

gracious One, will turn their ill-doings to our benefit if only so be that we are standing true to Him. When the ship is straight on her course even the tempest may but hasten her speed.

How carefully, too, God has planned all the details of our redemption. Once and again the same thought is emphasized in the story of the life of Jesus. What happened to Him was "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," that the work of salvation so carefully thought out beforehand in the Divine mind should be executed in its minutest details. Redemption is a gracious "decree" of God, and we have a sample in Christ's life and work on earth—so perfectly corresponding to what the prophets had said should be—of how God works out His decree. The process did not cease when Christ's mission to earth was finished and He returned to heaven. It is going on still. God is caring for the salvation of each individual soul as if there were none other to care for. How utterly safe we are in His hands!

*"Art thou the King of the Jews?"* v. 33; "THOU, the peasant prisoner, Thou whom Thine own rulers denounce?" Pilate's amazement—already fringed with scorn—was natural enough. Little like a king looked the Man of Nazareth! It has ever been hard for the rulers of earth to understand the sovereignty of Jesus. He looks so unlikely. And yet, what ruler of earth's greatest empire has ever held sway over so many hearts? And such sway! Even as a force in civil affairs, what is to be compared to the Kingship of the Christ? Who are the law-abiding citizens, if not those who are loyal to Him even before their loyalty to king and country? Of what sort is the material for the best soldiers? Cromwell's Ironsides and Havelock's "saints" are samples. In what communities does thrift prevail and the progress that goes with thrift? Which are the strong nations of the world? There is but one answer—Christian communities, the Christian nations.

*"My kingdom is not of this world,"* v. 36. Had it so been, then would His servants have fought in His defence. The law of Christ's Kingdom is the Sermon on the Mount; the exemplification of citizenship in that Kingdom is Christ's own life; the methods of extending His Kingdom are those which He practised and which

in the Great Commission He enjoined on His followers; the nature of the Kingdom is its sovereignty over the spirits of men, "the reign of spirit over spirit, of the living, risen Lord over human hearts." We are prone to forget all this in our labors for Christ. In Church and Sabbath School, in the organizations of various sorts in the congregation, in our missionary plans, we are apt to reckon much on numbers and social influence, and thorough equipment. These are not to be despised, but the effective force, after all, is the power that lies in the teaching of the truth to men and the living of the truth before men.

*"Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice,"* v. 37. Here is a touchstone of hearts. It is as if Christ had said, "He that is true to himself, true to the inner voice that makes itself heard to every man, will recognize Me when I speak to him." And why not? For did not the same Christ who revealed God's will to men by His words, implant conscience in the breast? The outer voice and the inner voice are in harmony. It is at peril of deadly violence to conscience that we shut our ears to Christ speaking in His Word.

*"What is truth,"* v. 38.

"But what is truth?" 'Twas Pilate's question put To Truth itself, that deigned him no reply."

—*The Task.*

And no reply was given because the question was a shallow scoff. Oh, the pity of it! Had ever scholar such an opportunity?—a lesson on Truth from Him who was Himself the Truth. But he missed the one great chance of his life, and thenceforward drifted rapidly to his dreadful act. He was too practised a judge to be deceived. The man before him was innocent. But he was too selfishly set on holding on to his place to perceive the true dignity of his prisoner, or to consider the awfulness of the crime of sending Him innocent to the cross. Verily, he sold his birthright for a "mess of pottage."

The race of Esau survives. How cheaply people sell themselves. Truth, honor, good name go for an extra cent in a bargain or a notch higher on the ladder of popularity, or a fresh draught of some forbidden pleasure; and when they succeed in getting what they have coveted the world laughs at them for their pains.