

paralyzed. It was a case incurable by medical skill. The question raised was much disputed amongst the Jews. The stricter sects held that it was not lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. (Luke 13 : 14.) Mark and Luke tell us that "they watched him," and that "he knew their thoughts."

The question may not have been uttered audibly. They came to the synagogue not to worship, but to watch Him; and, while so particular about Jesus keeping the Fourth Commandment, they broke it themselves by their malice and treachery. (Lindsay.)

They did not wish to see what rabbinical school he belonged to, but to see whether he would not do something which some of them could make the basis of a charge against him. The accusation would lie before the rulers of the synagogue, or, perhaps, the Sanhedrim. It would discredit him with the people and stop his preaching at least, so they hoped.

11.—Mark and Luke tell us that Jesus first bade the man "stand forth in the midst" and then asked, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm; to save a life or to destroy it?" He put a counter question covering a self-evident principle and to which there could be but one answer. One of their own maxims was, "He who neglects to preserve life when it is in his power, is a murderer." (Lindsay.) By this novel way of putting his case, our Lord teaches the great ethical principle, that *to neglect any opportunity of doing good is to incur the guilt of doing evil*, and by this law he bound his own spirit. (Brown.) Some think that he had a covert reference to their murderous plots against himself.

To this question they did not venture a reply but maintained an insolent silence. Then Jesus "looked round about on them with anger (indignation) being grieved at the hardening of their hearts." If they had been honest they would not have shrunk from answering these questions. Their silence showed their determination not to listen to reason. He was justly incensed at their obstinate self will.

The word implies that his anger was mingled with compassion. They were blinded by sin and hardened by pride. They had set themselves to prove Christ guilty at all hazards, and the result was a gradual harden-

ing of the heart, so that in the midst of wonders of grace no impression could be made upon them. There is no more sorrowful sight than the gradual hardening of the heart and searing of the conscience. (Lindsay.)

The question regarding the sheep is not given in the other versions of the miracle, but a similar one is found in Luke 14 : 5 in another connection. The R. V. reads, "shall have one sheep," it would therefore be the dearer to him. The question carries its own answer.

12.—This verse implies the questions given by the other evangelists. The answer to them is "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days." Every work of mercy, to body or soul, is a necessary work, always and everywhere, seven days in the week. The best of days should be filled with the best of deeds.

13.—The man believed "that Christ can give strength to execute the command. It is in that faith he acts; and, paradoxical as it may seem, let us say that, if in that faith he had not made the effort, he never would have got the strength; and yet if he had not got the strength, he never could have made the effort. Stretch forth thy withered heart to love—thy withered hand to serve—such is still his command. Fixing an eye of faith on him who has already fixed his eye of love on us, let us make the effort, and in the very making of the effort we shall get the strength." (Hanna.)

"Virtue goes out of Christ. The shrunken hand instantly acquires a healthful color, and swells into its right proportions. In his joy the man shuts and opens it; moves the pliant fingers; and holds the miracle aloft to the gaze of a crowd, dumb with astonishment. Give him a harp, and with that hand he would sweep its sounding strings to the praise of Jesus.

"What a pattern to men who have souls to be saved, and hearts to cure. He did what he could—using all means within his power to obtain the blessing: and, did people, with equal eagerness, repair to the church on Sabbath, as he to the synagogue, to meet Jesus Christ; and, with the same earnestness and the same faith, lay out their sins and their soul's sorrows before him, our Sabbaths would witness greater works than this—he who healed that withered hand healing withered hearts, and, whether they required to be saved or