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CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR.

'It is recorded of Thorwaldsen that in modelling his great statue of Christ, which now stands in the "Lady Church" of Copenhagen, he had striven to gain the requisite expression of benignity by making the hands upraised as if for benediction. The effect of the attitude was sublime, conjoined as it was with the compassionate sweetness of the kingly countenance; but the soul of the sculptor was not satisfied. At last, as if by a sudden flash of genius, he depressed the arms of the clay model into a posture of yearning entreaty; and so the statue was wrought; standing now grandly in its niche, facing the spectator as he enters the church, with the sculptured forms of the apostles on either side—an image to every hushed beholder of the Redeemer's appeal, in perfect sympathy conjoined with royal might, to the woe-stricken race of men.

To the great artist was surely vouchsafed a glimpse of the truth revealed to that Evangelist whose commission it was especially to set forth Christ the King. A civil servant of imperial Rome, the tax-collector of Capernaum, threw up his functions to own a mightier Master than the emperor whose officer he had been. But before that decisive moment in the history of the publican Matthew, he had witnessed a sight which his own vivid touch and that of his after-comrade Peter have made immortal, and of which he was afterwards to discern the deepest meaning. The scene was the door of the abode where the Prophet of Nazareth had been resting after a Sabbath spent in sacred ministry. The sun had just set; but in the fading light His form appeared, the centre of an eager expectant throng. There were the sick lying on their pallets; there was the shout of demoniac frenzy. But the presence of the mighty Healer diffused life and calm. In wondering joy "the whole city was gathered at the door." Capernaum was exalted unto heaven!

Such was the outward aspect of the scene. But to the quickened insight of the Evangelist, it became in his remembrance a revelation, not only of Divine power, but of perfect sympathy. To de-

scribe it he adopts a prophet's words: "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." That he took them away was only part of His work of love. He took them upon himself; he bore their load.

The wonderful thing connected with the prophet's words is that they are quoted by both the comrade-disciples, but in different senses, each completing the meaning of the other. For St. Peter writes that

Christ "His own self bore our sins in his body on the tree." Thus the Apostle speaks of "sins" where the Evangelist speaks of "sicknesses"; and the ancient prophecy sets forth the Son of Man as alike the bearer of human sorrow and of human guilt.

For a moment we pass by the grander and more solemn part of the revelation, and ask how he could bear our sicknesses. The answer, we repeat, is, By his perfect

sympathy. By actual experience he probably knew nothing of them. The "fairest of the sons of men" was undoubtedly as free from physical as from moral weakness. No languor dimmed that beaming eye; no bodily taint impaired the health of that glorious manhood. Yet, as with the outstretched hand of love, he takes upon him the infirmity, and becomes as one with those whom He came to heal. This too was essential to the complete manifestation of his love. For, as the beautiful word compassion proves, he who would help any sufferer most effectually must in a sense identify himself with that sufferer's case, feeling with him, not only for him, as commonplace kindness might do.

But at best there are three great limitations of human sympathy, all of which we must abstract in thought if we would rightly understand how the Divine Master "took upon him" our infirmities.

First of all: we cannot wholly throw off self even in our kindness to others. Here is the key to many mysteries, and in particular to this, that there is so much beneficence in the world that fails to elicit a return of love. It is gracious condescension—it is generous help; but the true sympathy is wanting. The benefactor does not "give himself with the gift." We have seen recipients of true kindness absolutely perplexed by the consciousness that their gratitude is so cold. The secret has been that the superiority of the helper has been made too apparent. His symbol has been the statue with uplifted arms, not that with the outstretched hand.

Then, secondly: may it not sometimes be the case that sympathy, in our weak human nature, if allowed free course, would become so keen and exquisite as actually to interfere with our power to aid? Excess of emotion defeats its own end. The eye dimmed with tears cannot clearly see how to remove the evil; the throbbings of the heart give tremulousness to the helper's hand. Thus in some cases, at least, of dealing with disease it is necessary not to be too sympathetic that the physician or surgeon may preserve a perfect calm. He must



COMME TIL MIG

[From Thorwaldsen's Statue in the Fru Kirke, Copenhagen.]

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."