

5. THE TRANSFIGURATION ON MOUNT THABOR.

From the inn near Hadad-Rimmon, Jesus went with some of the disciples eastward to Kisloth Thabor which lay at the foot of Thabor toward the south, about three hours from Rimmon. On the way thither He was joined, from time to time, by the disciples that were returning from their mission. At Kisloth another great multitude of travellers who had come from Jerusalem, again gathered around Him. He taught, and then healed the sick. In the afternoon He sent the disciples right and left around the mountain, to teach and to cure. Taking with Him Peter, John, and James the Greater, He proceeded up the mountain by a footpath. They spent nearly two hours in the ascent, for Jesus paused frequently at the different caves and places made memorable by the sojourn of the Prophets. There He explained to them manifold mysteries and united with them in prayer. They had no provisions, for Jesus had forbidden them to bring any, saying that they should be satiated to overflowing. The view from the summit of the mountain extended far and wide. On it was a large open place surrounded by a wall and shade trees. The ground was covered with aromatic herbs and sweet-scented flowers. Hidden in a rock was a reservoir, which upon the turning of a spigot, poured forth water sparkling and very cold. The

Apostles washed Jesus' feet and then their own, and refreshed themselves. Then Jesus withdrew with them into a deep grotto behind a rock which formed, as it were, a door to the cave. It was like the grotto on the Mount of Olives, to which Jesus so often retired to pray, and from it a descent led down into a vault.

Jesus here continued His instructions. He spoke of kneeling to pray, and told them that they should henceforth pray earnestly with hands raised on high. He taught them also the *Our Father*, interspersing the several petitions with verses from the Psalms; and these they recited half-kneeling, half-sitting around Him in a semicircle. Jesus knelt opposite to them, leaning on a projecting rock, and from time to time interrupted the prayer with instructions wonderfully profound and sweet upon the mysteries of creation and Redemption. His words were extraordinarily loving, like those of one inspired, and the disciples were wholly inebriated by them. In the beginning of His instruction, He had said that He would show them who He was, they should behold Him glorified, that they might not waver in faith when His enemies would mock and maltreat Him, when they should behold Him in death shorn of all glory.

The sun had set, and it was dark, but the Apostles had not remarked the fact, so entrancing were Jesus' words and bearing. He became brighter and brighter, and apparitions of angelic spirits hovered around Him. Peter saw them, for he interrupted Jesus with the question: "Master, what does this mean?" Jesus answered: "They serve Me!" Peter quite out of himself, stretched forth his hands exclaiming: "Master, are we not here? We will serve Thee in all things!" Jesus began again His instructions and along with the angelic apparitions flowed alternate streams of delicious perfumes, of celestial delights and contentment over the Apostles. Jesus meantime continued to shine with ever-increasing splendor, until He be-

came as if transparent. The circle around them was so lighted up in the darkness of night that each little plant could be distinguished on the green sod as if in clear daylight. The three Apostles were so penetrated, so ravished that, when the light reached a certain degree, they covered their head, prostrated on the ground, and there remained lying.

It was about twelve o'clock at night when I beheld this glory at its height. I saw a shining pathway reaching from heaven to earth, and on it angelic spirits of different choirs, all in constant movement. Some were small, but of perfect form; others were merely faces peeping forth from the glancing light; some were in priestly garb, while others looked like warriors. Each had some special characteristic different from that of the others, and from each radiated some special refreshment, strength, delight, and light. They were in constant action, constant movement.

The Apostles lay, ravished in ecstasy rather than in sleep, prostrate on their face. Then I saw three shining figures approaching Jesus in the light. Their coming appeared perfectly natural. It was like that of one who steps from the darkness of night into a place brilliantly illuminated. Two of them appeared in a more definite form, a form more like the corporeal. They addressed Jesus and conversed with Him. They were Moses and Elias. The third apparition spoke no word. It was more ethereal, more spiritual. That was Malachias.

I heard Moses and Elias greet Jesus, and I heard Him speaking to them of His Passion and of Redemption. Their being together appeared perfectly simple and natural. Moses and Elias did not look aged nor decrepit as when they left the earth. They were, on the contrary, in the bloom of youth. Moses taller, graver, and more majestic than Elias, had on his forehead something like two projecting bumps. He was clothed in a long garment. He looked like a resolute man, like one that could govern with strict-

ness, though at the same time he bore the impress of purity, rectitude, and simplicity. He told Jesus how rejoiced he was to see Him who had led himself and his people out of Egypt, and who was now once more about to redeem them. He referred to the numerous types of the Saviour in his own time, and uttered deeply significant words upon the Paschal lamb and the Lamb of God. Elias was quite the opposite of Moses. He appeared to be more refined, more lovable, of a sweeter disposition. But both Elias and Moses were very dissimilar from the apparition of Malachias, for in the former one could trace something human, something earthly in form and countenance; yes, there was even a family likeness between them. Malachias however looked quite different. There was in his appearance something supernatural. He looked like an angel, like the personification of strength and repose. He was more tranquil, more spiritual than the others.

Jesus spoke with them of all the sufferings He had endured up to the present, and of all that still awaited Him. He related the history of His Passion in detail, point for point. Elias and Moses frequently expressed their emotion and joy. Their words were full of sympathy and consolation, of reverence for the Saviour, and of the uninterrupted praises of God. They constantly referred to the types of the mysteries of which Jesus was speaking, and praised God for having from all eternity dealt in mercy toward His people. But Malachias kept silence.

The disciples raised their head, gazed long upon the glory of Jesus, and beheld Moses, Elias, and Malachias. When in describing His Passion, Jesus came to His exaltation on the Cross, He extended His arms at the words: "So shall the Son of Man be lifted up!" His face was turned toward the south, He was entirely penetrated with light, and His robe flashed with a bluish white gleam. He,

the Prophets, and the three Apostles—all were raised above the earth.

And now the Prophets separated from Jesus, Elias and Moses vanishing toward the east, Malachias westward into the darkness. Then Peter, ravished with joy, exclaimed: "Master, it is good for us to be here! Let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias!" Peter meant that they had need of no other heaven, for where they were, was so sweet and blessed. By the tabernacles, he meant places of rest and honor, the dwellings of the saints. He said this in the delirium of his joy, in his state of ecstasy, without knowing what he was saying.

When they had returned to their usual waking state, a cloud of white light descended upon them, like the morning dew floating over the meadows. I saw the heavens open above Jesus and the vision of the Most Holy Trinity, God the Father seated on a throne. He looked like an aged priest, and at His feet were crowds of angels and celestial figures. A stream of light descended upon Jesus, and the Apostles heard above them, like a sweet, gentle sighing, a voice pronouncing the words: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him!" Fear and trembling fell upon them. Overcome by the sense of their own human weakness and the glory they beheld, they cast themselves face downward on the earth. They trembled in the presence of Jesus, in whose favor they had just heard the testimony of His Heavenly Father.

Jesus went to them, touched them, and said: "Arise, and fear not!" They arose, and beheld Jesus alone. It was now approaching three in the morning. The gray dawn was glimmering in the heavens and the damp vapors were hanging over the country around the foot of the mountain. The Apostles were silent and intimidated. Jesus told them that He had allowed them to behold the Transfiguration of the Son

of Man, in order to strengthen their faith, that they might not waver when they saw Him delivered for the sins of the world into the hands of evil-doers, that they might not be scandalized when they witnessed His humiliation, and that they might at that time strengthen their weaker brethren. He again alluded to the faith of Peter who, enlightened by God, had been the first of His followers to penetrate the mystery of His Divinity, and He spoke of the rock upon which He was going to build His Church. Then they united again in prayer, and by the morning light descended the northwestern side of the mountain.

While going down, Jesus talked of what had taken place, and impressed upon the disciples that they should tell no one of the vision they had seen, until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead. This command struck them. They became more timid in Jesus' presence, more reverential, and since the words: "Hear ye Him!" they thought with sorrow and anguish upon their past doubts and want of faith. But as daylight advanced and they continued their descent, the wonderful impression they had received began to wear off, and they imparted to one another their surprise at the expression: "Until the Son of Man is risen from the dead." "What does that mean?" they asked one another, though they did not venture to question Jesus upon it.

They had not yet reached the foot of the mountain when Jesus was met by people coming to seek Him with their sick. He healed and consoled. But the people were struck with awe at the sight of Him, for there was something unusual, something supernatural and glorious in His appearance. A little lower down the mount He found assembled a crowd of people, the disciples whom He had sent out into the environs the day before, and several Doctors of the Law. These people were returning home from the Feast. They had met the disciples at their encampment and accompanied them thither, to wait for Jesus. Jesus

saw that they and the disciples were having some kind of a dispute. When they perceived Jesus, they ran forward to meet and salute Him, but they were amazed at His extraordinary appearance, for the rays of His glorification were still around Him. The disciples guessed from the manner of the three Apostles, who followed Jesus more gravely, more timidly than usual, that something wonderful must have happened to Him. When now Jesus inquired into the subject of dispute, a man from Amthar, a city on the Galilean mountain-chain, the scene of the history of Lazarus and the rich glutton, stepped forth from the crowd, threw himself on his knees before Jesus and implored Him to help his only son. The boy was a lunatic and possessed of a dumb devil, who hurled him sometimes into fire, sometimes into water, and laid hold of him so roughly that he cried out with pain. The father had taken him to the disciples when they were in Amthar, but they had not been able to help him, and this was now the subject of dispute between them and the Doctors of the Law. Jesus addressed them: "O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" and He commanded the father to bring the boy to Him. The father now led the boy up by the hand. During the journey he had been obliged to carry him like a sheep flung round his neck. The child may have been between nine and ten years old. As soon as he saw Jesus, he began to tear himself frightfully, and the demon cast him to the earth, where he writhed in fearful contortions, foam pouring from his mouth. Jesus ordered him to be quiet, and he lay still. Then He asked the father how long the boy had suffered in this way. He answered: "From early childhood. Ah, if Thou canst, help us! Have mercy on us!" Jesus responded: "If Thou canst believe, for all things are possible to him that believes!" And the father

weeping exclaimed: " Lord, I do believe! Help Thou my unbelief! "

At these words uttered in a loud voice, the people, who had remained timidly standing at a distance, approached. Jesus raised His hand in a threatening manner toward the boy and said: " Thou dumb and impure spirit, I command thee to go out of him and never again to return into him! " The spirit cried out frightfully through the boy's mouth, convulsed him violently, and went out, leaving him pale and motionless like one dead. They tried in vain to restore consciousness, and many from among the crowd called out: " He is dead! He is really dead! " But Jesus took him by the hand, raised him up well and joyous, and restored him to his father with some words of admonition. The latter thanked Jesus with tears and canticles of praise, and all the lookers-on blessed the majesty of God. This scene took place about a quarter of an hour eastward of that little place near Thabor where Jesus, the year before, had healed the leprous property-holder, the one that had sent his little servant-boy after Him.

Jesus then proceeded on His way with the disciples. They passed near Cana, crossed the valley of the Baths of Bethulia, and reached the little town of Dothain, three hours from Capharnaum. They took mostly the by-ways, in order to escape the multitudes returning in troops from Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples went in bands. Jesus walked sometimes alone, sometimes with this or that band. The Apostles who had been witnesses of His Transfiguration approached their Master on the way, and questioned Him upon the words: " Until the Son of Man is risen from the dead, " which were still for them a subject of reflection and discussion. They argued: " The Scribes indeed say that Elias must come again before the Resurrection. " Jesus responded: " Elias indeed shall come and restore all things.

But I say to you that Elias is already come, and they knew him not but have done unto him whatsoever they had a mind, as it was written of him. So also the Son of Man shall suffer from them." Jesus said several other things, and the Apostles understood that He was speaking of John the Baptist.

When all the disciples were again reunited around Jesus in the inn at Dothain, they asked Him why it was not in their power to free the lunatic boy from the demon. Jesus answered: "Because of your unbelief. For, amen I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Remove from hence hither,' and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." Then He instructed them upon what was necessary to overcome the demon's resistance. Faith gives to action life and power while at the same time it derives its own strength from fasting and prayer. He who fasts and prays deprives the demon that he wishes to cast out of his power, which power the exorciser attracts as it were into himself.