to believe that Ushpia and Kikia lived as early as the middle of the third millennium B.C. If the Akkadian immigration supposed by the present author really took place, it should probably be placed before the days of Ushpia and Kikia.

C. VAN GELDEREN.

## *THE TWO GREAT REFUSALS.*

MARK x. 17–27 ; MATT. xix. 16–26 ; LUKE xviii. 18–27.

JESUS had been beyond Jordan, and would seem to have been about to set out on His fateful last visit to Jerusalem. A man, whose age we may place perhaps at thirty to thirty-five years, and, according to Luke, one of "the Rulers of the Jews," heard that Jesus was about to leave the district. At the last moment he came running to Jesus and threw himself on his knees before Him. His mind was troubled by a question that he had in vain tried to solve. How much he knew of Jesus and His teaching we cannot tell, but he addressed Him in terms of affectionate appreciation, saying, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit Eternal Life ?"

His position as a Ruler and his wealth—for he had great possessions—left him longing for that which neither social standing nor wealth can give : he was awake to the cry of the soul and wanted it answered.

Jesus repudiates—perhaps we may say He even resents—the title "Good." "Why," He asks, "why callest thou me Good ?"

Does not the repudiation stagger us ? Does not the title seem to us most fitting ? Do not we find the echo of it in our own hearts, as we think of Him ? And so do we not feel puzzled that Jesus called it in question ?

Well ! we are not the first to feel the difficulty of the

situation. One even of the Evangelists felt it—Matthew, namely—and he felt it so strongly that he even dared to change our Lord's words. He makes Him say, "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good?" The Evangelist may have meant well, but he has failed at a critical point in his narrative.

Is it possible to find a likely reason for the recoil of our Saviour's mind from the ascription offered by this eager, earnest, sincere young Ruler? Can it have been that Jesus was just escaping from some temptation which had stirred Him to His depths? We know that temptation constantly recurred in His life. It was not the case that He had but one prolonged battle at the beginning of His public ministry and that thereafter He stood undisputed victor over the world, the flesh and the devil. It is pathetic to read how He chose the Twelve "that they might be *with* Him" and that later He turned to them and said, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." Luke tells us pointedly that after the strain of the great Forty Days' temptation the devil departed from Him "*for a season*"; and when, later, Simon tried to turn Him aside from the Cross, He called the Apostle "Satan" and bade him get behind Him, for he was a "stumblingblock" to Him.

How terribly real the temptation presented on the lips and in the solicitation of the Apostle had been, we see in the deep agitation of the Saviour's reproof. He would not have spoken as He did had there not been something more than Simon's voice crying, "Spare Thyself," and had He not felt in Himself the shuddering recoil from the Cross which corresponded with, and answered to, the pleading of the Apostle's love that He would pause and withdraw in time.

Some such vivid experience, in which He felt how human He was in His dependence upon a higher strength than His own; some recently deepened sense of the momentary

upholding He, in common with all His brethren, required by the Father's encircling arms; some more prevailing vision of goodness that, in God alone, dwells serene and free from the infirmity that besets all human life—this *may* have been the reason why Jesus Christ cried to this young man, "Why do you call me *good*? There is none *good* save one—God."

But though Matthew has missed the *Saviour's* "great refusal" it is from his narrative alone that we are able to follow the *second* great refusal in the incident; viz., that of the young Ruler himself. He has asked, "What shall I do" or "what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit Eternal Life?" The Jew of this period thought of God as keeping for every man a debtor and creditor account. Every good deed he did was recorded in his favour; every evil deed was recorded against him; and on the striking of the balance depended the issue of life or death.

Jesus repudiates such a conception; but He says to the inquirer, "If thou wouldest enter into life keep the commandments." The man asks, "Which?" and then Jesus, brushing aside everything ritual or national, points him to the broad, general laws which in every civilised community are recognised as the foundation of individual and social sanity. No state, no personal worth, can stand except where honesty, purity, reverence for life, honour for parents and love for one's neighbour are cherished.

This, this Ruler has seen; and what he has seen is right he has tried to carry out. Whatever temptations have clung around him from his position of authority and from his wealth he has wrestled with and thrown, and he tells Jesus so. "All these things have I observed from my youth." But God has set Eternity in every man's heart, and this pilgrim of the Infinite asks "What lack I yet?"

His assurance was accepted, and Mark adds, "Jesus, stead-

fastly looking upon him, *loved* him." How much the words mean! It is very rarely indeed that Jesus is said in any of the Gospels to love an individual. In John we read that He loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and there is an unnamed disciple who is spoken of as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," but I do not recall any other such use of the word except that here.

How much then, I repeat, the words mean! What sense of congeniality of mind between the man and Himself they witness to; what earnest gladness in battles nobly fought, in a character trained to high ends. Jesus knew, from what He had paid for conquest in His own life, what this man must likewise have paid; and His heart went out to him, not in mere liking but in love. And not least He loved him, I venture to think, because of what lay in the question, "What lack I yet?" There spoke the very same voice of unquenchable aspiration that Jesus was ever conscious of as crying to God in His own child-heart: the soul following hard after the unattained and the unattainable; the sense of the Infinite, of which some glimpse and portion has been won, but which, in its fulness, eludes and yet compels the soul's quest. Jesus recognised the man's brotherhood of spirit, his present hold of life, of which, because he had tasted it, he longed to drink a full draught.

And then in this love for him, and because love ever seeks the loved one's highest, completest good, He summoned him to His own side. "Get rid of all that holds you from the highest attainment of which you are capable. Sell all you have; give to the poor; come, follow Me, and you shall have heavenly treasure."

As He looked on him with the discerning eyes of love, He saw what aptitude he had for a great service.

The possible future man, as well as the actual present man, lived before Him. He saw in him what made Him use the

same great words as He had used to Simon and Andrew, James and John, "Come, follow Me"; but of none of these men do we read, "Jesus, looking on him, loved him," and I cannot but think that Jesus felt in regard to this man that there was that in him which would, if it could but be drawn out, make him the very head of those who were bringing in the Kingdom of God, and not less give to His own mind for intimacy of friendship and for appreciation of those things He held closest and dearest, another mind such as no one of the Twelve could give.

From no other with whom He was brought into casual contact did Jesus, so far as we know, ask as much as He did from this man. To no other was He so drawn. In no other did He find so much that might yield Him rest of heart. And He made love's venture—with what earnest prayer and hope!—and threw open the inmost places of friendship, and the secret of a service whose treasure was the wealth and joy of His own life.

Alas! and alas! The call was too high; the career too exacting. Mark tells us the man went away with a frown on his brow and sorrow in his heart. Did he think only of the price to be paid and not of the reward to be won? Did he fail to overhear the note of personal appeal in the Teacher's voice?—the quiet, scarce audible tone that said, "The Son of Man wants a friend with whom He may speak, heart to heart, of the things that are His very life; one to commune with Him of His exodus which He is to accomplish at Jerusalem. You can be that friend. Will you be?" Though he might still have turned a deaf ear to the summons that, obeyed, would have set him side by side with Paul, yet, had he but listened and stayed to think of what Jesus was telling him he might be to His own heart, would he have turned away as he did?

When he went back to his great possessions did he forget

that look, that steadfast look, of longing and of love in the eyes of the "Good Teacher"? Did the "Good Teacher's" voice become drowned in the common voices of the day? When night came and all was quiet, in the darkness and the silence did both come back and an unseen presence wrestle with him till the breaking of the day? We do not know. But life can scarce have been again what it had been. His riches would surely seem somehow less worth retaining; the pleasures that they would procure, innocent and worthy though all might be, would have less power to delight. Other friendships would seem less satisfying because *that* Friendship had been declined. And when sentence had been given against Him, and the eyes that had gleamed with a great hope had worn once more the look of rejected love as they were set on a disciple who had denied Him, and the "good Teacher's" winsome voice was silenced in death, what thoughts and memories surged in this man's soul? Was he one who thereafter in the early days of the Church sold his possessions and laid at the Apostles' feet the price he had once declined to place in the hands of the poor? and while carrying through life the chastening memory of what might have been, did he now take the lowest place of all in the service of the little community of which he might well have been the chief? Again we cannot tell.

But is it without point that Jesus spoke no word of upbraiding as His gaze followed the retreating figure with the slow step, and the bent head and the sad face; but rather, knowing what this life to which He had challenged him cost to live (for is it not written that "Though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor?") He covered his retreat with words that told the hardness of the task declined, and that made it plain to the understanding mind how He cherished a great confidence in the God with whom all things

are possible and a great hope that the last might yet be among the first ?

Still, this challenge, this summons for our life's absolute devotion to the service of God, comes from the same lips.

Is it possible for us, out of the disciplined soul, to yield the Son of Man gladness and rest ?—the gladness, the rest of being like-minded with Himself ? He no longer walks the earth, inviting alike the weary and heavy laden, and the strong and brave and resourceful to come to Him ; asking companionship in high thoughts and enduring ideals, no less than offering peace and pardon. But through Him ideals of manhood and womanhood are ours to cherish and fulfil. And these are what He lived for, and died for *and lives for still.* His challenge and His summons to-day are to take these to our minds and hearts and to hold all we have and all we are for their furtherance.

All we have—not great possessions, it may be, but just one special aptitude, perhaps—the faculty for joy, the sense of the humour in things, some gift from God of pity and sympathy, some power of friendship. All we are—with some strength to endure amid the shocks of time ; some ability to look on Medusa's face with eyes that do not shudder ; some experience in which others may find refuge in their day of stress.

All this He seeks from us for that ideal of man, that ideal of woman, which He saw, and which He now asks us to see, believe in, and devote ourselves to.

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