

mentary on his precept in Matt. 5 : 39. It shows us that that precept, like the others which accompany it, is to be interpreted in the spirit rather than literally. He stands stoutly for right and justice, but patiently without railing. Such reasonableness as this often disarms an opponent, making him ashamed of his violence ; whilst a blow for a blow leads to endless strife.

"*Peter then denied again,*" v. 27. The prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled and Peter's shameful fall was complete. Thrice he had denied his Lord. It will be profitable for us to consider some of the ways in which Christ's disciples still deny Him. It is more apt to be by action than by words. Any way in which we disown His authority before the world is practically a denial of Him. For example, His last command was that His gospel should be preached to the whole creation. Now if we are indifferent to that command, if we are at no pains to do our share towards its fulfilment, or are virtually saying that we care little for the authority of Christ, we are practically denying Him as our Lord. Again, He has given us, as the sum of our duty towards our fellow-men, that we should do to them as we would like to have them do to us ; in our dealings with them, we should use justice and kindness and fidelity. Now, if we act otherwise, if we are unkind, or unjust, or unreliable in our relations to our fellow-men, we are practically saying that we do not regard the authority of Jesus. We are virtually denying Him as our Lord. We have called ourselves by His name ; but when the testing time comes we say, " No, we are not His."

"*The cock crew.*" The other evangelists tell us that at the same moment Jesus turned and "looked upon Peter." Says Stalker in his "Trial and Death of Jesus Christ": "Who

shall say what was in that look of Christ? There may be a world in a look. It may be more eloquent than a whole volume of words. It may reveal more than the lips can ever utter. One soul may give itself away to another in a look." What did Peter see in that look? Reproach and grief, no doubt, and that broke his heart ; but love also, and that saved him from despair. And so his repentance was not unto death, like that of Judas, but unto life. He sorrowed for his sin and he forsook it. He wept bitterly and he did not deny his Lord again. As it was with Peter so may it be with us ! When by the inconsistency of our actions we deny our Lord before the world, let us remember that it grieves Him, let us think that He looks upon us with loving reproach. And at the thought that we have grieved one so patient and so loving and one to whom we owe so great a debt, let us be ashamed and sorry and let us sin no more.

"Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
Like pulses in the Church's brow and breast ;
And by them we find rest in our unrest,
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat
God's fellowship, as if on heavenly seat.
The first is JESUS WEPT ; whereon is prest
Full many a sobbing face, that drops its best
And sweetest waters on the record sweet.
And one is where the Christ, denied and
scorned,

LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh to render plain,
By help of having loved a little and mourned,
That look of sovran love and sovran pain,
Which He, who could not sin yet suffered,
turned

On him who could reject but not sustain.

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

TEACHING HINTS

A sense of proportion is necessary in such a lesson as this. It would be very easy, and very fruitless, to spend the whole time on the order of the trials, the private hearing and the public hearing, Annas and Caiaphas, or on the varying accounts of Peter's denials given by the several Evangelists. A precise harmony of all the accounts has never yet been agreed upon by Bible scholars, and probably never will be. The main outlines are clear, both in the case of the trial before the Jewish authorities (and we shall find the

same true when we come to the trial at Pilate's judgment seat) and in the case of Peter's sad lapse ; but each writer relates the story in his own way. The classes should be reminded that this is one sure mark of genuineness. When you discover four men giving an account of an occurrence each exactly in the same words, your suspicions are aroused. Minor divergencies actually confirm the truth of a narrative, artificial agreement throws doubt upon it.