

# The Quiet Hour

## Jesus and John The Baptist.

BY WAYLAND HOYT, D.D.

"The disciples of John told him of all these things" (v. 18). John was now in prison at the instigation of Herodias, the guilty wife of Herod Antipas and because of his brave condemnation of their sin—"It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother Philip's wife." (See Matt. 14: 1-5.) His prison was the castle of Machærus—half castle, half palace, built by Herod the Great, east of the Dead Sea.

John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to the Lord, saying, Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" (v. 19.) We heresee the great forerunner plagued by doubt. If we think of it carefully, we shall not find it at all surprising that he was. For some months had he been imprisoned; meanwhile Jesus had been carrying on His ministry. John had been the free eagle of the wilderness; for about eighteen months his name had been in every body's mouth, and he had been the centre of excited throngs; now here he was in the deep, dark, fearfully hot dungeons of Machærus; he had no chance for exercise, employment, or preaching, save now and then to Herod. He was in enforced idleness, and amid menacing danger. Then, besides, he who was the preacher of the winnowing-fan and the threshing floor and of the axe at the foot of the tree, of stern, quick method must have been disappointed at the news brought him of the quiet and gentle ways of Jesus. There was no storm about Jesus, no great upheaval, just preaching, healing. Such an ardent and impetuous nature as John's must have thought it very strange. If Jesus were the Messiah, why did he not do more thunderously? and so for this reason doubt begun to thrust in its disturbing questions. Doubt is sometime the result of environment; it was one thing to be the free and ranging preacher of the wilderness, another thing altogether to be prisoner. It is not wrong to doubt; it is wrong willingly to stay in doubt without seeking to get out of it; this John did not do; he sent his disciples with a question. The one to apply to in doubt is Jesus Himself; this John did.

"He cured many of diseases and plague and evil spirits" (v. 21). "Plagues is literally 'scourges.' Dr. Vincent says that 'diseases and scourges' mark the two classes of disease recognized in mediæval writings,—chronic and acute. It is also to be noted that the physician, St. Luke, makes a distinction between possession by evil spirits and disease, so showing us, I think, quite clearly, that the two are not to be confounded. Demoniacal possession was something terribly other than simple disease.

"Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard" (v. 22).

I was talking with a friend of mine who would deny to Christianity everything supernatural, would degrade it simply to a philosophy, would utterly deny deity to Jesus, etc. I was telling him how precisely other I believed in he believed. Then I said: "I dare risk my gospel; I dare take it to the most abandoned; I dare preach the forgiveness of sins through an atoning Christ; and I dare expect to see, for I have seen, an entire change in heart, hope, life; the drunkard reclaimed and his whole family rejoicing and kept so. Can you do that with what you believe?" I asked. "No, I frankly tell you, I cannot," he said. But precisely what I told him I had seen and done, an evangelical Christianity can do and is doing all the time. Facts are the best answer to doubts. If doubts ever whelm you, do as Jesus directed John to do; fall back on the blessed achievements of Christianity.

"Blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me" (v. 23). In Matt. 13: 55-57; 22: 42, and in John 6: 60-66, see instances of people's finding occasions of stumbling in Jesus. That which shall prevent such stumbling is limitless faith in Jesus. If He does strangely, as He seemed to John to do, trust His love and wisdom.

"But what went ye out to see? a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet" (v. 26). John was not wavering like a reed, or soft and selfish like those who had imprisoned him. He was a prophet; he belonged to the grand, strong, venerable company of the Hebrew prophets—not chiefly foretellers, though that was sometimes partially their function; but forthtellers, brave announcers of the truth of God, in the face of whatever opposition. And more, John was so grand and great, he was himself foretold; it was written of him, "My preparing messenger" (Mal. 3: 1), and so, as the personal herald of Messiah, he was more than prophet. Splendid eulogium on the imprisoned preacher! Notice (a) the tenderness of Jesus; He does not blame John for his doubts; nor will He blame us, if we treat our doubts as John did his. (b) The beautiful recognition by Jesus of all John was and did; nothing we are to do for Christ will He be unmindful of. (c) The exquisite defence of John by Jesus; He would not let him be misunderstood by the people; so will He guard our reputations. It is worth while serving such a Master.

"He that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (v. 28). "The simple meaning of these words seem to be that, in blessings and privileges, in revealed hope, in conscious admission into fellowship with God, the humblest child of the new kingdom is superior to the greatest prophet of the old. The smallest diamond is made of more precious substance than the largest flint." Now has been made atonement, has been consum-

mated resurrection, has been given the Holy Spirit; active for us is now our great High Priest in the unseen holy; in our hands is now the complete Bible. What no prophet saw or enjoyed, the humblest Christian both enjoys and sees. Appreciate your privileges, your dignity. Thankfully use what you have and are for the glory of your risen Lord.

## O Ye of Little Faith!

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

A SOWER sowed his seed, with doubts and fears;  
"I dare not hope," he said, "for fruitful ears:  
Poor hath the Harvest been in other years."  
Yet ere the August moon had waxes old  
Fair stood his fields, a waving sea of gold;  
He reaped a thousandfold!

In a dark place one dropt a kindly word;  
"So weak my voice," he sighed, "perchance none  
Will hear."  
Or if they did, no answering impulse stirred.  
Yet in an hour his fortunes were at stake;  
One put a life in peril for his sake,  
Because that word he spake!

"Little have I to give, O Lord," he cried,  
"A wayward heart that oft hath thee denied;  
Couldst Thou with such a gift be satisfied?"  
Yet when the soul had ceased its mournful plaint,  
God took the love that seemed so poor and faint  
And from it made a saint!

## Music in the Small Deeds of Life.

Singing birds are prized in all countries, but it is only in Japan that the notes of insects have been appreciated, and the insects named according to their different voices. The love of listening to these singing insects has for centuries been an impassioned pastime in Japan, and has created at last a unique trade and market. In Tokio toward the end of May little cages of exquisitely cut bamboo may be seen hung up on the verandas of houses, and in the cool of the dawn and at the close of summer days strange little whistles and tinklings and thrills proceed from these cages and make the air resound with the music. A recent traveller tells how he was moving from room to room in a quiet Buddhist temple at the hour of the hush that comes at the fall of twilight, when his attention was suddenly arrested by a silvery trill which filled at intervals the whole place. It was delicate and clear, like an etherealized bird's song, and yet of smaller volume than a bird's note. He called the priest's daughter and asked her what it was he heard singing. "That is a Suzumushi singing," she replied; "come and I will show you where it is." She led him to the back of the temple and pointed to the eaves of a cottage opposite. Looking across, he saw a tiny red cage hanging up, and in one corner a small black insect, hardly discernable in the dim light. "That is the insect you heard singing," said the priest's daughter. "It is called a Suzumushi, and its voice is beautiful and cool." Since God has made even the least insects to have beauty both in form and color and song, we should learn how to do the smallest deeds of every day life in a kindly, gracious way that shall have the effect of harmony and music upon others. What a difference there is between the musical life and the one that is full of harsh discord. Only by making Christ Master in our lives can they be set to heavenly music in all departments of expression.

\* S.S. Lesson, April 29. Luke 7: 18-28.  
Golden Text.—He hath done all things well.—  
Mark 7: 27.