

crucify," etc. It is not denied that the present participle may have this meaning (Winer, p. 432, who compares Acts iv. 21, 1 Cor. xi. 29), but it is in the highest degree unlikely that such is the meaning here. One of two things would be implied by it, for neither of which is there any just foundation in the passage or in Scripture generally—either that, without regard to what might become the state of the guilty parties, God had decreed that such sin should be unpardonable (as Weiss, who, as we shall see, fails to catch the true force of the words "Son of God"), or that the sin of crucifying Christ was in itself unpardonable, while our Lord prayed upon the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The present participles therefore must be interpreted as implying a persistence in the sin of which they speak, and must be translated either "engaged as they are in crucifying," etc., or more tersely (with the margin of the Revised Version), "the while they crucify the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

WM. MILLIGAN.

(*To be concluded.*)

THE FIRST STORM.

MATT. VIII. 23. MARK IV. 35. LUKE VIII. 22.

THE mischievous notion is very commonly held, and sometimes by men who are quite unaware of entertaining it, that the ideal cannot become the actual. In common life there is a wide gulf between the two; but this is the result (and perhaps the measure) of the Fall; and our recovery should close the chasm. Therefore the heart of Virgil did not despair, any more than the inspiration of Isaiah, of a perfect world being made the environment of a restored humanity. Yet the notion that the ideal is impossible is

carried so far by modern scepticism (sceptical of much besides religion) that it seeks to refute many a lofty belief by showing that similar beliefs have often floated up out of the depths of human reverie and desire. Thus the Incarnation is thought to be discredited, when its enemies can produce legends of the miraculous birth of Alexander, of the Buddha, or of Pythagoras. It would be much more reasonable to inquire, how could such beliefs have originated, among races not the most untutored and least profound, and what soil nourished them, unless our nature found something congenial in the anticipation that the divine might come into humanity, that manhood might be far greater than men are, but that for such an advance, an adequate cause must be forthcoming. These beliefs were the product of yearning, the embodiment of the ideal, betrayed into error by "lights which do mislead the morn." But it is a strange proposition that our beliefs are shown to be incredible, by showing that human nature instinctively reaches out towards them. And we claim very little, when we assert that no quantity of such myth or legend subtracts from the credibility of the Christian belief, attached as it is, in so pure and dignified a narrative, to such a person as our Christ. The widespread existence of beliefs in a supernatural birth shows that human nature forebodes a divine man. He is the ideal. And the wonderful differences between our pure and simple story of the incarnation, and all these adumbrations of it, and also between Jesus and their heroes and sages, shows how far is He from being one more natural person to whom, for an hour or a generation, the divine hope has clung.

At the very utmost the only advantage which unbelief can obtain from such analogies is drawn from the base tendency to despair of ideals in general, as if they were unattainable, as if the best were essentially the enemy of the good,

So it is with what are called the Nature-miracles, of which the greatest are found in the quelling of the two storms. Certainly the Old Testament has either foreseen, or dreamed of a time when nature should obey man, when all things should be under his feet. And if the ideal is not incredible, if there is no inherent absurdity in the splendid hope of a day, when man, lord of himself, should also be lord of the world around him, then such prophecies are at least not less to be relied upon, because their hope is common to the literatures of India, Rome and the Norsemen.

It follows that if Jesus came to found the kingdom of God ; if the gentle and unobtrusive marvels of His earthly life were His credentials to establish His claim upon the loyalty of His subjects, at the stormy beginning of the reign which should bring in eternal peace, it is most reasonable to expect among them some evidence of His mastery over the external world. On the other hand, scepticism must deny these works at all hazards, since there is no possibility of explaining them by the impressibility of the subject. If they are true, they are miracle in its purest form. We are told then that because Moses led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, it was necessary to the Christian legend that Jesus should do something similar ; or else that these beliefs were suggested by the promise, "When thou passest through the waters they shall not overflow thee." People felt the want of such miracles ; their faith had a sense of need, a craving for the prodigious, like that of Sir Thomas Browne, who rather sorrowed because he had not miracles enough for his power of credence. And then, recalling some hair-breadth escapes, in which the calmness of their Master had sustained them, they allowed fancy to embroider its strange devices on the simple fabric of their memories.

To all this it must be flatly answered that nothing of the kind has happened. The myths which might be engendered

by such a process are utterly different from the narratives before us. The exploit of Moses, rending asunder the sea for his followers and engulfing a hostile army, and the vivid imagery of the prophets, who sang of the drying up of rivers, the utter destruction of the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and making the depths a way for the ransomed to pass over, not from these splendours did the Christian fancy, greatly daring, evolve the smoothing of the waves around a fishing-boat. Equally futile is the contention that a necessary and inevitable process evolved a belief in the literal fulfilment of half of a certain promise, yet left the other half untouched. The words are these: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. xliii. 2). Now why should these fanciful mythologists, so intent upon rivalling Moses (on a very small scale) have felt no emulation whatever for the Hebrew children?

The whole Spirit of the Old Testament marvels, if suggesting any miracles whatever, would have suggested miracles far different from ours. These works were directly aimed at astonishment rather than consolation; they rather thrust nature aside than healed her discords; they courted publicity, they revealed a God of vengeance, and affected the politics of great nations. And the imagination would revel in imitating such prodigies. But the Gospel knows nothing of such "nature-miracles" as these; and of this difference the cause is the difference of ethical purpose between the Old Testament and the New. The miracles of Moses were performed to show that Jehovah was God: those of our Lord to introduce the seed which should grow secretly, the kingdom which was not with observation, the leaven hid in the meal.

And they are true to their purpose. Signs and wonders

were thrust on Pharaoh, but Herod hoped in vain to see some miracle done by Jesus. Only to the few disciples in the boat was the stilling of the tempest an evidence at first-hand, and for them it was not the laying bare of the bed of the lake, but the restoration of such conditions that their usual efforts could enable them to reach the shore. The nature-miracles of Jesus are few, they are self-controlled almost to austerity, and their simple grandeur contrasts with those of the Exodus like a Doric façade with flamboyant Gothic.¹

Moreover, their ideal is exactly the ideal of the Gospel. It is the restoration of nature from its convulsions, not the awaking of its dread powers against a foe. And in this respect, the predictions of the Old Testament would have been as misleading as its examples. Isaiah said, "with His scorching wind shall He shake His hand over the River. . . and cause men to march over dryshod" (xii. 15), but the Saviour never excited a tempest: His word is the same to nature as to souls: it is, "Peace, be still!"

Passing to the narrative itself, it is suggestive to observe

¹ "Unquestionably, there rests upon this brief and pregnant narrative a rare majesty. . . . With a few masterly strokes, there is here sketched a most sublime picture from the life of Jesus, and a picture full of truth. . . . Even His rising up against weather and sea is told by Matthew and Luke quite simply, without any ostentation; and the tentative query of the disciples, after their deliverance was accomplished, "Who is this?" is the slightest possible, the only too modest, and yet the true, utterance of the impression which they must at that time have received." (Keim, *Jesus of N.*, iv. 180.) And yet Keim goes on to reduce the whole story, the antiquity of which is "undeniable," to a *caput mortuum*. "As we examine more closely, the genuine nucleus of the narrative grows ever less and less, and the additions grow greater and greater." (p. 182.) And this is entirely due to that abuse of quotations from the Old Testament which is here, most of all, the common resort of the Sceptics, and which is examined above. It must be said that the passages from the Psalms, which Keim adduces, are as little to the point as if he explained the sleep of Jesus by the words "He giveth His beloved in sleep," coupled with the belief that Jesus was the Beloved Son. And also that the passage above quoted is by no means a solitary example of the odd fallacy which disposes of evidence by frankly stating it, and then leaving it unrefuted, but ignored in the conclusion.

the incidents which immediately precede it in St. Matthew. One man desires to follow Jesus everywhere, but he has not counted the cost, for Jesus reminds him that "the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Another is summoned to prompt obedience: "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead." Why does the evangelist place these brief incidents just here? Was it to suggest the questions, With what feeling would that easy follower have confronted imminent death? How did the other think of such an experience in discipleship? Perhaps this context is the explanation of a phrase which has excited not a little comment; for at the end of the narrative the same evangelist does not say that the twelve marvelled, but "the men" (*οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι*).

Jesus, in St. Matthew, enters a boat, and His disciples follow. In the other two Gospels He expressly says, "Let us go over unto the other side"; and if, as appears presently, they felt that He had power enough to rescue them, then this invitation, this plain statement of His purpose, ought to have calmed their fears. But so great a storm arose that St. Matthew applies to it the word commonly used of an earthquake. It was a convulsion. Violent squalls are common to all lakes deeply buried among mountains, because the air which is warmed in the basin becomes rarefied and ascends, and the cold air above sinks to be warmed in turn. It is evident that with any sudden and abrupt change of temperature, within limits restricted by the mountain walls, the process would become violent and lead to tempest.¹ But the sea of Galilee is no common mountain water. Already the Jordan, in its headlong course to the marvellous depression where its waters grow

¹ But the process is so constant, that a summer shower, among the great cliffs of the Irish coast, can always be escaped by sitting on the edge of the precipice, and I have often watched the silver lance-heads of the rain lifted by the uprush of warm air in a glittering arch over my head.

stagnant over the cities of the plain, has sunk six hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean. And the difference in level between this hollow and the plains which slope eastward from snowy Lebanon produces tempests such as that for which St. Matthew strained the language (*σεισμός*, in the others *λαίλαψ*).

In the meantime, the great Teacher had exhausted even His perfect frame. They had received Him into the boat "even as He was," which means, without the additional exertion of any preparation for the voyage, and He sank at once into peaceful slumber, His head upon the helmsman's cushion, *τό προσκεφάλαιον*, the only one on board. Thus do extremes meet; and the heavy and joyless slumber into which the guilty agitation of Jonah lapsed at last, was not more profound than the sweet and balmy repose of Christ. That repose was not lightly broken. His people, in reliance upon His declared purpose, struggled on as long as there was any natural possibility of escape. But when the waves tumbled into the ship so that the ship was already in the act of foundering, they could be still no longer. His sleep no longer seemed to express confidence in the result, but indifference what the result might be—an indifference which they could not share; and they cried to Him, Master, Master, we perish; Master, carest Thou not that we perish; save, Lord, we perish. That three various expressions should be used by a boat-full of agitated men has been a matter of grave discussion by some students—not surely of human nature; for a true cause of wonder would have arisen if they had stayed to decide upon a common form of words suitable for the occasion. And He arose and "rebuked the double storm, in their bosoms and in the sky," speaking first a brief word of reassurance to His followers, then granting deliverance to their reawakening faith, renewed by the grandeur of His bearing and by His words, and after He had hushed the storm, expostulating

more strongly with their unbelief. It is then that He quite denies to such an appeal as theirs the honourable name of faith, thus no doubt establishing, according to two evangelists, a verbal conflict with His previous admission in St. Matthew that they had some "little faith."¹ Persons whom such a "contradiction" afflicts may advantageously begin by asking how it is possible, from him that hath not, to take away that which he hath. And this same text will warn us all against just such languid reliance, such insufficient, and yet not quite unreal belief, as the disciples seem to have had. Were it not for the special and immediate presence of Jesus, their little faith, which was not faith, would have been quite "taken away" by the urgency of their peril. Now it is by nourishing our trust in Christ, through prayer and meditation, and the habitual realization of His nearness, that we shall be kept unshaken in the hour of trial, which we also must endure. This is the victory that overcometh the world, its alarms as well as its seductions, even our faith.

Too much, probably, has been made of the fact that our Lord addressed the winds and waves quite as if they were persons, with intelligence to hear and obey; and some have contended that Jesus really addressed the evil spirits who were the secret instigators of the storm. That is by no means what we read. And such a demonology is more than precarious, for it is the doctrine of both Testaments that God blows with His winds; that they are his ministers; that His angel holds the winds of heaven and lets them loose. And certainly the personification in this verse is no bolder than when Ezekiel prophesied to the four winds, or when Christ Himself said that if the children held their peace, the very stones would cry out.

¹ *δλιγόπιστος* is one of our Lord's own words. It occurs again in Matt. vi. 30, xiv. 31, xvi. 8, and Luke xii. 28 only.

There is something marvellous and significant in the contrast between the two moments, when Jesus, bearing all our weakness, sank into exhausted slumber, and when, responding to our appeal, He put forth energies that mastered nature. To such weakness did He condescend ; such rights did He assert and exercise.

He spoke to the waves as well as to the winds, because the billows heave long after the storm goes down ; and those sailors would well appreciate the marvel of waters suddenly quieted and glassy, reflecting skies over which the clouds no longer raced. Yet the supreme grandeur belongs not to that instant transformation, but to the moment just before ; to the mighty Presence, standing aloft upon the reeling deck, matching His voice against the roaring skies and waters, and overawing their passions with His calm.

In all this there is an abiding significance, because He has said to the Church and to its members, *Lo, I am with you always*, and because He is the same yesterday and to-day. Therefore it is no mere type ; no acted parable of the preserving care which we may trust : it is a precedent—a case in point, as often as we are storm-beaten, as often as the waves of earthly or spiritual adversity lash our frail bark and threaten to swallow it ; as often as we cry to Him, even with an inadequate and fearful appeal.

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