jesus to meet without shrinking the terrible trial before Him, and to do this voluntarily—not because of any power of His approaching captors. "Knowing all things that were coming upon Him," He "went forth" to meet them—especially him who at that moment was uppermost in His thought. John now understood that last, mysterious bidding of the Lord to Judas, with which He dismissed him from the table—"That thou doest, do quickly." He now "knew for what intent He spake this unto him." It was not to buy things needed for the feast, nor to give to the poor. It was to betray Him.

What a scene was that—Jesus "going forth," the three following Him; and Judas in advance, yet in sight of his band, coming to meet Him.

"Hail, Rabbi," was the traitor's salute. And then on this solemn Passover night, in this consecrated place, just hallowed by angelic presence, interrupting the Lord's devotions, rushing upon holiness and infinite goodness, with pretended fellowship and reverence, profaning and repeating—as if with gush of emotion—the symbol of affection, Judas covered the face of Jesus with kisses.

How deep the sting on this "human face divine," already defaced by the bloody sweat, and to be yet more by the mocking reed, and smiting hand and piercing thorn. The vision of the prophet seven hundred years before becomes a reality—"His visage was so marred more than any man." "But nothing went so close to His heart as the profanation of this kiss."

According to John's account, Judas' kiss was an unnecessary signal. Jesus Himself leaving the traitor, advanced toward the band, with a question which must have startled the Apostles, as well as the traitor and his company—"Whom seek ye?" The contemptuous reply, "Jesus of Nazareth," did not disturb His calmness as He said, "I am He," and repeated His question, "Whom seek ye?" Nor was that infinite calmness disturbed by the deeper contempt in the repeated answer, "Jesus of Nazareth." They had come with weapons of defence, but they were as useless as the betrayal kiss, especially when some of them, awed by His presence and words, "went backward and fell to the ground."



We have seen Jesus going forward from His company and meeting Judas going forward from his. We must now think of Judas joining his band, and the eleven disciples surrounding their Lord. John has preserved the only request made of the captors by the Master. It was not for Himself, but for His disciples;—"If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way."



Page 74

Three Evangelists tell that one of the disciples struck a servant of the high priest and cut off an ear. Luke the physician says it was the right ear, and that Christ touched it and healed it. John gives the disciple's name, which it was not prudent for the other Evangelists to do when Peter, who struck the blow, was still living. He also preserves the name of the servant, Malchus—the last one on whom he saw the Great Physician perform a healing act, showing divine power and compassion. John records the Lord's reproof to Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Can this firm voice be the same which an hour ago, a stone's cast from these two disciples, said beseechingly, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Yea, verily, for He had added to the prayer, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Thus does John's record concerning Peter testify to the triumph of his Lord. But he also notes the immediate effect of Peter's mistaken zeal. The captain and officers "bound Him." That was a strange, humiliating sight, especially in connection with the Lord's words to Peter while returning the sword to its sheath, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" Wonderful words! fitting to be the last of the Lord's utterances to a disciple in Gethsemane. With burning and just indignation at His being bound, Jesus turned to His captors, saying, "Are ye come out as against a robber, to seize Me?" As they closed around Him His disciples were terrified with the fear of a like fate. "And they all left Him and fled." Prophecy was fulfilled; the Shepherd was smitten; the sheep were scattered.

Without the voice of friend or foe, the garden of Olivet was silent. One had left it who, outliving his companions, gives us hints of his lone meditations. The beloved disciple cherished memories of joyous yet sad Gethsemane. He it was who longest remembered, and who alone preserved the prophecy in the Upper Room, so soon fulfilled—"Ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone."

In George Herbert's words we hear the Master cry,

"All My disciples fly! fear put a bar
Betwixt My friends and Me; they leave the star
Which brought the Wise Men from the East from far.

Was ever grief like Mine!"

CHAPTER XXV

John in the High Priest's Palace

"And they that had taken Jesus led Him away to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together."—*Matt.* xxvi. 57.



“Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple ... entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; but Peter was standing at the door without. So the other disciple ... went out ... and brought in Peter.”—*John* xviii. 15, 16.

“Everywhere we find these two Apostles, Peter and John, in great harmony together.”—*Chrysostom*.



Page 75

“Bow down before thy King, My soul!
Earth’s kings, before Him bow ye down;
Before Him monarchs humbly roll,—
Height, might, and splendor, throne and crown.
He in the mystic Land divine
The sceptre wields with valiant hand.
In vain dark, evil powers combine,—
He, victor, rules the better Land.”
—*Ingleman*.—*Trans. Hymns of Denmark*.

“It is probable that St. John attended Christ through all the weary stages of His double trial—before the ecclesiastical and the civil authorities—and that, after a night thus spent, he accompanied the procession in the forenoon to the place of execution, and witnessed everything that followed.”—*Stalker*.

We know not what became of nine of the disciples fleeing from Gethsemane; whether they first hid among the bushes and olive-trees, and escaped into the country; or took refuge in the neighboring tombs; or stole their way to some secret room where the goodman of the house furnished them protection; or scattered in terror each in his lonely way.

The captive Lord was dragged along the highway where Peter and John had been for a single hour the Heralds of the King. Over the Kidron, up the slope of Moriah, through the gate near the sacred Temple, along the streets of the Holy City, He was led as a robber to the high-priestly palace.

Three Evangelists tell us, “Peter followed afar off.” But love soon overcame his fears. He was not long alone. John says, “Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple.” We cannot doubt who was Peter’s companion as he turned from his flight. They “went both together,” as two days later they ran on another errand. In the shadows of the olive-trees along the roadside, or of the houses of the city, they followed the hurrying band which they overtook by the time it reached the palace gate. John did not “outrun Peter,” who was probably the leader. But at the gate they were separated.

We must not think that this palace was like an American house. The entrance to it was through a great arched gateway. This was closed with a large door or gate, in which there was a small entrance called a wicket gate, through which people passed. These gates opened into a broad passage or square court. Around it on three sides the house was built. All rooms upstairs and down looked into it. One large room, forming one side, was separated from it, not by a wall, but by a row of pillars. Being thus opened it was easy to see what was passing in the room or the court.

“That disciple,” who accompanied Peter to the gate, “was known unto the high priest and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest. But Peter was standing at the



door without.” John was doubtless familiar with the place and the servants, and went in with the crowd. He kept as near as he could to his Master during the dark hours of His trial, as he was to do during the yet darker hours at the cross.



Page 76

But the disciple within could not forget the one without. They must not be separated in their common sorrow. Peter too must show by his presence his continued love for his Master. He must have opportunity to show in the palace something of the faithfulness of which he had boasted in the Upper Room, though it had faltered in Gethsemane.

“Then went out that other disciple which was known unto the high priest and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.” That doorkeeper was not Rhoda—she who with a different spirit joyfully answered Peter’s knocking at another door—but was a pert maiden who, sympathizing with the enemies of Jesus, “saith unto Peter, Art thou also one of this man’s disciples?” She understood that John was such. Her contempt was aimed at them both. But it was not her question so much as Peter’s answer—“I am not”—that startled John. Was it for this denial that he had gained admission for his friend? It would have been better far if Peter had been kept “standing at the door without” though “it was cold,” than to be brought into the court of temptation and sin, where he “sat with the servants” in his curiosity “to see the end,” warming himself at the fire they had kindled.

Meanwhile we think of John hastening back to the judgment hall, from which he anxiously watched the movements of Peter “walking in the counsel of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of the scornful.”

Poor Peter! He fears to look into any man’s face, or to have any one look into his. He has obeyed the Master’s bidding, “Put up thy sword into the sheath,” but Malchus has not forgotten it; nor has his kinsman who saw Peter in the garden with Jesus,—though he may have forgotten the healing of Malchus’ ear by his prisoner.

Three Evangelists tell how Peter “sat” with the enemies of Jesus. John tells how at different times he “stood” among them. Thus does he report as an eye-witness, and show his own watchfulness of Peter’s restlessness;—of the conflicting emotions of shame and fear, the scornful frown, the enforced and deceiving smile, the defiant look, the vain effort to appear indifferent, and the storm of anger. Amazed at the first denial, shocked at the second, horrified at the third, what were John’s feelings when one was “with an oath,” and with another “he began to curse and to swear.” But concerning this climax of Peter’s sin, John is silent. It finds no place in his story.

At last “the Lord turned and looked upon Peter,” either from the hall, or as He was being led from it. At the same moment, Peter turned and looked upon Him. We imagine John turning and looking upon them both, marking the grief of the one, and the sense of guilt and shame of the other. But he knew the loving, though erring disciple so well that he need not be told that when “Peter went out” “he wept bitterly.” We almost see John himself weeping bitterly over his friend’s fall; then comforting him when they met again, with assurances of the Lord’s love and forgiveness. John’s next record of their being together shows them united in feeling, purpose and action for their Lord.



Page 77

There was another toward whom John's watchful eyes turned during the long and painful watches of that night. The picture of him is not complete without this Apostle's records.

"Art thou the King of the Jews?" asked Pilate of Jesus. Such John had thought Him to be. For three years he had waited to see Him assume His throne. He has preserved the Lord's answer,—“My kingdom is not of this world.” This declaration contained a truth to which even the favored disciple had been partly blind. Was he not ready to ask with Pilate, though with different spirit and purpose, “Art thou a King then?” The Lord's answer must have meant more to the listening Apostle than to the captious and heedless Governor. It was a declaration of the true kingship of the Messiah-King,—“To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.”

“What is truth?” asked Pilate in a careless manner, not caring for an answer. “What is truth?” was the great question whose answer the Apostle continued to seek, concerning the King and the kingdom of Him whom He had heard say, “I am the Truth.”

In that night he saw the Messiah-King crowned, but with thorns. He saw the purple robe upon Him, but it was the cast-off garment of a Roman Governor. A reed, given Him for a sceptre, was snatched from His hand to smite Him on His head. Instead of pouring holy oil of kingly consecration, as upon David's head, His enemies “spit upon Him.” It was in mockery that they bowed the knee before Him saying, “Hail King of the Jews.”

There are two scenes with which John alone has made us familiar. One is described in these words:—“Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith, Behold the man!” Did not that word “Behold,” recall to John another scene—that on the Jordan when he looked upon this same Jesus as the Lamb of God, whom His enemies were about to offer unwittingly, when He offered Himself not unwillingly a sacrifice upon the cross? The Baptist's exclamation had been in adoration and joyfulness: Pilate's was in pity and sadness. It was an appeal to humanity, but in vain. There was no pity in that maddened throng. Pilate turned in bitterness toward those whom he hated, but whose evil deeds he did not dare to oppose. So in irony “Pilate ... brought forth Jesus ... and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!”

John was the only one who heard the three cries of “Behold”—one at the beginning, the others at the close of the Lord's ministry. How much he had beheld and heard and learned between, concerning “the Lamb,” “the Man,” and “the King.”



Page 78

The only earthly throne on which John saw Him sit was one of mockery. He did not ask to sit with Him. It was a sad yet blessed privilege to be with Him during that night of agony—the only friendly witness to probably all of His sufferings. While John's eyes were turned often and earnestly toward Peter and Pilate, they were yet more on the Lord. When he went in with Jesus into the palace, and while he tarried with Him, he could *do* nothing—only *look*. No angel was there as in Gethsemane to strengthen the Man of sorrows, but did He not often look for sympathy toward that one who had leaned lovingly upon Him a few hours before? Was not John's mere waking presence among His foes in the palace, a solace which slumber had denied Him in the garden? John's eyes were not heavy now. There was no need of the Lord's bidding, "Tarry ye here and watch with Me." Love made him tarry and watch more than "one hour"—even through all the watches of the night. Then he was the Lord's only human friend—the one silent comforter.

CHAPTER XXVI

John the Lone Disciple at the Cross

"When they came unto the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him."—*Luke xxiii. 33.*

"At Calvary poets have sung their sweetest strains, and artists have seen their sublimest visions."—*Stalker.*

"Now to sorrow must I tune my song,
And set my harp to notes of saddest woe,
Which on our dearest Lord did seize ere long,
Dangers, and snares, and wrongs, and worse than so,
Which He for us did freely undergo:
Most perfect Hero, tried in heaviest plight
Of labors huge and hard, too hard for human wight."

—*Milton.—The Passion.*

Even careful students of the life of John are not together in their attempts to follow him on the day of crucifixion. Some think they find evidence, chiefly in his silence concerning certain events, that after hearing the final sentence of Pilate condemning Christ to be crucified, he left the palace and joined the other disciples and faithful women and the mother of Jesus, and reported what he had seen and heard during the night; and at some hour during the day visited Calvary, and returning to the city brought the women who stood with him at the cross: and witnessed only what he minutely or only describes. Other students think he followed Jesus from the palace to the cross, remaining near Him and witnessing all that transpired. This is certainly in keeping with what we should expect from his peculiar relation to Christ. It is in harmony with what we



do know of his movements that day. So we are inclined to follow him as a constant though silent companion of Jesus, feeling that in keeping near him we are near to his Lord and ours. This we now do in the "Dolorous Way," along which Jesus is hurried from the judgment-seat of Pilate to the place of execution.

Page 79

[Illustration: CHRIST BEARING HIS CROSS *H. Hofmann* Page 185]

It is John who uses the one phrase in the Gospels which furnishes a tragic subject for artists, and poets and preachers, on which imagination dwells, and excites our sympathies as does no other save the crucifixion itself. His phrase is this,—“Jesus ... bearing the cross for Himself.” We notice this all the more because of the silence of the other Evangelists, all of whom tell of one named Simon who was compelled to bear the cross. As John read their story, there was another picture in his mind, too fresh and vivid not to be painted also. He recalled the short distance that Christ carried the cross alone, weakened by the agonies of the garden and the scourging of the palace, until, exhausted, He fell beneath the burden. We are not told that the crown of thorns had been removed, though the purple robe of mockery had been. So this added to His continued pain. As John looked upon those instruments of suffering he heard the banter and derision of shame that always accompanied them.

There followed Jesus “a great multitude of the people,” whose morbid curiosity would be gratified by the coming tragedy. But there were others—“women who bewailed and lamented Him.”

It is surmised that at the moment when Jesus could bear His cross no longer, and was relieved by Simon, He turned to the weeping “Daughters of Jerusalem” following Him, and in tenderest sympathy told of the coming days of sorrow for them and their city, of which He had told John and his companions on Olivet.

John says that Jesus “went out ... unto the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha.” The place was also called Calvary. We do not certainly know the sacred spot, though careful students think it is north of the city, near the Damascus gate, near the gardens of the ancient city, and tombs that still remain. We think of John revisiting it again and again while he remained in Jerusalem, and then in thought in his distant home where he wrote of it. “There,” says John, “they crucified Jesus, and with Him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.” How few his words, but how full of meaning. We long to know more of John’s memories of that day—of all that he saw and felt and did. They were such in kind and number as none other than he did or could have.

There were two contrasted groups of four each around the cross, to which John calls special attention. One, the nearest to it, was composed of Roman soldiers, to whom were committed the details of the crucifixion—the arrangement of the cross, the driving of the nails, and the elevation of the victim upon it.



Page 80

Having stripped Jesus of His clothing, according to custom they divided it among themselves; the loose upper garment or toga to one, the head-dress to another, the girdle to another, and the sandals to the last. John watched the division—"to every soldier a part." But his interest was chiefly in the under-garment such as Galilean peasants wore. This must have been a reminder of the region from which he and Jesus had come. He thinks it worth while to describe it as "without seam, woven from the top throughout." Perhaps to him another reminder—of Mary or Salome or other ministering women by whose loving hands it had been knit. If ever a garment, because of its associations, could be called holy, surely it is what John calls "the coat" of Jesus. Even without miraculous power, it would be the most precious of relics. We notice John's interest in it as he watches the soldiers' conversation of banter or pleasantry or quarrel, in which it might become worthless by being torn asunder. He remembered their parleying, and the proposal in which it ended,—“Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be.” How far were their thoughts from his when their words recalled to him the prophecy they were unconsciously fulfilling,—“They part My garments among them, and upon My vesture do they cast lots.”

With what pity did Jesus look down upon the lucky soldier—so he would be called—sporting with the coat which had protected Him from the night winds of Gethsemane. How He longed to see in the bold and heartless heirs to His only earthly goods, the faith of her, who timidly touched the hem of His garment. What a scene was that for John to behold! What a scene for angels who had sung the glories of Jesus' birth, now looking down upon His dying agonies of shame—and upon the gambling dice of His murderers! No marvel John added to the almost incredible story, “These things ... the soldiers did.”

It is at this point that we notice a sudden transition in John's narrative. He points us from the unfriendly group of four, to another of the same number; saying as if by contrast, “*But* there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.” By “His mother's sister” we understand Salome.

The centurion had charge of the plundering soldiers; John was the guardian of the sympathizing women. He had a special interest in that group, containing his mother and aunt, and probably another relative in Mary the wife of Clopas. Mary Magdalene was not of this family connection, though of kindred spirit. So must John have felt as she stood with him at the cross, and at a later hour when we shall see them together again.



Page 81

In the days of the boyhood of John and Jesus, we thought of their mothers as sisters, and of parents and children as looking for the coming Messiah. None thought of the possibilities of this hour when they would meet in Jerusalem at the cross. By it stands John the only one of the Apostles. Judas has already gone to "his own place." If Peter is following at all it is afar off. The rest have not rallied from their flight enough to appear after their flight. James the brother of John is not with him. As their mother looks upon Jesus between two robbers, does she recall her ambitious request, "Command that these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand"? She understands now the fitness of the reply she had received,—“Ye know not what ye ask”?

But Salome and John are loyal to the uncrowned King. Though they may not share the glory of His throne, they are yet ready to stand beneath the shameful shadow of His cross.

But another is there,—drawn by a yet stronger cord of affection. She heads John's list of the women "by the cross of Jesus—His mother," whose love is so deep that it cannot forego witnessing the sight that fills her soul with agony. Yes, Mary, thou art there.

“Now by that cross thou tak'st thy final station,
And shar'st the last dark trial of thy Son;
Not with weak tears or woman's lamentation,
But with high, silent anguish, like His own.”
—*H.B. Stowe.*

As she stands there we seem to read her thoughts: “Can that be He, my babe of Bethlehem, my beautiful boy of Nazareth, in manhood my joy and my hope! Are those hands the same that have been so lovingly held in mine; those arms, outstretched and motionless, the same that have so often been clasped around me! Oh! that I might staunch His wounds, and moisten His parched lips, and gently lift that thorny crown from His bleeding brow.”

But this cannot be. There is being fulfilled Simeon's prophecy, uttered as he held her infant in his arms,—a foreboding which has cast a mysterious shadow on the joys of her life.

“Beside the cross in tears
The woeful mother stood,
Bent 'neath the weight of years,
And viewed His flowing blood;
Her mind with grief was torn,
Her strength was ebbing fast,
And through her heart forlorn,
The sword of Anguish passed.”

She can only draw yet nearer to His cross and give the comfort of a mother's look, and perhaps receive the comfort of a look from Him, and—oh, if it can be—a word of comfort from His lips for the mother-heart. Perhaps for a moment her thoughts are on the future,—her lonely life, without the sympathy of her other sons who believed not on their brother. Oh! that they were like John, to her already more of a son than they.



Page 82

In childhood Jesus had been “subject” to her: in youth and manhood He had been faithful to her. In the Temple He had thought of her as His mother, and of God as His Father. But no exalted relation, no greatness to which He had attained on earth, had made Him disloyal to her. While claiming to be the Son of God, He was still the loving son of Mary. Such He would show Himself to be on the cross. We thank John for the record of that moment when “Jesus ... saw His mother.” “The people stood beholding” Him, but His eyes were not on them; nor on those passing by His cross wagging their heads, nor the malefactor at His side reviling Him; nor on the chief priest and scribes, the elders and soldiers mocking Him; nor the rulers deriding Him. His thought was not on them, nor even on Himself in His agonies, as His eyes rested keenly on His mother. It was a deep, tender, earnest gaze.

John tells that Jesus also “saw” “the disciples standing by, whom He loved.” The Lord turned His head from His mother to His disciple. This could be His only gesture pointing them one to the other.

The prayer for His murderers had apparently been uttered when His hands were pierced, before the cross was raised. He may have spoken once after it was elevated, before He saw the two special objects of His love. His eyes met His mother’s. She saw Him try to speak. The utterance of His parched lips, with gasping breath, was brief, full of meaning and tenderness—“Woman! behold, thy son!” Then turning toward John He said, “Behold! thy mother!”

In these words Jesus committed His mother to John without asking whether he would accept the charge.

“From that hour the disciple took her unto his own home.” It is a question whether or not the phrase, “from that hour,” is to be taken literally. It may be that the blessed words, “mother” and “son,” were as a final benediction, after which John led her away, and then returned to the cross. Or, it may be that the mother-heart compelled her to witness the closing scenes.

[Illustration: THE VIRGIN AND ST. JOHN AT THE CROSS *Old Engraving*
Page 193]

If we pause long enough to inquire why John was chosen to be trusted with this special charge, we can find probable answer. Jesus’ “brethren” did not then believe on Him. Mary’s heart would go out toward him who did, especially as he was her kindred as well as of a kindred spirit. His natural character, loving and lovable, made him worthy of the trust. Apparently he was better able to support her than were any other of the Apostles, and perhaps even than her sons. He seems to have been the only Apostle or relative of Mary who had a home in Jerusalem, where she certainly would choose to dwell among the followers of the Lord. Above all John was the beloved disciple of Mary’s beloved son. So to him we can fittingly say:



Page 83

“As in death He hung,
His mantle soft on thee He flung
Of filial love, and named the son;
When now that earthly tie was done,
To thy tried faith and spotless years
Consigned His Virgin Mother’s tears.”

—*Isaac Williams*.—Trans. An. Latin Hymn.

Blessed John. When Jesus called His own mother “thy mother,” didst thou not almost hear Him call thee “My brother”?

One tradition says that John cared for Mary in Jerusalem for twelve years, until her death, before his going to Ephesus. Another tradition is that she accompanied him thither and was buried there. What a home was theirs, ever fragrant with the memory of Him whom they had loved until His death. No incidents in His life, from the hour of brightness over Bethlehem to that of darkness over Calvary, was too trivial a thing for their converse. That home in Jerusalem became what the one in Nazareth had been, the most consecrated of earth. What welcomes there of Christians who could join with Mary as she repeated her song of thirty-three years before, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” Of her we shall gain one more distinct view—the only one.

[Illustration: THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS *Rubens* Page 200]

CHAPTER XXVII

John the Lone Disciple at the Cross—Continued

Three sayings on the cross reported by John:

“Woman, behold, thy son! Behold, thy mother!”

“I thirst.”

“It is finished.”

—*John* xix. 26, 27, 28, 30.

Of the seven sayings of Christ on the cross, three are preserved by John only; one of love, another of suffering, and another of triumph. The first is that to Mary and John himself. The second is the cry, “I thirst”—the only one of the seven concerning the Lord’s bodily sufferings. John was a most observing eyewitness, as is shown by the details of the narrative,—the “vessel *full* of vinegar,” the “sponge filled with vinegar,” and the hyssop on which it was placed, the movements of the soldiers as they put it to Christ’s lips, and the manner in which He received it. He was willing to accept it to



revive His strength to suffer, when “He would not drink” the “wine mingled with gall” that would relieve Him from the pain He was willing to endure. The end was drawing near. The thirst had long continued. He had borne it patiently for five long hours. Why did He at last utter the cry, “I thirst”? John gives the reason. A prophecy was being fulfilled, and Jesus would have it known. It was this: “In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.” So “Jesus, ... that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, ‘I thirst.’”

John watched Him as He took His last earthly draught. It was probably of the sour wine for the use of the soldiers on guard. What varied associations he had with wine,—the joyful festivities of Cana, the solemnities of the Upper Room, and the sadness of Calvary.



Page 84

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, "It is finished." This is the third of the sayings of Jesus on the cross preserved by John, who was a special witness to the chief doings of his Lord on the earth. So the declaration meant more to him than to any other who heard it. Yet it had a fulness of meaning which even he could not fully know. Jesus' life on earth was finished. He had perfectly obeyed the commandments of God. The types and prophecies concerning Him had been fulfilled. His revelation of truth was completed. The work of man's redemption was done. On the cross He affirmed what John said He declared in the Upper Room to His Father: "I have glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work Thou hast given Me to do."

All four Evangelists tell of the moment when Jesus yielded up His life, but John alone of the act that accompanied it as the signal thereof, which his observant eye beheld. "He bowed His head,"—not as the helpless victim of the executioner's knife upon the fatal block, but as the Lord of Life who had said, "No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself."

John makes mention of another incident without which the story of the crucifixion would be incomplete. Mary Magdalene and other loving women had left the cross, but were gazing toward it as they "stood afar off." John remained with the soldiers who were watching the bodies of the crucified. "The Jews, ... that the bodies should not remain upon the cross upon the Sabbath, asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken"—to hasten death—"and that they might be taken away." As John saw the soldiers "break the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with" Jesus, with what a shudder did he see them approach His cross; but what a relief to him when they "saw that He was dead already, and brake not His legs."

In a single clause John pictures a scene ever vivid in Christian thought. He knew that Jesus "gave up His spirit" when "He bowed His head." The executioners pronounced Him dead. "Howbeit one of the soldiers"—to make this certain beyond dispute—"with a spear pierced His side, and straightway there came out blood and water." There was now no pain to excite the Apostle's sympathy, and yet he reports the incident as being of special importance. He calls attention to the fact that he was an eye-witness, and that there was something in it that should affect others as well as himself. He says, "He that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe." He explains why these incidents so deeply impressed him. They recalled two prophecies of the Old Testament. One was this, "A bone of Him shall not be broken." This reminded John of the Paschal Lamb which should be perfect in body; and of Jesus as the Lamb of God, by which name He had been called when pointed out to him as the Messiah. All through life Jesus had been preserved from accident that would have broken a bone, and in death even from the intended purpose that would have defeated the fulfilment of the prophecy.



Page 85

The other prophecy was this,—“They shall look on Him whom they pierced.” Because of what John saw and tells, we pray in song,

“Let the water and the blood
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure:
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

[Illustration: IN THE SEPULCHRE *H. Hofmann* Page 201]

John once more furnishes a contrast between Jesus' foes and friends. He says that the Jews asked Pilate that the bodies of the crucified might be taken away. This was to the dishonored graves of malefactors. John more fully than the other Evangelists tells of Joseph of Arimathaea who “besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus”—for honorable burial. Other Evangelists tell of his being “rich,” “a counsellor of honorable estate,” “a good man and a righteous,” who “had not consented to” the “counsel and deed” of the Sanhedrin of which he was a member, because he “was Jesus' disciple.” Mark says, “He boldly went in unto Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.” He had summoned courage so to do. Hitherto as John explains he had been “a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews.” John implies that Joseph was naturally timid like Nicodemus. As Pilate had delivered Jesus to His open enemies to be crucified, he delivered the crucified body to Joseph, the once secret but now open friend. The Jews “led him”—the living Christ—“away to crucify Him.” Joseph “came” and tenderly “took away His body” from the cross.

“There came also Nicodemus,” says John, “he who at the first came to Him by night.” Yes, that night which John could not forget, in which to this same Nicodemus Jesus made known the Gospel of God's love, manifested in the gift of His Son whose body in that hour these timid yet emboldened members of the Sanhedrin took down from the cross. They were sincere mourners with him who watched their tender care as they “bound it in linen cloths with the spices” for burial, with no thought of a resurrection.

Perhaps Joseph and Nicodemus recalled moments in the Sanhedrin when they whispered together, speaking kindly of Jesus, but were afraid to defend Him aloud; thus silently giving a seeming consent to evil deeds because timidity concealed their friendship. But at last the very enmity and cruelty of His murderers emboldened them as they met at the cross.

It is John who tells us that Jesus the night before His crucifixion went “where was a garden into which He entered,” and who also says, “Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden.” The one was ever more suggestive to him of a coming trial; the other of that trial past. “There,” in the garden—probably that of Joseph—John says “they laid Jesus.” There also were laid John's hopes, which seemed forever buried when Joseph “rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.” What a



contrast in his thoughts and feelings between the rolling *away* of the stone from the tomb of Lazarus, and the rolling *to* that of Jesus. The one told him of resurrection; but the other of continued death; for as he afterward confessed, “as yet” he and Peter “knew not that Jesus must rise from the dead.”



Page 86

Two mourners at least lingered at the closed tomb. “Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre” of their Lord, after they “beheld where He was laid.” John’s parting from them at that evening hour was in sadness which was to be deepened when he met Mary Magdalene again.

It is not easy for us to put ourselves in the place of John, as he turns from the tomb toward his lonely home. We know what happened afterward, but he did not know what would happen, though his Lord had tried to teach him. He is repeating to himself the words he had heard from the cross, “It is finished,” but he is giving them some difference of meaning from that which Jesus intended. He is walking slowly and sadly through the streets of Jerusalem, dimly lighted by the moon that shone in Gethsemane the night before upon him and his living Lord. We imagine him saying to himself:—
“Truly it is finished: all is over now. How disappointed I am. I do not believe He intended to deceive me, yet I have been deceived. From early childhood I looked, as I was taught to do, for the coming of the Messiah. On Jordan I thought I had found Him. He chose me for one of His twelve, then one of the three, then the one of His special love. What a joy this has been, brightening for three years my hopes and expectations. I have seen Him work miracles, even raising the dead. I have seen Him defeat the plots of evil men against Him, and did not believe any power on earth could destroy Him. I have watched to see Him the great and glorious King. But to-day instead of this I have seen Him crucified as the feeblest and worst of men. I do remember now how Moses and Elijah, when we were with them on the Holy Mount, talked with Him of ‘His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.’ But I did not understand them, nor even Himself when, just before we ascended the Mount, He told us ‘how that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, ... and be killed.’ I do not wonder that Peter then said to Him, ‘Be it far from Thee, Lord,’ though the Lord was right in rebuking him. Can it be only last night He said, ‘Tarry with Me.’ How gladly would I do it now. But He is dead, and buried out of my sight. Oh that I might see Him rise, as I did the daughter of Jairus. Oh that I might roll away the stone from His tomb as I helped to do from that of Lazarus, and see Him come forth. How gladly would I ‘loose Him’ from His ‘grave-bands’ and remove the ‘napkin bound about His face.’ I know it was a mean and shameful taunt of His revilers when they said, ‘If Thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ But why did He not do it? I remember how once He said concerning His life, ‘no one taketh it away from Me.’ But have not Pilate and the Jews taken it away? I shall never lean upon His bosom again. But this I know—He loved me, and I loved Him, and love Him still. The mysteries are great, but the memories of Him will be exceedingly precious forever.”



Page 87

[Illustration: JESUS APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALENE (Easter Morning)
B. Plockhorst Page 209]

Poor John. He forgot those other words of His Lord concerning His life,—“I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” The Lord had done the one already: He was soon to do the other, though His sorrowing disciple understood it not. Meanwhile we leave him, resting if possible from the weariness of the garden and the palace and Calvary, during that Friday night, which was to be followed by a day of continued sadness, and that by another night of sorrowful restlessness.

CHAPTER XXVIII

John at the Tomb

“Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb. She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved.

“Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb.

“Simon Peter ... entered into the tomb.

“Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, ... and he saw and believed.”—*John* xx. 1, 2, 3, 6, 8.

“Let us take John for our instructor in the swiftness of love, and Peter for our teacher in courage.”—*Stalker*.

“Oh, sacred day, sublimest day!
Oh, mystery unheard!
Death’s hosts that claimed Him as their prey
He scattered with a word;
And from the tomb He valiant came;
And ever blessed be His name.”
—*Kingo. Trans. Hymns of Denmark*.

“Mine eye hath found that sepulchral rock
That was the casket of Heav’n’s richest store.”
—*Milton.—The Passion*.

Of the women who visited the tomb of Jesus on the morning of the Resurrection, John was especially interested in Mary Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, probably in his presence; thus giving him opportunity to see the marvelous change from a most abject condition, to grateful devotion to her Healer, perhaps beyond that of any



other one whom He healed. John long remembered her starting on her errand “while it was yet dark.” So he remembered Judas starting when “it was night” on his errand, of which Mary’s was the sad result. One was a deed of love which no darkness hindered: the other was a deed of hate which no darkness prevented or concealed.

John had a special reason for remembering Mary. When she had seen that the stone was taken away from the tomb, it had a different meaning to her from what it did when she and John saw it on Friday evening. And when she “found not the body of the Lord Jesus,” she imagined that either friends had borne it away, or foes had robbed the tomb. In surprise, disappointment and anxiety, her first impulse was to make it known—to whom else than to him who had sorrowed with her at the stone-closed



Page 88

door? So she “ran”—not with unwomanly haste, but with the quickened step of woman’s love—“to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved.” They were both loved, but not in the fuller sense elsewhere applied to John. Astonished at her early call, startled at the wildness of her grief, sharing her anxiety, “they ran both together” “toward the tomb” from which she had so hastily come. But it was an uneven race. John, younger and nimbler, “outran Peter and came first to the tomb.” “Yet entered he not in.” Reverence and awe make him pause where love has brought him. For a few moments he is alone. His earnest gaze confirms the report of Mary that somebody has “taken away the Lord.” He can only ask, Who? Why? Where? No angel gives answer. Still his gaze is rewarded. “He seeth the linen cloths lying.” These are silent witnesses that the precious body has not been hastily and rudely snatched away by unfriendly hands, such as had mangled it on the cross.

Peter arriving, everywhere and evermore impulsive, enters at once where John fears to tread. He discovers what John had not seen,—“the napkin that was upon His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself.” John does not tell whose head, so full is he of the thought of his Lord.

“Then entered in therefore that other disciple also,” says John of himself, showing the influence of his bolder companion upon him. Though the napkin escaped his notice from without the tomb, it found a prominent place in his memory after he saw it. Who but an eye-witness would give us such details? What does he mean us to infer from the “rolled” napkin put away, if not the calmness and carefulness and triumph of the Lord of Life as He tarried in His tomb long enough to lay aside the bandages of death. When he saw the careful arrangement of the grave-cloths, “he believed” that Jesus had risen. We are not to infer from his mention of himself only that Peter did not share in this belief. We can believe that Luke does not complete the story when he says that Peter “departed to his home wondering at that which was come to pass.” As they came down from the Mount of Transfiguration they were “questioning among themselves what the rising again from the dead should mean.” As they came from the tomb they questioned no longer.

[Illustration: THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT *Old Engraving* Page 224]

We long for a yet fuller record than that which John has given of what passed when he and Peter were within the tomb. He frankly tells us that “as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that He must rise again from the dead.” Neither prophecy, nor the Scriptures, nor the Lord’s repeated declarations, had prepared them for this hour of fulfilment.

We imagine them lingering in the tomb, talking of the past, recalling the words of their Lord, illumined in the very darkness of His sepulchre, and both wondering what the



future might reveal. At last they left the tomb together. There was no occasion now for John to outrun Peter. They were calm and joyful. There was nothing more to see or to do. "So the disciples went away again unto their own home."



Page 89

“But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping.” In these words John turns our thoughts from himself to her who had summoned him and Peter, and then followed them. After they had left the sepulchre she continued standing, bitterly weeping. She could not refrain from seeking that which she had told the disciples was not there. Her gaze was “at the very cause of her grief.” “She stooped and looked into the tomb” as John had done.

From the infancy of Jesus to His death there was no ministry of angels to men, though they ministered to Him. “The Master being by, it behooved the servant to keep silence.” But the angelic voices that proclaimed His birth, were heard again after His resurrection. According to John’s minute description Mary “beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.” The angelic silence was broken by them both, with the question, “Woman, why weepest thou”—so bitterly and continuously? They might have added, “It is all without a cause.” Her answer was quick and brief; and without any fear of the shining ones who lightened the gloomy tomb, and were ready to lighten her darkened spirit. Her reply was the echo of her own words to Peter and John, slightly changed to show her personal loss;—“Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.”—Am I not wretched indeed? Is there not a cause? Why should I check my tears?

To answer was needless. Were not the angels in the blessed secret which was immediately revealed? Were they not glancing from within the tomb, over her bowed head, to the gently moving form without? Did Mary become suddenly conscious of some presence as “she turns herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus”? His question seemed an echo of the angelic voices, “Woman, why weepest thou?” with the added question, “Whom seekest thou?” This was the first utterance of the risen Lord. In the garden, at this early hour, who—so thought Mary—can this be but the gardener? As such she addressed Him, “Sir, If *thou* hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” We can hardly restrain a smile when we see how the strength of her love made her unmindful of the weakness that would attempt to “take Him away.”

“Jesus saith unto her, Mary.” That name, that familiar voice, that loving tone, sent a thrill through her heart which the name “woman” had failed to excite. More completely “she turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni,” with all the devotion of her impassioned soul.

Let us recall John’s account of Mary’s report of her first visit to the tomb, full of sadness—“*They have taken away the Lord,*” and then in contrast place by its side his record of her second report, full of gladness—“*Mary Magdalene, cometh and telleth the disciples, I have seen the Lord.*” The one was a mistaken inference; the other a blessed reality. Between these two utterances on the same day what revelations to them both. But the end was not yet.

Page 90

“When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” So John describes the first meeting of Jesus with the disciples after His resurrection. He gives hints of some things of which other Evangelists are silent. With emphasis he notes “that day” as the day of days whose rising sun revealed resurrection glory. That “evening” must have recalled the last one on which they had been together. Then the Lord had said unto them, “Peace I leave with you.” But the benediction had seemed almost a mockery, because of the sorrow which followed. But now it was repeated with a renewed assurance of His power to bestow it. Through fear of the Jews they had closed the doors of probably the same Upper Room where they had been assembled before. These doors were no barrier to His entry, any more than the stone to His leaving His tomb.

[Illustration: ST. PETER AND ST. JOHN AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE
Old Engraving Page 225]

As John alone preserved the incident of the pierced side, he alone tells how Jesus “showed unto them His ... side,” and said to Thomas, at the next meeting, “Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side;” and how this was followed by Thomas’ believing exclamation, “My Lord, and my God.” With this and the Lord’s beatitude for other believing ones, John originally ended his story of the Lord, in these words,—“Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name.”

CHAPTER XXIX

“What Shall This Man Do_?”

“Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.”—*John* xxi. 1.

“There were together Simon Peter ... and the sons of Zebedee.”—v. 2.

“Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following.”—v. 20.

“Peter ... saith to Jesus, Lord, and What shall this man do?”—v. 21.

The twenty-first chapter of John’s Gospel is without doubt an addition, written some time after the original Gospel was finished. Why this addition? To answer the question we

must recall the things of which the addition tells. They are of special interest in our studies of Peter and John.

In our last chapter we were with John in Jerusalem. From there he carries us to the Sea of Tiberias. He tells us that he and his brother James, and Peter, with four others, “were there together.” They were near their childhood home, where they had watched for the Messiah, and where, when He had appeared He called them to leave their fishing employment, and to become fishers of men. They had been saddened



Page 91

by His death, then gladdened by His resurrection. He had told them to meet Him in Galilee. And now they were waiting for His coming. They were within sight of a boat from which perhaps some day they had fished. Peter, ever active and ready to do something, said to his companions, "I go a-fishing." As John had followed him into the tomb, he and the others followed him to the boat saying, "We also come with thee." Let John himself tell what happened. "They went forth and entered into the boat; and that night they took nothing. But when day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach: howbeit the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore saith unto them, Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered Him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."

Once more we are to find Peter and John the prominent figures, and see the difference between them, John being the first to understand, and Peter the first to act. When John saw the multitude of fishes he remembered the same thing had happened before at the beginning of Christ's ministry. Looking toward the land, and whispering to Peter, he said, "It is the Lord." "So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him"—out of reverence for his Master—"and cast himself into the sea," and swam or waded about one hundred yards to the beach. The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net with the fishes. John remembered their great size, and the number "an hundred and fifty and three." He says, "When they got out upon the land, they see a fire of coals there." Did it not remind him of another "fire of coals" of which he had already written, kindled in the court of the high-priestly palace where "Peter stood and warmed himself," and near which he denied his Lord three times? If he did not recall that scene immediately, he did very soon.

Jesus invited the disciples to eat of the meal he had prepared. As they did so they were filled with awe and reverence, "knowing that it was the Lord." In the light of the palace fire, "the Lord turned and *looked* upon Peter"—that only. But in the morning light on the seashore, "when they had broken their fast, Jesus *saith* to Simon Peter, Lovest thou Me?" Three times, with some difference of meaning, gently and solemnly He asked the question as many times as Peter had denied Him. On Peter's first assurance of his love Christ gave him a new commission, "Feed My lambs." This was a humble work,—not so exalted as it is now—a test of Peter's fitness for Apostleship. He was ready to accept it; and thus he showed his fitness for the enlarged commission, "Feed My sheep."

With what intense interest John must have listened to the conversation between his friend and their Lord. Was he not as ready as Peter to say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee"? In the end John fulfilled the commission, "Feed My lambs," better than either Peter or any of the other Apostles. Of them all he had the most of the child-like spirit. He may fittingly be called the Apostle of Childhood.



Page 92

Peter was told by the Lord something about his own future,—how in faithful service for his Master he would be persecuted, and “by what manner of death he should glorify God.” By this his crucifixion is apparently meant. As John listened, perhaps he wondered what his own future would be. He was ready to share in service with Peter. Was he not also ready to share in his fate, whatever it might be?

“Follow Me,” said Jesus to Peter. They seem to have started together away from the group. John felt that he must not be thus separated from his friend and his Lord. Though he had not been invited to join them, he started to do so, as if the command to Peter had been also for himself. “Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned back on His breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth Thee?” As Peter at the supper beckoned unto John to ask that question concerning Judas, is it not possible that John now beckoned to Peter to ask Christ concerning himself? However this may be, “Peter, seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, what shall this man do?” or, as it is interpreted, “Lord—and this man, what?” It is as if he had said, “Will John also die a martyr’s death, as you have said I shall die?” It is not strange that he wanted to know the future of his friend. But he did not receive the answer he sought, for “Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”

These words may mean that John would live to old age and escape martyrdom, which became true. But this was not the meaning which Christians of his day put into them. They had the mistaken idea that Christ, having ascended to Heaven, would soon come again. They also believed that John would live until Christ’s second coming. “This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die.” John was unwilling to have this mistake concerning Christ’s words repeated over and over wherever he was known. So he determined to correct the false report by adding what is the twenty-first chapter of His Gospel, telling just what Christ did say, and the circumstances in which He uttered the words to Peter concerning John. His testimony is this:—“Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.”

Peter became the suffering; John the waiting disciple, “tarrying” a long time, even after his friend was crucified, and all his fellow-Apostles had died, probably by martyrdom.

But after all that John wrote to correct the mistaken report concerning His death, tradition would not let him die. It affirmed that although he was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil at Rome, and though he was compelled to drink hemlock, he was unharmed; and that though he was buried, the earth above his grave heaved with his breathing, as if, still living, he was tarrying until Christ should return.

Page 93

“What shall this man”—John—“do?” asked Peter. He found partial answer in what they did together for the early Christian Church, until John saw “by what manner of death Peter should glorify God.” And then that church found yet fuller answer in John’s labors for it while alone he “tarried” long among them.

When John tells us that Peter turned and saw him following, we recall the hour when Andrew and he timidly walked along the Jordan banks, and “Jesus turned and saw them following,” and welcomed their approach and encouraged them in familiar conversation. How changed is all now! John does not ask as before, “Where dwellest Thou?” Nor does Jesus bid him “Come and see.” He who has become the favored disciple is now better prepared than then to serve his Master, following in the path they had trod together, and having an abiding sense of the blessed though unseen Presence, until his Lord shall bid him, “Come and see” My heavenly abode, and evermore “be with Me where I am,” and share at last, without unholy ambition, the glory of My Throne.”

CHAPTER XXX

St. John a Pillar-Apostle in the Early Christian Church

“James and Cephas and John, they who are reputed to be pillars.”—*Paul. Gal. ii. 9.*

“They went up into the upper chamber where they were abiding; both Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip, ...”—*Acts i. 13.*

“When the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place.”—*Acts ii. 1.*

“An angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them out.”—*Acts v. 19.*

“Now when the Apostles which were in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of the Lord, they sent unto them Peter and John.”—*Acts viii. 14.*

“He (Herod) killed James the brother of John with the sword.”—*Acts xii. 2.*

The next place where we may think of John with his Lord was on a mountain in Galilee. At least once before His death, and twice after His resurrection, He directed His Disciples to meet Him there. For what purpose? Evidently to receive His final commission.

“Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto Me in Heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations,



baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”



Page 94

But the disciples were not yet prepared to fulfil this commission. So He appointed another meeting, to be held in Jerusalem, where He met them, “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Here the command on the mountain was limited by another—not to depart from Jerusalem immediately. “Wait” said He, “for the promise of the Father which you heard from Me.” That promise we find in John’s record:—“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.” “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, shall teach you all things.” “He shall testify of Me.” In the fulfilment of that promise, the disciples were to find the preparation to “go” and “preach.” For that preparation they were to “wait.”

Jesus then reminds them of the assurance given by John the Baptist concerning Himself:—“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” Once more John is carried back to the Jordan, and reminded of the time when he and Jesus had been baptized. All those former scenes must have been recalled when Jesus at the final meeting in Jerusalem declared, “John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

These words revived in the disciples the hope which had died in them when Jesus died upon the cross. So, with yet mistaken ideas, they asked, “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” John and the rest of the Bethsaidan band, who had heard the Baptist say that the kingdom of God was at hand, hoped that “at this time” it would appear. But, as when Jesus gave no direct answer to the two pairs of brothers on Olivet concerning the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, or to Peter’s question concerning John’s future, so now He avoided a direct answer to this last question. He reminded them of something more important for them than knowledge of the future: that was their own duty,—not to reign, but to be witnesses for Him, first in Jerusalem, then throughout Judaea, then in Samaria, then “unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” Yet this could not be until they had “received power after that the Holy Ghost had come upon them.” This was promised them: they did not clearly understand what was meant: they were waiting to see.

“He led them out until they were over against Bethany,”—well-remembered Bethany. From there Jesus had made His triumphal entry into the City of the Great King: from there He would make a more glorious entry into the New Jerusalem. John was not His herald now. He, with the other ten, was “led” by Him to witness His departure.

As He ascended Olivet the last time, did He not give a parting glance down the slope into the village below, His eye resting on the home of those He loved, made radiant for us by the search-light thrown upon it by the loved disciple at His side? In thought did He not say, “Lazarus, Martha, Mary, farewell.”

The lifted hands, the parting blessing, the luminous cloud, and the vanishing form—such is the brief story of the Ascension.



Page 95

“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into Heaven?” The questioners were two angels. Without waiting for answer, they gave promise of Jesus’ return. “Then returned the disciples unto Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet.” Whither bound? We are told, “They went up into *the* upper chamber.” No longer simply “A large upper room” to which Jesus had told Peter and John they would be guided. Were they not now the guide of the nine thither, to the place where they had six weeks before “prepared” for the Passover? Did not the goodman of the house give the Disciples a second welcome, and offer it to them as a temporary place for the Christian Church? So it would appear, for again we are told, “they were there abiding.” Once more Luke gives their names, in the Acts as he did in his Gospel. All except Judas answered, in that upper room, to the roll call of the company scattered from Gethsemane, but reunited in a closer union. In each of Luke’s lists he begins with the Bethsaidan band. But he does not preserve the same order. In the latter he begins, not with the two pairs of brothers as such—Peter and Andrew, James and John,—but with the Apostles whom Christ had drawn into His inner circle, Peter, John and James, naming first the two who were already becoming the acknowledged leaders of the Christian band. In that list we find the name of Andrew recorded the last time in Holy Writ.

But the eleven were not alone: others resorted thither for the same purpose. What was that purpose? and who were some of them? This is the answer:—“These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.”

It is here, for the last time, that we read of Mary, in the Gospels. In what better place could we bid her farewell than in the room consecrated by the presence of her Son. How we rejoice with her that in that place the longing of her heart must have been satisfied as she joined “with one accord in prayer ... with His brethren”—her sons who during His life had not believed on Him. What a welcome to that room did they receive from John, their adopted brother! May we not indulge the thought that among “the women” were her own daughters; and that we hear her joyfully asking the once carping question of the Jews concerning “the carpenter’s son,” but with changed meaning, saying, “His *sisters*, are they not all with us?” If so “His Mother called Mary,” “and His brethren,” “and His sisters,” and John the adopted son and brother, were at last a blessed family indeed. Mary on her knees with her children around her, rejoicing in God her Saviour, of whom she had sung in the infancy of her Son—that certainly is a fitting scene to be the last in which we behold the Mother of Jesus.

“When the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place.” They were united in feeling, purpose and devotion, in the “one place,” the home of the early Church.

Page 96

The hour had come for the fulfilment of the promise of their Lord, for which they were to tarry in Jerusalem and wait. There was a great miracle,—a sound from Heaven as of the rushing of a mighty wind which filled the house. Flame-like tongues, having the appearance of fire rested on the heads of the disciples, who were “all filled with the Holy Ghost.” He gave them utterance as they spoke in languages they had not known before. Crowds of foreigners in the city “were confounded because that every man heard them speaking in his own language.”

On the morning of that day the Church numbered one hundred and twenty. “There were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls.”

St. John was one of those filled with the Holy Ghost, according to the prophecy he had heard by the Baptist, and the promise by Christ. On him rested a fiery tongue. To him the Spirit gave utterance, perhaps in the languages of those among whom he was to labor in Asia Minor, from where some of these strangers had come. He was in full sympathy with that Christian company, an actor with them, a leader of them, a pillar for them strong and immovable.

But the Upper Room was not the only place where John worshiped. The Temple was still a sanctuary where such as he communed with God. The hour for the evening prayer was nearing when “Peter and John were going up into the Temple.” They reached the Beautiful Gate, which Josephus describes as made of Corinthian brass, surpassing in beauty other temple gates, even those which were overlaid with silver and gold. By it they saw what doubtless they had often seen before, a lame man who, during most of the forty years of his life, had been daily brought thither. His weakness was a great contrast to the massive strength of the pillar against which he leaned, as he counted the long hours and the coins he received in charity. His haggard appearance and ugly deformity were a greater contrast to the richness and symmetry of the gate which was so fittingly “called Beautiful.”

Was there something especially benignant in the faces of the two Apostles, that encouraged the poor creature to hail them as he saw them “about to go into the Temple”? They were willingly detained. “Peter, fastening his eyes on him, with John, said, ‘Look on us.’” A gift was bestowed richer far than that for which he had hoped. They were full of joy themselves, and of pity for him, and of a sense of the power of their Lord, so often exercised in their presence. Therefore the command, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”

That was a strange sight to those who had long known the beggar, as he held Peter with one hand and John with the other, as if leading them into the Temple, into which he entered, “walking, and leaping, and praising God.”



Page 97

The glad shout of the healed man attracted a crowd around him, “greatly wondering.” The Apostles declared that the miracle was by no power of their own, but by that of Jesus who had been killed, but had risen from the dead. For this they were arrested and put in prison—strange place for such men and for such a reason. On the next day they were brought before the rulers who demanded by what power they had done this thing. Again the disciples declared it was in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom the Jews crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead. The rulers were amazed when “they saw the boldness of Peter and John.” They had known the power of Jesus’ words: they saw a like power in the words of the Apostles, whom they were assured had been with Him and been aided by Him. But this did not check their rage, which was increased as they saw how many believed the Apostles. The three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost were increased to five thousand.

[Illustration: EPHESUS *From Photograph Page 232*]

As leaders of the Christian company Peter and John were again put into prison—into the public jail for malefactors. But the divine power which had been used through them was now used for them. A solemn warning was given to the daring wickedness of the rulers. When they thought their prisoners kept “with all safety,” in the darkness, behind bolted doors, “an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them out, and said, ‘Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life.’”

We know not the manner in which he led them out as he invisibly opened and closed the doors through which they passed, to obey without fear the heavenly bidding. With consternation the rulers heard a messenger declare, in words almost echoing the angel’s command, “Behold the men whom ye put in prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people.”

Persecution scattered Christians who fled from Jerusalem, telling wherever they went, of Christ as the Saviour. A deacon named Philip preached in Samaria with great effect. “Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost.”

These two were chosen because they had taken the most active part in establishing the church in Jerusalem, and were specially fitted for similar work elsewhere. With what peculiar feelings John must have entered Samaria. He must have recalled a day when hot and weary he had journeyed thither with his Lord and met the Samaritaness at the well. Perhaps he now met her again, and together they talked over that wonderful conversation which made her the first missionary to her people, many of whom declared, “We know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”



Did John on this visit enter into “a village of the Samaritans”—the same where he had said, “Lord, wilt Thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” Is it of them that it is now said he “prayed for them”? His fire of indignation and revenge had changed to the fire of love. The pentecostal flames had rested on his head.



Page 98

Once more—only once—we find the names of James and John together. One short sentence, full of pathos, of injustice and cruelty, of affection and sorrow, tells a story of the early Church: Herod “killed James the brother of John with the sword.” He was the first martyr of the Apostles. The smaller circle of the three, and the larger one of the twelve, is broken. For these brothers we may take up David’s lamentation over Saul and Jonathan, slightly changed, and say, “They were lovely and pleasant in their lives: but in their death they were divided,”—for through half a century John mourned the loss of his loved companion from childhood.

After James—one of the three whom Paul named pillars—had fallen, the other two, Peter and John, stood for awhile side by side in strength and beauty. To each of them he might have given the name Jachin by which one of the pillars of Solomon’s temple was called, meaning, “whom God strengthens.” Peter was the next to fall, after which John long stood alone, until at last the three whom first we saw by the Sea of Galilee, stood together by the glassy sea, in each of them fulfilled the promise made through John, by their Lord,—“He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more.”

[Illustration: THE ISLE OF PATMOS *Old Engraving* Page 233]

CHAPTER XXXI

Last Days

“I John ... was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus.... And I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches.”—*Rev. i. 9-11.*

“Since I, whom Christ’s mouth taught, was bidden teach,
I went, for many years, about the world,
Saying, ‘It was so; so I heard and saw,’
Speaking as the case asked; and men believed.
Afterward came the message to myself
In Patmos Isle. I was not bidden teach,
But simply listen, take a book and write,
Nor set down other than the given word,
With nothing left to my arbitrament
To choose or change; I wrote, and men believed.”

From Samaria John with Peter “returned to Jerusalem.” This is the last record of him in the Acts. We have but little information concerning him after that event. He suddenly disappears. We have two glimpses of him which are historic, and several through shadowy traditions.



There was a very important meeting in Jerusalem to settle certain questions in which the early Church was greatly interested, and about which there had been much difference in judgment and feeling. St. Paul was present. He says that St. John was there, one of the three Pillar-Apostles who gave to him and Barnabas “the right hands of fellowship.” This is the only time of which we certainly know of the meeting of these two Apostles; though we have



Page 99

imagined the possibility of John's visiting the school of Gamaliel, and worshiping in the Temple when young Saul was in Jerusalem. From this time, A.D., 50, we lose sight of John and do not see him again until A.D., 68, in the Isle of Patmos. As his Lord was hidden eighteen years, from the time of His boyhood visit to Jerusalem until He entered on His public ministry, so long His disciple is concealed from our view. Leaving Jerusalem he probably never returned. Why he left we do not know. It may have been because of persecutions. Perhaps the death of Mary relieved him from the charge we may believe he had faithfully kept, and thus made it possible for him to go about like other Apostles to preach the Gospel. If so we have no hint in what direction he went. He may have gone directly to Ephesus. On reaching it perhaps he found a welcome from some who had heard him speak in their own language on the day of Pentecost. It was a populous city, wealthy and wicked. Its magnificent Temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the world. Its ruins give us a hint of its former glory.

All the traditions of early times make Ephesus the home of St. John in the latter part of his life. From it as a centre he ministered to the Churches of Asia Minor.

Gospel truth found its way thither, even before Paul made it the centre of his third missionary tour. He was driven from it, but he left the foundation of a Christian Church, upon which John builded. There were like foundations in at least six other important cities of Asia Minor—Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

The silence of the latter half of St. John's life is broken but once, and that by himself. He tells us that he "was in the isle that is called Patmos." It was not far from Ephesus, within a day's sail. It is a huge rock, rugged and barren, only a few miles in length.

Why was John in Patmos? He says, "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." What does he mean by this? Perhaps that he was led thither by circumstances of which we do not know, or by the guidance of the Spirit of God, who there would make wonderful revelations to him. But more probably he was banished thither for the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus, and for being a faithful follower of Him, notwithstanding the persecutions of Nero or Domitian. As told in an ancient Latin hymn,

"To desert islands banished,
With God the exile dwells,
And sees the future glory
His mystic writing tells."

The grotto of La Scala may have been the spot from which he looked out upon the Aegean Sea, and upward into the heavens, communing in solitude with his own thoughts, or with his Lord for whom he was there. Patmos was for this a fitting place,

whether he had gone there from his own choice, or had been driven thither by the cruelty of his persecutor. In such solitude did Milton muse, and Bunyan dream.



Page 100

It was the “Lord’s Day,” says John. He alone, and at this time only, uses that name with which we have become familiar, though it may have been in common use among the early Christians. It meant much to John, even more than to us. It was a reminder of the day when he looked into, and then entered, the tomb of his Lord, and believed that He had risen from the dead.

His meditations may have been aided by Old Testament Manuscripts, his only companions; especially that of Daniel, in which it is claimed “the spirit and imagery of the Book of Revelation is steeped.”

What a contrast there was between the peaceful waves of Gennesaret, creeping silently upon the sandy beach of his childhood home, and the breakers dashing upon the rocky coast of his exile abode in his old age! How suggestive of the calm and turmoil of his life!

[Illustration: SMYRNA *Old Engraving* Page 233]

But his musings were suddenly broken by “a great voice, as of a trumpet,” giving a command—“What thou seest, write in a book.” He says, “I turned to see the voice that spake with me.” He beheld his Lord in greater grandeur than he had seen Him on earth, even on Hermon. As he gazed upon the divine figure he must have exclaimed,

“Can this be He who used to stray,
A pilgrim on the world’s highway,
Oppressed by power, and mocked by pride,
The Nazarene, the Crucified!”

We do not wonder that he says,—“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead.” So had Paul done when the Lord appeared to him at Damascus. John adds, “He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not.” The words seem almost an echo from the Holy Mount,—“Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.”

The command to John was renewed, to write—of things which he had seen, and what he was yet to behold. The early Christians called him the Eagle, meaning that of all the sacred writers he had the loftiest visions of divine truth.

John’s writings are of three kinds, the Book of The Revelation of the secret purposes of God; his Gospel; and his three Epistles or letters.

Although The Revelation is the last of the books of the Bible, it is probably the first of those by John. It contains messages from the Lord in Heaven to the seven churches in Asia, which we have mentioned, concerning their virtues and their failings. To each was given a special promise of reward to those who overcame sin, and were faithful to

Christ. From this Revelation of John we get our imagery of Heaven, helping us to understand something of its glory.



Page 101

His Gospel is supposed to have been written next. Why did he write it? As we have noticed, Matthew, Mark and Luke had already written their Gospels. But there was abundant reason for John's writing the fourth Gospel. We need not doubt the tradition that he was urged to do so by the disciples, elders and bishops of the early Church. They had heard him tell much concerning Christ of which the first three Evangelists had not told. These things were too precious to be forgotten, or to be changed by frequent repetition after his lips were silent. That must be soon, for he was very old, having long passed the limit of human age. They had listened to the story of the early call of the disciples, and of the first miracle at Cana, and of the night visit of Nicodemus to Jesus, and of the talk by the well of Samaria with the Samaritaness, and of the washing of the disciples' feet, and of many other things which Jesus said and did of which no one had written. In John's talks with Christians, and his preaching in their churches, he explained fully and simply the teachings of Jesus, as no one else had done, or could do. They longed for a record of them, that they might read it themselves, and leave it to their children, and those who never could hear the words from his lips.

So St. John wrote his Gospel, giving to his first readers his great reason,—“These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name.”

For the writing of his first Epistle he also gives a reason, saying,—“That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled concerning the word of life, ... that ... declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us.”

Through these words John draws us very near to his Lord and ours, Whom we behold through his eyes, and hear through his ears. We almost feel the grasp of a divine yet human hand.

The great theme is the love of God, or as Luther expresses it, “The main substance of this Epistle relates to love.” John's Gospel abounds in declarations and illustration of this greatest of truths, but it does not contain the phrase in this Epistle in which he sums up the whole Gospel, “GOD IS LOVE.” Because of John's deep sense of God's love, and because of the depth of his own love, the Beloved Apostle is called, The Apostle of Love.

John's second Epistle should be of special interest to the young. From it we infer that there were two Christian homes, in each of which John took delight. The mothers were sisters. His letter is addressed to “The elect lady”—or as she is sometimes called the Lady Electa—and her children. John tells of his love and that of others for them,—Mother and children—because of their Christian character. He tells of his great joy because of the children “walking in the truth”—living as children should live who have learned of the teachings of Christ.



Page 102

From the group of children around him in the home where he wrote, he sends messages to their aunt, saying, "The children of thine elect sister salute thee." How the children of Electa must have prized that letter! How little they thought that nineteen hundred years after they received it, other children would read it, and think how happy were those who had the Apostle John for their friend.

This letter is one of the things that revealed his child-like spirit. We remember the time when he did not have that spirit. At last he did have it because he became so much like his Master who loved the little ones, and taught His disciples to do the same.

John thought of the child-spirit as the Christ-spirit, whether it was in the old or the young. He called all who had it children. He called those to whom he ministered in his old age his little children. This he does in the last sentence of his last letter to the Christian church,—“My little children, guard yourselves from idols.”

Because of his own child-like spirit and his seeking to cultivate it in others, and because of his manifest interest in children, he may be called the Apostle of Childhood.

There is a beautiful tradition concerning him, that in his old age, when he was too feeble to walk to the church or to preach, he was carried thither, and said again and again,—“Little children, love one another.” Some said, “Master, why dost thou always say this?” He replied, “It is the Lord’s command, and if this alone is done, it is enough.” Of his death at the probable age of about one hundred nothing is known. It is claimed that there is a sacred spot somewhere among the tangled thickets of Mt. Prion which looks down on Ephesus where his body was laid.

There is a tradition, inconsistent with the supposition that Mary died in Jerusalem, that she accompanied John to Ephesus and was buried near him; her eyes having been closed by him on whom her Son had looked with dimming vision, commending her to his loving care.

No magnificent tomb marks the place of John’s burial. None is needed. But there are richer and abundant memorials of St. John the Divine—an imperishable name because that of the Beloved Disciple of Him Whose name is above every name.

CHAPTER XXXII

A Retrospect

How wonderful and charming a history is that of St. John! Our glimpses of him have been few and often-times indistinct; but they have been enough in number and clearness to reveal a noble and lovable character.

We saw him first on the sea-shore of Gennesaret, not differing from any other Galilean boy. We watched him playing and fishing with his Bethsaidan companions, none of

them thinking of how long their friendship would be continued, or in what new and strange circumstances of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, disappointment and glad surprises, that companionship would become closer and closer.



Page 103

We saw John in his rambles about his home, amid scenes beautiful in themselves, which became sacred because of what he there beheld and heard.

We discovered his relationship to a child in Nazareth whom he did not know at first as the most wonderful being in the world.

We entered his home and visited the school where he was taught of Him who was called the coming Messiah; but who had already come, though his parents and teachers knew it not.

We followed him as a Jewish boy into the Temple, whose glories were to become more glorious in his manhood by what he beheld therein.

We saw him on the Jordan, standing with his kindred and namesake, who pointed him to Jesus as the Messiah for whom he had been looking. From that hour we have known him as a disciple of Jesus, later as one of his twelve Apostles, then one of the chosen three, then the one—the beloved Disciple.

Through his eyes we have beheld the wonderful works of our Lord: with his ears we have heard the most wonderful words ever spoken to man. We have caught glimpses of him in most wonderful scenes which he was almost the only one to behold—amid the glories of the transfiguration, in the death-chamber changed to that of life, in the shadows of Gethsemane.

We have learned through John the sacredness of human friendships, made closer and holier by friendship with the loved and loving Lord. He has been our guide to the Upper Room of joy and sadness; to the Priestly Palace of suffering and of shame; to the cross of agony and death; to the tomb of surprise and exaltation; to the mount of final blessing and ascension.

[Illustration: PERGAMOS AND THE RUINS OF THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN
Old Engraving Page 233]

John saw what kings and prophets longed to see, but died without the sight—the Messiah come. He witnessed probably all the miracles of Jesus, from his first in Cana as a guest, to his last on the sea-shore as a host—the signs of divine power inspired by pity and love. He looked upon the enthusiastic but mistaken throng who in Galilee would force upon Jesus an unwelcome crown; then upon the multitudes who hailed him with hosannas on Olivet; then the maddened crowd who shouted through the streets of Jerusalem, “Crucify Him.” He witnessed Christ’s movements when the multitudes gathered about Him for instruction and healing, and when he withdrew from them to pray. His eyes were dazzled by the brightness of the transfiguration as he looked upon the form which at last was enshrouded in darkness on Calvary. With another vision he beheld that form in Heaven itself.



On the Jordan he beheld Jesus as the Lamb of God which was to be offered as a sacrifice. He saw the cross become His altar of sacrifice, and then in Heaven discerned Him as the “Lamb as it had been slain.” He was witness of Christ’s joys and sorrows, shame and suffering, humiliation and exaltation, entering into them more fully than did any other human being.



Page 104

From the hour in which John stood with the Baptist who told him to behold Jesus, his eye was upon Him, until, because there was no more for him to behold of his Lord on earth, the angels asked, "Why stand ye gazing?" Having seen Him "lifted up" on a beclouded cross, he saw Him "taken up" as a glorious "cloud received Him out of sight."

John heard wondrous things. He became familiar with his Lord's voice, its tones of instruction and exhortation, warning and reproof, invitation and affection, forgiveness and benediction, prayer and praise, depression and agony, joy and triumph. He was no careless listener to the words spoken to Jesus—those of inquiry and pleading, hypocrisy and contempt, mockery and deceit, hatred and love. Beside his Lord, he heard saintly voices, and the voice of the Father.

Much that John saw and heard when with his Lord he has made known. We imagine some things were too tender and sacred for others' ears: concerning such his lips were sealed. Other things were too precious for silence: of such he is the most distinct echo. His Gospel is often a commentary on the other three. He was an eye-witness of most of the events of which he tells. His Gospel is rich with illuminated texts. Having the best understanding of "the words of the Lord Jesus," he is the fullest reporter of His teachings. Having the deepest insight into the heart of hearts of his Lord, he is its clearest revealer. While many others grasped separate truths, he placed them side by side in harmony and unity, and thus held them up and revealed them to mankind. His Lord's words were the most sacred treasures of his memory: his greatest joy was to bring them forth for others to view and admire, that they too might be inspired thereby to "love and good works." Without erasing aught from the pictures drawn by his fellow-Evangelists, he has added to, and filled in, and re-touched with a sympathizing hand. So familiar had he become with his Lord's countenance, with all its varied expressions, and so skilful was he in reproducing them, that his composite portrait is the most beautiful and impressive of all attempts to portray "the human face divine."

Standing outside of some grand cathedral, before its stained window, we mark the figures with their rich depth of color. Passing within we see the same figures, but the outline is more distinct; the colors are richer, and with more harmonious blending. So sometimes we seem to stand with the three Evangelists outside the Gospel Cathedral; and then with John within.

Like Ruth in the field of Boaz he followed the reapers—the first three Evangelists in the field of their Lord,—to "glean even among the sheaves." He "gleaned in the field until evening," the close of the long day of his life, "and beat out that he had gleaned," and gave it to others. There was not need for them to ask him, "Where hast thou gleaned?" There was only one field from which such harvest could be gathered. Rather could they say as Naomi to Ruth, "Blessed is he that did take knowledge of thee."



Page 105

There have been more noted illustrations of change in character than is furnished in St. John. His early life was not profligate like that of John Newton or John Bunyan. And yet the change in him was marked enough to furnish an exhibition of contrast, showing the power of Christ's teachings and example upon him, until he reached an unwonted degree of perfection. He combined the noblest traits of the loftiest manhood and womanhood, with the simplicity of childhood. His human kinship to Jesus illustrated but faintly the closer and tenderer relation formed by the transforming of his spirit into the likeness of Christ. This was more royal than any merely human relationship. It was the closest relation of which we know of the perfect Christ with imperfect man. We have watched the changes in John's spirit, and seen his imperfections smoothed away, and his character so polished that it became the brightest reflector of the image of Jesus Christ. Yet from the first there were budding virtues in him which Mary Magdalene's supposed gardener brought to perfection.

[Illustration: RUINS OF LAODICEA *Old Engraving Page 233*]

In history John stands and must ever stand alone. He was one of the two who first accepted the call of Christ to come to Him: he was the last of the Apostles to repeat, in another and yet as true a sense, that invitation to multitudes of men. He was one of those two who first saw what may be called the beginning of the Christian Church, in the little booth by the Jordan: and the last one of the Twelve to remember its fuller establishments in the Upper Chamber of Jerusalem. He was the last man who had seen the last prophet who told of the coming Messiah; and was the last Evangelist to tell that He had come. He was one of the three who were the last to behold the Shechinah, and to whom came the voice of God the Father.

John was the lone disciple in the palace of the high priest, witnessing the injustice, mockery, and cruelty before Pilate; the last one with whom the Lord spoke and on whom His eye rested before His death. He was the lone disciple to gaze upon the cross and witness the dying agonies; the first to look into the deserted tomb; the first of whom we are told that he believed the Lord had risen therefrom. The last survivor of the Apostolic band, he had the fullest opportunity to witness the fulfilment of prophecies of which he was a careful student and clear interpreter. He saw the sad close of the Jewish dispensation, and the glorious beginning of Christianity. He saw the Holy City overthrown, as Christ declared to Him on Olivet that it would be, and had a vision of the New Jerusalem of which the old was a consecrated type, at last profaned.

Of the golden Apostolic chain he was the last link binding the Church to its Lord. He was the last known human kindred of the Son of Man. The last words of inspiration were spoken to and recorded by him. He was the latest prophet, historian, and Evangelist. One of the first to say, "I have seen the Messiah," he was the last to say, "I have seen the Lord."



Page 106

We have caught glimpses of St. John in the early days of Christianity, as a light and a pillar, a teacher and a guide. Sometimes for years together he has been hidden from our view, and then has emerged with a yet brighter halo around his head. We have watched him on a lonely isle gazing into heaven, beholding glories of which he gives us hints, but which he tells us he cannot fully describe.

Because of his relation to the Lord, the fisher boy unknown beyond the hamlet of Bethsaida two thousand years ago is “spoken of” as truly as Mary of Bethany, whose memory he especially has made sacred and perpetual. Wherever the Gospel is preached he too is remembered, honored and loved.

Because of his relation to the Lord, towns in lands of which he never knew, bear his name; in which people are taught by his words and inspired by his spirit. In them many a family is known by the name St. John. Rivers in their flow bear his name from generation to generation on earth, while he points men to the pure river “proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb,” which was “showed” him in Patmos. Societies for fraternal fellowship and mutual helpfulness are called after him. St. John’s day has a sacred place in the calendar. Many a rural chapel and stately city church are reminders of him. The richness of his graces, and the yet future of his saintly influence, are symbolized in the yet unfinished temple of surpassing grandeur in the City of New York,—“The Cathedral of St. John the Divine.”

From all these earthly scenes in which we have beheld him, to which history and tradition have pointed us, and from those things which are memorials of him, we turn to the Heavenly scenes which he bids us behold as they were revealed to him. Thither we follow him after all his trials and labors and triumphs of earth. With reverence and gladness for him, we listen to the voice of the Lord saying to him what He had told him to say to the Churches of Asia:—“Because thou didst overcome I give thee ‘to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.’ Thou shalt ‘not be hurt with the second death.’ I give thee ‘a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written.’ I give thee ‘the morning star.’ ‘I will in no wise blot thy name out of the book of life! I make you a pillar in the temple of My God.’ O John, rememberest thou thy petition and that of thy brother who has long been with Me,—‘Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand in Thy glory’? Thou thoughtest that ‘glory’ was an earthly throne, which thou never sawest. But thou hast overcome thy pride and ambition, thy jealous and revengeful spirit. Thou hast triumphed over those who were thine enemies because thou wast My friend. Thou didst see My agonies and victories in Gethsemane and on Calvary. Thou didst take up My cry on My cross concerning My work on earth, and sound it forth,—‘It is finished.’ Dost thou remember My final



Page 107

promise to him that overcometh, which I made from this My true throne of glory, through thee, 'in the isle that is called Patmos'—precious name even here because of thy 'testimony for' Me. That promise I now fulfil in thee. O John, one of My chosen Twelve on earth; yea more, one of My chosen three; yet more, My beloved one, here in Heaven, now, 'Sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father in His throne.'"

CHAPTER XXXIII

Legends and Traditions of St. John

After closing the history of St. John, we linger over the traditions that cluster about his later years. They reveal the feelings of the early Church toward him who was the last of the Apostolic band, and the last who had seen their Lord.

There is one legend so beautiful, so much like him, that we can almost believe it as having a fitting place in his history. It belongs to the time when he preached in the magnificent Church which Christians had reared for him in Ephesus. We may not credit the story that on his brow he wore a golden plate engraven with the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord," but we can almost imagine it written there. His memorable appearance and his tender manner, the loving voice with which he told the story of his Lord, fastened all eyes upon him, and opened all ears to his message of salvation. There was one, a young man, who standing in the distance, looked and listened with such eager interest as to attract the attention of the Apostle. In repentance and faith he found the peace which nothing else can give. He was baptized and numbered with the Ephesian Christians. St. John took special interest in him, training him in Christian doctrine, and preparing him for a useful life. When the hour for John's banishment came, in his anxiety for the youth, he committed him to the care of the Bishop of the place, whom he charged to be faithful in teaching and spiritual guidance.

But the youth was exposed to many temptations from the heathen about him. Their songs and dances and wine again charmed him as they did before he heard the preaching of John. He yielded to their influences, and renounced his profession of Christianity. In the absence of the Apostle, the reproofs of the Bishop only maddened him. He no longer attended the services of the Church, or sought the companionship of Christians. Having entered the paths of sin, he wandered farther and farther therein. At last he committed a crime against the government. In fear of punishment he fled from Ephesus, and joined a company of robbers and bandits in the wild ravines of the mountains. Though young in years, he was so cunning and bold in crime that he became the leader of the band. Inspired by his daring spirit they were ready for deeds of violence that made them the terror of the whole region.



On John's return from his exile in Patmos to Ephesus, he longed to know of the welfare of the young disciple, who had been to him as an adopted son, ever present to his mind and heart in his lonely island. The Bishop, with downcast eyes, sorrow and shame, declared, "He is dead." "How?" asked John, "and by what death?" "He is dead to God," said the Bishop. "He has turned out wicked and abandoned, and at last a robber."



Page 108

John rent his garments as a sign of distress. Weeping he cried with a loud lamentation, "Alas! alas! to what a guardian have I trusted our brother!" The tender, faithful heart of the aged Apostle yearned for the young man. He was ready to say, "How can I give thee up!" He knew the mercy of God, and the power of love, human and divine; and determined that the robber-chieftain should know it too.

Immediately he procured a horse and guide, and rode toward the stronghold of the robbers. It was in a wild mountainous ravine, with rushing torrents and rugged rocks overgrown with brushwood and luxuriant herbage. It was a place of grandeur, and yet of gloom—a fitting haunt for the robber-band. Few travelers passed that way, and that hurriedly and in terror.

At last the Apostle and his guide heard from behind the rocks the hoarse shouts of revelry. But he heeded them not, so intent was he on his errand. He was seeking the prodigal, his adopted son—who was not seeking the loving father. He drew the reins of his horse, while he told his guide that their journey was ended, and prayed for themselves and for him whom they sought. His nearness was discovered by one of the band, who led him to the rest, and bound his guide. There was a great contrast between the old man with his snowy locks and beard, in his humble garb; and the younger, the wild looking bandit with his streaming hair and loose white kilt; between the defenceless captive, and his captors armed with Roman swords, long lances, and bows and arrows before which he seemed perfectly powerless.

As he looked upon their hardened features they looked into his benignant face, and stood awed in his presence. Their rough manner, words and tones were changed by his smile and even friendly greeting. He made no resistance. His only motion was a wave of his hand. It was mightier than sword or lance or bow. His only request was, "Take me to your captain." Over-awed by the dignity of his manner and his calmness, the captors obeyed their captive and silently led him to their chief. In an open space the tall handsome young man was seated on his horse, wearing bright armor and breastplate, and holding the spear of a warrior. At a glance he recognized his old master, instructor and guide, who had been to him as a father. His first thought was, "Why should this holy man seek me?" He answered his own question, saying to himself, "He has come with just and angry threatenings which I well deserve." John had been called "a son of thunder." As such the trembling chief thought of him, ready to hear him pronounce an awful woe. So with a mingled cry of fear and anguish, he turned his horse and would have fled—a strange sound and sight for his fellow-robbers.



Page 109

But St. John had no thunder tones for him, no threats of coming punishment. The kind shepherd had found the sheep that had been lost. The father had found the prodigal, without waiting for the wanderer's return. John sprang toward him. He held out his arms in an affectionate manner. He called him by tender names. With earnest entreaty he prevailed on him to stop and listen. As young Saul, when near Damascus caught sight of Jesus and heard His voice, dropped from his horse to the ground; so did the young chieftain at the sight and voice of St. John. With reverence he kneeled before him, and in shame bowed his head to the ground. Like Peter who had denied the same Lord, the young man wept bitterly. His cries of self-reproach and his despair echoed strangely in that rocky defile. As St. John had wept for him, he wept for himself. Those were truly penitential tears. John still spoke encouragingly. The young man lifted his head and embraced the knees of the Apostle, sobbing out, "No hope, no pardon." Then remembering the deeds of his right hand, defiled with blood, he hid it beneath his robe. St. John fell on his knees before him and enfolded him in his arms. He grasped the hand that had been hidden, and bathed it in tears as if he would wash away its bloody stains, and then kissed it, in thought of the good he said it should yet perform.

That hand cast away the sword it had wielded in murder, and lovingly, gratefully held that of John, as the Apostle, and the robber-chief now penitent and forgiven, together left the wilderness; within sight of the astonished band; some of whom were greatly touched by what they had seen and heard, while others were ready to scoff at what they called the weakness of their leader.

Another tradition is a beautiful illustration of the tenderness and sympathy which we may judge was increasingly manifest in St. John's character, the spirit of the Lord "whose tender mercies are over all His works," the spirit St. John had seen in his Master who noticed the sparrow falling to the ground. True it is,

"He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man, and bird, and beast.
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small;
For the dear Lord who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

There was a young tame partridge in which St. John took delight and found recreation in many an hour from which he had turned from labor for rest. A young hunter anxiously seeking the great Apostle was surprised to find him in what seemed a frivolous employment. He doubted for a moment whether this could be he. John asked, "What is that thing which thou carriest in thy hand?" "A bow," replied the hunter. "Why then is it unstrung?" said John. "Because," was the answer, "were I to keep it always strung it would lose its spring and become useless." "Even so," replied the Apostle, "be not offended at my brief relaxation, which prevents my spirit from waxing faint."



Page 110

We have already alluded to a tradition which is perhaps the best known of all, and universally accepted. In Ephesus, in extreme old age, too infirm to walk, St. John was carried as a little child to the church where he had so long preached. In feebleness his ministry had ended. The last sermon as such had been preached. He could no longer repeat the words of Christ he had heard on the mountain, and the sea-shore, and in the Temple. He could no longer tell of the wonders of which he was the only surviving witness. In Christians he saw the child-spirit, whether in old or young. In his old age he was a father to all such as none other could claim to be. His great theme—his only theme—was love. So his only words, again and again repeated as he faced the congregation were “Little children, love one another.” And when asked why he repeated the same thing over and over, he told them it was the Lord’s command, and if they obeyed it, that was enough.

Traditions alone tell of St. John’s death. One claims that as his brother James was the first of the Apostles to suffer martyrdom, he was the last. Others tell of miraculous preservation from death;—that he was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, and drank hemlock, without any effect upon him. Sometimes he is pictured as holding a cup from which a viper, representing poison, is departing without doing him any harm.

There is still another story concerning his death. On the last Lord’s Day of his life, after the Holy Communion, he told some of his disciples to follow him with spades. Leading them to a place of burial, he bid them dig a grave into which he placed himself, and they buried him up to the neck. Then in obedience to his command they placed a cloth over his face and completed the burial. With weeping they turned away and reported what had been done. But his disciples felt that, not the grave, but the great church was the fitting place for his burial. So with solemn service they went to bring his body thither. But on reaching the grave they found it empty, as he and Peter had found the tomb of their Lord on Easter morning. Then they remembered the words of Christ to Peter concerning John, “If I will that he abide till I come, what is that to thee?”

But there is another tradition stranger still. People refused to believe that St. John was dead, even though he had been supposed to be, and had been buried. For centuries his grave was shown at Ephesus. Pilgrims visiting it beheld a wonderful sight. The ground above it rose and fell, as if the great Apostle were still breathing as he had done for one hundred years, while treading the earth which now guarded his immortal sleep.

Such stories seem strange to us when we remember the chapter he wrote to correct a mistake made by those who misunderstood his Master’s word, and believed that he would not die until the Lord returned to the earth.

He probably escaped martyrdom which befell his fellow-Apostles. Dying, probably in Ephesus, we think of him as peacefully entering the mansions of which he had heard his Lord tell in far-off Jerusalem nearly seventy years before.