THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

AGONY! This terrible word, used but this once in Scripture, might not have found its way into our language but for its application by St. Luke to the mysterious suffering of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. A term originally descriptive of the desperate struggle often witnessed in the sacred games of Greece, it implies the utmost severity of contest; it pictures to us the condition of one in the last extremity of conflict, whose sweat might be as great blood-drops upon his body, who falls exhausted, yet a victor, and whose name is thenceforth inscribed on the tablet of everlasting fame. The Evangelist could find no other word by which fitly to express the last crisis of that awful hour, and spoke of his Lord as "being in an agony." But to utter that word is almost more than the Christian heart can bear. We may well fear to approach that sacred anguish, an anguish of the soul, which nearly destroyed the bodily frame. No scene in our Lord's life inspires such awe—not even the cross, with all its accompaniments of terror. All men may gather round the cross and behold the silent Sufferer there, He was "lifted up" for that; but surely only a faithful few may dare to look while the Lord falls upon His face, and pours forth cries and tears! Such only would we now invite to stand afar off, and reverently gaze upon, and strive to understand that sorrow like unto no other sorrow.

In reading the narratives we are struck with the fact that, of the four Evangelists, John alone, the man whom Jesus loved, the man of tenderest heart, and the only eye-witness of them all, says nothing of this terrible scene. He simply tells us that our Lord, after His great priestly prayer, "went forth with His disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden, into the which He entered,

and His disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with His disciples." Of what passed within that Garden before the betrayer came he is silent. Did *he* feel that agony to be as it were a sacred secret? Did his loving hand falter in the attempt to record that hour of anguish? We know not; but the minute and generally consenting accounts of the other three Evangelists can leave no doubt of the historic fact; and if none were, like John, an eye-witness, the indications that Peter, another eye-witness, superintended the narrative of St. Mark is not to be forgotten. This Evangelist is alone in recording that, upon our Lord's second visit and rebuke to His sleeping Apostles, "they wist not what to answer Him," a similar condition of mind to that of St. Peter at the Transfiguration, "he wist not what to say." Mark however says nothing of the angel, and differs from the others in substituting "hour" for "cup" in one part of our Lord's petition. Matthew gives the longest account, but does not mention the angel; Luke alone speaks of the angelic apparition, and, notwithstanding his brevity in other respects, gives us two other circumstances, omitted by the other Evangelists, that the distance to which our Lord withdrew Himself from the disciples was "about a stone's cast"; and that, "being in an agony" and praying the "more earnestly," "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke, we must remember, undertook "to set forth in order those things most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses"; while with respect to the last point, may we not believe that as a physician it was peculiarly interesting to him?

Putting all the accounts together, we may "set forth in order" the events of which Gethsemane was the central scene somewhat in this way. After the company in the

upper room had sung or chanted the Passover Psalm which concluded the supper, after the consoling discourse that followed, after the wonderful intercessory prayer in which the Lord while He prays, yet speaks as being one "with the Father," He says, "Arise, let us go hence." Perhaps these words were first spoken, as they occur in the narrative, at a pause in the discourse, which was resumed as the disciples, loath to depart, lingered with appealing looks to their Lord, who had just said, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you," and they gain thereby the words of "good cheer" and the consecrating prayer. But the time for departure comes at last; they arise and go forth from the upper chamber—from the gate of the rejecting city. They descend into the deep ravine, and, as it seems, Peter on the way re-asserts his constancy, declaring, "the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise," and receives a second warning from his foreseeing Lord. Here too apparently occur the question and answer about the sword, only to be understood as referring to the time when the Lord, having departed into a far country to receive His kingdom, His disciples would need from time to time some immediate means of defence against their enemies.

Then they come to the brook—the winter torrent in its dark bed—the brook Kidron, crossed now by the Son of David, as David himself had crossed it in his misery, driven from Jerusalem and seeking refuge in the wilderness where no man dwelt; the brook too which in its lower course received the blood of the daily sacrifices brought by conduits from the Temple courts. It was crossed, and the Lord led the way to the probably walled inclosure of the Olive orchard, where was an olive press to crush the fruit of the olive, that it might yield its precious oil. (Let us note every hint of symbolism.) The shade of the trees would be only the darker for the light of the paschal moon, but

from the mention later of torches, and other indications, we may judge that it was obscured by the winter clouds. Then Jesus turns and says to His disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." But He takes with Him the three who alone had seen His glory on the Holy Mount, and were now alone to witness His deep humiliation. How far the "yonder" meant does not appear; it must have been sufficient to seclude Him from the body of the disciples, but as they were sitting under the thick umbrage of the trees, the distance need not have been great. Then as He steps slowly on to reach the spot, "He began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled"; and He says, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He that had lately in His Divine strength uttered the words, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me," now in human weakness seems like to sink under some approaching and amazing horror, fatal it might be to bodily endurance, and seeks human companionship. Then again He stops and says, "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me," a charge reserved for these His favoured friends. Yet still, impelled as by a fearful necessity, He went forward a little—the "stone's cast," and then—strange sight! —fell on the ground, fell on His face, and in the stillness of the night air are heard the words, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt." Then silence, and the watchers, still probably in the dark shade of trees, fail in their watch and sleep. They are awakened by the voice of their Lord, returned amongst them, and addressing Peter with the words, "Simon, sleepest *thou?* couldest not *thou* watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation"; adding, with compassionate excuse for him and for all, "the spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Again He went away, again they hear the same unwonted

words of anguished prayer, again there is silence, and again their eyes are heavy, and they sleep. How long they know not, but presently He is again amongst them, and He asks: "Why sleep ye?" and they, bewildered and ashamed, know not how to answer Him. Before they can do so, He has left them, and a third time He is heard to pray, now as "in an agony," "the more earnestly," but in the same words at once of appeal and of submission. Then—is there not a light that falls upon the prostrate form? Does not the sound of another voice reach their ears? Is not their Lord lifted as by unseen hands? and are not drops as of blood stanched upon His forehead? Surely an angel speaks to Him! So they whisper one to another. But the light fades, the darkness closes, the silence is again unbroken; and, worn with the emotions of the day, again they sleep. Once more the Lord returns, and calm now, resuming the manner of the Master, says: "Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Then, it may be catching the light of torches borne along the hillside, and detecting perhaps the dark figure of the betrayer, He turns, and bids them "Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand."

What was it that happened during this tremendous hour, so unparalleled in the history of our Lord? How came it that, deprived of, or laying aside, His Divine power, His naked human soul seemed exposed for a time to some crushing horror? What was that horror?

The office of the Apostolic body was to expound our Lord's life and mission, but to them we look in vain for an explanation of this mystery. They scarcely even refer to it. In all their writings there occurs but one obvious allusion to this terrible crisis, the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He

had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." John, who says nothing in his Gospel, is equally silent in his Epistle upon this agony of his Lord. Peter, if he authorized the account given in Mark, yet makes no reference to the event in his Epistles. The words: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings," might have been thought to include a reference to this the severest of His sufferings, did not the previous phrase, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh," appear in clear connexion with the statement that "Christ once suffered for sins, . . . being *put to death* in the flesh." James, the remaining member of the privileged three, perished too soon to allow of any epistle from his hand. The other James, "the Lord's brother," speaks of "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," and instances Elias, "a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain"; but he makes no allusion to the great example of "fervent prayer" given by our Lord in the garden—a prayer which we are told was heard and answered. Jude says nothing. St. Paul, unless he were the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is silent also—a remarkable silence when we consider the variety and fulness of his writings, and the revelation which he claimed to have "received of the Lord" concerning the doctrines of the Faith, and which enabled him to become a wise master-builder in the Church. The single reference in the Epistle to the Hebrews we shall recur to farther on.

This silence on the part of those endued with power from on high to go and teach all nations, is the more

significant when we contrast it with the fulness and the reiteration with which they speak of the Lord's death and its purpose. To them that death is the great sacrificial act which, superseding the old, establishes the new economy. It is "the shedding of blood"—"the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"—"without which there is no remission" of sins. With them it is the Cross and not the garden, upon which all men are to fix their regard. It is as lifted upon the Cross that all men will be drawn unto Him. It is the Cross that finds a place on almost every page of the Apostolic writings.

We are led then to the conclusion that, whatever might be the necessity for that awful hour, it had no immediate connexion with the great sacrificial act through which is obtained remission of sins. It could not have been then that "His soul was made an offering for sin." It could not have been then that He was "made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." It could not have been then that He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." It could not have been then that He bore the sins which "He bare in His own body on the tree." It could not have been the great atoning act, or any vital portion of it.

We return then to the question, What was the nature of our Lord's suffering in the Garden? As at least suggesting an answer, we would direct attention to our Lord's words after He had entered upon the "hour": "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into Temptation." He was surely not then thinking of the temptation to sleep when His disciples should have watched, nor of the temptation to which Peter would soon succumb, nor of the temptation which had swallowed up Judas. He was now in the hour of His agony? Was it not rather that His own soul was under the shadow of temptation? Was He not Himself in conflict with the Tempter?

Following this clue, we remember that, after the temptation in the wilderness, "the Devil departed from Him for a season,"—for a "season" only—and would assuredly return. That first foiling was not to be accepted as defeat; it but tested the strength of this second Adam who had come into the world. We have, on the contrary, indications that during our Lord's ministry the Evil One was repeatedly close at hand. The strange demoniac possessions encountered so often by our Lord, some of which none but He could expel; the words that our Lord occasionally let fall: "I give unto you power over all the power of the Enemy"; "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven"; "Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out"; "Get thee behind me, Satan" (as Peter remonstrated against the suffering and death of which his Lord spoke); and again on this very night, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I have made supplication for thee, that (under that sifting) thy faith fail not." These are all intimations that the Devil, whose works He came to destroy, mindful of the peril of his kingdom, was not far off. And is it not certain that this ever returning Enemy would make a last supreme effort? Would not, in this case, the Master be as the disciple, and be subjected to a yet more terrible sifting? Did not our Lord refer to such a coming struggle when, after the supper, He said, "The Prince of this world cometh, but hath nothing in Me"? Is it without significance that the same night, immediately after the scene in the Garden, our Lord said to the rabble multitude, "This is your hour, and *the power of darkness*"? Is it not then a probable supposition that in Gethsemane our Lord encountered a last and most deadly assault of the Evil One?

And there is something in the circumstances that supports this supposition. There was the strange denuding of Divine power apparent in the change from calm supremacy and

lofty intercession to the state of human weakness, sorrow, amaze, oppression as unto death. This denudation was needful, may we not say, if the Lord, "made like unto His brethren," was to be "tempted in all points" like unto them, needful that He should meet even the most deadly power of the Tempter, not in His Divine nature, but in ours, so that He might overcome for us? Do we not see also an indication of simple humanity in the leaning of our Lord upon human companionship; His taking with Him the three, with the charge to watch with Him; His return again and again, as seeking human sympathy? Do not those pauses, as in a tempest of the soul, suggest baffled but renewed assault—a triple assault as in the wilderness—a cessation for a brief space, but the consciousness of our Lord that the conflict was not ended, that the Adversary would return? Does it not appear as if there were an added fury in each attack, till at the last the Saviour "being in an agony, His sweat was as great drops of blood falling on the ground"? Does it not seem as if some Power were bent upon crushing the very life out of the bodily frame—yes, so that He should *not* be "lifted up and draw all men unto Him," so that He should perish there and then in that darkness, in that Garden? Is there not something appropriate to the coming of this true King of Terrors in the darkness itself? Well might the moon refuse to give her light at such an hour, and a horror of great darkness wrap the Saviour round, and leave Him alone with the Power of darkness!

Is it not again appropriate to such a contest as this with supernatural Power, that when it is ended a supernatural being, one of those "that minister to the heirs of salvation," should, as at the ending of the first temptation, appear to restore the fainting strength of the Son of man?

Let us now look at the passage already quoted, the only one in the Apostolic writings which obviously refers to this

agony of our Lord, and which the New Version renders, "Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from (or out of) death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." The words "out of death," favour, it will be seen, the supposition that the death feared was a then present peril; and the words "for his godly fear" may certainly imply a godly fear of evil, under whatever form He might be contending with it. But it is the argument of the context that supplies the key to the understanding of the passage. This is concisely stated in the fifteenth verse of the preceding chapter. "For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Here the being subject to temptation is set forth as the special way in which our High Priest took part in our infirmities. He is spoken of farther on as having "in the days of His flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears,"—a conjunction which surely suggests that the occasion was one in which He was subject to some form of temptation. May we not also derive some confirmation of this view from the passage in the second chapter, which, speaking of the sufferings of Christ, describes Him as "the Captain of our salvation,"—the Captain who has Himself advanced to meet the foe, Himself has suffered the stress of battle, Himself struck down the foremost Adversary, and has thus led the way to victory?

We have spoken of this passage in the Hebrews as the only Apostolic allusion to this sacred agony; but is it not possible that there may be a reference to it also in the 12th chapter of the same epistle, where the writer urges to laying "aside every weight (cumbrance), and the sin which

doth so closely cling about us (as a garment), and let us run with patience (or endurance) the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith: who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down on the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him, . . . that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls. Ye *have not yet resisted, unto blood, striving against sin.*" Here, in the first instance, the idea of a race is plainly present to the writer's mind—the divesting of encumbrance, the weariness, the faintness, the sitting down of a previous victor in the place of honour. The cross is no doubt referred to as the open culmination of the Saviour's sufferings, but is not this a divergence of thought? Does not the idea of a race recur to the writer's mind in the exhortation to "wax not weary," etc.? while in the words, "ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," may it not be that the blood drops of the agony are referred to, and not the blood shed on the cross, since striving against sin, appropriate to a contest with the Evil One, is not appropriate to the passive endurance of the cross.

However this may be, we cannot but think that whatever illustration may be gathered from other parts of Scripture favours the hypothesis of our Lord's subjection at this last hour, before He was delivered up into the hands of sinners to suffer all they could inflict upon the body, to a trial of soul unshielded by Divine Power, at the hands of the great Adversary, the works of whom He came, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to destroy.

Do we derogate from the Saviour's Divine majesty in this supposition? Or is it inconsistent with the authority He had previously displayed over the powers of evil? Is there not, we reply, evidence that He now laid aside that majesty? and how could that authority have been exercised at the time that He was tempted? He had shown indeed His

complete control over all the powers of Hell before the eyes of the people, but that became Him as Immanuel—"God with us." In this narrative He is explicitly set before us in an hour of human weakness, "learning obedience through the things that He suffered."

But if Temptation, what was the nature of that Temptation? We are not told, but may we not reverently ponder this deep mystery? May we not recur to the Temptation in the wilderness as some guide to our thoughts? We know that the offer of the kingdoms of this world was then made, and made in vain. We know that the suggestion to test His Divine sonship by turning the stones of the barren wilderness into bread, or by casting Himself headlong from the temple battlements, was rejected. Might not now, under the close prospect of exposure to the rage of men, and the torture of the cross, *doubt of the Father's love* be urged upon the Saviour's soul by all the arts of him who was a liar from the beginning—by all the apparatus at the command of infernal malignity—by all the power of him who possessed the power of death?

The trial of Job was the question of the Divine righteousness. He was conscious of righteousness himself, and could not understand how a righteous, a just God could subject him to such misery. To Christians who have apprehended the Divine love—love as the essential attribute in the Divine Fatherhood—is not doubt of this love, as under stress of bitter sorrow it sometimes comes upon the soul, is it not the worst bitterness? is it not the supreme temptation, and the most fatal? If our Lord was "in all points tempted like as we are," would not this temptation have its turn? and if so, when more fitly, when more dangerously than at the moment when, though He was a Son, He was about to be "put to grief," and made a curse? Surely then, if ever, "the terrors of Hell gat hold upon Him, and He found trouble and sorrow." "The

Father," might the Tempter say, "does not the Father fail you?—fail you even at this hour?—fail you as you cry, and cry, yea, this three times in vain, that Thou mightest be saved from this hour?" Let us imagine all this urged by the personal power of the great Adversary upon the unaided humanity of the Lord, and might He not be nigh unto perishing? Might it not indeed, as we have already intimated, be the final aim and desperate effort of the Evil One that this Son of man, now withstanding him alone in the darkness, should, if unconquered, die?

Our Lord overcame, but how? By the one prayer three times repeated in which He cast Himself upon the Father—Father still! "All things," He cries, "are possible unto THEE; Thy power is infinite, power to save." "Out of the depths will I cry unto THEE," and "Thou wilt set My feet upon a rock." "Father, if it be possible, let this hour"—this cup of anguish in the thought that Thy love fails—"let this cup pass from Me!" "Yet—yet—not *My* will—My will encompassed with infirmity, wrestling to the death with this mighty One, this spiritual wickedness whose hour it is—no, not *My* will, but *Thy* will, the holy, the perfect will of God." How different this, the prayer of "the Son of man," from that so recently uttered when, as Son of God, He said, "Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am"!

> "Go to dark Gethsemane
> Ye that feel the Tempter's power."

These words aptly express the lesson, as we would read it, of this great scene, the meaning of which has not always, as we think, been so clearly apprehended as by the Christian poet. It has been confused with other issues, with other portions of the great Redemption. And if the nature of the Temptation be obscure, it will be enough to know that He suffered being tempted—"tempted in all

points like as we are"—and that He is able thus to succour them that are tempted. Oh the mystery of God manifest in flesh!—the great secret of Christianity, into which if angels desire to look, how much more those for whose sake "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but took on Him the seed of Abraham," and was "in all things made like unto His brethren"!

JOSIAH GILBERT.

THE WORK OF BIBLE REVISION IN GERMANY.

II.

CRITICAL PART.

BEFORE we attempt to put the English reader in a position for estimating the worth of the so-called "Probebibel," we give, on behalf of those who wish for more precise information, a list of the most important critiques, which have appeared in a pamphlet form—thus not, or not merely, in magazines.

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