STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

XIV.—GETHSEMANE.

IN the dark eventide before the final agony the souls of the disciples were clothed in darkness, but the soul of the Master walked in light. They were as men that dreamed; He was as the one wakeful being in a world of dreamful sleepers, and his wakefulness was more than the world's sleep. Their talk seems like the cheery and heedless prattle of a child at the knees of a man whose heart grief has cloven in twain, or like the babbling of a summer brook under a sky dark with thunder-gloom and gathering storm. Yet as to the Master these figures are impertinent. The sorrow that filled his soul did not quench his sympathy; the clouds that enfolded his spirit did not shut from those who had clustered round Him the sunshine of his love. If they live with touching, almost tragic, unconsciousness of the fate He sees approaching with inevitable step and awful form, He, living at the same moment, as it were, in the present and in the future, with suffering in idea translated into utmost reality, thinks of his thoughtless disciples, and with forward-looking care seeks to arm them against the evil day. And so here emerges one of his divinest qualities, illustrated in action at every moment of his closing sufferings. Sorrow is often selfish, loves to be indulged, to sit blind and deaf to the world and duty, ministered unto, but not ministering. But here is suffering, the greatest ever known, the deepest intensest that ever strained a heart, yet He who bears it, and is being borne by it to death, broods over his unsuspecting children, thinks of their agony when his shall have reached its climax and done its work, thinks of their misery when He is laid, the smitten Shepherd, in the tomb of Joseph, and they, the scattered flock, shall have fled every man to his own. Were there nothing else, this sublime thoughtfulness, this conquest of the sorrow that conquered not Him, but his life, would speak Him in a real sense Divine.

It is, then, in his last sorrows that Christ seems most Christly. "Though He were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which He suffered," and through his sufferings He was "made perfect" as "the Captain of our salvation."[1] His sorrows have been the great interpreter of Christ to man; in them lie the source and secret of his power. They have in a real sense redeemed man, and were, in a sense no less real, universal, doing for the race what the discipline of suffering is designed to do for the individual. The German who, while a modern, had a genius at once most classical and pagan, has introduced us to "the sanctuary of sorrow." But the "sanctuary" he conceived was little else than the outer court of the temple—his hand had never touched the veil, his foot had never crossed the threshold of the holy of holies. As there is a path the eagle's eye has not seen, so there is a "Divine depth of sorrow" which the clear but cold eye of Goethe never descried. Its *poetic* depths his cultured thought had sounded; its *religious* were to him unknown, even unsuspected. He heard in it "the still, sad music of humanity," but not the voice of God. Yet without that voice the music is but discord. If only through sorrow the deepest things in a man can be educed, so only through it can the deepest truths in God and the universe be seen. A tear is a telescope which reveals to the eye that can use it a heaven, otherwise concealed, of starlit galaxies and shining suns. God is never so personal and real to man as when, in the darkness of some great sorrow, the soul stretches out "lame hands of faith," gropes till it grasps his right hand, and is by it led up into the light. And the height to which He leads us is a sun-gilded mount of vision, far above the clouds and storms of earth, where the soul can rest as in the lap of God, hearing the songs of peace and hope the angels in Paradise sing.

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[1] Heb. v. 8; ii. 10.

> As angels in some brighter dreams,
> Call to the soul when man doth sleep ;
> So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,
> And into glory peep.

And the sorrow of Christ has had as beneficial a mission for humanity as personal sorrow for the individual. It has so revealed God to man, and so bound man to God, as to be his salvation.

The history of the Passion, which is to us the greatest of all histories, is what we must now attempt to understand. At the outset we must note the time, the Thursday evening, by Roman reckoning the 13th of the month, but by Jewish the 14th, the day beginning for the Jew with sunset. The morrow is the great day of the preparation, and the day after the great day of the feast. The days that have passed since the triumphal entry have been full of change. The people have been disappointed, and a disappointed mob is a dangerous thing, prepared to break or burn the idol it can always make, but that cannot always fulfil its maker's intentions. The Jesus it had hailed as the Christ had proved not its own, and to be not its own was to be as good as none. The rulers knew the people, read the meaning of their disappointment, and met at the house of Caiaphas to consider how the foolish mob could be made to do their malignant will.[1] Heaven seemed to bless their conclave. To them came one who had followed the Galilean.[2] Discipleship had become impossible to Judas. Disappointment had grown into apostasy, and to the apostate hatred is essential and revenge dear. He was no miserly or avaricious person, treacherous through love of gold, but a strong, passionful, capable man, who found Jesus not the Christ he had expected, and forsook Him because He had not fulfilled his hopes. Where there is no affinity with Christ, association with Him is sure to develop antipathy, and if the antipathy is nursed till it becomes hateful and hostile, the hate is sure to be fierce and the hostility vengeful. It was not the "thirty pieces of silver" that tempted Judas, but the revenge born of apostasy, the feeling that the Master who had so disappointed him and whom he had deserted, who had become to him so offensive in his friendless and outcast loneliness, must be crushed, ended, that he might be free. While wicked fortune favoured the evil, the Providence that guides the good appeared no less kind. Jesus came from Bethany, entered the city in the twilight, and sat down with his disciples in the humble room where the last supper was prepared. There, while the city was waiting its festival, while the priests were laying the lines that were to close round the Holiest, He and his little band celebrated in celestial calm the supper that was to be for all lands and for all time the memory and mirror of that sacred night. So in our streets, in our homes, in our very lives, heaven and hell meet and touch, while to our coarse eyes every place is common and every time common day.

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[1] Matt. xxvi. 3–5.

[2] Matt. xxvi. 14; Mark xiv. 10; Luke xxii. 3.

That supper is an event which profoundly affects the imagination. Its very simplicity increases its significance. The meaning it bears to faith is marvellous on the one hand; the place it has filled, the work it has done in history, as marvellous on the other. If the vision had been granted to Christ of what it was to be and do, would it not, even when his sufferings were deepest, have turned his sorrow into joy? He would have seen his supper surviving for ages, simple in form, transcendent in meaning, a living centre of unity for his scattered disciples, a source of comfort, strength, peace, purity to wearied and sinful men. In upper rooms, in catacombs, where the dust of the dead rested, and the spirits of the living met to speak to each other words of holiest cheer; in desert places and moorlands, where hunted fugitives assembled to listen to a voice which, though a man's, seemed God's; in cathedrals, where form and space spoke majestically to the eye, and lofty music to the ear; in rude huts in savage or heathen lands; in ornate churches in wealthy, busy, and intellectual cities—men of the most varied type and conditions, saintly and sinful, ignorant and educated, simple and gentle, rich and poor, peer and peasant, sovereign and subject, priest and people, forming a multitude no man can number, have for centuries met together to celebrate this supper, and be by it made wiser, happier, holier. The actual and ideal history of the rite stands in strong contrast to its institution. Of the twelve men who sat and broke bread with Jesus, of the priests who were so anxious to work out their "expedient," of the Scribes who were laboriously interpreting and making tradition, of the Romans who were ruling and guarding Jerusalem —could any one have dreamed what this obscure and humble supper was to be for man, and to do for the world? Yet it is God's way to make the foolish things of the world confound the things that are wise, and his way has ever in the end proved the wisest and best for man.

But it is of special significance to our history to note the thoughts that at the supper possessed the mind of Christ. He is to Himself evidently a sacrifice. The bread that signifies the body broken and eaten has a distinctly sacrificial import.[1] The blood is to be "shed for many for the remission of sins."[2] And it was no mere sacrifice, it was one that symbolized a new relation of God to man, and man to God—his blood was the blood of "the new covenant." The term διαθήκη is here of peculiar importance. It does not mean either a covenant in the sense of contract or agreement, or a testament in the sense of a will, but it has a meaning which combines ideas distinctive of both. In διαθήκη there are the conditional elements necessary to a covenant, and the absolute elements necessary to a testament; the first, so far as it denotes conditions, revealed and established by God, which man must accept and obey before he can stand in right relation with Him; the second, so far as it denotes these conditions as the direct and independent and absolute expressions of the Divine will. Covenant is inapplicable, in so far as it signifies that the two parties are in an equal degree concerned in laying down the conditions and enforcing obedience to them; testament, in so far as it implies that the death of the testator is necessary to its validity, or that its terms are as rigid and inflexible as those of a dead man's will. There is a point, indeed, where the two notions almost coalesce. A testament may be a sort of posthumous covenant; a covenant, a sort of pre-mortuary testament. Where a will is conditional, it is because of the wish of a now dead man to act as if he were still alive; where a covenant is absolute, it is because of the wish of a living man to act as if he were dead, a being whose will had received final and irrevocable expression. But even so, we cannot allow either term to be an adequate translation of διαθήκη, but must regard it as containing all the absolute elements of the one with the conditional elements of the other. So understood, we may define the καινὴ διαθήκη as the revelation of a new relation on God's part with the conditions necessary to the realization of a new and correspondent relation on man's. This revelation, as the expression of an individual will, may be denoted Testament, but as the exhibition of a real relation on God's part, and a possible relation on ours, with the conditions on which its realization depends, it may be termed a Covenant. The καινὴ διαθήκη becomes thus almost equal to the new religion; it presents God in a character that makes him a new Being to man, and shews man how to realize a new relation to God. The Hebrew equivalent of διαθήκη, בְּרִית, was used in the same sense, and so applied alike to the legal economy of Moses and the spiritual economy of the prophets.[1] Each was the revelation of God in a new character and relation, with a new correspondent relation made possible on the part of man. And these ideas were, without doubt, present to the mind of Christ when He so solemnly used the word. He was instituting a new religion, revealing a new God to man, making man a new being to God. And this religion He founded in sacrifice, the sacrifice of Himself. The supper was to be the Feast of Commemoration, was to celebrate the hour and act of creation. The founding of the old διαθήκη had been ratified by blood,[2] the founding of the new must be the same. In the sacrifice of Christ the essential Fatherhood of God was to be made manifest, and the spiritual sonship of man made possible.

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[1] Matt. xxvi. 26. *Cf.* Lev. vii. 6; Exod. xii. 8.
[2] Matt. xxvi. 28. *Cf.* Exod. xxx. 10.

Now Jesus, full of the great thoughts and emotions that had at once created the supper and been created by it, passed with his disciples out into the cool night air. The city was asleep. All was still, save for here the sigh of a weary pilgrim resting uneasily on his mat, there the quick footfall of a wanderer hastening to his home, or the measured tramp of the sentinel walking his rounds. They issued out of the gate that looked towards Olivet, crossed the Kedron, and were soon hidden in an olive grove. There is an awful silence in a sleeping wood, but never did the silence speak to a heart so still in its agony as the one that was then seeking in Gethsemane a place of seclusion and prayer. That seclusion seems too sacred to be broken. Grief is always holy, and the holier the sufferer the less may we profane his sorrow by our pre-

[1] Exod. xxxiv. 28; Jer. xxxi. 34; Isa. liv. 9, 10.

[2] Exod. xxiv. 6-8.

sence. A great painter, who painted the Man of Sorrows as an act of highest worship, shewed at once his genius and his reverence by hiding the marred visage, leaving the less noble parts to reveal the agony that had broken his heart. So to us Gethsemane ought ever to be a veiled Holy of holies, to be visited, if at all, only at moments when we can look with purified eyes, and allow the meaning of the Saviour in his passion to steal softly into our minds. We are here on holy ground, and must stand, as it were, with spirit bareheaded and barefooted, reverent while inquiring.

And here it is necessary to note the limits of our inquiry. It is historical, not theological. Few things, indeed, have more profaned the sufferings of Christ than an over-curious speculation. Their nature, their degree and value, have all been discussed and estimated, their quantity and quality most precisely determined. With such questions we have here and now no concern. Our business meanwhile is to attempt to present a great moment in a holy and perfect life, in relation to the person and history of Him who lived it.

Now, looking at it from this point of view, we can say that Gethsemane does not stand alone. It is related alike to Christ's past and future—is an echo of the one and a prophecy of the other—and it is so related because of its essential connection with his person. If Gethsemane is to be understood, it must be understood through the person and character of the Sufferer. The agony of the particular moment came from the essential nature of Him who endured it; and so to understand the one we must seek to know the other. It is essentially a matter of the spirit. In Christ, sorrow of spirit created physical pain; the physical pain did not create the spiritual sorrow. His cry was, "My *soul* is exceeding sorrowful." The intensity of the sorrow only became manifest when the touch of a Roman spear shewed that He had died of a broken heart. But it was the kind and quality of the spirit that made the sorrow; the preëminence of the sufferings was due to the preëminence of the Sufferer.

Given the nature and spirit of Christ, and sorrow, unique, transcendent, was to Him a Divine necessity. There is a sort of adaptation been a sinful man and a sinful earth. The two suit each other. Though it is but a dismal home and he a dismal inhabitant, yet he has never known a better, and, almost unconscious of its wretchedness, he settles down, grimly determined to be as happy as possible. But the sinless Jesus had only the relation of diametric opposition to this sinful world. In it there was nothing correspondent to what was in Him. The feeling of utter homelessness which He must have had while here gives a solemn plaintiveness and depth to his contrast of the homeless Son of man with the foxes of the earth and the birds of the air. A poet tells us—

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy.

Now, if this heaven, which is perhaps not so much about as within us in our infancy, were to continue into our manhood, earth would seem to us almost a hell. A child brought up in a lazar-house, to whom green fields and the glory of the summer earth were alike unknown, who had never seen other men than those smitten with "the curse of God," would come to feel as if his strange abode were homelike and natural. But introduce a fresh blooming lad from the hill-side, familiar with the "celestial light" in which earth is apparelled, with the breath of the flowers, the sound of the sea, the glory of the sky, with the faces of noble and healthy men, and him the ghastly lepers, the fœtid atmosphere, the steaming disease would appal and dismay. We are the children of the lazar-house, familiar to insensibility with its misery; Christ the blooming youth, with a soul all open to perceive and feel man's profound wretchedness. He understood it better than even the sufferers themselves, and felt it more. His sympathy had a strange insertive power, causing Him to feel and bear the man's sorrows much more than even the man himself. And if we think how He knew the hearts of men—the secret griefs, the unuttered regrets, the pining miseries, the blighted hopes, the thwarted wishes, the corroding remorse, that dwelt, like ghastly spectres, or burned like devouring flames, in almost every human breast—and how that insertive sympathy would make Him feel all as his own, can we fail to see that there must have been in Him, through the mere fact of his living here, a sorrow such as the collective sufferings of his time gathered into one soul would but poorly express? Life to Him was passion, sympathy, and pain.

Consider again: Jesus alone of those who have lived on earth knew the inner essence and final issues of sin. The holier a man is the more perfectly does he understand sin; the more wicked he is, the less. The Prodigal could not see into the depravity and defilement of the "far country" as his father did. The poor victim of seduction, who has touched the lowest deep possible to a woman's soul, cannot, even in her hour of remorse, see her sin as her pure celestial-minded sister sees it. And in proportion to a soul's consciousness of what sin is will be its misery at the sight of it. Hell must be more intolerable to an angel's thought than to a devil's experience. A pure spirit in the regions of the lost would, as more conscious of the evil and issues of sin, be more wretched than the lost themselves. Fancy a man suddenly gifted with an intuitive faculty, rendering him as able to read the human heart as the eye is to read the human face. He may feel at first proud of his rare power, and the curious and extensive knowledge it gives. He studies men—deciphers the strange hieroglyphs written on character and memory. He makes extraordinary discoveries, reversing most of his former judgments. He sees that a heart thought sound is in ruins, though now and then visited by beautiful moonbeams, as if an angel had descended into it, and shed from its wings a soft white light. He sees a head perplexed with doubt while the tongue utters faith. The inner man of the statesman, poet, preacher, furnishes a strange contrast to the outer, and at it our heart-seer now sneers, now laughs, now weeps. But soon other scenes open. Suddenly he confronts a man in whom the brutal passions reign and struggle as did the "hell-hounds" in Milton's Sin. Now he meets a prodigal in the "far country," with "wasted substance," driving out the stranger's "swine," and feeding on their "husks." Then he passes, wrapped in the thin torn garments of long faded finery, a woman

> Mad from life's history,
> Glad to death's mystery,

bearing in her heart an indescribable record of suffering, wrong, ruin, and sin. And as his experience widens and his insight deepens, horror and despair rise within him, until he, the man gifted with unerring intuition, cries, "O God! take back Thy gift, and leave me a short-sighted but happy man!"

Now Jesus alone of men had this intuitive faculty. "He knew what was in man." Man was as "naked and open" to his eye as to God's. And He knew human sin too—what it could and what it would do. The man He loved, the sin He hated; yet day by day saw the hated sin ruining the loved man. He stood on earth too, yearning in every fibre of his being with the desire to save, bleeding in every pore of his heart with pity for the lost; yet past Him those lost men went, hurrying, trampling each other in their mad haste to be ruined. Sin too, in the very extravagance of insult, turned on Him, plying Him with manifold subtle temptations. He had come to destroy it: it transcended its former self by attempting to destroy Him. Day by day the wickedness He loathed unutterably pressed against his heart, stood in his path, breathed in his face, touched his limbs, rose round Him like a brazen bulwark, which seemed gradually to narrow till it threatened to shut Him in. Ah, there He was, sin everywhere and in every one on earth save Him alone, and it, wrathful at being excluded, storming every avenue, mustering its forces to crush, if it could not capture. Alone He was with an awful loneliness, yet not alone, for the Father was with Him. We can see but a little way into the suffering that was there; but a little way, too, into the strength and joy that came from the hands and face of the Father.

Jesus suffered then—could not but suffer. Significant was that silent lowly advent of his, stepping so quietly across the threshold of the world into the manger of Bethlehem. Not as emperor, not as priest, not as scribe, but as peasant, or rather simple unadorned man, exposed to all the hardships and pains of poverty, had the "Man of Sorrows" to travel through his life. The Father did not annul for the Son the old curse of labour; even this He bore. The moment the Divine Boy realized his Father's business, He realized his own sorrow: bread to earn, yet men to save; a mother to support, yet a world to redeem; around Him the wants and claims of the day, away before Him the work He had come to do. And how that work foreseen, therefore forefelt, must have added to his sufferings, pressed its burden upon that heart, which alone knew perfectly how to "take no thought for the morrow," till even He exclaimed, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Thou Divine Sufferer, bearer of the world's sorrow, we thank Thee that Thou hast shewn its divine necessity—that he who would in a sinful world be sinless, must be that world's outcast and supreme sufferer. Teach us to be like Thee in spirit, though its price be a sorrow like Thine; to have "the fellowship of Thy sufferings," and to be "made conformable to Thy death."

And sorrow had a great function in the life and spirit of Christ. By his sufferings He, "though a Son, learned obedience." There is no implied antithesis to former disobedience. He who was "without sin" had never to unlearn, only to learn. His humanity, while at first equipped with everything that was native to man, had to acquire whatever was acquirable. God creates man innocent, not obedient or disobedient; whether he shall be the one or the other, man himself must determine. Jesus was born as man is born, with human capacities and tendencies in Him, a moral character possible, not actual. His relation to law had to be determined by his own will. His obedience began with his first conscious choice; and while perfect as a child's obedience, could only be held as such, not as a man's. As man reaches his perfection in manhood, so manhood can alone render human obedience in its perfection. As it has a phase corresponding to each phase of life, so man has to learn as child, or boy, or youth, or man, an obedience suited to each period. Childhood hands over to boyhood a character which boyhood must develop, amidst its frolic and struggle, towards either evil or good. Youth receives the moral results of boyhood, adds to them its own, and then hands on the work to manhood to complete, to be either made or marred. So the obedience of Jesus progressed through these successive stages, and in each stage He had to "learn" it by "the things which He suffered." Here lay the worth and meaning of his sorrow: it was his great educator. He went into it the one sinless child; He came out of it the one obedient man. He entered its school only innocent; He left it perfectly righteous. While He could not have suffered as He did apart from his sinlessness, He could not have "learned obedience" apart from his sufferings.

But these general considerations are significant here only as they help us to understand the dark hour in Gethsemane. They shew us not only that sorrow was inevitable to Christ, but also the kind and quality of this inevitable sorrow. It was without sin, yet due to sin—the sorrow of the Sinless in presence of the sinful. Holiness is happiness only where all are holy; it is and must be suffering where all beside are evil. The agony for sin will be in proportion to the absence of sin in the sufferer. And this truth received its most awful exemplification in Gethsemane. The sorrow there did not proceed from God. The filial trust of the Saviour was absolute. He entered his agony with the serene consciousness that when his loneliness was deepest his Father would be with Him;[1] He issued from it with a cry of the most perfect and even passionate confidence in his loving presence and helpful will.[2] And midway between those points, in the black centre, where He wrestled with his agony as Jacob had wrestled with God, the name that rose to his lips, as the drops of blood stood out on his brow, was still "Father."[3] And the thing asked and the manner of the asking shewed the spirit of the Son: "If it be possible," "if thou be willing," "let this cup pass." The confidence and the obedience were alike absolute; as if He had said, "Whatsoever thy will may be, I will trust and will obey." He had no consciousness of Divine anger, of a face hidden, or love withdrawn; only of a "cup" the spirit was willing but the flesh too weak to drink. What this "cup" was is plain enough. The ideas and language of the supper were still in his mind. He was thinking of "the cup of the new testament in my blood." It was his death as a sacrifice, his shedding of his blood "for the many, for the remission of sins."[4] The thought of this death had been for long his daily companion. He had first spoken of it at Cesarea Philippi[1] and had never ceased to speak of it since. As it approached Him, it deepened the shadow on his spirit, touched it with a heavier sadness. It was "the cup" He told the sons of Zebedee He must drink, the death He must go to Jerusalem to suffer. And now that the end has come, it seems too awful; as He faces it there is forced from Him the prayer, "Father, if it be possible, let it pass."

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[1] John xvi. 32.

[2] Luke xxiii. 46.

[3] Matt. xxvi. 42; Luke xxii. 42.

[4] Matt. xxvi. 28; Luke xxii. 20.

Now why should Christ so fear death, a death He had throughout anticipated and foretold? This great horror seems a mysterious thing. Christ had for Himself nothing to fear. Conscience makes a coward only where there is guilt, not where there is holiness. Jesus did not know the remorse that feels the future terrible; only the filial love that yearns for rest in the bosom of the Father. Man had been cruel, God gracious; and by death He could escape from angry man to gentle God. But it was not the issues from death Christ feared; it was the way into it, the *drinking* of the cup. He was in a great terror, not at what was personal, but at what was universal in death—what it involved and signified as to man, not what it involved and signified as to Himself. His death was to be, in a sense, the victory of sin—its victory not over Him, but over his life. The spirit that was willing it could not vanquish, but the flesh that was weak it did. Yet in vanquishing the flesh it was vanquished by the spirit. Christ was obedient unto death, and death, in overcoming the life, did not overcome the will, was rather overcome by it. He surrendered his life, but held fast his obedience; gave

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[1] Matt. xvi. 21; Mark viii. 31.

Himself up to death, but maintained his holiness, his service of law and love. But in the conflict that ended in these most opposite victories—of sin over his life, of his will over sin—his spirit and sin stood face to face, and knew each other as they had never done before. And the knowledge involved struggle, agony, sorrow unto death. Christ died on the cross, but not by the cross. He died for sin and by sin, his heart broken, but his will strong, inflexible, holy.

How and why this fatal yet victorious conflict with sin should fill Christ with so great and unspeakable horror we must now, though only in the dimmest way, attempt to see. His sufferings might be said to be of two kinds—the necessary and contingent, the general and the special; or those essential to his very nature and mission, and those springing out of his mystery and historical relations. The necessary were, in a sense, abstract and universal—the sufferings of a holy person obedient, under the limitations essential to a creature, and within the conditions afforded by a sinful world, to the will that made and sent and ruled Him; but the contingent were, in a sense, concrete and particular—the sufferings of a pure and gracious spirit, deserted, hated, betrayed, crucified, by the men He loved and was dying to save. The necessary were, while real and essential sufferings, transformed and glorified by the end, "the joy that was set before him;" but the contingent were, while concrete and historical, an unrelieved agony, a darkness touched by no ray of light from a higher and diviner world. The former give to Christ's work its peculiar character and worth, and so concern theology; but the latter make Him "the Man of Sorrows," explain at once his attitude in Gethsemane and his bearing on the cross, and so concern history. The necessary sufferings are intelligible only to those who study Christ as Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews studied Him; but the contingent are intelligible to those who seek to know Him as He is presented in the Gospels, as He lived in history and among men.

Yet it is necessary to note in what sense the word contingent is here used. The sufferings so named were, in a sense, necessary: when holiness like his confronted sin like man's, sorrow that became intensest suffering was, as we have seen, inevitable. But the sufferings so endured did not belong to the essence of his work—were, let us rather say, accessories, almost accidents. His death did not depend for its worth, was not constituted a sacrifice by, the human crime and passion that gathered round it, and deepened its agony and shame. It had been as precious in the sight of God, as glorious in its issues for man, as it now is, even though the scenes of treachery, malice, hatred, obstinate vacillation, and inflexible revenge that did surround it had never been. Judas and Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate, the rabble rout that did not forbear their shouting even at the cross, were not partakers in the work of Christ, as essential to it as Himself. Yet though they were not necessary to it, they were sources of sorrow, centres charged with agony, for Him. The vision that in Gethsemane and on the cross stood clear before his soul, we can but dimly imagine. Judas the disciple, a loved, trusted, familiar friend, became an apostate, now urged by passion into treason, now consumed and pursued by the furies of remorse, then a fugitive from conscience, seeking by the flight from time into eternity to escape from himself; Caiaphas the high priest, representative of an ancient people, head of their worship, symbol of their faith, prostituting his sacred office, using noblest opportunities for worst ends; Pilate, upholder of law and order, consenting to do a wrong to please the multitude—administrator of justice, yet, in deep disdain of the clamour and its cause, surrendering innocence to vengeance; the people, suddenly swerving from the enthusiasm of hope to the fanaticism of hate, athirst for blood, renouncing their splendid inheritance, denying their very Messiah, and demanding the death that is to be their dispersion and enduring shame — these and similar forms, with all their dreadful doings and surroundings, pass in a vision more terrible than reality before the eye of Christ. These men, with all their passions and guilt, seemed to encircle Him, to belong to Him, to mix themselves up inextricably with his work, to create and cause the death that was to be his glory and their shame. And He might well feel as if to go forward to his death were to consent to their crime. He had come to be their redemption, but his very act of sacrifice was to be a most calamitous judgment. He had come to save, but his mercy was to be to them in its issues severer than the severest justice. And so it seemed as if into his very cup their crimes had been pressed, as if the very wine He had to drink were dark with their blood. It looked as if He had become the victim of the most dreadful irony that even Providence could indulge; his act of divinest grace made the condition and occasion of man's most utter and unspeakable sin. And so his soul stood, as it were, clothed in horror before a sacrifice so conditioned, a death so prepared and attended. It was almost more than even his will could do or endure; and the feeling, making Him irresolute in the very moment of his highest resolution, forced from Him the cry, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." Yet the will seemed only to waver that it might settle the more fixedly in its purpose to obey. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The obedience was absolute; the worst of evils could be suffered that the will of God might be done.

And these contingent sufferings were not aimless; they contributed to the perfection of the Sufferer, to the efficiency and value of his work. They revealed sin to Christ and man, shewed the excellence of his righteousness and the misery of our guilt. The death of Christ, with all its evil pomp and circumstance, may be said to have created in humanity the consciousness of sin. After it the seeming and shameless naturalism of Greece, the indulgent and lascivious worships of Syria and Egypt, the unethical beliefs and immoral religious practices of India, became abhorrent to the conscience of the world, lay before the spirit naked, defiled, unclean. Religions that were blind to sin, that trifled with it, were no religions for man. Evil was now a dreadful reality that must be conquered, if he was to remain human, and realize the image of God. And the sufferings that so revealed sin to man were, in the truest sense, redemptive. Sin once seen in its exceeding sinfulness is sin abhorred, renounced. The evil personified in Judas and Caiaphas, in Pilate and Herod, in the priests and the multitude, is evil man no more can love, just as the holy and beautiful righteousness incarnated in Christ is righteousness he no more can hate, but must ever admire and follow after with a divine enthusiasm. And so the Will that required Jesus to drink the awful cup was a beneficent Will—purposed that the One should suffer that the many might be saved. For the suffering that revealed man's sin perfected man's Saviour. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him." "Inasmuch as He suffered, He Himself having been tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY OF THE NEW COVENANT.

JEREMIAH XXXI. 31–34.

THIS prophetic oracle could not fail to strike all readers as very remarkable were they not so familiar with its phrases, and with the interpretation we have learned to put upon these in the light of New Testament fulfilment. It is one of the most outstanding utterances in the whole range of prophetic literature; and it is an interesting and not unprofitable inquiry what precisely it meant for the Prophet himself. We propose to enter on such an inquiry in this paper; and we hope to make it appear that this word concerning a new covenant between God and Israel was a very great and noble one, pregnant with deep far-reaching thought, even when we endeavour as far as possible to shut out the light thrown upon it by the New Testament, and to read it as a spiritually-minded contemporary of Jeremiah might have read it. To do this requires