

The Home of Christ.

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"And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt at Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast."—Matt. iv. 13.

That is always a momentous era in the history of every individual, when the period of youth is over, and manhood goes forth to grapple with the stern realities of life. Existence has new responsibilities—new cares—new hopes—new motives—new trials—new joys. If the character was plastic before, and only moulding or developing, now it fast consolidates. "The Man" takes a new position. He selects his own associates—discovers his own resources—manifests his own tastes and congenialities. The magnetic needle, trembling and oscillating before, fixes itself now to its pole; and there, with little variation, remains till he goes to the last and longest home of all.

We have in these words the first glimpse which the Bible gives us of the *Home of Jesus*. Around that name, the earthly Home of the Lord of Glory, how many hallowed and sacred thoughts gather! Other spots already claimed the honour. *Egypt* was for a time His home. Thither, in the morning of that mysterious infancy, He fled with His parents, till a message from Heaven assured of a safe return. *Nazareth* was His home. There, an impenetrable silence broods over thirty years of wondrous interest to all time. We dare not lift the veil of secrecy. But we can well picture the lovingness of that Childhood and Youth, unruined by one frown or passion or taint of selfishness—a Holy Light in a dwelling of peaceful obscurity, His hands toiling, as we have reason to believe they did, in the workshop of His reputed father, thus voluntarily subjecting Himself to the full heritage of the curse of toil. We can picture the wanderings of that mysterious boyhood amid the olive groves and wooded eminences which enclosed the Village. We can listen in thought to the earliest prayers lisped in the quiet homestead or on the silent hills. Rising even then with elastic step "a great while before day," while the lower valley was still sleeping amid the shadows of early dawn, the "Holy child" was invoking the ear of His Father in Heaven.

But *CAPERNAUM* is invested with a deeper interest still. Youth, obscurity, privacy, are left. He is now the public Person—the Teacher sent from God—the MAN. *Nazareth* was the home of His parents. There He was "subject to them." The

period of subjection is over. He has completed His beautiful example—He has read His holy lesson to boyhood and youth. Now He has to bear a more advanced and dignified testimony. Manhood in its prime is invited to come to the shores of *Gennesaret*, or to enter one of the lowly porticos in the town of *Capernaum*, and gather solemn instruction by a visit to the HOME OF JESUS!

"Master, where dwellest thou?" said two of His disciple-followers on one occasion. "Come and see," was His answer. He invites us to come also. We can, indeed, speak nothing regarding that lowly dwelling; we can mark no stone of the outer building; we cannot tell whether the blue waves of the Lake murmured under its lattice; or whether it looked out to the vines climbing the slopes which hemmed in the plain. But the mere locality is nothing. It is the wondrous Life that stamped its impress on that home, and that reads many a lesson still as to what the home and the life together should be. Come, then, let us gather with all reverence around this model "Home," where the ideal of MAN, the root and flower of perfect Humanity mysteriously unfolded itself.

Let us look to the life of Jesus in its twofold aspect—*social* and *individual*, *public* and *private*.

I. **SOCIALLY.**—The character of the Redeemer partook of no asceticism. The Home of Jesus was in the centre of Galilean and (Jerusalem excepted) the centre of Palestine life. He was, in this respect, unlike his great forerunner, John the Baptist. Rigid, austere, separating himself from the amenities of existence, the wilderness and solitudes of Judea were his abode. He shunned society. He came and delivered his message to teeming multitudes by day, and then as the night shadows gathered round the Jordan, he plunged back into the untrodden wilds, with no eye to look kindly on him but that of One, whose presence to him was more than all human tenderness could be! There was much to love, at least to revere, about the Harbinger of the Messiah. He was bold, honest, intrepid, sincere. He had forsaken all for the sake of his message. He could afford no time to fritter away in a worthless world. It took him the livelong night to get his spirit braced up for the solemn embassy of the morrow. With the prayer still lingering on his lips, he went forth with the old burning message of persuasion and terror—"Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

But the Home of Jesus was not the wilderness! No secluded nook was His selected dwelling—no quiet Palestine hamlet where