

passover. So black are the shadows of the old trees by the side of that sharp, white light! But hark! There are voices. There are people coming from the direction of the holy city. You can make out their forms. Do they think it is the time for olives? Into the press will they heap the fruit? Will there be bruising and breaking and crushing to-night? These people are talking, or rather one is talking to the others. Some trouble burdens the company, and he is comforting them. Ah, you have seen him before. He is the one that all Judea is wild about. Why, people have come to the passover especially to see him. Up on the slopes of Olivet, just back of this garden, in the pilgrims' tents pitched there, are people who would die for him if he were touched.

Touched he will be if the priests can have their say. He talks strangely about his king-hip. If he would set up his banner as a king, and fight, he would soon have all the people under that banner. No, he must suffer, he says; must die for the people. That is his royal prerogative, mission, crown. People are puzzled to understand him. Twelve men are with him. You have seen them before, patiently following along the highway, through the fields, up the mountains. Twelve? No, there are only eleven. Where is the twelfth man? If suffering may soon await the master, why do not all come to this place of the oil-press, to Gethsemane, waiting in sympathy on the great Master soon to die? Yes, soon to die! Does he know that even now in the city are mustering the forces that will seek his life?

Fly, master, fly! There is time to escape over Olivet. No, he cannot fly. Shall the olive fall the press in the hour of bruising and crushing? No, he will not fly.

He has told some of them to come apart with him. He would pray. Three follow, James, John, and that Peter, so clamorous to follow even unto death. But fly, Master, fly! They are tramping through Jerusalem's streets, eager to find thee. Be a king, and gather your army to confront them. No, it is the king's hour, but not to fight. He bids those three followers watch while he may pray a little way off. The three shall be sentinels? Then let them be vigilant. You can see his bowed form in the white moonlight. He goes back to the watchers. What, sentinels asleep and an enemy crowding out of Jerusalem's gates! Fly, Master, fly! There yet is time. No, he has gone back to his prayers and to his agony. He comes again. Surely one, that ardent Peter, must be awake. No, all asleep! He bows once more in prayer. He tastes again the bitter cup. You hear his sobs, see the great drops of his agony falling in the moonlight. He comes again to those sleeping watchmen. Let him not tarry to say one word, but fly swiftly! No, he speaks to them. He bids them sleep. Sleep, Peter, sleep on! Sleep, all of the three, all of the eleven, if you can! For look, there in the snowy moonlight, beyond the aged trees, is the yellow gleam of torches! You hear the clank of arms. The assassins have come, and at their head is that misling twelfth disciple—traitor now—Judas! He has come at last!

A. D. 30.]

Matt. 26. 67-75.



67 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another

LESSON IX.

PETER'S DENIAL.

[May 27.

maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them: for thy speech bewrayeth thee.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

General Statement.

When the disciples saw the band approaching for the arrest of their Master, with Judas as its leader, their first impulse was to draw the sword in his defense. But Jesus pressed back their offered blades, and healed the high priest's servant whose ear Peter had severed at a blow. Forbidden to fight, and beholding their leader submissively bound by his foes, they fled, each one caring for himself. Two only of the eleven followed, John and Peter, the one with his Master (John 18. 15), the other afar off among the rabble in the rear of the soldiery. The Saviour was first taken to the house of Annas, the ex-high priest, who was still regarded as the lawful head of the nation. The rulers were summoned hastily, and with one voice determined that Jesus must be put to death. But to make their action sure they adjourned to the palace of the legal high priest, Caiaphas, where a larger number of the council were assembled, where they went through with the forms of a trial, and again condemned Jesus to death. It was the

final act of rejection, Judaism refusing to receive its royal Messiah. While Jesus was enduring scorn, abuse, and blows in the palace, his disciple Simon Peter, was without in the court-yard, cringing over a fire, and cowering under the reproaches cast upon his Master. Curious, inquiring eyes glance at him; one and another accuse him of being one of the Galilean's disciples. With sinking heart, which gives the lie to his lips, he declares that he knows not and never has known the Man of whom they speak. He is driven to support his falsehood, as many another liar, by oaths. Just as Peter is uttering a curse, his Master is being dragged down the stairs, and, turning, looks upon his disciple in the act of denying his Lord. At that moment the shrill cry of the cock is heard without, and the unfaithful apostle recalls the warning of his Saviour given only a few hours before. He breaks away from the vile throng, goes forth into the darkness, and pours out his heart in the tears of a true penitence for his sin.

Explanatory and Practical Notes.

Verse 67. Then. After the mockery of a trial before the Sanhedrin, or council of the Jews, at the palace of the high-priest Caiaphas. **Did they spit in his face.** In ancient times it was customary, after a prisoner was condemned to death, to deliver him to the soldiers and underlings, to be mocked, beaten, spat upon, and even tortured, as they chose. To spit in

one's face has always been considered the highest insult; and to think of such treatment to the high and holy Son of God! **Buffered him.** Struck him with their fists. (1) *See in all this how much of the lower, bestial nature is in our humanity.* (2) *It was for our sakes that Jesus suffered this shame.*

68. Prophecy unto us. They blindfolded him