

# God's Open

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James I. Vance

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## By James I. Vance, D.D.

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# GOD'S OPEN:

*Sermons That Take Us Out-Of-Doors*

By  
JAMES I. VANCE, D.D., LL.D.

*Pastor First Presbyterian Church,  
Nashville, Tenn.*



NEW YORK

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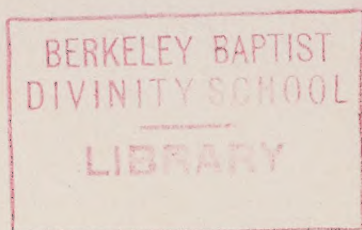
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*To my sons, in memory of the  
many happy days we have spent  
together in the open along the  
trout streams and on the mountain  
heights in the Land of the Sky.*

## GOD'S WORLD

O, world, I cannot hold thee close enough!  
Thy winds, thy wide gray skies!  
Thy mists, that roll and rise!  
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag  
And all but cry with colour! That gaunt crag  
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!  
World, World, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,  
But never knew I this;  
Here such a passion is  
As stretcheth me apart,—Lord, I do fear  
Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year;  
My soul is all but out of me,—let fall  
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

—EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY.

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I

CHRIST'S LIFE IN THE OPEN

## A BALLAD OF TREES AND THE MASTER

Into the woods my Master went,  
Clean forspent, forspent,  
Into the woods my Master came,  
Forspent with love and shame.  
But the olives they were not blind to Him,  
The little gray leaves were kind to Him:  
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him  
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,  
And He was well content.  
Out of the woods my Master came,  
Content with death and shame.  
When Death and Shame would woo Him last,  
From under the trees they drew Him last:  
'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last  
When out of the woods He came.

—SIDNEY LANIER.

## I

### CHRIST'S LIFE IN THE OPEN

*"He went into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone."*—MATTHEW 14: 23.

THE shadows of evening are falling. There is that stillness in the wood which comes at the close of the day, when creature life seeks repose. The trees and the rocks, the blooming flowers and climbing vines, are waiting for Him. Then the hush of nature is broken by a foot fall, and into the woods the Master comes. Up the mountain side He climbs to His oratory.

He is alone. He has left the world behind Him. He has turned from the great crowds that thronged Him. He has sent His disciples by boat across the little sea, and now He seeks and finds, not solitude, but fellowship, in God's open, for He has come to the woods to pray. Not to some synagogue or temple, not to a shrine that man has built, not to an altar some priest has consecrated, but under a tree that God has grown and on a stone that nature has fashioned, the Son of man kneels for His communion with God.

He has come from achievement. There on the lake shore where the crowds gathered, He has

been giving Himself without stint. High on the mountain side above the noise and tumult of the seething, needy world, He seeks rest and quiet. Soon He is to return to achievement. Already the boat that bears His disciples across the little lake is in the midst of a stormy sea, tossed by contrary winds, and in the gray dawn of the fourth watch of the night, He must hasten to them. But the feet that climb the mountain will as easily walk the sea. Then when the boat comes to land yonder at Genessaret, the people "from that country round about" will be waiting for Him with all that were diseased, and He will stand among them, and they will touch the hem of His garment, and as many as touch His robe shall be made perfectly whole.

And so the Saviour has come into the wood for more than rest. He has sought the mountain for renewal, for endowment, for power. He must be furnished afresh for His great ministry to the needy world. He must have a new contact with the Source of strength, a period of undisturbed and unbroken communion with His Father. He seeks and finds it in God's great out-of-doors.

One wonders what Christ prayed for that night in the mountain oratory, when He was alone with God. What was the burden of His supplication as He poured out His soul to His Father? On other occasions the words of His prayers are preserved; here, it is merely the recital of the fact that He went into a mountain apart to pray, and that when

the evening was come, He was there alone. His loneliness was not solitude. Never was there such companionship. The quiet of the woods was about Him. The stillness of God's great cathedral lay on His soul. God was in His holy temple. The Eternal was "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

And so we think of that night of prayer in the chapel of the hills as a night of communion, of fellowship between God the Father and God the Son. Is not this the essence of prayer and the soul of religion itself? Prayer is something other than a scheme to acquire, to induce God to change His mind or His method, to persuade Him to bestow what He is disposed to withhold. Prayer is not wrestling with God, as Jacob found that weird night by Jabbok. Prayer, instead of overcoming God's reluctance, lays hold of His willingness. Prayer is giving one's self up to God without conditions, as the Master did that night in the garden: "Not my will, but thine, be done." There is no greater prayer.

As He goes down the mountain in the dim light of early dawn from that night among the friendly trees, from the flowers and the rocks and the warm earth so kind to Him, He is ready.

#### THE LIFE OF JESUS OUT OF DOORS

Enlarging this incident, we shall have a picture of much of the earthly ministry of Jesus. A large

part of His time was spent in the open. Palestine is a country with a climate so kind that for eleven months in the year one may sleep on the ground and live with nature as a close and kindly friend. Doubtless Christ's body was often wet with the dew, and the moon and stars shone down on His face as He fell asleep. He must have loved the trees and fields, the hills and valleys and lakes, the streams and roads, the flowers and the sunshine, the winds and the blue skies and the shining stars. He was priest of the house not made with hands.

The great events of His life and ministry were nearly all out-of-door experiences. His birth was so close to nature that the nearest companions of His first night on earth were the beasts of the stall. When the hour came for His baptism, it was not from some sculptured urn or chiseled font that the water was taken, nor under some templed dome that heaven's dove descended. It was by the riverside from the waters of a living stream under the open skies. There out of doors a man from the wilderness baptised the Son of God, and a voice from the firmament said: "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."

To the two disciples who met Jesus shortly after His baptism, and who asked: "Master, where dwellest thou?" Jesus replied: "Come and see." And they went and spent the day with him. Where? Christ never owned a house. We wonder if it was not to some quiet spot in vale or

wood, to the bank of pool or stream, under the cool shade of a great rock, that Andrew and his friend were taken that day by Him Who was to become their Master, and Who was to lead them on to world conquest and martyrdom.

Of Christ's sixty-four parables, thirty-two take us out of doors. He utters the profoundest truths of religion and interprets them with the commonest facts of nature. He saw that "earth was crammed with heaven, and every common bush aflame with God." So far from any contradiction between God's word and His works, to Jesus nature was luminous and musical with the divine. The fig tree, the wind, the clouds, the rain, the mustard seed, the vine and its branches, the tares, the treasures hid in a field, the fishing nets, the lost sheep, the wheat fields and husbandmen, are all packed with messages from God. When Jesus would preach, His pulpit was a mountain top or a lake shore, a dell or a street, and His text a blade of grass from some green field, a flower blooming by the roadside, a gushing spring, a singing brook, a cloud or a star.

Of the forty-eight miracles recorded of Jesus, thirty-seven call us to the open. There He not only stilled the tempest and walked the sea and fed the crowds, but healed the sick and cleansed the lepers and opened the eyes of the blind and cast out devils and raised the dead.

It was in the wilderness that Jesus won His first

victory over Satan. It was as He walked by the sea that He found and called Peter and Andrew, James and John. And it was out in the mountains that the ordination of the twelve took place. He was an open air preacher, and His greatest sermons were delivered out of doors, one on a mountain-top, another beside a well. It was not in some stately temple nor sombre cathedral that the transfiguration as well as the temptation occurred, but on the top of a high mountain, with common earth under foot and the sinless heavens overhead. There in the clear, bold light of open day Moses and Elias appeared, talking with Jesus. The "dim religious light" does not come to us from the ministry of Him Who lived and taught out of doors.

Thus they followed Jesus when He was on earth. The people found Him in God's great out-of-doors. He is to be found there still under the open skies, beneath the shade of trees, along the beaten highways or dim trails or beside stream and lake not less than in the churches man has built.

#### JESUS' RELIGION AND THE OPEN

All this bears in a striking way on the religion Jesus brought to men. It confirms its genuineness. Jesus did not clothe Himself with mystery nor hide in the shadows. He did not house Himself in a hermit's cell or sacred crypt or holy retreat. He did not shun publicity. He dwelt in the full glare of day, where all He said and did can be tested and

investigated and scrutinized. His ministry was in the open where concealment was impossible. He was a priest of the street, a preacher of the highway, and any who would could come to His side and touch Him and look into His kind face and hear His gentle voice and be blessed. In this Christ stands singular and alone among the founders of great religion.

It reveals its simplicity. Nature takes us away from the ornate and the artificial to the simple and the sincere. It hates shams and veneer. It needs no make-up. Jesus was simplicity incarnate, and His gospel the religion of sincerity. Nature never poses nor affects, is never artificial. The same is true of Jesus as a teacher. He was never grandiloquent, never studied nor dramatic, never a mere actor. Anyone could understand Him. The truths He revealed were eternal, but they were uttered in the language of the common people, and expressed in metaphors of daily life.

It also bears on its interpretation. Jesus brought religion and nature together. He is a poor disciple of Jesus who shuns science and is afraid to know God's world too well. Nature will never defame God. It will never betray its Master. In his study of nature, man may often fall short of the facts and reach unwarranted conclusions, but if he will be reverent and patient, the lost path will be re-discovered, and it will be found to lead to God.

It aids, too, in the experience of the religion of

Jesus. Much that God would give us is to be best had in the open. There is a delightful contact out of doors with Him Who made and rules the world. There is rest for tired nerves, renewal of courage, recovery of poise, correction of values, and emancipation from the vain show. He is to be pitied who never has a chance to return to the wild and get acquainted with the world as it was when it came from its Maker's hands. The man who said of vacation: "Whatever choice you make, you are pretty sure to regret it," was evidently a tender-foot, and confined his recreation periods to hotels and Chautauquas and tailor-made parks.

I am sorry for city children who never get off pavements, who never see a flower unless it is cut or growing in a pot, who never wade a stream nor climb a tree nor go swimming and nutting in the open.

When you are worn out, take to the woods. When your great temptation is on, hurry to the wilderness. Get away from people. Get close to nature. Get a rod and hunt for a trout stream. Get a stick and some walking shoes and be off on a hike. Get a horse and ride out of storm into peace, out of worry into heaven. Get a boat and push out on lake or river, and as the ripples fall from your paddle or the winds play with the sails, forget your troubles.

'Are your nerves on edge? Get your tackle and come with me to a laughing stream. The banks

are dense with rhododendron, and above the brook the trees put their heads so close together that only here and there is the glint of the sun on the shining water. We wade the stream, and let the fly drift with the current. Now on a gleaming ripple, now in a dark pool, now in the lee of a fallen log the trout leaps, the line stiffens, and the electric current charges up arm and spine. The creel fills. On a rock that lifts from the brook or on a patch of mossy bank we eat our lunch, and at the same time feed on the beauty of the world. Then another mile with the brook. Then home. Then a night of dreamless sleep, and when morning wakes,

“God’s in His heaven,  
All’s right with the world.”

Have you soured on life? Come, let us visit our big brothers, the trees in the forest. Let us stroll among the ferns and galax and wintergreen. They are all waving a welcome. A rabbit jumps from cover and scampers across our path. A gray squirrel barks from a dizzy limb, and the birds sing. Your ugly mood is lifting. The evil spell is broken, and soon you are in tune with the beauty of the world.

Have you lost courage and faith? Mount a horse and let us ride. I will take you up a bridle path under the shade of trees, across limpid fords whose crystal waters splash your stirrups, by the side of murmuring waters riding toward the sky.

line, from whose heights you may see the blue ranges of the mountain world for a hundred miles, and the deep green of far valleys, and the curling smoke of cabins long removed, and hear now and again the sound of an axe or the deep baying of a hound or the shout of a mountaineer or the call of cattle and sheep. As you ride homeward and dismount from your horse, if you do not lay your hand on his neck and for a moment fondle him, if you do not feel that the burden has slipped from your shoulders and the load from your heart, if you have not come to believe that the world is kinder than you thought and people better and God surer and nearer, you had best write your will.

“Into the woods the Master came.”

“He went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come, he was there alone.” We do well to follow the Master into God’s open. We have made religion too much of an indoors affair. We have taught people that if they would find God they must look for Him in a church. He is to be found in the church, but also in the mountains and fields and by the sea.

The narrow streets of the cities of the old world hark back to an age of fear. As the world grows safer and kindlier, walls fall and streets widen. It is a good sign when man’s home is less of a house and more of a garden, and his worship less a ritual and more a life.

... can be found in a book, in  
the Church, in our thinking, in a new  
... in the future? It is an old  
thing, I may become convinced that  
... there is a God to be seen in nature  
... the Lord, who is the Father, who is  
... the Father, who is the Father, who is  
... the Father, who is the Father, who is

## II

### LIKE A TREE

## THE BRAVE OLD OAK

A song to the oak, the brave old oak,  
Who hath ruled in the greenwood long;  
Here's health and renown to his broad green crown,  
And his fifty arms so strong.  
There's fear in his frown when the sun goes down.  
And the fire in the west fades out;  
And he showeth his might on a wild midnight,  
When the storms through his branches shout.

Then here's to the oak, the brave old oak,  
Who stands in his pride alone;  
And still flourish he, a hale green tree,  
When a hundred years are gone!

In the days of old, when the spring with cold  
Had brightened his branches gray,  
Through the grass at his feet crept maidens sweet,  
To gather the dew of May.  
And on that day to the rebeck gay  
They frolicked with lovesome swains;  
They are gone, they are dead, in the churchyard laid,  
But the tree it still remains.

He saw the rare times when the Christmas chimes  
Were a merry sound to hear,  
When the squire's wide hall and the cottage small  
Were filled with good English cheer.  
Now gold hath sway we all obey,  
And a ruthless king is he;  
But he never shall send our ancient friend  
To be tossed on the stormy sea.

—HENRY FOTHERGILL CHORLEY.

## II

### LIKE A TREE

*"He shall be like a tree."*—PSALMS I:3.

THE Duke, in "As You Like It," says:

"—our life, exempt from public haunt,  
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

King David, in the first Psalm, sings the song of a tree that tells the life story of a man: "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

#### A PROMISE

What a wonderful thing a tree is! Some day a tiny seed falls into the lap of Mother Earth, and resting its tired cheek on her warm bosom, goes to sleep. When it awakens, the miracle of being has been wrought, the door of destiny swings wide, and the world of light and song and sunshine calls.

Think how a tree grows! With infallible instinct it feels out and finds what it needs. It

gathers food from the soil. It extracts sustenance from the rocks. It drinks from stream and sky. It imprisons the sunshine until its garments are living green. It bows to the winds and bends to the storms and blushes under the warm gaze of the ardent sun. Through all this, it grows tall and strong and lusty, spreading its branches to bless the earth, and lifting its head to salute the heavens.

Think of how a tree serves! The birds come and build their nests in its boughs. Any bird that will may come, for the gospel of the tree is: "Whosoever will may come." The beasts of the field, the cattle and the sheep, and tired men from the noisy town come to rest in its shade, and when its fruit grows to luscious ripeness, it says: "Take and eat." If you will not take, it will of its own accord drop its bounty in your hand, for the tree lives to serve.

Think of how a tree suffers! It bares its head to the tempest, its face is exposed to the ice and snow, it meets in the open the attacks of the storm wind, it is bruised and broken by the tempest, and when the woodsman drives the keen edge of his axe into its heart, the tree gives its life to feed man's fire and warm his home.

Think of how responsive a tree is! Nothing leaves it as it found it. It responds to the seasons. It stores up in itself the record of all it does and says and thinks and becomes. It draws a circle around its heart for each passing year. It carries

to its grave the kiss of every sunbeam, the baptism of every raindrop, the caress of every zephyr, the stroke of every thunderbolt, and the scars made by the sword of the ice-king.

Think of how the trees bind the world together! Successive generations have the same tree for a friend. Yonder is a tree whose wide-spreading branches gave generous shade to father and mother. The children and the children's children will come and sit there and talk to one another of how life fares. The tree will listen, and laugh or weep or sing, according to the story. Sweethearts, for five hundred years, have been saying the same things to each other under that old tree, and the tree has never grown weary of listening, nor has it ever betrayed a secret. If it could only speak our language, what scenes it would recite, what tragedies relate, what romances unfold! It could talk to us of the years that stretch back into the dim past. When a youth at college, I planted a tree on the campus. Now and then I make a pilgrimage to that tree and lean against its growing trunk and look up into its spreading branches and listen, as the tree talks to me of things I might forget, but should remember.

Yes, a tree is a wonderful thing. It takes God to grow trees. It takes Him a thousand years to grow some trees. And yet a tree that required a thousand years for God to grow, a man in one brief hour may kill. It is wanton desecration needlessly

to kill a tree. One cannot withhold a protest when he sees the forests destroyed. It is an infamy that is common in America, and it will bring down on our guilty heads the wrath of generations yet unborn who, when they go out to look for their trees, will find only the graveyards of the greatest forests the world has known. Thank God for trees! I should hate to live where there are none.

"I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree,

"A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast,

"A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray,

"A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;

"Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.

"Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree!"\*

The Psalm, however, is something more than the recital of the glory of a tree. It is a tree reciting the glory of a man. It is more than a plea for forest preservation. It is a plea for the preservation of that which God made when He toiled at the summit of creation and made man in His image,

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\* Joyce Kilmer.

and crowned him with the lordship of the world. Wonderful as is a tree, there is something more wonderful. It is a soul. It is personality. That we may know how wonderful a soul is, God seems to say: "Sit down under the trees and let them talk to you. Listen, as down from their leafy boughs comes this line from an old song: 'He shall be like a tree!'"

It is a glorious thing just to be like a tree, to come into being as a tree comes, to have God think your soul awake until for you the miracle of being has been wrought, and the door of destiny swings wide, and the world of light and song and sunshine calls you to God's great out-of-doors.

It is glorious to grow as a tree grows, to reach out into the world around you and lay hold of things which by the invisible processes of life build themselves into the fabric of the soul, to find in the earth beneath you, in the sky above you, and in the world about you the things which enable you to become, until all of God's great universe is found to be just a garden in which the soul gets its growth.

It is glorious to serve as a tree serves, to give yourself freely to all whose need stops at your door, to find that people seek you for the help you can give, to have the weary rest in your presence and see the troubled blessed with peace, to watch those who had lost happiness recover it, until they sing and shout in your company, to feed and succor

and sustain until the worn of the world look into your face with the light of heaven in their eyes.

It is glorious to suffer as a tree suffers,—to suffer, but not in vain, to take discipline without a murmur, to discover that pain is only a method of development, to be as happy in winter as in summer, to be as confident when the snow is on the ground and the leaves are sere and dead as when the grass is green and the flowers are in bloom.

It is glorious to have the world experience of a tree, to have the life of the race become a part of your daily experience, to hear the laughter of children and laugh with them, to behold the infirmities of age and slow down that you may keep step, to see the tears of grief and to weep with those who weep, to hear the sighs of the lonely and to make them your own, to be like a tree in your sympathies, taking the whole world up into your heart. This is the promise. This is the way God wants us to live. He would like man's life to be as beautiful, as symmetrical, as useful, as responsive, as that of a tree.

Here is a man's salute to the trees:

"Many a tree is found in the wood,  
And every tree for its use is good:  
Some for the strength of the gnarled root,  
Some for the sweetness of flower or fruit,  
Some for shelter against the storm,  
And some to keep the hearthstone warm;  
Some for the roof and some for the beam,  
And some for a boat to breast the stream.

In the wealth of the wood since the world began,  
The trees have offered their gifts to man.

“ But the glory of trees is more than their gifts:  
’Tis a beautiful wonder of life that lifts  
From a wrinkled seed in an earthbound clod  
A column, an arch in the temple of God,  
A pillar of power, a dome of delight,  
A shrine of song and a joy of sight!  
Their roots are the nurses of rivers in birth,  
Their leaves are alive with the breath of the earth;  
They shelter the dwellings of man, and they bend  
O’er his grave with the look of a loving friend.

“ I have camped in the whispering forest of pines  
I have slept in the shadow of olives and vines;  
In the knees of an oak, at the foot of a palm,  
I have found good rest and slumber’s balm.  
And now, when the morning gilds the boughs  
Of the vaulted elm at the door of my house,  
I open the window and make a salute:  
‘ God bless thy branches and feed thy root!  
Thou hast lived before, live after me,  
Thou ancient, friendly, faithful tree! ’ ”

For a human life to get from the tired and toiling of earth as fine a tribute as Henry van Dyke here pays to trees is not to have lived in vain.

#### A PROMISE WITH A CONDITION

The promise that man shall be like a tree is preceded by a condition. In the opening verses of the Psalm, a portrait is painted. It is not the portrait of a tree, but of a man.

“ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the

counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

It is the portrait of a man living in harmony with his Maker. This harmony obtains in every part and posture of his being. It has to do with the way he walks and stands and sits, with his pleasures, with the moments when he is shut in silent contemplation within the quiet seclusion of his own soul. He is living a life of companionship with his Maker. When he walks, he walks with God. Whether he stands or sits or plays, he feels the Divine Presence about him. When he meditates, his solitude is glorious because God is there.

There is no promise to the man who is godless. There is nothing here for him to claim who repudiates and casts out of his life the God of the trees. Why should one think himself able to achieve a life of harmony and beauty by ignoring his Maker and despising every provision and violating every law God has made for his growth and development? No tree was ever so foolish. The trees worship and obey. There is no rebellion in nature. It is in the human heart alone that the Divine will is challenged. Man only of all God's creatures would live his life with God left out.

It cannot be done. The scientist who says it can, lies. Any sect that says it can be done is more clever than honest. Any student who comes out

of his laboratory to announce that he has discovered that man can live without God has a brain addled by the fumes of his experiments. Man was made for God. It is as natural for the soul to turn to its Maker as it is for the roots of a tree to seek the soil, or the leaves to reach up for rain and sunshine. It takes God to make a soul. How long? If it takes God a hundred or a thousand years to make a tree, how long does it take Him to make a soul? As trees that required a thousand years for their growth may be slain in an hour, so swiftly may a soul for which the Son of God gave His life.

One day, when a lad, I made a wonderful discovery about trees. It was that they grow great and live long in proportion to what is underground. I was spending the summer at my grandfather's farm. On the hillside above the big spring stood a great white oak, a forest king, measuring some five or six feet in diameter at the base of its trunk. During the long years erosion has been at work on the soil around its roots, and on this summer day to which I refer, there was a cloud-burst and a landslide that left the great roots exposed to a depth of several feet. To my amazement I discovered that the tree was as big underground as above. This was the secret of its vigour and longevity. The same is true of souls. Souls grow greatest that strike deepest into God. It is not what you see, it is what you do not see, that gives the measures of a man. The soul that has the biggest life

is the soul that has the largest contacts with God. Hence the condition precedes the promise. When the condition is complied with, the promise may be claimed.

#### THE PROMISE A PROPHECY

A man who walks with God shall be like a tree. What kind of a tree? There are trees that do not amount to much. There are trees no one would want to be like, trees that are twisted, stunted, deformed, sickly, dying. I have gone through forests in the Northwest, and seen huge trees eight feet in diameter cut down and lying rotting in the swamps. Who would want to be like these? Yet there are men of great gifts, occupying big positions, but who are guilty of similar folly. Made to rule the world, they rot in vice and sin. God's life is not in them. They are like a tree, but the tree they are like is dead. Its glory is gone.

"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." This is the prophecy. It is a tree in living contact with the Source of life. It is interesting to see what water can do for a tree. One summer a neighbour gave us a tree. She was making some improvements on her house nearby which necessitated the removal of this tree. The tree man came with his teams and workmen and transplanted the tree. It was a splendid hackberry. He guaranteed that it would live, but a few days after its removal, the leaves began to fade and fall, and soon

the tree stood leafless. All summer long a basin around the root of the tree was kept filled with water, and eagerly we watched the next spring to see what would happen. To our delight, the leaves budded once more, and soon the tree was waving green. It has grown as no tree along that street has grown. The water saved its life. It is so with a soul in living contact with God. It is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water." The burning heat of summer cannot quench its life.

"It bringeth forth its fruit in its season; its leaf also shall not wither." So with the man who is like such a tree. His life is not barren nor deformed. "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." There is no defeat. He shall serve and live and triumph. It is a promise of prosperity, of happiness, and of usefulness. This is what God pledges life shall be when the soul is united to the Source of life.

Such a tree has faith, and the faith of a tree never wavers. It takes God at His word. It trusts that the rain will come when it is needed, and that sunshine and soil will give what is required. Such a trust is easy to the soul that is planted in God. The reason doubt attacks us is that we are trying to trust a God in Whom we do not live.

Such a tree can teach men how to pray. It says that prayer is not arguing with God, nor a scheme to get what He is reluctant to give. Prayer is merely contact and trust. About all the prayer a

tree offers is: "Thy will be done!" The fact of prayer is its answer. The tree is not after things, but life. There is the story of a tree growing on a barren rock, but vigorous, and the secret of its virility was found to be a root that had run out along the foot-bridge over a narrow stream, and imbedded itself in the rich soil on the far side. So the soul by prayer invades the eternal and feeds on the infinite.

Think of standing as a tree stands. The winds blow, but the tree stands. One day from the window of a railroad train, I saw a lone tree standing in what had been, a few days before, a wood. There had been a tornado, and all the trees had gone down but this one, which still stood upright saluting the heavens. It was a picture of the man whose strength is in God, who trusts and prays. God is able to hold him up. This was the secret of the dauntless courage of John the Baptist.

The tree tells men how to suffer. Suffering is part of its growth. Suffering is God's discipline by which the soul becomes. As you have sat by a wood fire on a winter evening, and the flames have lapped themselves around the log, you have heard the wood sing. Different kinds of trees sing different songs. It is so with the life God touches in pain and discipline.

Think of how a tree serves. It never fails, because it is planted by the rivers of water. When life is barren of service, it is because there is no contact

with God. If it would serve, it must be served. If it is to give out, it must take in. If it would minister to others, it must be ministered to itself.

It is great just to be like a tree. This is the promise. It is great to meet the conditions of the promise, until the promise becomes a prophecy that daily translates itself into a life experience. When you pass a tree, if you will listen, you can hear it speaking to you. When you lie on the grass, or swing in the hammock under the shade of trees, if you listen you will find a song in the tree-tops. When you drive past the trees on the roadside, if you look you will see their branches waving to you in friendly fashion. And the thing they are saying and singing and waving is always the same. It is this: "God loves you, and if you will live in Him, you shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Your work shall never fail, and your joy shall never wither, and all you do shall prosper!"

III

A MAN AND A BROOK

## SONG OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE

Out of the hills of Habersham,  
Down the valleys of Hall,  
I hurry amain to reach the plain,  
Run the rapid and leap the fall,  
Split at the rock and together again,  
Accept my bed, or narrow or wide,  
And flee from folly on every side  
With a lover's pain to attain the plain  
Far from the hills of Habersham,  
Far from the valleys of Hall.

All down the hills of Habersham,  
All through the valleys of Hall,  
The rushes cried: Abide, abide,  
The wilful waterweeds held me thrall,  
The laving laurel turned my tide,  
The ferns and the fondling grass said: Stay,  
The dewberry dipped for to work delay,  
And the little reeds sighed: Abide, abide  
Here in the hills of Habersham,  
Here in the valleys of Hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

But, O, not the hills of Habersham,  
And O, not the valleys of Hall  
Avail: I am fain for to water the plain.  
Downward the voices of Duty call—  
Downward, to toil and be mixed with the main.  
The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn,  
And a myriad flowers mortally yearn,  
And the lordly main from beyond the plain  
Calls o'er the hills of Habersham,  
Calls through the valleys of Hall.

—SIDNEY LANIER.

### III

## A MAN AND A BROOK

*"And he drank of the brook."*—I KINGS 17:6.

**T**HIS is the story of a man and a brook, two of the best things in God's world,—a man, God's best in the world of animate nature, and a brook, God's best in the world of inanimate nature. For if man were to perish from the earth, existence would return to the jungle; and if the brook should cease to run, the desert would reign.

How wonderful man is! "How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!"

Man is at the summit of creation. God made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour. When God toiled at the top of the world, He said: "Let us make man in our image." Man is the portrait and philosophy and promise of all God's plans and purposes and activities. "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

There in the wilderness, beside the brook Cherith, down under the broad plateau on which the snowy walls of the temple gleamed in the eastern sun, hard by the famous road which ran from Jerusalem on the mountain to Jericho in the plain, was a man. The glen is quiet. Around are the rocks and trees and stillness of nature. In the midst of such solitude sits God's prophet Elijah. All is quiet save for the man's own thoughts and the voice of a brook.

How wonderful a brook is, too! Where does the brook come from? It is fed from a hidden source whose plenty never fails. The brook defies the drought, and conquers and transforms the desert.

What a song it sings as it goes on its way! There is no hate nor fear, nor are there any vain regrets, in the song of the brook. It sings of the beauty of the world, of the glory of life, of the shining stars and the radiant sun, as its silvery waters murmur over golden sands.

What wonders it works as it goes on its way! It gladdens the world. It fertilizes the soil. It blesses and beautifies forest and field. It waters the grasses and the flowers. It reflects the day, and lets the night go to sleep by its side. The clouds rain down their tears, and the brook opens its arms and makes the rain-tears of the weeping sky its own.

What a way the brook has! It comes like a

silver rill from under the roots and rocks, and starts down the hill through gorge and glen, falling in a shimmering veil of waters from some high ledge, resting like a star-eyed goddess in some deep transparent pool, giving all and claiming naught in return. May we not say of the brook as of the man: "A brook shall be as an hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land"?

What a journey is before it! It will go where man has never been. It will see sights and hear voices he has never seen nor heard. It will go into unknown lands. It will meet the mighty ocean, and embark on sea tides to distant shores where people of strange customs will come down to greet it with curious welcomes, and wonder what the waters of the brook can tell them of that world of distance and mystery that dwells beyond the low gray screen of the skies.

And the brook will live on after the man is gone, after his body has crumbled into dust. Generations will rise and pass and vanish, but the brook will still be singing in the glen:

"Men may come and men may go,  
But I go on forever."

There they are, the man and the brook. The man is lonely, but he has the brook. It would comfort his loneliness and cheer his solitude and

strengthen his worn body. It seems to be saying: "Let us be friends! There are just the two of us out here in God's open." Elijah stooped down to answer the salute of the waters gliding by. "And he drank of the brook."

What does the brook say to the man? Elijah has been saying things himself. He has been preaching to the nation. The time has come for him to listen, to have things said to him. God's preacher is a brook. He has sent his servant to sit beside Cherith and listen and meditate and prepare. Such seasons come to us all. There are times when we need not so much to be telling others as to be told ourselves, not so much to talk as to listen, to hear the inaudible and elemental voices of the world. "Come ye yourselves apart and rest a while." What did the brook say to the man?

#### NEEDS

I think it said to Elijah: "You do not need as much as you think—just a drink from the brook and a morsel of bread from a raven's beak or a widow's table, and your needs are met." We can get along with far less than we imagine. Many of our needs are artificial. We manufacture appetites. The joy of life is destroyed by our restless quest for things we do not need. Life would be happier if it were simpler. A rich man once said to me: "Could I have my way and follow my tastes, I would live very simply in a little house, with

furniture to meet actual needs, and plain fare on the table." "Why not?" I replied. "Why not live as you prefer?" With a sigh he said: "It would not please my family." But why should we not train our children to the truer estimate of what is best in life?

This same complexity crowds into all life. It gets into the church. How much of the energy of God's people is absorbed with organizations, and how little is given to the one supreme thing God wants done, the leading of other lives into fellowship with Him through Christ! Many a church is organized until it is actually inefficient. Its energies are used up in the effort to keep the machinery going.

The best organization is that which work creates, not that which is supposed to create work. This is the brook's way. It makes its own channel. The channel does not make the brook. And the brook makes a beautiful channel for itself. I came on a stream one day which suddenly changed from wild beauty to tame monotony. First it was winding in and out among the trees between grassy banks, the stones in its bed making musical the falling waters, as the brook went singing on its way. Then the stream suddenly emerged upon a section that ran straight across a field, the banks bare and the waters slow and sullen, flowing in muddy silence. A man had changed the course of the stream, and in doing so, had robbed it of its beauty. Nature is

the great artist. If we would live closer to the simple heart of nature, if there were less of complexity and artificiality, we should find that what the brook said to the prophet is true. We do not need as much as we imagine.

#### THE BEST THINGS FOR ALL

The brook is saying that there are some things which cannot be monopolized. Many of the ills of life arise from man's effort to corner the market, to monopolize instead of share. Some people are cleverer than others. They seem to succeed. They capture the best sites and the biggest incomes.

But God is more clever than these clever souls who would monopolize the franchise of happiness. He has fixed life so that the best things are for all. You cannot corner sunshine. You cannot monopolize air and scenery. You cannot bottle up the brook. One day a millionaire tried to buy a brook, and thought he had succeeded. But after a while, the brook said: "I am weary of the rich man's lawn," and it slipped away to run beside a poor man's garden. It is thus with love, and peace, and faith, and with God Himself. There is no such thing as a monopoly of the best.

Hence there can be no real poverty in the world. We would understand this if we could only realize what we need and what we own. One has nothing in the bank, but he may have what no bank can

hold. He may have the brook. He may have enough to meet his elemental needs. He may have the world. If so, why should he be unhappy? Elijah was not disconsolate there in the glen. He was happier than Ahab in his palace. Thank God for a world in which the best things belong to everybody!

#### GOD'S CARE

The brook tells the man that God takes care of those who trust Him. It said to Elijah: "God always takes care of me. I never worry. I never wonder where the water is coming from. Somehow it always comes. I merely trust. One day a man came and stood there on the bank and said: 'Brook, you had better save; there is going to be a drought; you will need what you are giving away; you had better hoard some of the water while you can.' But a lily on the bank said: 'The man speaks falsely. I do not toil nor spin. I simply trust in God, and He never fails me.' Then a bird in a tree on the bank of the brook said: 'The lily speaks the truth. God takes care of those who put their trust in Him.' I believed the flowers and the birds instead of the man; and the water has never failed."

Nor did God fail Elijah. He had been predicting three years of drought. He had been saying that no rain would fall, but there was plenty of water in the glen where the brook ran. God was

taking care of Elijah. To be sure, the man needed bread as well as drink, but God was supplying that, too. There was the widow of Zarephath, whose cruse of oil and barrel of flour failed not. The brook was in the barrel as well as in the glen. It told the same story of God's unfailing care for those who put their trust in Him.

It is always so. God can be trusted. He will not fail us. There may be years of famine. There may be exile and want. There may be hard times. They are sent to test faith.

"I know not where God's islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air;  
But this I know: I cannot drift  
Beyond His love and care."

This covers all human need. There is a hunger which the widow's cake could not feed, a thirst which the brook Cherith could not quench. But God has made provision for these, also. There is never a longing but He has an answer. If your hunger is holy, God will satisfy it. If your thirst is clean, God will send a limpid brook to splash its spray on your tired feet, and call to your parched lips: "Stoop down and drink and live!"

#### THE BROOK FOR THE SPIRIT

There is a brook for the spirit as well as for the flesh. Man is more than flesh. He is immortal spirit. He has processes which cannot be reduced

to any ritual of the senses. He has powers which function in a realm whose reach transcends the sky-line. He has longings which cannot be tethered to earth and time. God is not oblivious of these.

For the soul, there is the living water. For man's eternal needs "there is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God." For the immortal spirit there is the fountain of life. Isaiah was thinking of the spiritual when he said: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" John was calling us to drink of this brook when he wrote: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." And Jesus was proclaiming the living water when He said: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

It would be strange for God to provide for the body that dies, and not for the spirit that is immortal,—to be concerned for our lower appetites and to neglect the sublime and God-like part of our natures. But it is stranger still for man to drink of the brook that quenches physical thirst, and to decline to drink of the water of life. Yet this is what many are doing. Christ offers the cup of salvation, but some strangely thrust it aside and decline the chalice of life. The brook bids us drink and live.

## WORKING DAYS AHEAD

The brook says to the prophet: "There is work yet for you to do. It is for this that God has brought us together. You cannot die. There are great days ahead. Great deeds await you. Carmel is on the horizon. Horeb is on the sky-line." Elijah must be ready. And so the brook prepares the man for a new day of service.

This is what it means when God gives us a brook, when He reinforces and rejuvenates. Days and deeds await us. It is pre-eminently so of the living water, for Jesus said: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Is the brook springing within us? What are we doing for the world? God is generous to us. Are we parsimonious to others? If so, we have sinned against the brook. Some morning we may seek it and find that it has left us, for the brook will not dwell with a selfish life.

## DESTINY

The brook speaks of destiny. The pulses of the ocean are beating in the brook. It has never seen the sea. It has never heard the roar of its waters, nor watched the tide as it breaks on the beach. But the sea is calling to the brook. In the ripples which eddy to its curving banks are the miniature tides of world oceans, and in the gurgle of the silvery waters as they slip around the smooth stones

in the brook's bed is the prophecy of the shouting waves of the wild, wide sea.

In man's soul the pulses of an eternal life are beating. Destiny calls. Somewhere on the far line of being, the brook and the sea meet in human experience. Death is not the end. It is merely escape from limitations. It is life widening out into the great beyond.

"If I stoop into a dark, tremendous sea of cloud,  
It is but for a time;  
I press God's lamp close to my heart,  
Its splendours soon or late will pierce the gloom,  
I shall emerge somewhere."

As we emerge, we find that the brook has not left us. It has only grown to a great river, which runs by the throne of God, and on its banks are gathered from all lands those whom love of God has blessed.

"He drank of the brook." The man and the brook,—they are not all. There is God. He is ever with them. He has made the man and the brook for each other, but He has made both for Himself; and the brook never dies, and the man lives forever, because back of all seas, and bigger than humanity, is the God Whose eye "slumbers not nor sleeps," and Whose kind care shepherds His flock by the banks of the river in "the land o' the leal."

IV

THE FIRST BREAKFAST

## THE PRESENCE

Risen Master, fain would we,  
Sharing those unearthly days,  
Morn and eve, on shore and sea,  
Watch thy movements, mark thy ways;

Catch by faith each glad surprise  
Of thy footsteps drawing nigh;  
Hear thy sudden greeting rise,  
"Peace be to you! It is I!"

Secrets of thy kingdom learn,  
Read the vision open spread,  
Feel thy word within us burn,  
Know thee in the broken Bread.

—JACKSON MASON.

## IV

### THE FIRST BREAKFAST

*"Jesus saith unto them, Come and break your fast."*

—JOHN 21:12.

**O**FTE<sup>N</sup> the Church speaks of the Last Supper, occasionally of the first breakfast.

We feel that Jesus is with us when we break bread in sacramental remembrance of Him, but we are not so conscious of His Presence in the common meal, when we eat to satisfy our hunger and to strengthen our bodies for the daily task. Jesus is present at both meals. There are those who recognize His Presence at the communion table in the sanctuary, but who never think of the unseen Guest at the table in their own homes. There are Christians who are most devout as the sacramental emblems are passed, but they have no word of thanks to Him Who gives us unfailingly our daily bread. "Jesus saith unto them, Come and break your fast."

What a lovely scene the closing chapter of John's gospel presents! The purpose of this gospel, as John tells us in the closing paragraph of the twentieth chapter, is to present the deity of Jesus,

“that we might believe that Jesus the Christ is the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through his name.” But could anything be more human than Jesus as the curtain falls in the twenty-first chapter? He is standing on the lake shore. He is building a camp-fire. He is cooking the fish and calling tired men, wearied by a night of fruitless toil, to come and eat. It is as though John would say: “He is divine because He is human.” It is as if he would make His humanity the climax of his argument for His deity. The Last Supper was holy. The first breakfast is also holy.

We have pictures of the Last Supper. I wish someone would paint a picture of the first breakfast. Great masters have glorified their art by placing on canvas that scene in the upper room when Jesus instituted the Holy Supper. I wish some master hand would mix the colours and set brush to canvas that we might look upon that little group gathered about the camp-fire on the sands of Genessaret in the gray light of the slow dawn. The same faces are in both pictures. There are not quite so many in the first breakfast as in the Last Supper. Judas Iscariot is not there, and there are four others who are absent. But seven are present, —Peter, dripping wet, because he could not wait for the slow boat to land him at Jesus' feet; and John, the first to recognize that it was the Lord; and James; and Thomas, with his doubts gone for-

ever; and Nathaniel, and two others. There they are around the camp-fire, with the boat yonder dragged half way out on the sand, and the miracle catch of fishes piled up where the curious can see them, and the breakfast waiting, and over it all the glory of the risen Christ, Who has come back for a bit of old-time fellowship in God's open with the men He loves. The Last Supper has its lessons, but surely the first breakfast also has its lessons. What would it teach us?

#### OUT OF DOORS

It takes us out of doors. That is one thing that makes it great. Thank God for the open, for the fields and forests, for the hills and plains and the tall peaks that seem so friendly with heaven, for the grasses and trees and rocks, for running rivers and shining lakes and the bounding sea, for flowers and the scent of new-mown hay and the tang in the morning air! Thank God for all that makes the world so beautiful, and for the chance now and then to get off of the metal pavements man has made, and away from the ugly houses men have built, out into God's open!

It was Charles Dickens who said: "There is a soothing influence in the sight of the earth and the sky, which God put into them for our relief when He made the world in which we are all to suffer and strive and die." I love a book that takes me out of doors. I love the story of Jesus for the

same reason. It is arresting to notice how much of Christ's life was spent in the open.

What a scene is this by Galilee's murmuring waves in the dewy morning! Yonder in the dim distance are the eastern hills, and beyond the hills, the reddening sky, as the sun comes on to bring the waiting world its new day. This side the hills are the deep blue waters of the little lake, sometimes lashed into storm, but placid now, and dark with that strange colour which tells of birth amid the snows. Yonder and there perhaps on the sea are other sails where fishermen are at work, but without Christ to show them how; and here on the shore are the trees and rocks, and maybe the song of a bird, and certainly the merry crackle of a blaze and the delicious odour of the waiting breakfast, and His own dear voice saying: "Come and dine!"

Yes, I like God's book of nature. I like the shrine that is to be found out of doors. No one can be very wicked who seeks God there, but if you are to find God there, you must have Him within. You can find God on the golf links, but you must first have Him in your heart. You will not find Him in the church unless you have Him in your heart. Merely admiring the beauty of nature is not worship. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Therefore, we are not prepared to worship in God's open until we have shut the door and

prayed to our Father in secret, and "the Father Who seeth in secret shall reward us openly."

#### THE MEAL JESUS PREPARED

The first breakfast was a meal prepared by Christ Himself. Everything was ready when the disciples reached the spot. For the sake of good comradeship, Jesus took of the fish which they had caught and added them to the meal He had prepared. Christ had a breakfast of bread and fish waiting. He knew His friends would be hungry. He had anticipated their physical needs, and He was ready.

Jesus is not above thinking about and planning for and providing for our common needs. It is something to Him that people get tired and hungry and broken down in health, that they need clothes and shelter and bread. He was thinking of these things as He went about doing good. He fed the multitudes. He did not stop at this, He started with it. And He does not stop when He becomes the risen Christ. That is the point to be noticed at the first breakfast. One might conclude that Christ had gotten past all this. He is too spiritual now. When He was a poor man and walking the dusty road and sitting tired and thirsty beside Jacob's well, it was to be expected. But surely He is past physical hunger now. Yes, but His disciples are not.

And so there is religion in feeding the hungry,

in giving a cup of water to the thirsty, in nursing sick people, in visiting prisoners, in contributing to famine relief, in pushing in between little children and starvation. These were the cries moaning there as the waves of Galilee broke on the sands. Jesus heard them, and still hears them, and He wants His followers to hear them and build their camp-fire and call to the starving of earth, in the name of the risen Christ: "Come and break your fast!"

#### SEVEN DEFEATED MEN

The guests at the first breakfast were seven defeated men. They have lost their vision. A while ago they were thinking of a kingdom and a king. They were dreaming of returning glory for their nation. They had a vision so fine and fair that they had left all to follow Jesus. They were following the gleam. They, too, had seen a star, and the star had summoned them from their old tasks to a world career. But the star is gone now. The sky is black as midnight. Their dream is dead. Peter said: "I am going fishing. I have idled long enough. I will play the fool no more. It is high time we were getting back to work." And the others said: "We are going with you." What a journey it was back to the old life! What a dismal hour when they tried to get out the boats and the nets once more! These are the things they had cast aside. This is what Peter meant when he

said: "Lord, we have left all to follow thee." They have come back to this! What a collapse!

They have failed even as fishermen. They cannot so much as do what they used to do. They have forgotten how. They have toiled all night and caught nothing. Time was when their boats led the way on Galilee, but they are coming in empty this morning. They are not only not apostles, they are not even decent fishermen. They are the laughing-stock of their old competitors. This is not all.

They are worse than failures. They are sinners. Each man is conscious of his shame. Certainly Peter was. He has denied his Lord. He can never hold up his head again. And the other men are not much better, for in the Saviour's darkest hour they all forsook Him and fled. Every one of them had deserted his Master. Even John could do no better than to follow afar off. This is the defeat that was most bitter. It is where all of us fail, for all have sinned. These are the men who are climbing out of the boat and coming toward the camp-fire. What does Jesus want with them? What can He do with such men? They have had their chance and failed. Ah, but Christ is calling, and still calls to defeated men: "Come and break your fast!"

#### THE CONQUERING CHRIST

While the guests are defeated, the Host is

victorious. In the Last Supper it was Christ on His way to the garden, to Gethsemane, to arrest and trial, Christ on His way to Pilate's judgment hall, to the cross and to the tomb. But in the first breakfast it is Christ Who has been to Calvary, Who has risen from the tomb, Who has conquered death, and Who is now on His way to ascension, to enthronement and coronation. The men are defeated, but their Leader is not. A new day is dawning for Christ's disciples.

The first breakfast tells us of the conquering Christ. He is with us always. He is equal to our needs. We cannot make our demands too great. Already for the seven He has changed the night of fruitless toil into a morning of unprecedented success. This is what He is doing all the time for His followers. Let us not be afraid to put Him to the test. Sir Walter Raleigh had gone to Queen Elizabeth with some new request, and she said: "When are you going to stop asking for things?" Sir Walter replied: "When the queen stops giving." And so with our sovereign Saviour. All power is His. He bids us put Him to the test, and the promise which is bright with victory abides for His disciples in all ages: "Lo, I am with you always."

It used to be a custom in the colleges and universities of England and Scotland when honorary degrees were conferred and the candidate was present for his doctorate, to indulge in horse-play.

When the university conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws on David Livingston, the custom was not carried out. The students were there with their peas and pop-guns, and lungs loaded for the usual performance, but as the lank, gaunt figure of the missionary stood up before them, his face tanned by the hot African suns and furrowed by sixteen years of exposure to the wilderness, and his arm limp at his side from the bite of a lion that left him lamed for life, a hush fell on the student body. They were in the presence of a man bigger than any honour their university could confer. Suddenly Livingston began to plead with the students to give their lives to the service of God in the Dark Continent, and then in a voice tense with the deepest feeling, he said: "The thing which has sustained me through all these years, and has kept me at my post, was the promise of my Leader, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' " There is as much for every missionary, for every follower of the conquering Christ.

#### THE NEW CAMPAIGN

Jesus was starting a new campaign that morning by the lake. He was talking to the seven, but He was thinking of the world. He was looking past the lake, past the distant eastern hills to the needy world, to those in darkness and in the shadow of death. They must be reached, and He

is telling these men whom He has invited to breakfast that He does not want them to be fishermen, but evangelists.

He proceeds to equip them for the campaign. They have finished breakfast, and now Jesus turns to Peter and says: "Peter, do you love me?" The others are listening. Peter hangs his head in shame. If Christ had only taken him to one side and talked with him in private about his disgrace, about his apostasy on that awful night! But, no, He is dragging it out there before them all. I think at first it was in a whisper that Peter replied: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." But Jesus will not have a whisper. He keeps at him until he shouts it out so that all can hear: "Thou knowest that I love thee!" They have their lesson. Love is what they need. If they are to go to the needy world they must go in love, and if they go in love, they will not fail. Love is the power that is to transform the world, and it is not just love for the work, it is love for Christ. In the city of Stargard, Germany, there is a great cathedral, St. Mary's, and it is said that if a speaker wants to be heard, he must keep his eyes fixed on a picture of the Christ attached to a column in front of the pulpit. Jesus is telling the men around the camp-fire that if they are to reach the needy world they must keep their hearts fixed on Him.

This is the message of the first breakfast. In the Last Supper Jesus said: "Remember me." In

the first breakfast He said: "Feed my sheep." He wants us to remember Him that we may feed His sheep. He would have us love Him that we may bring the lost world back to Him Who loved it and died for it. "Feed my sheep." Christ wants the world shepherded. "I could make a better world than this, myself," said some petulant skeptic. "That is precisely what we are for and why we are here," was the reply. The new campaign that started from that camp-fire by Galilee was a campaign for the new heavens and the new earth, and Christ will not be satisfied until His sheep are shepherded and the last lamb of God's great flock has been safely gathered into the fold.

V

THE SPRING BY THE SIDE OF  
THE ROAD

## A WISH

Mine be a cot beside the hill;  
A bee-hive's hum shall soothe my ear;  
A willowy brook that turns a mill  
With many a fall shall linger near.

The swallow, oft, beneath my thatch  
Shall twitter from her clay-built nest;  
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch  
And share my meal, a welcome guest.

Around my ivied porch shall spring  
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew;  
And Lucy, at her wheel, shall sing  
In russet gown and apron blue.

The village church among the trees,  
Where first our marriage vows were given,  
With merry peals shall swell the breeze,  
And point with taper spire to heaven.

—SAMUEL ROGERS.

## V

### THE SPRING BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

*"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."*—JOHN 4: 14.

A LONG journey, a hot day, the blistering sun, and the stifling dust; weary, spent; then, there by the side of the road a crystal spring gushes from the rock, and you stoop down and drink and live. Your thirst is quenched. Your tired body revives. Rested and refreshed, you are ready for the road again. This is what the spring by the side of the road has been doing through the long years. It was there before you were born, and it will be there long after you are dead. It has been doing this for all who came its way, for the rich and the poor, for saint and sinner, for citizen and criminal. It asks no questions. It makes no charge. It seems to say: "Come again!"

Don't you remember the day you stopped beside such a spring? Poor indeed is he who does not know a spring by the side of the road, who has not somewhere hanging on memory's wall this picture!

If you would know the value of a spring or a well, you must go to a desert country. You must cross what used to be called "the great American desert," and see how, slowly, but surely, its sterile sands have become waving green fields of wide-stretching, fertile farms, and its arid wastes have blossomed into productive gardens. Irrigation is the magician's wand that has brought about the transformation.

After a long ride of many hours one hot summer day through the stifling heat and baking sand, across the barren desert which stretches for miles on either side of the Santa Fe railroad before it reaches Southern California, suddenly in the midst of that dead world our train pulled into a station where for a few acres there was a perfect oasis. Trees cast grateful shade as a protection from the blistering heat. Flowers were blooming, and vegetables growing in the gardens. The green turf spread a carpet of velvet over the station yard. About the doorway and windows vines were clinging and climbing in trellised beauty and luxuriance. What had created that little Eden hard by death's valley? A well of water, that was all. And wherever you can get a well or a spring, the desert is conquered.

This is the story Jesus told the woman by Jacob's well. The spring speaks not only of itself, but of the desert stretches in human life, and of the effect of Christian service on the desert. The

Christian is to be a spring by the side of the road, a well hard by death's valley. His mission is to change Sahara into an oasis, until barrenness becomes fertility, and the desolate waste is transformed into a tropical garden of fruits and flowers.

The people who lived in that eastern land on the edge of the desert could appreciate a spring perhaps as Occidentals do not. To them, there was no blessing like a well of water. It made the difference between famine and plenty, between riches and want. Again and again do we find them describing the blessings of salvation under the figure of a well. "Who passing through the valley of Baca maketh it a well."\* "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life."† He is a spring by the side of the road. It is not strange that when Jesus wanted to portray the blessings of the Christian life, He uses the same figure. To those dwellers under a fiery sun where famine was the constant fear, and thirst terrible to man and beast, He said: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst," and then to those who have quenched their thirst and enriched their own lives with the blessings of salvation, He says: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Christ's disciple is the spring by the side of the road.

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\* Psalms 84:6. † Proverbs 10:11.

## THE VALUE OF SALVATION

The value of salvation is not merely or chiefly its value to those who receive it. This is something, to be sure. It is something to get our own souls saved, our own sins forgiven, our own thirst quenched, our little desert watered and made to bud and blossom. It is something to have our own hearts filled with joy and peace and hope, and to feel that, whatever comes, we are insured against disaster.

There are some who stop here. They never get over being saved themselves. It was such a delicious shock to their souls that they would cherish the thrill forever, and talk about it the remainder of their days. Their spiritual repertory has but one tune,—their conversion. On every occasion they relate their experience and tell what great things the Lord has done for them.

Sometimes, however, the Christian who is so fond of telling his own experience becomes a backslider to the extent that he begins to doubt whether he was ever really converted. Then the brethren must begin all over again with him. What is responsible for his collapse? It is not accidental. The Christian who stops with getting his own soul saved will not stay where he stops very long. He will not keep what he gets unless he goes further. He must advance or he will backslide.

The value of salvation is not chiefly to those who receive it, but through those who receive it. If the

desert in the individual life is not to lapse into sterility, it must become productive. The desert beyond must be conquered. Of course one must have before he can give. You cannot pour out of an empty cup. You cannot pump water from a well that is dry. Here is the trouble with Christians who do nothing. They have a name to live, but that is all they have. There never was any water in the well. It was just a hole in the ground, and a sign saying: "This is a well. This is a Christian." But if it is a real well, if the diggers have struck water, if one's soul has been refreshed with salvation, he must not stop with quenching his own thirst.

Christ teaches that when He saves, it is not merely to bless the individual who is saved. It is that, of course, but salvation goes further. It attacks the desert beyond. The well does not exist to quench its own thirst, to minister to its own need, to admire its own charms and powers, to drown itself in its own tides. It exists to water the world, to baffle sterile sands and wake barren wastes into fertility and beauty.

#### BLESSED TO BLESS

Jesus intends everyone He blesses not only to be blessed, but to be a blessing. This is the very genius of Christianity. It is not a proselyting religion, although it is often exploited as such. It is a missionary religion. Christ's disciples are to

be concerned to reach people not that they may embrace certain dogmas or conform to certain rituals, but that they may share the blessings Christ has bestowed.

We are not redeemed to guard relics, to maintain holy traditions, to see that what has been still is, "and ever shall be, world without end, amen." In Jerusalem there is an abbot whose holy calling is to stand guard over the bones of the saints. It is not recorded of him that he has any living products to his credit. There are churches whose standard of efficiency is very much like that of the Jerusalem abbot. They guard the dead. They are a part of the desert themselves.

We are not redeemed that we may provide ourselves with spiritual privileges, that we may feed our own souls, that we may draw as much water out of the well of salvation as we need, and pour back any left over. Some never get beyond this. Some churches are mutual admiration societies. They do not want the desert watered. They pay the bills, and are entitled to all the water themselves. Such churches are the despair of Christ.

We are blessed to bless, to live a life of service; not to get to heaven by the quickest and easiest route, but to make the territory through which we pass as much like heaven as possible. The Amazon River rises one hundred and fifty miles from the Pacific. By flowing westward, it could soon run its course and reach the sea; but it turns eastward,

doubling and winding for two thousand miles, reclaiming the desert, watering vast stretches of land, creating great forests and wonderful wealth of soil, widening at its mouth into a great sea and driving its waters five hundred miles into the ocean. It is a picture of what Christ means His disciple to be in the world. He is not to run his course by the cheapest route. He is to be like a well in the desert. He is to be like a spring by the side of the road, that never reminds us of past favours, that never stints, that gives with a song, and the more it gives, the more it has to give.

This is the song of the spring:

“Give, give, be always giving,  
Who gives not is not living,  
The more we give the more we live.”

God hates meanness.

#### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SPRING

Christ asks us to be a blessing because it does not impoverish us. Your blessing is not hurt by becoming a blessing. It does not injure the well to have its water drawn out. There is no danger of making the spring run dry by dipping a cup of crystal from its sparkling pool. It is not necessary to be parsimonious. Thank God salvation is one realm where one need not practice economy, where he may be a glorious spender, because the fountain is inexhaustible, everlasting!

Christ wants us to be a blessing because it is the only way we can keep our blessing unimpaired. It not only does not hurt the well to be used, but service is the well's salvation. Were it not used its waters would become dangerous. Use keeps the waters sweet and fresh. If one's redemption is to be a spring, and not a stagnant pond, he must be forever in the business of trying to bless others. The man who hoards his religion is to blame for its becoming stale.

It is the only way to enjoy salvation. We used to sing of giving the gospel to the heathen to keep them from perishing. It was rather a self-righteous attitude. The posture is passing. We have discovered that we are to give the gospel to the heathen to keep from perishing ourselves. Some do not get much out of salvation. They have been redeemed with great difficulty. They are going to heaven when they die. But they find the journey tiresome. They expect to be in the general assembly and church of the first-born, but they are in no hurry to claim their seat. They have laid up treasures where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal, and they are entirely satisfied to leave these treasures where they are laid up. The trouble with such good souls is, they are traveling in a private car all by their dear, lonely, unfriendly, un-neighbourly, selfish selves. No wonder they sometimes get tired of their own company. The way

to be happy is to make others happy. There is no other way for God nor man. We must quit trying to quench our thirst with our own joys. No creature can live in its own secretions.

God wants us to be a blessing to others because it is the only way to go on in the Christian life. Service is the secret of growth and development. The more one gives away, the more he has left. "Give and it shall be given unto you." Some of us have nothing but stale blessings. There are those who have been nibbling at the same old crust for a decade. They have never given away anything. Their religious experience has become so stale that nobody wants it. For every bucket you draw out of the well, a fresh one takes its place. It is the same in Christian life. It is still true that heaven's manna spoils when hoarded.

The spring by the side of the road teaches us the only way to cure our defects and mend our failures. It is not what we have, but what we do with what we have, that is important. It is not always how we get it, but what we are doing with it. Senator Dolliver was once asked if it was wrong for the church to take tainted money. After two days' study of the question, he replied: "Yes, take it and use it. Money, like water, purifies itself by circulation." The world is to be conquered by being blessed.

It is also the way to keep in fellowship with the Great Giver. What we do for others, we do for

Christ, Who said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." When one gets that standard of giving, he gives as the spring by the side of the road gives,—not what he can spare, not even what the people need; but he gives his all. He gives his best. And he gives for the joy of giving.

This is the secret of the Christian life,—not simply the secret of a happy life, or even of a useful life, not the secret of privilege and power and victory, but just the secret of the Christian life. There is no such thing as being a Christian without conquering the desert, and do not forget that the desert is never far away. A rich man who desired to become interested in personal work, who was not satisfied merely to give his money, asked the charity organization of his city to assign him a family. On his first visit, he discovered that the poor woman toward whom he was to be friendly was none other than the scrub-woman in his own office. The desert is near, and the method of the spring by the side of the road is, to begin to conquer that part of the desert which is nearest, and to begin at once!

VI

GOING FISHING

## THE ANGLER'S INVITATION

Come when the leaf comes, angle with me,  
Come when the bee hums over the lea,  
Come with the wild flowers—  
Come with the wild showers—  
Come when the singing bird calleth for thee!

Then to the stream side gladly we'll hie,  
Where the gray trout glide silently by,  
Or in some still place  
Over the hill face  
Hurrying onward, drop the light fly.

Then, when the dew falls, homeward we'll speed  
To our own loved walls down on the mead,  
There, by the bright hearth,  
Holding our night mirth,  
We'll drink to sweet friendship in need and in deed.

—THOMAS TOD STODDART.

## VI

### GOING FISHING

*"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee."*—JOHN 21:3.

*"Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."*—MARK 1:17.

I AM sorry for the man who never goes fishing,—who does not know what it is to bait a hook and cast a line, and wait for that strange electric thrill to leap from the stream up line and rod, up arm and spine, into his nerve centers, when something down there out of sight begins to play with the bait. I am sorry for the man who never sits on the bank under the shade of trees and listens to the shining river sing its song, and to the birds sing theirs in the treetops, while he forgets all his cares and waits for the fish to bite.

#### THE APOSTOLIC SPORT

Peter was in the depths of despondency. His day dream had run out. His castle in the air had toppled down. He had seen Christ crucified, the Conqueror of death apparently conquered. They had laid the Lord's body in the tomb. Christ's

disciples were face to face with grim despair. They had thought that it was He Who should restore Israel, but now that thought is dead. If ever there was a group of men in the depths of gloom, it was these men who had staked all on Christ, and lost. What shall they do?

Peter has a suggestion and offers a program. He says unto them: "I go a-fishing. I must get away from all this. I must go where I can think. I must get back where I started, and begin over again. I need the sound of the sea, and the tang of the wind, and the pull of the nets, and the jump of the fish. If my mind is to clear and my nerves steady, I must go fishing."

The others said to him: "It is the thing to do. We also go with thee." They did not argue the matter. They did not hesitate nor deliberate. They went. I can see them getting ready to go, the bustle of preparation, and I can see them going. There is a new look in their faces. Care is fading out. Despair is loosening its grip. The soul of the fisherman is shining in their faces. There is an eagerness, an expectancy, a feeling of good fellowship. Already their tired, sore hearts begin to heal of their hurt.

I can see them fishing, and almost feel as if I wanted to go there, too. They are getting hold of themselves again. You can hear them talking to each other. They are not having much luck with the fish, but unconsciously they are climbing back

to Christ. Soon He stands on the shore and calls. He is telling them how to cast the net. It is as if the Master would say: "I must get into this game myself. I, too, would go a-fishing." And now the great catch, and breakfast on the beach, and "Lovest thou me?" The apostles are re-commissioned, and soon they are off again on their work of soul-winning and world-building.

#### THE CALL OF THE WILD

It is a great thing just to go fishing. The other day a friend of mine came in from a sheet of water which need not be located, and laid five bass on the scales that tipped the balance at twenty-five and a half pounds. What difference did it make to him as to who was elected President, or what had become of the strike, or whether pay-day was next week or next year? He had caught five fish which averaged over five pounds each. What else mattered?

I met a friend on the train at daybreak one morning. He was getting along in years. The gray was showing on his brow. His shoulders were stooped. But he looked like a boy that morning. I asked: "Where are you going so early?" and he leaned over and said in a whisper what Peter said to the disciples long ago: "I go a-fishing."

I am sorry for the man who never hears that call, who never has the passion for adventure

waken in his soul, who is not always something of a boy.

“Backward, turn backward, O time, in thy flight.”

Here are some of the things which take place when one goes a-fishing: Care leaves him. He is getting away from the sense of responsibility. The mind stops grinding in on itself. There is a let-up in the friction of life, and the fisherman comes home rested and ready for work.

Fishing kindles the imagination. Imagination is the creative faculty,—I was about to say the re-creative! How it riots on a fishing trip! What pictures it paints of the monsters of the deep that run off with the bait! *Puck* once published a cartoon of two slightly intoxicated men who were balancing themselves on a landing at the fishing club. There on the wall in a glass case was the effigy of a big fish. They gazed at it for a moment, and then one said to the other: “The man who caught that fish is a liar!” Maybe the Lord will be a bit patient with the fibs of the fishermen. They are the product of an overwrought imagination.

It makes one human to go fishing. It makes him companionable and charitable toward his fellows. It seems to release certain qualities of human nature which well-nigh cease to function in the cold realm of gain and under the stern grind of life.

## MAN BUILT FOR PLAY AS WELL AS FOR WORK

What is all this but saying that God has built us to play as well as to work? He Who made the tear ducts also made the laughing muscles. He Who builds within the soul the mood for meditation also builds there the sense of humour. It is as important to gratify one as the other. I pity the man who never prays, but I also pity him who never plays. He probably would pray better if he played some.

This is not to say that play is the whole program of life. It is merely one number. People who devote themselves entirely to pleasure shrivel. They cannot grow. They are of little value to the world. People who are forever asking to be entertained have child minds. They never grow up. But the man who never plays gets little fun out of life. He makes life a poky business for others, and grows old out of time.

Of course recreation should deserve its name. It should recreate. The play that leaves a stain is a calamity. Pleasure that is a form of dissipation is a curse. People who get their fun out of foul stories and dirty shows and dishonest amusements mistake excitement for recreation, confound amusement with enjoyment.

When recreation re-creates, it not only does for us what has been suggested as the result of a day with the rod and the stream,—it not only cures care and stimulates the imagination

and makes us more human, but there are bigger and better things it does. It calls us back to simplicity and sincerity. We so often allow conventionalism to enslave us. We go down on our knees before appearances. Life grows insincere. It is veneered. There is need to tear off the veil and snap the fetters and be free. Amid the relaxations of clean sport, this takes place.

It also cleanses life. It makes people purer to get away from the grind. All of us are "slightly soiled," and the stream that cleanses must be a living stream. Purity is not the product of a monk's cell. Holiness does not thrive in seclusion. It needs the open. Goods kept on the shelves become shop-worn. Life is cheapened and tarnished in the same way. It is cleansed and renewed in God's great out-of-doors.

It also contributes to faith. He is wisest who finds his fun in contact with nature, who thinks God's thoughts after Him, who communes with God in the forest and by the stream. From such communion he returns with stronger faith both in God and in man. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." Nature speaks of its Maker. You cannot listen to the fields and streams and flowers very long without learning that there is a God, and that "He is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him."

## FISHING FOR MEN

There is a higher form of recreation than any thus far mentioned. Christ calls it fishing, too. Was it an accident that so many of the apostles were fishermen? There were plenty of shepherds and tradesmen in that land, but Andrew and Peter, James and John, the big four, were all fishermen. Was it merely a trick of metaphor when Jesus stopped by the sea and called to the men in the boat: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men"? Did He not mean that the greatest game of all is life, and that the greatest fun in life is still just fishing, but fishing for men?

As those Galilean fishermen listened, how life widened out, how the sky pushed back! Theirs had been a small program. Their little world ended there on the beach. They had not thought beyond their boats and nets. But now the Son of man is calling them to be "fishers of men," and all at once they discover what life is for. They see their chance to shape history, to build a kingdom. Again they seem to hear Peter saying: "I go a-fishing," and in a newer and higher sense they say, as they leave all and follow Jesus: "We also go with thee!"

This is the great recreation. If one would know what real joy is, let him go out and try to save a man. If he would have his imagination sublimely kindled, let him seek souls. When he is cast down

and lonely, when sorrow and disappointment are his portion, when he is like that little group long ago who had lost the Lord, here is the remedy. Go fishing. But let it be also for men. Take a hand at world-building. Push back the sky-line. Get a glimpse of far horizons. The opportunity is for all.

I am sorry for him who has never gone fishing for men, who has never cast a line for a human soul, who has never angled to catch immortals, who has never tasted the supreme joy of leading others into fellowship with Jesus. There is an ecstasy about it that is sublime. It is the great adventure which all may follow, for it is open season every day in God's world for those who fish for men!

VII

THE CROOKED TREE THAT  
STRAIGHTENED

## THE TREE

I love thee when thy swelling buds appear,  
And one by one their tender leaves unfold,  
As if they knew that warmer suns were near,  
Nor longer sought to hide from winter's cold;  
And when with darker growth thy leaves are seen  
To veil from view the early robin's nest,  
I love to lie beneath thy waving screen,  
With limbs by summer's heat and toil oppressed;  
And when the autumn winds have stripped thee bare,  
And round thee lies the smooth, untrodden snow,  
When naught is thine that made thee once so fair,  
I love to watch thy shadowy form below,  
And through thy leafless arms to look above  
On stars that brighter beam when most we need  
their love.

—JONES VERY.

## VII

### THE CROOKED TREE THAT STRAIGHTENED

*"Immediately she was made strong and glorified God."*—LUKE 13: 13.

ONE summer day while strolling across the lovely campus of Ursinus College, I came upon the crooked tree that straightened. It was a big tree, its trunk measuring some twenty inches in diameter, its tall branches lifting on a level with the high roofs of the nearby buildings. Around it on the campus were other great trees of various kinds,—firs and oaks and elms, maples and tulips and gums, and here and there an apple tree with the red fruit glinting through the green leaves. All these trees had grown straight from sod to sky, save the tree before which I stopped. It had grown crooked. It had grown from the root on an angle to the earth's surface for a distance of some fifteen feet up its trunk. Then in a sharp line it had abruptly righted itself to the perpendicular, and from there on, had grown straight toward the heavens.

#### THE CROOKED TREE

The tree interested me. It had started wrong. It had started crooked. It was not the way God

wants trees to grow. God wants trees to grow straight. Something had happened. What was it? Some law of nature had been violated. Some hurt had been inflicted on the tree when it was a mere sapling. What was responsible for that bent trunk standing there on the college campus amid the straight and graceful trees which surrounded it? I brought some men from the conference to see the tree and diagnose the situation. One said that the trouble was caused by some external weight or force when the tree was young. Another thought it had started in an environment too crowded. Another surmised that there had been a lack of light, and the tree had grown crooked reaching for sunshine. But all agreed that it was a curious sight. It was not the way God and nature intend trees to develop.

But the tree had straightened. It had gotten into line. It had declined to stay crooked. You could see exactly where the fight took place and where the battle was won. The bent place was not a curve, but an angle. That was the feature which captured our keenest interest. In a definite engagement the tree had fought off its foes. It had flung aside its handicap and risen above its wounds. Then, by the laws which God has ordained for trees, by the invisible processes of life that go on inside the tree, it had not been bent but had grown straight.

It was good to see. I felt like taking off my hat

to that tree. I was proud of it. A straight life had come to others as an inheritance, but this tree had to fight for its integrity. Other trees had behaved from their infancy, but this one had gone wrong and come back. As I looked at it, I thought of the promise: "To him that overcometh," and wondered whether a tree that fights for its character and wins does not deserve a crown. As I looked at the crooked tree that straightened, I thought I understood better what Jesus meant when He said that there was more joy over finding one lost sheep than over ninety-nine that had never gone astray.

#### THE CROOKED BODY

There are human bodies like that tree. It is such a body that limps out on the stage in the story told in the thirteenth chapter of Luke. There was a woman bent over and bowed toward the earth. She was unable to walk erect. She was unable to hold up her head and look about her with the freedom and comfort and grace possessed by her fellows. For eighteen years she had been chained to this infirmity. For more than one-third of the average life-time, she had dragged her crooked body along the earth, no doubt envying the people who could hold up their heads, and wondering why such a handicap had been laid on her.

There are others like her. There are more crooked bodies than there are crooked trees. You

can hardly walk the streets on any day without seeing some human body with an infirmity, lamed or maimed or blemished. It is not God's will. God means human bodies as well as trees to grow straight. He means for life to come into possession of a body free from the taint of inherited disease into an environment where there is plenty of light and air and nourishment. Do not blame the Maker for these deformities which greet the eye. The human body as it came from His hands was the most perfect machine ever made. It was marvelous, and many of our most wonderful inventions are copied from the human body.

Why, then, are these bodies bent and bowed, twisted and deformed and diseased? It is the result of the violation of law. Somewhere along the line, either in the individual or in his forebears, either from himself or his surroundings, a wrong has been done, a hurt inflicted, which was contrary to God's will. "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" is part of an inescapable law. The physical penalty for sin is terrific. Recently I was called to visit two men in an insane asylum. In talking to the superintendent about them, he said they had paresis and their condition was hopeless. Syphilis was slowly eating its way up the spinal column into the tissues of the brain. He declared that eight cases of insanity out of every ten were caused in this way. What a horrible harvest men

reap in their own bodies for the sins they commit!

Look again at the woman in the Bible story. Her crooked body is straight now. She is bowed to the earth no longer. She is standing erect. She can look you in the face. Her infirmity is gone from her forever. Jesus has worked the transformation. It was His eye that saw the poor creature and pitied her. Others had seen her, and had gossiped about her bent body, or ignored it. But Christ saw and pitied. This is the way He feels about crooked bodies. It was His voice that called her. It was His hand that touched her and thrilled her as He said: "Woman, be loosed from thine infirmity!" "And immediately she was made straight and glorified God."

It is a glorious sight to see a crooked body straighten. How is the miracle performed? It is not by ignoring the laws of nature, nor by declining the use of means. Of course there is divine healing, but you need not search for it among quacks and charlatans. God never works a miracle unnecessarily. He does not discredit the natural with the supernatural. Medicine and surgery and sanitation are as divine as prayer. What folly to substitute a crotchet for a law! Back of all the processes of life and growth is God.

"A fire mist and a planet,  
A crystal and a cell,  
A jellyfish and a saurian,  
And a cave where the cave men dwell;

Then a sense of law and beauty,  
And a face turned from the clod;  
Some call it evolution,  
And others call it God."

What a glorious thing to straighten a crooked body, to heal a club-footed child, to wipe a harelip from a baby's face, to mend a tubercular bone, to rebuild a deformed hip! Thank God for hospitals! Hats off to doctors and surgeons and nurses! They are all a part of the good God's ministry to the hurt life of the world. Whether they recognize it or not, they are widening out the work of Him Who long ago said: "Woman, be loosed from thine infirmity!"

But there is something worse than a crooked tree, worse even than a crooked body.

#### THE CROOKED SOUL

There are crooked souls. It is not God's will that souls any more than trees or human bodies should grow crooked. God wants the soul to grow straight. Omnipotence releases itself for this mission. God's grace is at work. Divine activities are engaged. Love is enlisted to drive back the forces which assail the spirit. God hates sin because sin makes souls crooked. God is in the business of salvation. His plan for man's spiritual nature is that it grow straight from sod to sky, from time to eternity.

But the world is full of crooked souls,—

twisted, deformed, lamed. They are unable to stand straight and face life without fear. Sometimes these deformities are concealed. Nobody wants to flaunt his moral and spiritual crookedness in the face of the world. He wants a reputation for rectitude and decency whether he deserves it or not. It is strange that with such a desire to seem straight, we should not make greater effort to be straight.

It is sin that makes a crooked soul. And sin is man's product. It is surrender to the lower and baser and animal side of our natures. Of course bad surroundings, foul air, sordid poverty, vicious associations, all aggravate the situation; but the real hurt is self-inflicted, for sin cannot enter until the human will gives its consent.

This is the saddest sight to be seen on earth,—not a crooked tree, not a deformed body, but a diseased and rotting moral nature. Have you gone through a home for incurables? Have you visited a hospital for crippled children? You came away sad of face and heavy of heart. Anyone who can look on such sights and not be moved to pity is made of stone. But there is a sadder sight to anguish the heart. It is diseased and crippled souls. It is a moral sense twisted and bent. It is a spirit blind and deaf, past feeling. This is life's most tragic deformity.

A crooked soul may be straightened. Such is the glad news of the gospel. Its message is not

for trees, not so much even for the body, but for the immortal soul. This is the glorious work of salvation. No soul is so deformed as to baffle the technique of the Divine Surgeon, no hurt so deep but the skill of the Great Physician can reach and heal it. There never was a case too hard for Him. To bent and bowed souls, to lives enslaved to appetites, tormented by lust, stained by vice and wrongdoing, crushed by penalty, Jesus says: "Be loosed from your infirmities!"

It is a glorious sight to see a crooked soul straighten! This is the battle royal. There is the fight in which all heaven is interested. If faith will listen, it can hear cheers from the skies for the soul that declines to be satisfied with a crooked life. There is joy among the angels over one sinner that repenteth. Of course God's plan is for life never to go wrong. When children are trained in the right way, they never know an hour without trust in their Heavenly Father. Salvation is not salvage. It is prevention and production and growth. Nevertheless, when life goes wrong, when the son wanders into the far country, when all left for grace is to pluck the soul like a brand from the burning, such redemption and recovery produce a double joy.

Have you been saved? If so, rejoice. If not, decline to despair. The tree on the campus of Ursinus College is a picture of a man converted late in life, of one who has gone crooked for

twenty or forty years, and then straightened. There is, however, a point where the change must take place, and salvation takes place, not on a curve, but at an angle. There must be decision. People do not drift into heaven. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" It is a great hour when a soul lifts its face toward heaven, when it discovers that Christ is calling, and that He would do for the soul what was done for the crooked tree on the college campus, for the bent body of a poor woman that Sabbath day long ago!

VIII

A MAN AND THE WILDERNESS .

## THE TOIL OF THE TRAIL

What have I gained by the toil of the trail?

I know and know well.

I have found once again the lore I had lost

In the loud city's hell.

I have broadened my hand to the cinch and the axe,

I have laid my flesh to the rain;

I was hunter and trailer and guide;

I have touched the most primitive wildness again.

I have threaded the wild with the stealth of the deer,

No eagle is freer than I;

No mountain can thwart me, no torrent appall,

I defy the stern sky.

So long as I live these joys will remain,

I have touched the most primitive wildness again.

—HAMLIN GARLAND.

## VIII

### A MAN AND THE WILDERNESS

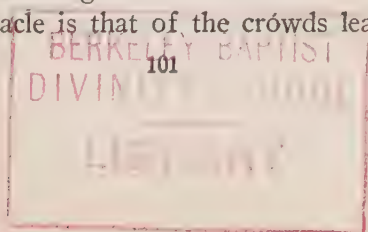
*"What went ye out into the wilderness to see?"*

—MATTHEW II:7.

IT is the wilderness, a region wild and thinly populated. There are no cities, and no roads to speak of. It is nature in primeval simplicity. There is sunshine and clean air, and some flowers bloom, and there is sand,—plenty of sand. But you will find no marble palaces, no tailor-made parks, no libraries and works of art, no stately temples and busy shops. Jesus asks: "What went ye out into the wilderness to see?" The wilderness looks uninviting.

Here is civilization. Here are cities and shrines, gorgeous palaces and a gold-plated temple. Here are arms and fortresses, and noisy trade, and the splendour and glamour of human achievement. Here, too, in the city, is the scramble for place, the fight for power, and the quest for wealth. Here you will find pride, and pomp, and hypocrisy, and injustice, and oppression, and want, and restlessness, and despair. All this you will find where people swarm and grow civilized.

The spectacle is that of the crowds leaving the



city for the wilderness, leaving civilization for nature, turning their backs on ivory palaces and gorgeous shrines, deserting the stalls and shops and money-bags, and pouring into the wilderness. Great crowds are doing this. Every town seems to have emptied itself. The roads are thronged with pilgrims. There are all kinds of people,—not only peasants and traders, but yonder are some priests going where there is no temple, and there are some soldiers going where there is not even a place for dress parade. The king with his splendid retinue has joined the crowd and is making for the desert. Something must be going on. What is the sight? There has been no advertising. No megaphone has cried the show. Yet something extraordinary is on exhibition, for the world is making for the wilderness.

This is the remarkable occurrence to which Jesus refers. He is speaking of the exodus of city folks to the desert, of the great hegira when Jerusalem and the towns around poured their population into the wilderness. What was the attraction? What were the people after? "What went ye out into the wilderness to see?" We shall discover; but before doing so, notice the trend.

#### BACK TO THE WILDERNESS

There are times when we go back to the wilderness for help. The people in Jerusalem had found that pomp and power and place and wealth, and all

the things which go with them, were a failure. Government was corrupt, society rotten, and the rites of religion had degenerated into an empty form. Sham and cant, hypocrisy and injustice and oppression, had captured the seats of authority. There was not much chance for a poor man, and next to none for an honest man. People were suspicious and jealous, restless and unhappy. Life had lost the note of sincerity. Existence was a vain show, a pantomime, a tragedy, a despair.

Civilization is greatly overrated. We brag about it, and pile up statistics. We build big houses and big ships and big cities. We invent, discover, project. We nurse our whims, and gratify our stale souls, with every new thrill that is on the market. Then some day, when a sane mood catches us, we look the situation over and say: "What's the use!" Is this all there is in life,—the passion for pleasure, the struggle for place, the fight for power, and the quest for gain? Soon we die, and all is gone. We are like children, building block houses just for the fun of knocking them down. This is about all there is in the kind of life some people live. Now and then the winds which blow from heaven tear a hole in the clouds, and we see past delusions to reality.

Then we are ready for the desert. Then comes over us a hatred of sham, and a sigh for sincerity and simplicity. We would like to get away from the pantomime, shake off our bejeweled harness,

turn our backs on vanity, on paint and powder and gold lace and frills and millinery, on the silly show and childish ambitions, and once more have fellowship with downright, unaffected, unpretentious honesty. It is the call of the wilderness. It is a soul sighing for the chance to live. What has the wilderness to offer?

#### A MAN

The sight in the wilderness is a man,—an honest man, a simple, fearless, unterrified, incorruptible, unpurchasable man. It is a great sight,—shall we say a rare sight? The crowd found a man beyond the Jordan. That was all. There were no new laws, no fresh tricks and paraphernalia, no new organizations and institutions, no novel experiments in government, no theologies nor sociologies, no reforms for the army, no new avenues for commerce,—nothing but just a man.

This is all that God has to offer a world that has grown anæmic, a civilization that has become effete. He says: "I will give you a man." This has ever been His plan. The new age has always had a man on the horizon. When a nation was to be created, there was Abraham; emancipated, there was Moses; given a country, there was Joshua; developed into a world-power, there was David; when a race was to be saved, there was Jesus of Nazareth. The same plan shows in profane history. Every great reformation has had a man at

the front. And so you may write history with a roll call. Methods and tools and institutions shift about. It is the will, the soul of a man that makes the age.

And all this is as true to-day as ever. While we are in the age of tools and machinery, the man is still on top. When things get chaotic, when civilization fades and becomes pallid, when greed and graft and corruption abound, when pomp and place and power over-reach and betray, and when society sickens and cries for help, the remedy will come, not in some new act of legislation, some fresh outlet for trade; it will come as it has always come, in a man great enough and good enough to call his fellows back to that which is simple, honest, and sincere.

#### A WILDERNESS PRODUCT

The man who saves the day and makes the age has often been a wilderness product. The man who conquers and overthrows a régime that has fattened on corruption, and grown insolent and iniquitous, has usually been a dweller close to nature. He has always been something of an elemental man, a dweller in God's open. This was the show feature in John the Baptist. There was nothing like him in town. He did not have his price. Probably some of the city folks laughed at him at first, and said: "Look at his clothes! They don't fit. There is no style about him. He wears

camel's hair." But as they listened to him, as they came under the spell of his fearless soul, they said: "Here is a man who can be trusted. Give him the right of way."

A little reflection will show that most of the world leaders of virility and power have lived close to nature. The winds of the wilderness have blown across their souls. In a fine passage in "The Valour of Ignorance," Homer Lea calls attention to the fact that it has nearly always been a man of this kind who has led a world conquest. God got Livingston out of a cotton mill, and Lincoln out of a log cabin. When the man for the age has been gently bred, he has had a spirit great enough to resist the soft and enervating influences of luxury and wealth, and be an elemental man.

He who leads his age in the battle against the forces which debauch and corrupt and prey upon society must be strong enough to resist these forces himself. Such an one is hard to find. How often has the man the people trusted turned out to be the man their foes have captured! At the critical moment, he wobbled and went over to the enemy. The bribe was bigger than his soul could resist. I do not believe that every man has his price, but I fear several have. And so, again and again, a great cause has been humiliated by defeat, not because it was unrighteous, but because its leadership was apostate.

THE PORTRAIT OF THE MAN FROM THE  
WILDERNESS

What kind of a man did the desert have to offer? What were the measures of this man in camel's hair tunic? Can he stand the lure of the crowd? Will popularity turn his head? Will the call to the city tame his message? Will the chance for ease swamp him? Look him over and note his marks. Christ sketches the portrait.

He has convictions. He is not a reed. He stands like stiff steel. This is the first quality of a great leader. He must stand, whether the crowd be with him or not. How often have we gone out to see a man, and found a reed,—a thin, vapid, spindle-legged, wobbling effigy of a man, swaying this way and that, a wily politician, trying to please everybody, promising much and fulfilling nothing!

He has character. He is not clothed in soft raiment. The fine thing is not what he has on, but what he is,—not his clothes, but his character. You cannot make a man out of a clothes-line, a uniform, regalia, epaulets.

He has a message. He is a prophet. John's message was straight, simple, honest. Everybody understood it. If the crowds did not like the message, they might go. The man who helps the age must lose himself in his cause. How often have we come out to hear a prophet, and found an office-seeker, a poor little partisan politician, and gone

back to the graft-cursed city, saying: "Fooled again!"

The man from the wilderness has more than all this. Jesus said he was greater than a prophet. There was something in the man we cannot frame nor put into words. It was the divine part of him. So with every real leader who stands out against evil, and resists lawlessness and corruption. After all has been said, something remains unsaid. He is too fine for phrases. Such was the man who drew the crowds to the desert, and ushered in the Messiah. He called his times back to simplicity, to reality, to purity, to righteousness.

#### THE MAN THE WORLD NEEDS

What a great thing if the city could have a few men from the wilderness for leaders! Amid the strife of factions, the clash of interests, the play of partisan politics, and all the evils incident to such disorder and misrule, there is needed some honest, sincere, courageous leadership,—a man big enough and strong enough and white enough to rally to him all the forces of righteousness. There are plenty of men who feel they can fill the bill,—who, when the call sounds, answer: "Here am I!" but there is no evidence of any hegira in their direction.

Every town and state needs a few men of the John the Baptist type. It goes without the saying that a real leader must have brains and morals. John the Baptist was no fool. The trouble often

with the self-elected reformer is that he is short-statured intellectually. He is a fanatic. He sees only one issue, and that from a narrow angle. On the other hand, there is no man more dangerous to the best interests of the state than one who has both brains and morals, but who lends these to the forces of corruption. The leader needed must have convictions, character, and a message, and then something more. He must have that thing which you cannot put into words. He must be a man of faith, and tie up to the Source of strength. There is no hope of any man leading to something better who is not himself divinely led.

There is need of a leader who, like John the Baptist, is willing to decrease, to efface his own personal interests, who is not out for office, who cares little about his personal fortunes, whose ambition is to open a way, and who, if the cause demands, is willing, like John the Baptist, to lose his head in the adventure.

What chance is there for such men to be raised up in this greatly troubled day? We must not lose hope. The wilderness has not gone out of business! In some humble home a boy may be in training to save the city. On some farm a youth may be growing to manhood who will some day rally the forces of righteousness. Somewhere among us, even now, may dwell the leader of honest heart and simple ways and fearless soul who will prepare the way. Indeed, the chance to be

such a leader is offered to every man who is willing to pay the price. Christ lifted John to a pinnacle, and then said to the men who were listening: "You may surpass him!" He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater. That is your opportunity and mine. God has not quit making elemental men. He still has power to; but His shop is often in the wilderness.

IX

FADING LEAVES

## UNDER THE LEAVES

Oft have I walked these woodland paths  
Without the blessed foreknowing  
That underneath the withered leaves  
The fairest buds were growing.

To-day the south wind sweeps away  
The types of autumn's splendour,  
And shows the sweet arbutus flowers,—  
Spring's children, pure and tender.

O prophet-flowers!—with lips of bloom,  
Outvying in your beauty  
The pearly tints of ocean shells,—  
Ye teach me faith and duty!

Walk life's dark ways, ye seem to say,  
With love's divine foreknowing  
That where man sees but withered leaves,  
God sees sweet flowers growing.

—ALBERT LEIGHTON.

## IX

### FADING LEAVES

*"We all do fade as a leaf."*—ISAIAH 64:6.

ISAIAH stands amid the falling and fading leaves of autumn. He is thinking of his nation. It seems to him that its glory has departed. His people have lost their virility. They have grown dull and irresponsible and emotionless. Their righteousness is like a polluted garment, and their iniquities are like winds that would blow them away from God.

Depressed and melancholy, he has sought out some lonely spot on a mountain crag or in a wooded glen where in solitude he may brood over the vanished glory and present decline of his nation. Looking about him, his eyes rest on the fading forests. The green of spring has faded from the leaves, and brown and sere they are falling from the branches and drifting in the autumn wind. They seem to him to be a picture of his country. "We all do fade as a leaf."

And so this line seems to voice despair. It is the utterance of one who is dwelling on the dark side of life, and who is correspondingly depressed. The fading leaf is a symbol of a glory that is gone. It

recites defeat and decay. Its message is in a minor chord.

#### THE PATHOS OF AUTUMN

Fading leaves tell the story of life. They speak of our bodies. The body wears out. Old age draws on apace.

“Change and decay in all around I see.”

Yonder is an athlete full of vigour and strength. The blood fairly dances in his veins. His muscles are as supple and elastic as steel. Every organ is sound, and every physical faculty functions at the maximum of efficiency. Nothing wearies him. He carries no burdens. He has no fears. It is glorious just to be alive. Great is youth!

Then the years slip by. The blood slows down and cools off. The muscles stiffen and the joints creak on their hinges. The heart is less steady and the brain less clear. The step is slow and the back is bent. The hand is tremulous and the vision dim. It is the old story. “Or ever the silver cord be loosed or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.”

Our bodies wear out. The house in which we dwell tumbles down. The fountain of perpetual youth remains undiscovered. The physicians continue their fight against disease, and their struggle to promote health, but at last the hour comes when

the doctor says: "I can do no more." The shutters are drawn, and we walk softly, for death is at the door. Soon it will be "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The body was not built for a long lease. It can have but one tenant, for "we all do fade as a leaf."

Fading leaves tell the story of human experience, of our joys and hopes and expectations. They are the melancholy recital of one whose page of life is torn, whose cup passes from sweet to bitter, whose day changes from gold to gray, and whose road winds from the green valleys and the sunny heights off into gloomy shadowed canyons.

There a youth steps to his work in the glory of a great promise. Talented and trained, with abundant opportunities, he needs but to put himself to the test and all will be well. Those who love him watch his course with confident pride. "The year's at the spring." Too soon, however, autumn comes. His will breaks down before temptation. There is a lack of application, an unwillingness to pay the rugged price success demands. He is turning from hard and homely tasks to follow lines of least resistance, and the promise of the morning fades and fails.

Yonder is a man who measures himself against the world in the competitions of business life. He feels that he can do what others have done. He has the nerve and energy and enterprise needed to launch great undertakings. He possesses initiative.

Success seems coming down the road to meet him. If the markets will stay steady, in a year or two he will reach the hill-crest, and the remainder of life's road will be easy. But at the crisis, the weather changes. The markets go to smash. Something takes place against which there is no insurance. He is caught between the upper and the nether millstones. His securities are sacrificed, and all that is left of his splendid business venture is a chastened experience.

Here is another chapter. This time it is a story of misplaced confidence. It is a young lawyer or doctor or preacher or business man, brimming with enthusiasm, believing in human nature, saying that it is a good world, and that people are better than they seem. But soon this sunny-souled optimist runs into a fog. He suffers disillusionment. The tiger gets its claws in him. His best friend betrays him. He finds that society is artificial, that men are given to deceit and duplicity. His optimism dies. He becomes cynical, sarcastic, censorious, pessimistic. It is just the story of the fading leaf writing itself across another human life.

Then there is the gladdest and holiest hour of all, the wedding morning. A man and a maid plight their troth. Eden swings wide its gates of joy to them. Was there ever such a spring? The song that is singing in their hearts is of a happiness that will last until the sunset. But sometimes,—not

always, thank God! Would it were never!—but sometimes marriage joy fades as the leaf. Before the day has passed to noon the sky is full of clouds, and the glory of a great hope is dead.

Thus one might pass from chapter to chapter through the entire volume of human experience, and find the fading leaf on well-nigh every page. The same drift is discovered in great world movements. The fading leaves symbolize nations that have risen and flourished and fallen, civilizations that have come and gone, empires whose torch has lit the world and then flickered in its socket and died. One may call the roll of the dead nations of the world and dwell on the splendour of their achievements, but the only trace of their remains is that turned up by the spade of the archæologist. Nations, like people, fall into the sere and yellow leaf.

How this mournful line from the lips of Isaiah seems to echo over the earth to-day! It recites the pathos of the modern world. There are lovely cities in ruins, prosperous countries wrecked, nations dying, nations in exile, communities broken up. It is the horror of the world's worst war. The ethical restraints wrought out in a thousand years of patient human struggle have been discredited and rejected. It is a fading page of world glory in human history.

Amid the ruin, America seems secure. But for how long? When will the beauty of springtime

turn to the brown and sere of autumn for us? Is there coming a day when we shall be rudely wakened from our fancied security and dollar-chasing activities to find that the tide of horror which engulfed Europe is rolling in on us? We shall need more than a policy of avoiding entangling alliances to escape the perils of that tide. We must safeguard the future with righteousness, with a Christian treatment of other nations, and with the use of our vast resources for world welfare. No man can live by himself. Neither can any nation.

And so autumn, whether of nature or of life, is suffused with pathos. Our moods take on a melancholy tint with the falling of the leaves. Nature is reminding us of what is behind, of the gaiety that is gone, of the freshness that has faded, of the vigour that is spent, of the splendour that is declining, of the day that will soon be dead.

“Autumn is over the long leaves that love us,  
And over the mice in the barley sheaves;  
Yellow the leaves of the rowan above us,  
And yellow the wet wild-strawberry leaves.

“The hour of the waning of love has beset us,  
And weary and worn are our sad souls now;  
Let us part, ere the season of passion forget us,  
With a kiss and a tear on thy drooping brow.”\*

As one dwells on all this, it is easy for him to

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\* W. B. Yeats.

lose his head, and grow melancholy and depressed, as did Isaiah. We need to look on the pathos of life until we shall see beyond it, on the fading leaves until we shall discover returning spring. We need to study life and nature, not with our senses but with our souls. Then we shall find in the falling, fading leaves of autumn not the creed of pessimism, but the secret of a deep and abiding optimism.

## AUTUMNAL GLORY

There is an autumnal as well as a vernal glory. What is more beautiful than a tree in autumn dress, than a forest aflame with colour, as the frost paints his tints of red fire and yellow gold into the landscape? There is pathos in the tree whose leaves wither in mid-summer before the time, but when nature does her work, the fading leaf is not an emblem of defeat but the season's victorious banner flung out to say that the woods are ready for winter.

Likewise the signs of advancing age in the human body are not distressing when they come in nature's way. There is something lovely and satisfying in the gracious repose and benediction of ripe old age. It is when one ages prematurely, paying the penalty for sin, when the vigour of youth withers through indiscreet indulgence, when long before the time the shoulders stoop and the step becomes unsteady, that age is melancholy. But

"the hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness." There is no melancholy when winter is on the head but eternal summer in the heart. Then the signs of advancing age are but an autumnal glory which life flings out to proclaim its readiness for death's winter, whenever that may come.

It is as the leaves fade and fall that the fruit reaches its maturity. The other day I passed an apple orchard. The trees were all but leafless, but the branches were bending and groaning and well-nigh breaking under a big and bountiful crop of ripe red apples. The leaf had faded, but the fruit was in perfection.

May it not be so with those experiences in life which strip us of foliage? The fruit is reaching perfection. Sometimes the great achievement comes just as the leaves fade and fall. Then the fruit is at its best. Just when life surrendered what seemed most precious, it reaches its sublime and most heroic experience. Gipsy Smith relates an experience he had in a shell hole on the French front. He found seven soldiers in the pit, all of them desperately wounded; and all but two later died. They had been there for three days. He gave the first one his canteen, and the lad placed it to his parched lips, and then handed it to the soldier next. It went around the circle, and when it came back not a drop of water had left the flask! There was the falling, fading leaf of human valour in

that shell hole, but there was glory there, too, that never dies.

The leaves fade and fall, but the tree lives. None is so stupid as to imagine that the drifting foliage of autumn is a sign that the forest is dead. Neither should there be despair in God's world of providence when the leaves fade. As we look across the battlefields of Europe, the splendour of civilization is dim, but God is on the throne. Let us be patient and nurse faith. It is the faith that sees beyond the change of seasons that is needed now. It is power to sense the spiritual. What the world needs to-day is not a creed that withers like a leaf, but a conviction that has in it something of the fiber of the oak. Often chaos has been but an introduction to a new world order. Every night is the forerunner of dawn. And so the old prophetic shout stands: "The morning cometh!"

And the soul that senses autumnal glory is the soul that

"Sees in some dead leaf dried and curled  
The deeper meaning of the world,  
Hears in the roar of mortal things  
The God's immortal whisperings."

Autumn fades into winter, but beyond the shroud of winter is returning spring. The leaf fades in order that the tree may survive a change of season unharmed. It is so with the death winter. The sermon in the fading leaves is a mes-

sage of immortality. The body returns to the dust, but the spirit to God Who gave it. Death to the soul is but what the fading leaf is to the tree.

One Sunday morning in the Highland Presbyterian Church, of Birmingham, Alabama, the pastor, Dr. J. Thompson Plunket, preached to his people a sermon from the text: "We all do fade as a leaf." As he finished his discourse, he fell, and in a few moments his work on earth was over. In a striking way he had himself fulfilled his message and gone on to nobler tasks.

"Earth breaks up, time fades away,  
Heaven flows in with its new day."

Thus the glory that is on the world in the fine days of autumn is a message of victory and hope. It speaks of the life that Christ imparts. He "came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly." It speaks of the life that is fadeless. It reminds us of the country whose joys never wither and whose beauty never fades.

Thus the soul looks beyond the forest flecked with red and brown and gold, longing for a land where beside the river of life there grows a tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and where the soul sings the song of a returning spring whose joy never withers.

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust;  
Thou madest man, he knows not why;  
He thinks he was not made to die;  
And Thou hast made him; Thou art just."

X

ANOTHER VILLAGE

## IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

In the cool of the evening, when the low sweet whispers  
waken,

When the labourers turn them homeward, and the  
weary have their will,

When the censers of the roses o'er the forest aisles are  
shaken,

Is it but the wind that cometh o'er the far green hill?

For they say 'tis but the sunset winds that wander  
through the heather,

Rustle all the meadow grass and bend the dewy fern;  
They say 'tis but the winds that bow the reeds in prayer  
together,

And fill the shaken pools with fire along the shadowy  
burn.

In the beauty of the twilight, in the Garden that He  
loveth,

They have veiled His lovely vesture with the darkness  
of a name!

Through His Garden, through His Garden, it is but the  
wind that moveth,

No more! But O the miracle, the miracle is the same.

In the cool of the evening, when the sky is an old story,  
Slowly dying, but remembered, ay, and loved with  
passion still. . . .

Hush! . . . the fringes of His garment, in the fading  
golden glory

Softly rustling as He cometh o'er the far green hill.

—ALFRED NOYES.

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## X

### ANOTHER VILLAGE

*"And they went to another village."*—LUKE 9:56.

**H**ERE is an incident in the earthly life of the Son of man, Who "had not where to lay his head." Jesus must have had many such experiences, and often spent the night with no roof above Him but the open sky.

#### THE VILLAGE THAT SHUT CHRIST OUT

The first thing to notice in this story is the village that turned Christ down. It was an ugly thing to do under any circumstances. It was decidedly ugly and unmannerly because of the circumstances under which it was done. Jesus was on His way to Calvary. "And it came to pass when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Christ was on His way to lay down His life for the sins of the world, to make atonement, to make it possible for the lost to be saved, to slay hate, to reconcile man to God and men to each other, to tear down walls of sectionalism and suspicion and national jealousy, and make the world friendly.

The cross was not easy for Christ. There was much to hold Him back. It required a struggle to go on. You can see the fight in His face, for "he stedfastly set his face." He pushed ease and popularity aside, and made up His mind to go on to Calvary at any cost. This is the Guest Who is on the way, and this is His business. The Son of God is on the road to Calvary. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is on the way to the supreme consummation. The Redeemer of the race is on the last lap of the journey to His crucifixion.

He must have lodging for the night, and He has sent some of His disciples ahead to make ready. Not much was required, just a shelter and a simple meal. There were no sumptuous hotels in that day and time where pampered guests might touch a button and have every wish gratified. The Saviour of the world had plain fare. But Christ was human enough to get tired and hungry. He needed rest and food. Therefore the disciples go ahead to make the few simple preparations that were necessary.

The village they entered was a village of the Samaritans, and the Samaritans had no dealings with the Jews. Things, however, seemed to go smoothly at first. The disciples did not ask for much. They were not fastidious. They were willing to put up with anything, and really there was no choice. They probably soon completed

the few arrangements for Christ's entertainment over night.

And now Jesus has arrived. When the people of the village look Him over, they turn Him down. They say: "You must get out. You cannot spend the night in this town. You must move on." They treated Him as if He had been a common tramp. "Move on!" This is the slogan of municipal selfishness, of village isolation, and of inhuman provincialism. That which made the surly boorishness of these inhospitable roughnecks especially aggravating was the reason they gave for refusing to let Christ spend the night in their town.

Jesus was conducting Himself in an orderly way. He had done nothing to give offense. He had broken no law. He was guilty of no trespass. The reason they assigned was that His face was set as if to go to Jerusalem. They were guilty of almost unbelievable narrowness and bigotry. The Samaritans would have nothing to do with Jesus because they themselves were not on friendly terms with Jerusalem. They insisted that the man who spent the night in their town should hate the people they hated. They demanded that anyone who would get food and shelter from them must absorb all their jealousies and become as bigoted as they were themselves.

There are Christian people who seem to be afflicted with the same spirit. The price they charge for their friendship is the adoption of their hatreds.

A pastor took charge of a church which was split into cliques. To be friendly with one side was to incur the enmity of the other. The fact that one of these factions had been especially active in promoting his call made it difficult for this preacher to get a square deal in the congregation. He finally moved on to a field less complex. The writer once sold an article describing a summer vacation to one of the religious weeklies of America. The article was published, and shortly after, he received a communication from one whose theological angle was out of harmony with that of the religious weekly. The communication took the writer severely to task for allowing anything to be published in such a sheet. This in the name of religion! Pity the world if this be religion! The Samaritans are not the only people to turn down Christ because His face is set as though He would go to Jerusalem.

The village lost Jesus. It turned Him out of doors. He went on His way rejected before ever He reached Pilate's judgment hall or Calvary's cross. The village that rejected Him remained as mean and sordid and squalid, as dirty and dark, as full of hate and suspicion, as if the Lord of light and glory had never walked its streets. It might have had heaven, but it shut Christ out.

It is strange what little things will lead to a rejection of Christ. The King of glory comes our way. The Christ of Calvary, the Friend of sin-

ners, the great-hearted Son of man comes to enrich our lives, but there is someone in the church we do not like, some practice we disapprove, some tenet we decline to accept, some individual against whom we cherish an ancient grudge. Because of this, we turn down Christ. It is not fair.

Thus the village lost its chance. It was not that Christ was unwilling and unable to do a big thing for the town. The woman at the well was a Samaritan. Christ changed her life, and through her, changed her town. He was ready to do as much for this village. Doubtless there were many sick people there longing to be healed. There were those weary with much waiting, carrying heavy burdens, with lives bare and lots hard. Christ was ready and able to change all this for them. But prejudice barred the door. The same thing goes on to-day. Sectarianism, sectionalism, race hatred, prejudices built on colour and class and caste, petty feuds, close the door against Christ. To rise above it all and claim and keep the heavenly Guest is the prayer we should make.

#### THE FIRE EATERS

Next in the story come the fire eaters. The disciples were naturally indignant at the way their Master was treated. It was an outrage. Jesus had been insulted. They would not treat a dog the way this dirty little Samaritan village was treating their Master. Even a tired dog might rest on a door-

step or sleep under a shelter. It is not strange that the disciples resented the affront. We could not have much respect for them had they failed to be indignant.

Two of them were worse than indignant. They were in a towering rage. They said: "Lord, let us burn down the town. This village should be wiped from the map. These people do not deserve to live. They have violated the simplest rules of common hospitality. They are a disgrace to the country. They are a blot on the landscape." "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them even as Elias did?"

They did not want the Saviour to worry over the situation. They would not have Him lift His hand in the matter. They are ready to do all that is necessary. They seem to say: "Leave these people to us. Only say the word, and the vile shacks of this inhospitable town will go up in smoke."

The identity of these fire eaters is somewhat surprising. They are James and John who are tugging at the tether, James the sedate, self-poised, judicial counselor, and John the gentle, sweet-spirited apostle of love, the man who wrote: "Little children, love one another." These are the men who would burn down the town and wipe this half acre of hell off the map. And yet it is not surprising that these are the men, for there is nothing like

the storm of a gentle soul once aroused, the wrath of love once enraged. They are, however, taking themselves rather seriously, for they seem to think they can do what they propose. They can command fire from heaven. They are in charge of the elements. They are in the same class with Elijah. They are able to work miracles. They only need Christ's permission, and the thing will be done.

Fire! Good people seem to have a partiality for this remedy. There are those who like the doctrine of hell. It guarantees that the enemy will get his desserts. It is a comforting doctrine for those who are not going that way. Burn them! Exterminate them! Excommunicate them! They are not fit to live. Let them be Anathema!

We come upon such saints in the Bible. James and John are not alone. David has said some rough things in the imprecatory Psalms. Paul has occasionally given way to the same mood. Are we to conclude that inspiration vouches for their conduct as well as for the accuracy of the record? Must not even the sacred writers in the spirit they manifest be tested out by the Spirit of Christ? This does not mean that Christians are never to fight. We are to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Yet militant Christianity may be easily overdone. It is significant that a canvass taken by one of the most widely circulated magazines in America to discover the ten best-loved hymns of Christendom resulted in a list

in which there was not one war hymn. Christ conquers His enemies with love. Controversy never saved a soul. Dr. Hall, who wrote a lovely tract on "Come To Jesus," became engaged in a bitter theological controversy, and wrote a severe denunciation of his antagonist. A friend suggested that Dr. Hall name this attack: "Go To Hell," by the author of "Come To Jesus." It is not the fire eaters who build the kingdom. "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

#### ANOTHER VILLAGE

"And they went to another village." This was Christ's answer to His disciples. He rebuked them. It was not an easy thing to do, for He must have loved them for their loyalty. They were ready to die for Him. He did not have so many of this kind. It was their undying devotion to Him that made them say what they said. Perhaps there was mixed in some of the Jews' hatred of the Samaritans, but this was not the main thing. The main thing was their loyalty to Jesus. It must have stirred Christ to have followers true as steel.

It took a broad mind and a clear head to rise above the situation, and insist that even under such provocation His disciples be fair and gentle. They must not be unkind and unbrotherly even toward the people who had turned Him out of doors. His kingdom was not to be established by fire. And so Jesus "turned and rebuked them and said, Ye

know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

His real answer, however, was not what He said, but what He did. He went to another village. He went somewhere else. The village that turned Him down was not the only village. There were other towns. It was not necessary to burn down the town to get a place to rest. The world was not that crowded. He seemed to say: "They do not want us here. Let us go where we are wanted." Christ's answer to the town that kicked Him out was not force nor argument nor reproach, nor even rebuke. Without a word, He turned and went away. He was still going to Jerusalem, to Calvary, to the cross, to a village that would open its doors and give Him rest and shelter and food. "And He went to another village."

It was great. How Christ towers here! He rises above the little jealousies and revenges of earth. He scores selfishness and hate, and pleads for tolerance and love. Is it difficult to believe in One like this, One Who is so broad, so generous, so fair-minded, so great-hearted, so brotherly? Then I say there is nothing fine that one can believe in.

There is a great lesson here for Christ's followers. Christians are often tempted to be fire eaters, to resort to force. There was a day when they burned heretics. The day abides when, to

promote the faith, some Christians would resort to anathemas and heresy baiting. Human nature is not easy to control. But grace can change human nature. The world is not saved by fire.

There is a lesson here for nations and races, as well as for churches. Race hatreds are the prolific source of wars. The colour line abides. The antagonisms between Jew and Samaritan carry over into other groups. Just now the French and the Germans hold the stage. It is easy to keep prejudice alive, but there is something better than revenge, better than competition. The world is spacious. "They went to another village."

Christ's example here is a tremendous rebuke of sectarianism, of rabid denominationalism, of bigotry and intolerance, and of the blind zeal that lights martyr fires and kindles faggots of hate. There is a zeal that is more concerned with boosting the denomination than with saving the world. Churches are located not according to need, but where the pasture is best. The result is, some sections are over-churched and others neglected. It is not strange that, with such strategy, the church should go lame in the fight. If the Christian church is to reach the world, it must follow Christ and be possessed of His Spirit.

"They went to another village." The day has worn to its close. Perhaps they found another village more hospitable. It may be that that night the Saviour and His disciples slept in the open

fields. But as they went on, I think Christ's followers began to think of the Sermon on the Mount. They recalled the Beatitudes. They thought of how Christ said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It is something to stand on our rights, but Christ's true followers think not of their rights, but of their duties. It is something to command fire from heaven, as did Elijah; but it is greater for one to deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus. It is something to smite the enemy hip and thigh. It is greater to bear one another's burdens. It is something to burn a town. It is more Godlike to save a world!

XI

THE PALMS, THE TEARS, AND THE  
PAWN-BROKERS

## AN UPPER CHAMBER

I came into the City and none knew me;  
None came forth, none shouted: "He is here!"  
Not a hand with laurel would bestrew me  
All the way by which I drew anear—  
Night my banner, and my herald Fear.

But I knew where one so long had waited  
In the low room at the stairway's height,  
Trembling lest my foot should be belated,  
Singing, sighing for the long hours' flight  
Towards the moment of our dear delight.

I came into the City when you hailed me  
Saviour, and again your chosen Lord:—  
Not one guessing what it was that failed me,  
While along the way as they adored  
Thousands, thousands shouted in accord.

But through all the joy I knew—I only—  
How the hostel of my heart lay bare and cold,  
Silent of its music, and how lonely!  
Never, though you crown me with your gold,  
Shall I find that little chamber as of old!

—FRANCES BANNERMAN.

## XI

### THE PALMS, THE TEARS, AND THE PAWN-BROKERS

*"Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord."*—LUKE 19: 38.

**T**HIS is the story of one day in the Saviour's life on earth. It was His proudest day, the day they cheered Him, and shouted: "Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" It was also the saddest day, the day He wept over Jerusalem. It was the sternest day of the gentlest life our world has known, for it was the day He used force, seizing in His kind hand a scourge and driving the thieves from the temple.

It was the Jewish Sabbath, and the Jews were a very religious people, especially when it came to the matter of Sabbath observance. They had a profound conviction when they sang: "Hosanna to Christ!" Jesus was the Hero of a religious parade. Let the imagination try to reproduce the scene. It was a spring morning. The sunshine is brilliant. The dew tarries on the grasses and flowers. Great crowds surge out from the city. Yonder comes a man riding an ass's colt. He is

attended by a few peasants. When the crowd sees Him, it acclaims Him. The people break branches from the palm trees, and wave them in salutation. They strip off their garments, and spread them on the ground, and shout: "Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord!" They must have wanted a king.

We are not so keen on kings to-day. There are not many of them left, and the few who are seem doomed. It takes no prophet to predict a day when not a throne will be left on earth, nor a crowned head in all the world. Because kings stand for caste, for privilege, for autocracy, for despotism, for the spoiling of many to make luxury easy for the few. The world has grown tired of that sort of thing, and is saying it must stop. The worm has turned. The rights of the common man are to the front. Christianity has brought in this creed. Greatness resides not in privilege, but in service. He gets most who serves best.

Is that crowd after an autocrat when they shout for a king? If so, the people are foolish. If Christ has come to oppress, to be a despot, the world would not run after Him, for it does not need Him. Let Him go back to Bethany. The taxes in Jerusalem are already high enough without a fresh levy to deck out a new king.

Look at the King and make up your mind as to whether or not He is a despot. He is the picture of humility. He is riding an humble beast. There

is no crown on His head, no sceptre in His hand. He has no retinue. He is without pomp or wealth or splendour. He possesses no sign of royalty. His retainers are a dozen poor peasants. It seems ridiculous to call Him a King. His only exchequer is a bag that holds the dole of charity. Surely the people have nothing to fear from Him.

Recall what He has been doing. He has been going up and down the land healing the sick, ministering to the needy, feeding the hungry. People can love Him. They will love Him enough to die for Him. The only things that need fear Him are those that hurt the people, the foes of human welfare, the devils that destroy.

Listen to Him. You will not need to listen long to discover that He has great compassion. He tells why He has come. It is not to forge chains, to add burdens. They have burdens enough. He has come to emancipate. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Christ deserves the cheers of the crowd. He is a real Hero, a democratic King. The people have nothing to fear from Him. He will bind the people to Him by ties that are stronger than the grave. Men will give up all to follow Him. They will live for Him and die for Him. Let the palms wave on, and the people sing their song. Let them say: "Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord!" For here at last is a monarch of Whose reign the world need never be afraid.

## THE TEARS

Kings are usually concerned for revenues. They are on the lookout for something to tax. Even republics have not been cured of this habit. Government is cursed by it to-day. About all that one hears is taxes. Government has gotten to be a very expensive luxury. It costs to be civilized. Doubtless much of the taxes sweated from the people is squandered in enterprises whose only apology is political expediency.

The Palm Sunday King was not thinking of taxes. He was not concerned for revenue. He was not figuring out how much more He could make the people pay. He was watching the people, pondering their needs, pitying them in their troubles, profoundly concerned for their burdens.

He beheld the city and wept over it. That is what He did while the parade was at its height. He saw the city's wretchedness and misery, its folly and sin. He looked down the years and saw its destruction. Then He forgot His crown and throne. He lost sight of the palms and the shouting. He no longer heard the cheers. He began to weep. All that gay spectacular faded out in a mist. The tears were running down His cheeks. "O, Jerusalem, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes!"

You can trust yourself with that kind of a king. There is nothing to fear from a ruler so compassionate that human woe breaks His heart; a King Who loves humanity and Whose sympathy is sincere is the people's friend. Of course rulers can affect concern. The lachrymal glands of the demagogue operate with ease. He loves to talk of his devotion to the people. He bawls it out from the rostrum when he is seeking votes. But after the election he is not so ready to die for the welfare of the people.

Jesus was not a demagogue. He was a King, but also a Man of Sorrows. He lived His concern. The tears of Christ say that the people can trust Him. If there be a way to relieve them of their burden, Christ will find the way.

#### THE PAWN-BROKERS

We are not to conclude that because tears are in His eyes, Christ is womanish, that because He is tender-hearted, He is weak, that because He is the King of Love, He is incapable of hate, lacking in fiery anger against fraud and imposture, without scorn for that which is foul and false. He was the Lamb of God, but He was also the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

The last scene of that fateful day is in the temple, and gives the climax of Christ's right to be called a King. The people are coming up to the temple to worship, to make their offerings. Here

and yonder are the tables of the money-changers where the people pause to get the money for their offering. The money-changers are slick rascals who charge exorbitant rates, and cheat in the change. They were the pawn-brokers of that day. They have become so bold and brazen and insolent that they associate their vile traffic with the worship of Jehovah, and house their infamous business in the temple itself.

No one interferes. They are protected. The city officials have been fixed. The graft has been paid, so that they are without shame. Suddenly the King appears, this Man Who rode in on an ass's colt, this peasant Rabbi, this weeper Who an hour ago forgot the parade given in His honour and turned His attention to the slums to cry over the poor, and Whose lashes, it may be, are still wet with weeping, and on Whose cheek there still trembles a tear of compassion. He watches the pawn-brokers.

Then, without introduction, the King gets into action. Seizing a scourge, He attacks the money-changers. The blows fall thick and hot on the heads of that slick gentry. The tables loaded with coin and merchandise are upset. The money is scattered in all directions. The tumult is great. Rascality is always a noisy coward. Soon the pawn-brokers are vanquished. They run to cover. One honest man has broken up a nest of thieves. The temple courts are cleansed, and Christ says to

the people who look on in amazement: "They have made my house a den of thieves."

Christ deserved the title they gave Him. He was a real King. The kind of king the world needs to-day is a man with courage to wage war on organized iniquity, a strong arm to unseat rascality, a righteous soul that declines to compromise with evil, a heart hot with indignation against the greed that feeds on human need and cloaks its hypocrisy in the garb of religion. Let the people sing on. They have found a real Hero at last, One tender-hearted enough to weep over human wrongs, and strong-hearted and stout-armed enough to redress them.

Such was the King. No wonder they cheered Him. No wonder the world still sings:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name."

The kingdom should be like the King. It should have rights for the common man, tears for human need, and a scourge for rascality. It is for those who believe in Jesus, who call Him not only Prophet and Priest, but King, to see to it that the kingdom does not belie the King!

XII

THE PLACE WHERE THEY LAID HIM

## MY GARDEN

A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!  
Rose plot,  
Fringed pool,  
Fern grot—  
The veriest school  
Of peace; and yet the fool  
Contends that God is not—  
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?  
Nay, but I have a sign:  
'Tis very sure God walks in mine.

—THOMAS EDWARD BROWN.

## XII

### THE PLACE WHERE THEY LAID HIM

*"Come see the place where the Lord lay."*

—MATTHEW 28:6.

*"Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was man never yet laid."—JOHN 19:41.*

**H**E is sitting on the stone that had been rolled away from the mouth of the tomb in which Joseph and Nicodemus had laid the dead body of Christ. He is an angel from heaven, and a wonder to behold. His countenance is like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. At sight of him, the soldiers set to guard the tomb were so scared that they trembled and became as dead men. The angel had descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the door. When the women came in the gray dawn of that first Easter morning to anoint the dead body of Christ, they found the angel there at the door of the tomb sitting on the great stone as though waiting for them. And now this is his message: "Come and see the place where the Lord lay."

#### AN EMPTY GRAVE

Why invite those women to gaze in on an empty

tomb? Christ is not there. Even His body is gone. Nothing but His grave clothes remain, neatly folded and laid aside as if to say there was no hurry nor confusion in the Saviour's departure. But Jesus is not in the sepulchre. He is gone. He is walking in the garden, hard by the place where they laid Him. He will soon be on the road to Emmaus. He will visit the upper room. Ere long He is going to Galilee. If they would see Him, they must make haste. Their hearts are aching to see Him. They can stand the awful suspense no longer. Why waste time gazing at the spot where the Lord lay? Why pause to look in on an empty grave? Why waste a second? They must away to see the risen Christ.

To be sure, the tomb was a lovely spot. It was a garden tomb. The year was at the spring. The fresh green of resurgent spring was on the world. The flowers were blooming. Nature was at its best. But it is not the tomb that the women have come to see. It is their Lord, and He is gone. Cemeteries may be beautiful, but the soul does not find life's objective in a graveyard. To be sure, there are hallowed associations there when the grave sepulchres the dust of our beloved. But this tomb in Joseph's garden has been broken open. It is empty of its guest. Then why hold the women there just to gaze at the place where they laid Him?

Certainly it was not because God's angel would make a tomb a shrine. Men sometimes commit

that folly. There has always been the peril of offering worship to sacred relics and holy sites, to bones and nails and wooden crosses. No one can visit certain churches in Europe which house great quantities of human skulls and possess shelves loaded with time-stained relics without being amazed at such exhibits in buildings erected to the glory of Him Who said: "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Surely Christ's tomb was never meant to be a shrine.

It was not accidental that Christ left nothing for the senses. We do not know for a certainty just where Calvary was. The soldiers carried off His robe. The wooden cross long since has turned to dust. God would interest us not in things, but life; not in places, but in people; not in the bones of the dead, but in the needs of the living. A visit to a cemetery is no alibi for neglect of common duty. Taking care of a grave does not atone for being unbrotherly. Jesus said: "Let the dead bury their dead." China is a melancholy illustration of what befalls a nation that worships a grave. "The living he shall praise thee."

#### THE MESSAGE OF THE EMPTY GRAVE

Notwithstanding all this, there were good reasons for the angel's message to the women that first Easter morning when he said: "Come see the place where the Lord lay."

He would have them see with their own eyes the most minute and circumstantial and unmistakable evidence of the resurrection, to assure themselves beyond the possibility of doubt that Christ's body was not in the tomb. They looked in. Jesus was not there. The place was empty. He Who had been crucified on Calvary's cross was gone. Where was He? Hope begins to beat on the door of the heart with that question.

The proof of Christ's resurrection is not hazy. It is of the most definite and satisfactory kind. Nothing is left to chance or credulity. Again and again the risen Christ appeared to His disciples. He walked and talked and supped with them. They saw Him. They touched Him. They discussed themes with Him which verified the evidence of their senses. His resurrection was certified to them by many infallible proofs.

Nor was this all, nor indeed the strongest evidence that Christ rose. The message and ministry of the apostles, the trials they endured, their hardships and martyrdom, their courage, their enthusiasm in the face of the cross and the cell, the growth of the church, the heroism of believers, the influence of all this on the world, and the experience in the heart of every believer, all create a class of evidence in support of Christ's resurrection that is well-nigh unanswerable. But there is something more.

The angel would have those women grasp the

splendour and magnitude of the miracle. They are looking at the place where He lay. As they do so, it all comes over them again. They see the trial. They hear the shouts of the mob. They follow the weary Christ out to Calvary. They see Him nailed to the cross. They watch Him die. They recall the feelings they had as all this transpired. And now they are gazing on the spot where His body lay. There can be no doubt about it. Jesus died, but His body is not in the tomb.

They have turned, and are walking down the garden path. All at once they see Him. There He is before their eyes. Listen! He is saying something. "All hail!" They run and hold Him by the feet and worship Him. It is impossible for them to be deceived. Jesus is not in the tomb. The tomb is empty. He is here in the garden, walking and talking. Christ died, but He lives. He is risen from the dead. Thus the supreme fact of Christianity as a supernatural religion forever associates itself with God's open, with an empty tomb and a garden path, with the place where He lay and the path where He walked and talked with His friends.

Had they needed any further proof of His Godhood, they have it now. The resurrection is splendid. It is magnificent. From the dust of a tomb Christ has passed to the power of a God. They are thrilled and elated. The whole world is

changed for them. They are charged with a courage nothing can daunt. They are clothed with a heroism that can play with death. They will never forget the place where the Lord lay.

#### THE EMPTY GRAVE AND THE COMMON LIFE

There is a great lesson in all this for the common life, for us as we wait by a grave or walk down a garden path. We must not forget our struggles nor allow sudden success to obscure the day of small beginnings. Some of life's sublimest achievements are hard by the place where all seemed lost. Shame on him who gets on in life, but would hide his lowly start, who becomes famous, but would keep from publicity the places and people with whom he was associated in obscurity! They are scrubs of the meanest breed who disown their forebears.

A great soul who has come up from a lowly home and plain parentage never forgets his old father and mother. He loves to go back to the cabin in the clearing, to the hut under the hill, to the shabby house on a cheap street, and look on the place where he lay, and recall the days of poverty and struggle, and fight off the false ideals which sometimes creep in with the acquisition of place and fame, of wealth and power. He loves to look once more into a dear old wrinkled face and kiss away the signs of care and tell the heart that loved him first that his

mother will always be to him what she was in those days of long ago.

It is good sometimes to recall the hours of apparent defeat, the dark days when all seemed lost. We are so easily spoiled. Our heads are so quickly turned. We forget so soon. A man makes money, and loses his religion. It occurs so often. He was a decent church member until he became prosperous. Then he forgot the days of his struggle and the God Who had helped him to fight his battle. His Sundays are devoted to recreation and sport. He gambles and goes the gaits. The church, the Sunday-school, and the prayer-meeting are all back numbers. He needs something to bring him to his senses. It is well for him to go back and look upon the place where he lay, to recall the times and days when he was poor, and try to recover his lost virtues and climb out of his shabby sins and be a man again.

All this has a definite application to one's personal experience as a Christian. It is good for us now and then to go back and dwell on what we were before Christ quickened us and raised our souls from a grave where we were dead in trespasses and sins. We sometimes grow discouraged in our Christian life. Then we think of what we were. This was David's meditation when he wrote: "He took me out of a miry pit and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings." It is well for us in our drab moments to follow

David's example until the joy of the Easter morning begins to possess the soul, and the song is on our lips again, and we exchange doubt for hope, and despair for victory.

#### THE EMPTY GRAVE AND THE CHURCH

There are times when Christ would say to the church what the angel said to the women at the garden tomb. It is good for the Christian church to recall its humble beginnings, to remember the day when all that Jesus had was a little group of humble fishermen, not a building, not a school, not a hospital, neither wealth nor numbers nor influence. "Come see the place"—not where the church stood prosperous, resourceful, successful, victorious, but where it lay despised and rejected.

It is well for the church to have this memory to freshen its conviction that it is not by might nor by power, but by the spirit of the Lord that it is to accomplish its mission. The church ever needs to learn what Elijah discovered when he found that God was not in the wind nor in the earthquake nor in the fire, but in the still small voice; what the apostles discovered at Pentecost, that it is through the baptism of the Holy Ghost rather than by wealth and numbers and culture and influence that the world is to be saved.

Then the church is ready to turn from the empty tomb to the garden path, from the day of defeat to the signs of victory, to the triumphs of the cross,

to the place the world is giving Christ now, to His position in the life of nations, in literature and art and civilization. Things have changed. Christ has risen, and is rising. He "sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied." "He shall reign until he has put all enemies under his feet." "Of the increase of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Are we like the women who came to the tomb troubled with doubt, disheartened, discouraged? "Come see the place where the Lord lay." Then from the empty tomb let us turn our faces toward the morning, beholding along our garden path the risen and rising Christ until our lips are vocal with victory. Nothing can stop the tide. Nothing can stop the spring. Nothing can stop the dawn. Nothing can stop the life of the risen Christ.

XIII

THE FORGOTTEN WATER-POT

## WHAT CHRIST SAID

I said, "Let me walk in the fields;"  
He said, "Nay, walk in the town;"  
I said, "There are no flowers there;"  
He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the sky is black,  
There is nothing but noise and din;"  
But He wept as He sent me back—  
"There is more," He said, "there is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick,  
And fogs are veiling the sun;"  
He answered, "Yet hearts are sick,  
And souls in the dark undone."

I said, "I shall miss the light,  
And friends will miss me, they say;"  
He answered me, "Choose to-night  
If I am to miss you, or they."

I pleaded for time to be given;  
He said, "Is it hard to decide?  
It will not seem hard in heaven  
To have followed the steps of your Guide."

I cast one look at the field,  
Then set my face to the town;  
He said, "My child, do you yield?  
Will you leave the flowers for the crown?"

Then into His hand went mine.  
And into my heart came He.  
And I walk in a light divine  
The path I had feared to see.

—GEORGE MACDONALD.

### XIII

## THE FORGOTTEN WATER-POT

*"The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?"—JOHN 4: 28, 29.*

**T**HIS is a story of personal work. The worker was without personal fitness or preparation or experience. She was one who but an hour ago had found the Saviour, one who was neither ordained nor commissioned, who belonged to the laity, who was not even a layman, but just a lay-woman, and that in an age when women were slaves. She was a woman about whom there was an ugly story, a woman with a discredited and dishonoured record, a stained life, a shamed past, and a future empty of hope.

If ever there was poor material out of which to make a personal worker for Christ and His kingdom, surely it is here. But the woman is saved. Her sins are forgiven. She had come to drink of water from Jacob's well, and Jesus has placed to her parched lips the cup of life. Her tongue is vocal with the new message. Her feet are swift and eager on a new mission. Her heart is afire

with a new passion. Her eyes are lit up with a new joy, and her face is aflame with a holy purpose.

She has come for water. She has found salvation. She is going for souls. In an instant her whole life has changed. That neglected and forgotten water-pot which she leaves behind her as she turns her face to the town to tell her neighbours of the Christ recites the change. It is a mute piece of clay, but as it lies there by the well's mouth it is eloquence incarnate. It declares that a human soul has found the well of salvation. Jacob's well is no longer the end of the path. The road winds on over the hills through the haze toward the sky-line that is eternal.

#### CHRIST'S QUEST

Notice first Christ's quest for a soul. He has gone out of His way to meet the woman at the well. He is on His way to Galilee, but "He must needs pass through Samaria." It is the necessity of bringing salvation to a perishing soul. He has come on a long journey to meet her. He has travelled more days and miles than she can count. He has been on His way from the foundation of the world. Were the curtain to lift, it would disclose Christ with His face always toward the hour when He was to meet a sinful woman at Jacob's well. Now at last the clock has struck high noon as He sits thus by the well, and yonder comes a woman down the path swinging her water-pot, and the

conversation which has been on the program for thousands of years begins.

Human need tugs at Christ's heart. It draws Him like a magnet. He cannot stay away from a soul in trouble. He came to "seek and to save that which was lost." It was not hard for Him to come. It was impossible for Him to stay away. Is it hard for a mother to answer the cry of her hurt child? How she leaps to her feet and flies to help! It is so when the cry of a hurt soul sounds in Christ's ears. That is the cry He had heard. To hear it, one must live close to Him. With the ear of flesh we can hear only certain sound waves, and with the eye of flesh we can see only certain colour waves. But when the soul is in communion with Christ, it hears the inaudible and sees the invisible. Redemption widens the gamut of the soul until we can hear and see the plight of one in the toils of sin.

Christ has come a long way to meet us, too. He must needs go through our town, also. It is Jacob's well for our souls, and Christ is waiting to give us not the physical, but the spiritual. He would cleanse our stain and lift our load and change our life. Let Him talk with us and turn life inside out and "tell us all things that ever we did." This is His way. And He does it, not to shame us, but to save us.

How are we receiving Him? What are we saying to the Christ Who has come so far, Who has

come by the way of the cross? Are we unconcerned? Do we stare at Him and go on drawing water from Jacob's well? Are we too busy to talk about our souls, too occupied with filling clay pitchers and getting back to the dull town to give God an hour, and are we allowing heaven to slip away, leaving us as stained and poor as we were before the King of Day opened to our withered souls the gate of life? O, to listen and obey, to drink of the living water and go back to the town redeemed!

#### THE WOMAN'S QUEST

Notice next the woman's quest for souls. She has found Christ. Shall she surrender herself to her new joy? Shall she bide there at the well for the rest of that golden day and revel in rapture and give herself over to the thrills of her new ecstasy and wave good-bye to Christ as He goes on down the road toward Galilee, and then in the gloaming go back to the town swinging her water-pot and gaily singing: "O, happy day that fixed my choice"?

She has no time to indulge her rapture. She forgets her water-pot and leaves Christ and hurries back to tell her neighbours of the Saviour she has found. She has become a personal worker. Such was the effect of salvation on the people in the New Testament. Andrew found Peter. The man in the tombs told the men of his own village

of his Saviour. This is Christ's plan for the extension of His kingdom. It was the plan followed by the early church. When the early Christians were scattered abroad they went everywhere preaching. The gospel is to be preached, but not always from a pulpit, not only in a church, often on the street, in the office, in an automobile, on the golf links, not always to a thousand people at once, sometimes just to one. Every believer is to be an evangelist.

Watch this woman preacher as she gets into action. If ever a new convert was thoroughly disqualified for such work, it is she. But somehow she gets by. She does not stop to consider her lack of personal fitness, to ask what she shall say to the questions the men of Samaria will ask her, to ponder whether she possesses tact and courage, to ask what they will say when a woman who has led the life she has comes with the message she is bringing, to think of results, to wonder whether she may not do more harm than good. All these things are mere tricks of the devil to hinder us in our work for souls. This woman swept them out of the way in her eager haste and holy joy to carry the good news.

Listen to her message. "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." That was all. She talked to them out of her experience. There was not a syllable beyond it. If there had been no experience, there would have been no message.

The reason some have no message is they have no experience. We do not need to argue with people about their sins, nor be able to explain to them all that is involved in the plan of salvation. What we need to do as personal workers is just to be able to say: "I have found great help in Christ. He has made life a different thing for me. I am sure He can do as much for you. Come and see."

#### CHRIST AND THE CROWD

Notice next Christ and the men the woman has brought Him. They believed her message. That was the marvelous thing about it. The natural thing would have been for the men to laugh at her, to ridicule her, to treat the whole thing as a joke. "Have you heard the news? She has religion. She is going up and down the street talking to people about their souls. She must be getting ready to swap husbands again. You may be sure she is up to some new devilment." Suppose a woman with her record were to get converted in your town and start out on a crusade for God? But salvation makes a difference. It stamps the message with sincerity. It changes the individual. We do not go out alone. The only credential one needs for personal work is to get genuinely saved.

They came out to the well on the woman's testimony. There they are. How many, we are not told. I fancy that some of the hardest cases in that tough town are there. They are the woman's

former associates. It is the kind of crowd such a woman would be likely to assemble. What an audience! Christ has come to meet them, too. The woman He saved has not failed Him. How does she feel as Christ talks to the men she has brought? Her heart beats until it almost breaks its walls. If they would only believe in Him, too! Then there can be a new day in Samaria. These men can make it a new town. They can have happy homes. Crime can be put down, and cruelty and lust. The slavery of women and the rough days of the past will be gone.

Jesus is talking to the men, now. His sermon to the crowd is not reported. His sermon to one woman is. Had the modern reporter been present, he would probably have passed by what Jesus said to the woman, and given us His sermon to the crowd. We measure the value of an address by the size of the audience, but the Bible does not worship numbers. We may be sure Jesus turned the lives of these men inside out, too. And they also believed. They said: "We want you to come into Samaria and speak there." And He did. He spent two whole days in the city. What a wonderful time the Saviour must have had in that town of sinners!

But suppose the woman had not forgotten her water-pot. Suppose she had listened and believed and said: "I must fill my pitcher and hurry back, for I left a thirsty man at home, and he will be

rough if I am late!" Suppose she had gone back to drudgery, and had never thought of souls. The town would have stayed unchanged. It would have remained as bad as ever. Perhaps the woman herself would soon have drifted back into the old life. Think of what the world is missing because we do not forget business long enough to carry Christ's message. Shall clay tools claim all of God's time? Let us leave the pitcher at the well. There is bigger business than carrying water. It is carrying salvation.

#### THE WOMAN AFTER CHRIST HAD GONE

The two days are over. Christ has gone on His way. The weeks are measuring into months. I wonder what the woman did, how she lived? I wonder whether the believers got together and talked things over and organized a little church? Maybe they rented a room, or had a spot out on the hillside under a tree. There they met to talk about the man whom they had met at the well. They did not know much, but they knew enough to change life. I fancy the woman kept on doing personal work. Perhaps the others did as much. Samaria felt the influence of the little church. Human relations began to change in that town. It is marvelous what one person may do. Just one woman whose soul is afire with holy ardour for Christ's cause! She does not work alone. He Who said: "Lo, I am with you always," is there.

One day news came of a great revival in Samaria. They had gotten Philip the evangelist, and a great meeting was in progress. It was not possible to handle the crowds. They send to Jerusalem for help. And the church there sends unto them Peter and John. Who was back of this revival at Samaria? Someone had been working and praying. We can allow our imaginations to fill in the story. The woman who forgot her water-pot was still under the spell of a heavenly vision.

It is this the world needs to-day. We must have more than preachers and evangelists. If the world is to be saved, the saved must be transformed into personal workers. There are people in every community who have never found Christ because those who have found Him have failed to carry the message. A prominent business man in a certain community joined the church. Someone asked him why he had not done so earlier. He said: "I suppose it is because no one ever asked me. When I buy goods for my store, it is usually because someone comes along and tries to sell me. No one has ever tried to sell me Christ." When the church gets dead in earnest and really believes in the supreme value of a soul, the business of Christians will be to "carry on" in succession with her who forgot her water-pot and went her way to tell her friends of Him Who alone has the living water for a thirsty world!

XIV.

THE WHITE FIELDS

## THE CHURCH IN THE WILDWOOD

There's a church in the valley by the wildwood  
No lovelier place in the dale;  
No spot is so dear to my childhood  
As the little brown church in the vale.

How sweet on a clear, Sabbath morning  
To list to the clear-ringing bell,  
Its tones so sweetly are calling:  
O, come to the church in the vale.

There, close by the church in the valley,  
Lies one that I loved so well;  
She sleeps, sweetly sleeps, 'neath the willow;  
Disturb not her rest in the vale.

There, close by the side of that loved one,  
'Neath the tree where the wild flowers bloom,  
When the farewell hymn shall be chanted,  
I shall rest by her side in the tomb.

—WILLIAM S. PITTS.

## XIV

### THE WHITE FIELDS

*"Lift up your heads and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest."*—JOHN 4: 35.

THE white fields of the world's need,—not the green fields, not even the fields that have turned from green to gold, not the fields that have faded brown and withered sere under the biting frost, but the fields that are white, that are dead ripe, that are clamouring for the sickle, that are saying to the reapers: "We must be garnered or we perish."

Such was Christ's picture of the world's spiritual need, of the harvest fields in that land, and in every land, of that age and in every age, into which He would send His servants. He paints two things into the picture. One is urgency and the other is entreaty. Was there ever such urgency? It is a race with death. There is no time for delay.

He seems to say to them: "You have a proverb that four months come between seed time and harvest. But it is not thus in my kingdom. The harvest follows swift on the sowing of the seed. Behold, the men of Samaria are coming. But an

hour ago here beside the well I sowed the seed in the heart of a sinful woman, and now, lift up your eyes and look on the white fields. 'These men are ready for the message. They are ripe for God's harvest.' It is so everywhere and always, for the soul needs God and the weary world is dead ripe to be brought home to Him. If Christ's disciples could only realize this, there would be a glorious season of ingathering the whole year around. The days of waiting are over. What is needed is to catch the vision of white fields and thrust in the sickle.

There is entreaty in the picture, too. It is the heart of Christ pleading for those for whom He died. It is the wounds of Christ pleading with those He has redeemed. It is the sight of souls whose day will fade into night, and whose chance will perish unless the reapers come. It is the agony of God in travail for His own. Is it nothing to those whom He has saved that Christ yearns for all whom the Father has given Him? Shall we turn away from the cross where we have been loosed from our load of sin, and say: "No, let Him call; I will not answer; let Him agonize; I do not care; let Him travail for souls; so far as I am concerned, He shall not be satisfied; let them perish; I am not disturbed"?

In the preceding chapter, we stopped before the picture of the woman who left her forgotten water-pot beside the well in her eager haste to carry the

glad news of her Saviour to the men of her town. It was a lesson in personal work. In this chapter, it is the picture of white fields. It is the challenge which a critical and desperate situation of world need makes to Christ's followers. It is a situation that calls for self-denial, for a faith that practices heroism and sacrifices itself in order that souls without the bread of life may be fed, and lips parched with the thirst that slays not the body but the spirit may drink and live.

#### WORLD FIELDS

The white fields of the world are the non-Christian nations of the earth. Those who study the New Testament, seeking only to know Christ's will, find no difficulty in reaching the conclusion that the business of the church is world evangelization. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" is a command that can be neither abridged nor repealed. The field is the world.

The field is not the church. The field is outside the church in God's open. The church is the force. The church does not exist for its own entertainment and profit. Worship is not the end of religion. Culture is not. Even service is not. All these are fundamental phases of Christian experience, but the business of the church is to carry the gospel into all the earth, until no soul is without the knowledge of Christ. The apostolic church so

understood it, and any church that neglects it cannot please Christ.

The church is the passion of Calvary organized, militant, aggressive, evangelistic. The cross is the passion of God for a lost world throbbing in a Person. The church is the passion of God for a lost world throbbing in an organization. Calvary is God's passion expressing itself. The church is His passion in action,—overcoming barriers, conquering hostility, enlisting adherents, until the lost find their way back to the Father's house.

There are some who regard this as fanatical and unnecessary. They do not believe in foreign missions. They regard any religion as good enough, provided it be sincerely held. They consider the religion which a nation gets as a product of its own evolutionary processes, the best for that nation. They have never seen the white fields. A member of the church I serve was in the habit of paying all his church dues for the year with a check. It was not a large one. Always across the face of the check he wrote: "Not a cent for foreign missions." One day it fell to my lot to conduct his funeral. His checks, scarred with that challenge of Calvary, repudiating the cause for which the Saviour gave His life, seemed to rise up in judgment against him. There are perhaps those who are not so bold in their opposition, but who are as pronounced in their indifference to the challenge

which comes from the white fields of the world's need.

But to-day people who read and think and travel with their eyes open have ceased to sneer at missionaries. They are finding that the Christian missionary is the real statesman of the new world. It is not possible to have a world one half pagan and one half Christian, one half motivated by hate and one half motivated by love. The problems of the world are one. The problems of the East and of the West are the same. There is no Oriental problem that is not also an Occidental problem. The wrongs of China are America's wrongs, also. The perils of France are not national, but international. Therefore, when nations come together to consider these problems, the problems must be approached and attacked by people of the same motives and standards and ideals. This means an international mind.

We are finding that the only psychology for an international mind is a recognition of the obligation of the service ideal. Nations can get nowhere in solving world problems until they recognize that peoples are great, not as they enslave, but as they serve. The service ideal is a monopoly of the religion of Him Who said: "I am among you as one that serves." The Christian missionary who teaches wherever he goes the service standard of life is the exponent of the only statesmanship that can end war and make nations friendly.

We are finding, too, that on the world fields the church is realizing its own oneness perhaps as nowhere else. Sectarianism has no standing when God's people are face to face with the white fields. What difference does it make whether one be Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or what not, when it comes to saving the grain that is about to perish? Then what needs is to put dogmas into cold storage and get busy with the sickle.

Missionaries are the hope of the people in those lands where human life is cheap, where the sordid materialism incident to a factory life that knows nothing of the Golden Rule, is beginning to cast its long and awful shadows. There human life is already cheap. The only thing that will save women who are already slaves, that will drag the children out from under the wheels of the car of this modern Molech, is a gospel that fights materialism with the spiritual, and insists that human beings are made in God's image, and that men must treat each other as brothers.

These and other similar discoveries, as well as the message of personal salvation to the individual, are the credentials of the missionary to-day. He is in a big business. He is the statesman of the new age. He is the forerunner of world brotherhood. Do not sneer at him. Do not pity him. Esteem it a sublime privilege to share in his glorious adventure.

## PRESENT DAY URGENCY

The white fields were never more urgent than to-day. They are open. Time was when they were closed. Time was when a missionary was called a foreign devil. He is called such no more. He is not only tolerated to-day, he is welcomed. He has become the confidential adviser of the mayors of cities, and of the governors of provinces, who seek to translate into the life of their country some of the things that have blessed us in this western world. The non-Christian nations of the earth are coming more and more to realize that the civilization they need cannot be built on the Koran, nor on the teachings of Confucius, nor on the mysticism of Buddha. It must come through Christ.

Christianity has shown that it can meet the world's need. It is no longer an empty boast or a doubtful experiment. It is a demonstration. It can handle any situation. It can change social conditions. If people will only faithfully practice its teachings, it and all similar efforts will get them out of the jungle. The gospel will cure the troubles of the world.

We have learned that no program of world reconciliation which leaves out Christ can hope to succeed. It must have the Christian dynamic. The Arms Conference made a splendid stagger toward reconciliation. But it will prove futile to prevent war without a national conscience, with-

out national good-will, without the Golden Rule. Christianity is the only thing that can make the world safe and keep the road clear for human progress.

The growth of modern missions has been steady and arresting. Within ten years the church has practically doubled its missionary gifts, and correspondingly multiplied the force in the field. Despite this, its success in mission fields has run ahead of the force to such an extent that there is scarcely a mission Board that does not carry a large debt. Is this to be regarded as a disaster? Are we to lament a success that transcends our preparation for garnering the harvest? Should we not rather consider the dead ripe fields which face the Christian church to-day as a stirring challenge to increased sacrifice and self-denial?

It is not an impossible task which confronts the Christian church as it lifts its eyes to the white fields. Nothing is impossible with a sufficient spiritual dynamic. For centuries the Nile was a mystery to the people of Egypt. Running through rainless regions, carrying fertility to what otherwise would have been sterile sands, the river was the source of Egypt's prosperity and power. But what if the river should run dry? Where did its mystic waters come from? Suppose the source of supply should fail? The rich delta would wither and the land would die. But they have found that the Nile rises in the high mountains whose mighty

peaks are covered with eternal snows. There on the summits of mighty Ruwenzori are the undying sources of the mystic river that has made Egypt's desert into a garden. And so it is with the church of Christ. The unfailing sources of its power are on high. Yonder are the white fields, but above the white fields is the white throne, and the church which connects with these heights is equal to its task of world redemption.

XV

MOUNTAIN-TOP AND VALLEY

## DAWN AND DARK

God with His million cares  
Went to the left or right,  
Leaving our world; and the day  
Grew night.

Back from a sphere He came  
Over a starry lawn,  
Looked at our world; and the dark  
Grew dawn.

—NORMAN GALE.

## XV.

### MOUNTAIN-TOP AND VALLEY.

*"Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them."*

—MARK 9:2.

THOSE who travel on the surface of this incident will find it easy to condemn the transfiguration as a waste of time. It seems foolish, selfish, and empty of meaning. Here were some professional soul-savers, some widely advertised welfare workers, having a picnic, indulging in a wake, holding a séance, giving themselves over to meaningless rhapsodies, while the grinding, groveling, sinning, needy world down there in the plain below goes to the devil.

Jesus has taken Peter and James and John, His apostolic favourites, for a little outing to the mountain. They have climbed to the summit of Hermon, and there they get their view. But it is not scenery they behold. It is not a panorama of mountain, valley, and plain, of river, sea, and lake, stretching away to where land and sky meet. They see beyond the sky-line. They are looking across the great divide into eternity. As they watch

Jesus, a strange change takes place in His appearance. His form and features are the same, but His Person is more radiant than the sun. His very garments shimmer and shine with a great light. The essential glory of Jesus shines out and suddenly in that lustrum they see Moses and Elias talking with Christ. Peter felt that he, too, must say something. To make conversation, he blurted out: "It is good to be here. Let us erect three tents. Let us make the picnic permanent. Let us forget the struggle and sin down there in the plain." Then a voice from above said: "This is my beloved son. Hear him." Suddenly the picture dissolves. The voice is silent. Moses and Elias have gone, and "they see no man save Jesus only."

Such was the transfiguration. Granted that it occurred,—and there are those who have their doubts and say it was a case of hypnotism,—but granted that it happened as told, is it not a stupid and extravagant incident? Would not these men better be down there where they are needed, ministering to human want and suffering, than up here on the mountain-top having a holy picnic? Of what earthly value can their pious hysterics and celestial thrills be to a torn, worn, and bleeding world?

It must be admitted that there is a kind of religion that never gets beyond the picnic stage. Its sublimest experience is a soul-fest. It is intro-spective, meditative, hysterical, gullible. It is

stupid and selfish. It forgets the sobbing, suffering world, and is absorbed with its own mental states. It studies the Bible not to discover the plain face of duty, but to detect some hidden and occult meaning of unfulfilled prophecy. It nurses its fancies, coddles its moods, and like Peter, makes conversation by proposing to keep God in the family and perpetuate the picnic.

Such a conception of religion cannot be too strongly condemned, whether the people who practice it call themselves Holy Rollers or Holy Jumpers or Disciples or Millennial Dawn or just students of the word. Religion is practical. It must get somewhere. It must help somebody. If it is nothing but a séance, it is a fraud. If the transfiguration stops there, it is unworthy of a place in the New Testament. But those who go beneath the surface find that the transfiguration is one of the sublimest incidents in the life of Jesus. Three great facts are imbedded in the story.

#### VINDICATION

The transfiguration was a vindication. It was heaven certifying the genuineness of Christ's claim. A cloud drifts in and wraps its white folds like a turban around the peak on which they stand, until the world is blotted out. Then the cloud becomes vocal, not with the roar of thunder, but with the voice of God, Who says: "This is my beloved son. Hear him."

It was a vindication to Christ of the reality of His mission. Did there ever come to Him seasons of blinding, baffling doubt? It seemed to be such a season there in the garden, when He was in an agony. "What shall I say?" He cried. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" Jesus was human enough to be tired, hungry, thirsty, lonely. Was He human enough sometimes to wonder whether He might not be mistaken about Himself, whether after all He was not just a common, clay man, deluding Himself with the idea that He had a divine mission?

Surely He had a right to a word of encouragement, to a bit of reassurance, to an hour when the sky rolls up its curtain and glory flames out to salute its King. He was ever trying to strengthen the faith of others. Suppose His own faith should break down? It would be the tragedy of the world. Hence God comes to His Son. Heaven opens the door to its King, just wide enough to say: "You are not mistaken. You are the brightness of the Father's glory. You are the chosen one. The world may crucify, but heaven waits to acclaim, to welcome, to crown!" Jesus can now go on His way.

It was also a vindication to His disciples. We know they had their seasons of doubt. One day they asked: "Who art thou?" Again they said: "Thou art the Christ!" Now they are acting as if Jesus is God, and now as though He were only a

weak man. They need certitude. They get it on the mountain-top. "This is my beloved son." They must never doubt again. Satisfied, they are ready for what awaits them. They cannot talk about the transfiguration, for there are some things too holy to be subjected to the stares and scoffs and sneers of the unbelieving crowd. They will not wear the transfiguration on their sleeves. They will cherish it in their hearts. In the blinding tempest, when threatened by doubt, they will think of the mountain-top and carry on.

It is likewise a vindication for you and me, passing on to us over the faith of these apostles a faith that was tested out in the fiercest conflict. There is much about Christ we cannot understand. Reason has no explanation, but where reason halts, imagination marches. We can behold the picture and be reassured. The Christ of the transfiguration can be trusted not only for this life, but for that which is to come. This is the first thing in the incident,—vindication. Were it all, it would be enough to make that mountain-top holy forever.

#### REVELATION

The transfiguration was a revelation of immortality, of the fact that death does not end all, that the grave does not destroy identity, that dead people can be recognized two thousand years after they have died, recognized by people who never saw them. There is something in the glorified

face which not only carries identity, but is self-announcing. Peter, James and John had never seen Moses and Elias, but they had no difficulty in knowing who they were. Moses and Elias talked to Jesus. Not only did their existence continue, not only was their identity maintained, but their mental processes were abiding. What more do you want? This is what the transfiguration reveals concerning the future life. This is its message concerning the grave. Why should we fear death, or mourn our loved ones as lost from our fellowship forever?

The transfiguration was a revelation that demonstrated the reality of the spiritual world. It says more than that the soul survives death. Moses and Elias have been somewhere during the past two thousand years. They seem to have kept up with what was going on. They were interested in current events. They knew what was about to take place. They were talking with Jesus, and we know what they discussed. It was the decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. They knew why Jesus was on earth, that He was about to die. They knew where and when He would die, and they knew that His death would be not a defeat but an achievement. They were celestial ambassadors to discuss what was of keenest interest in the world of spirits.

We regard the realm of sense as reality. We spend ourselves on that. But we are soaking in a

spiritual atmosphere. The soul does not enter a void at death. It enters a sphere throbbing with intense life. Jesus came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly,—not that we might have a dull time, but enter upon the great adventure in which no moment shall be stale. This is what the transfiguration reveals. But even this is not all.

It was a revelation of the character of the resurrected body, of something that cannot be portrayed in words. If this body were described to us, the description would puzzle rather than inform. But the transfigured body was there before their eyes. They saw what could not be said. No wonder they were not allowed to talk about it. They could never tell it accurately. “With what body do they come?” “Thou fool!” But because the resurrected body cannot be described, it is not to be doubted. While “it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” “we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” The resurrected body will be like Christ’s transfigured body. It will be glorious. There will be no blemishes. Lameness and blindness and weariness will be gone forever. It will be beautiful with glory until the very raiment of the saints is transfigured, shining like burnished gold and glistening like the spotless snow. It will gleam with a whiteness that stands out against the snowy background of Hermon as the radiance of the burnished sun dulls and deadens the white face of the noon.

This is the second thing in the transfiguration,—the revelation. It is a chapter in the life of Jesus that reaches beyond the stars. But even this is not all. There is one thing more.

#### PREPARATION

The transfiguration was preparation. While it transpired on the mountain-top, a very different scene was enacting itself in the valley. While Christ's face shone with a supernatural light, while Moses and Elias were talking about Calvary and Peter was making irrelevant remarks, and the voice in the cloud was certifying Christ's divine origin, the other disciples were down there at the foot of the mountain, with trouble and sickness, with calamity and impending death. They were doing their best, but it was without avail. A father had brought his afflicted child, and the lad is torn with a dumb and deaf demon. The horror takes place before their very eyes. It is not a glimpse into heaven, but a look in on hell, that greets them. Here is where the soul-savers and welfare workers are needed,—not up there on the peak with their rhapsody, but down here in the valley of need at close grip with despair.

They are coming down from the mountain-top. It was not a place to stay. It was just a place to be equipped. They are coming down with the spell of that hour on them, coming fresh from contact with the eternal to face desperate, unyielding, inso-

lent human misery and suffering. I fancy the other disciples greet them coldly, and ask: "Where have you been? Here is your place. Here is your task. We have been on duty. We have needed you." But directly they discover that the men who have been on the mountain-top have not been wasting their time. They have been preparing for service. They have brought to that stubborn case of human need a victorious faith, a triumphant certitude, the challenging and convincing confidence of those who have seen the eternal and heard the voice of God.

Watch the transfigured Christ at the foot of the mountain. He is not less radiant and sublime than He was on the summit. He is not afraid. He has no doubts. Heaven has just commissioned Him afresh. The battery of His wonderful Personality has just been recharged from the dynamo of the infinite. The father tells his story and presents his afflicted child. Jesus asks: "Canst thou believe?" Is He trying to slip out on a technicality? Never! The demon is cast out. It is an awful struggle that leaves the lad apparently dead. But Jesus lifts him into his father's arms, restored, emancipated. Then more clearly than ever they understand the transfiguration.

God gives us a great hour on the summit with Him that we may give Him a great day of service in the valley with our fellowmen. He cures doubt and kindles hope and enchants and reassures, not

that we may have spells and dwell apart from the torn and pestered world as it wallows and foams in its despair, but that we may come with victory and confidence to minister and heal.

Have we been on the mountain-top with Him? They are waiting for us in the valley, and He will be with us in the depths no less than on the heights; and as we cast out unclean things in His name, we shall find that the transfiguration is more than a vision; it is an experience; more than a memory; it is what God means every day to be like.



XVI

A SENSE OF FAR HORIZONS

## THE HILLS OF REST

Beyond the last horizon's rim,  
Beyond adventure's farthest quest,  
Somewhere they rise, serene and dim,  
The happy, happy Hills of Rest.

Upon their sunlit slopes uplift  
The castles we have built in Spain—  
While fair amid the summer drift  
Our faded gardens flower again.

Sweet hours we did not live go by  
To soothing note, on scented wing;  
In golden-lettered volumes lie  
The songs we tried in vain to sing.

They all are there: the days of dream  
That build the inner lives of men;  
The silent, sacred years we deem  
The might be, and the might have been.

Some evening when the sky is gold  
I'll follow day into the west;  
Nor pause, nor heed, till I behold  
The happy, happy Hills of Rest.

—ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE.

## XVI

### A SENSE OF FAR HORIZONS

*"He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars. . . ."*—GENESIS 15: 5.

**W**HERE does your sky-line end? Abram sat in his tent with the flap down. He was shrouded in gloom. He was tented in despair. His world was small, and he was saying to himself: "Life has been a failure. I had thought to found a nation, but old age is on me, and my dream is gone. I am childless, and hope is dead, and the future offers but a grave." Then God invaded the gloom. He threw back the flap to the old man's tent and said: "Abram, come outside and look toward heaven. Dream again!" And he did, and his manhood returned. He saw the stars. He saw that the world was bigger than the patch of ground on which his tent was pitched. He saw that the sky was higher than his ridge-pole. He got a sense of far horizons. His soul revived, and turning his back on the grave, the old man went away to found a nation.

One's horizon is his sky-line. It is the boundary of his world, the outer rim of his universe. It is where his seas lave the ether shores, and his conti-

nents cut into the heavens. His horizon is the goal toward which his feet travel, and its lights are the beacons which beckon and allure him.

Some men have a short horizon. They live in a small world. They live for the day, for the gratification of the passing moment. They measure things by what is nearest. They want a quick delivery, and value only that which can be turned into cash on the spot. They are opportunists, and lack perspective. They live as if the way things are is the way they must stay, as if the stretch of the road they are on fixes the style of the road forever, as if life were a blind alley, and existence a tent in the desert with the flap down.

It is a poor way to live. It shortens everything. It deadens existence. It shrouds us in gloom, and tempts us to despair. We need a sense of far horizons. We need to walk outside and look around, to gaze away across the fields, beyond the wide-extended plains, over the foothills and past the tall ranges to the far horizons, to the world which loses itself in the stretches of unbridled space. Have you climbed by a road that was long and toilsome, out of a flat country to a mountain-top? The road wound and wound, and for a long time there were no vistas. The hill in front of you seemed the end of the world. The barriers about you hedged and oppressed you. Then suddenly you stepped out where the curtain lifted, and the world broke away across green fields and hazy

ridges and majestic peaks into ample distances. You had a vision of far horizons, and your soul leaped at the sight. It was something like this that God did for Abram. He took him out where he could see, where he could discover the bigness of the world and in the glory of that discovery shake off his gloom. It is what He would do for all.

#### THE SPELL OF THE INFINITE

He would give us a sense of far horizons. To tired, discouraged, defeated men and women who feel there is nothing left to live for, He lifts the curtain and reveals the bigness and glory and endless possibilities of life. To those who are sordid and grasping, whose souls are so hectored by the senses and whose spirits are so tethered to fleshly appetites that they barter eternity for time and sell out their birthright for a mess of pottage, He says: "Look now toward heaven!" Get a vista. Dream of glory. This life is not all. There is more for you to consider than the profits of the present, more to live for than the pleasures of the passing hour.

Man needs a perspective. He needs to get himself and his work in right relations to God and His world. One reason we get so quickly discouraged and are so easily defeated is that we have lost our outlook. We see nothing but a blank wall ahead. A great artist wrote "amplius" across the work of the young student. So across our vision

God is continually writing "wider, higher, longer, farther, bigger!" He would bring us under the spell of the infinite. He would capture our imaginations and suffuse our souls with a sight of celestial vistas.

Here is the worth of the supernatural in religion, and I would not give much for any religion that lacks it; yet there are people who try to explain everything away. They would reduce the universe to a formula. They rebel at miracles. They protest against the virgin birth, the dual nature of Christ, and the resurrection. They would shorten everything and measure it by their little yardstick. They want to weigh and label and pigeonhole the universe. The result is, life is left without a perspective. The horizon is torn down, and the soul is clapped into a windowless cell where the lights are out and the bolt is shot. Religion becomes a cave-dweller's creed. Better a cosmopolitan religion that makes one a citizen of the universe; a creed with vast vistas and big forces and dizzy heights and stretches which break away toward the infinite; a religion which leads out of the cave and says: "Look now toward heaven!"

This is the preciousness of heavenly hope. We are pilgrims here, but we seek a country. This life is packed with trouble. Yonder is a mother with a dead child against her cheek, there a father with a wild boy on his heart, there a home whose happiness is in ruins, and yonder a youth whose sky is

overcast with clouds ere the day is well begun. The world is full of trouble. But God says: "The world is only a tiny corner of my universe. Look away to the land of light and song. There is no despair there, and no sorrow. Look toward heaven!" Some feel that heaven is an old-fashioned religion. They say: "This is our world." So it is, but it is not all. Do not take away the hope of heaven. Do not destroy our dream. Christ painted the picture Himself, that we might have a sense of far horizons.

This, too, is the mystery of prayer. We think sometimes of prayer as a cheap way of getting what we are disinclined to work for ourselves, as a scheme to induce the Almighty to upset His administration of the universe in order to meet our special need and gratify our personal whims. Prayer is a far higher and holier thing. It is the soul projecting itself out toward the infinite. Are enemies threatening? Does temptation imperil? Pray! "Look toward heaven!"

This is what God means when He says: "Have faith." Faith is looking beyond the seen into the unseen. It is having a sky-line out there beyond the purple rim of things, beyond the amber sunsets, far out on that glory ledge, where eternal mansions lift.

It is what God means when He says: "Have hope." Stretch your world and move into bigger quarters. Move on into diviner surroundings. It

is also the message of love. Love laughs at bars. Love requires liberty. Love defies all barriers which would keep it from its own. Caste comes and builds a sky-line across the wall of love, and says to love: "Stop! Your world ends here!" But love says: "No, my world is on the other side of your wall. Caste cannot shorten my horizon!" Then love tears down the walls of caste, for love has far horizons. Love "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things."

And so all that God does and says would seem to be just for this. The revelation of the supernatural, the doctrine of heaven, the sanctity of prayer, the summons of faith and hope and love, are all to bring life under the spell of the eternal, and to give to poor, time-badgered, sense-pestered souls the thrill and call of the far horizon.

#### HUMAN NEED

Man needs a sense of far horizons to save his soul, to deliver him from dirt, to keep him from groveling, from degenerating into a mere animal, to keep him from living as if there were nothing to live for but a living. There are men who see nothing beyond their daily wage. They never have a thought higher than their heads. They are in the tread-mill, and go through the daily grind. Life is slavery. God says: "Look toward heaven! Man, you are immortal! Live as if you had forever!"

Man needs it to help him find himself. He will

never find his powers until he gets beyond his depth. He is at his best with a sense of vastness on him. The infinite summons. He needs it for the sake of his work, to transfigure it, to lift it into dignity, to invest it with permanence and make it a delight.

He needs the far horizon to steady his convictions. Somebody said: "Why object? It will do no good." And that is a common way to view life. If things are not going your way, go their way. Be a trimmer. Wag your head with the majority. Then is the time for the man who wants to be more than a pigmy to look beyond the crowd, past majorities, and say, as true men have always said: "Here I stand!" The trouble is, people get short-circuited and go to pieces in a moral crisis. The opinions of the crowd tap them, and they surrender. What they need is to live in contact with the currents from God's throne.

Where does your sky-line end? Are you living in too small a world? Are you thinking only of the present, of your business, your wages, your troubles and failures? Are you a mere provincial? Has life become stale, and existence dreary?

Break away! Venture out! Push aside the curtain! Lift the flap to your tent and walk out under the stars! Ask God to do for you what He did for John on Patmos. The lonely island was the exile's prison, and the seas seemed to sing the requiem of hope. But John was in the spirit on the Lord's

day, and he saw beyond the island, and across the seas, past all the barriers of time, into the glory, and heard the choir chant angelic anthems. O, for an Apocalypse, for a revelation that will break up the monotony of the cell and the cave, for a glimpse into glory that will transfigure drudgery and widen out our island crag into Jerusalem the Golden!

And so God's open is higher than the roof of the world, taller than the tallest mountain, wider than the widest sea, and ampler than the dimmest skyline, farther than the farthest stars,—God's far horizon is the infinite!

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