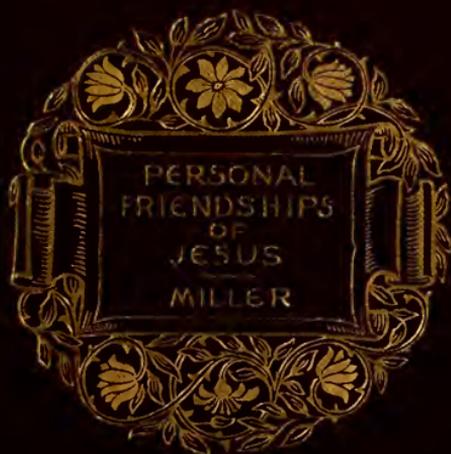


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# PERSONAL FRIENDSHIPS OF JESUS

BY

J. R. <sup>o</sup>MILLER, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "SILENT TIMES," "MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE," "THINGS  
TO LIVE FOR," "BLESSING OF CHEERFULNESS," ETC.

*One friend in that path shall be,  
To secure my steps from wrong;  
One to count night day for me,  
Patient through the watches long,  
Serving most with none to see.*

BROWNING.

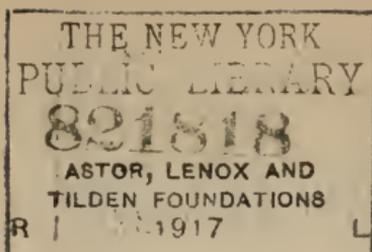
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## P R E F A C E.

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GEORGE MACDONALD said in an address, "The longer I live, the more I am assured that the business of life is to understand the Lord Christ." If this be true, whatever sheds even a little light on the character or life of Christ is worth while.

Nothing reveals a man's heart better than his friendships. The kind of friend he is, tells the kind of man he is. The personal friendships of Jesus reveal many tender and beautiful things in his character. They show us also what is possible for us in divine friendship; for the heart of Jesus is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.

These chapters are only suggestive, not exhaustive. If they make the way into close personal friendship with Jesus any plainer for those who hunger for such blessed intimacy, that will be reward enough.

J. R. M.

PHILADELPHIA,



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All I could never be,  
All men ignored in me,  
This I was worth to God.

BROWNING.

But lead me, Man divine,  
Where'er Thou will'st, only that I may find  
At the long journey's end Thy image there,  
And grow more like to it. For art not Thou  
The human shadow of the infinite Love  
That made and fills the endless universe?  
The very Word of Him, the unseen, unknown,  
Eternal Good that rules the summer flower  
And all the worlds that people starry space.

RICHARD WATSON GILDER.

# THE FRIENDSHIPS OF JESUS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### THE HUMANHEARTEDNESS OF JESUS.

O God, O kinsman loved, but not enough,  
O man with eyes majestic after death,  
Whose feet have toiled along our pathways rough,  
Whose lips drawn human breath ;

By that one likeness which is ours and thine,  
By that one nature which doth hold us kin,  
By that high heaven where sinless thou dost shine,  
To draw us sinners in ;

By thy last silence in the judgment hall,  
By long foreknowledge of the deadly tree,  
By darkness, by the wormwood and the gall,  
I pray thee visit me.

JEAN INGELOW.

THERE is a natural tendency to think of Jesus as different from other men in the human element of his personality. Our adora-

tion of him as our divine Lord makes it seem almost sacrilege to place his humanity in the ordinary rank with that of other men. It seems to us that life could not have meant the same to him that it means to us. It is difficult for us to conceive of him as learning in childhood as other children have to learn. We find ourselves fancying that he must always have known how to read and write and speak. We think of the experiences of his youth and young manhood as altogether unlike those of any other boy or young man in the village where he grew up. This same feeling leads us to think of his temptation as so different from what temptation is to other men as to be really no temptation at all.

So we are apt to think of all the human life of Jesus as being in some way lifted up out of the rank of ordinary experiences. We do not conceive of him as having the same struggles that we have in meeting trial, in enduring injury and wrong, in learning obedience, patience, meekness, submission, trust, and cheerfulness. We conceive of his friend-

ships as somehow different from other men's. We feel that in some mysterious way his human life was supported and sustained by the deity that dwelt in him, and that he was exempt from all ordinary limiting conditions of humanity.

There is no doubt that with many people this feeling of reverence has been in the way of the truest understanding of Jesus, and oft-times those who have clung most devoutly to a belief in his deity have missed much of the comfort which comes from a proper comprehension of his humanity.

Yet the story of Jesus as told in the Gospels furnishes no ground for any confusion on the subject of his human life. It represents him as subject to all ordinary human conditions excepting sin. He began life as every infant begins, in feebleness and ignorance; and there is no hint of any precocious development. He learned as every child must learn. The lessons were not gotten easily or without diligent study. He played as other boys did, and with them. The more we think of the youth of

Jesus as in no marked way unlike that of those among whom he lived, the truer will our thought of him be.

Millais the great artist, when he was a young man, painted an unusual picture of Jesus. He represented him as a little boy in the home at Nazareth. He has cut his finger on some carpenter's tool, and comes to his mother to have it bound up. The picture is really one of the truest of all the many pictures of Jesus, because it depicts just such a scene as oftentimes may have been witnessed in his youth. Evidently there was nothing in his life in Nazareth that drew the attention of his companions and neighbors to him in any striking way. We know that he wrought no miracles until after he had entered upon his public ministry. We can think of him as living a life of unselfishness and kindness. There was never any sin or fault in him; he always kept the law of God perfectly. But his perfection was not something startling. There was no halo about his head, no transfiguration, that awed men. We are told that he grew in favor

with men as well as with God. His religion made his life beautiful and winning, but always so simple and natural that it drew no unusual attention to itself. It was richly and ideally human.

So it was unto the end. Through the years of his public ministry, when his words and works burned with divine revealing, he continued to live an altogether natural human life. He ate and drank; he grew weary and faint; he was tempted in all points like as we are, and suffered, being tempted. He learned obedience by the things that he endured. He hungered and thirsted, never ministering with his divine power to any of his own needs. "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren."

In nothing else is this truth more clearly shown than in the humanheartedness which was so striking a feature of the life of Jesus among men. When we think of him as the Son of God, the question arises, Did he really care for personal friendships with men and women of the human family? In the home

from which he came he had dwelt from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, and had enjoyed the companionship of the highest angels. What could he find in this world of imperfect, sinful beings to meet the cravings of his heart for fellowship? Whom could he find among earth's sinful creatures worthy of his friendship, or capable of being in any real sense his personal friend? What satisfaction could his heart find in this world's deepest and holiest love? What light can a dim candle give to the sun? Does the great ocean need the little dewdrop that hides in the bosom of the rose? What blessing or inspiration of love can any poor, marred, stained life give to the soul of the Christ?

Yet the Gospels abound with evidences that Jesus did crave human love, that he found sweet comfort in the friendships which he made, and that much of his keenest suffering was caused by failures in the love of those who ought to have been true to him as his friends. He craved affection, and even among the weak and faulty men and women about him made

many very sacred attachments from which he drew strength and comfort.

We must distinguish between Christ's love for all men and his friendship for particular individuals. He was in the world to reveal the Father, and all the divine compassion for sinners was in his heart. It was this mighty love that brought him to earth on the mission of redemption. It was this that impelled and constrained him in all his seeking of the lost. He had come to be the Saviour of all who would believe and follow him. Therefore he was interested in every merest fragment or shred of life. No human soul was so debased that he did not love it.

But besides this universal divine love revealed in the heart of Jesus, he had his personal human friendships. A philanthropist may give his whole life to the good of his fellow-men, to their uplifting, their advancement, their education; to the liberation of the enslaved; to work among and in behalf of the poor, the sick, or the fallen. All suffering humanity has its interest for him, and makes

appeal to his compassion. Yet amid the world of those whom he thus loves and wishes to help, this man will have his personal friends; and through the story of his life will run the golden threads of sweet companionships and friendships whose benedictions and inspirations will be secrets of strength, cheer, and help to him in all his toil in behalf of others.

Jesus gave all his rich and blessed life to the service of love. Power was ever going out from him to heal, to comfort, to cheer, to save. He was continually emptying out from the full fountain of his own heart cupfuls of rich life to reinvigorate other lives in their faintness and exhaustion. One of the sources of his own renewing and replenishing was in the friendships he had among men and women. What friends are to us in our human hunger and need, the friends of Jesus were to him. He craved companionship, and was sorely hurt when men shut their doors in his face.

There are few more pathetic words in the New Testament than that short sentence which tells of his rejection, "He came unto his own,

and his own received him not." Another pathetic word is that which describes the neglect of those who ought to have been ever eager to show him hospitality: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Even the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven had warmer welcome in this world than he in whose heart was the most gentle love that earth ever knew.

Another word which reveals the deep hunger of the heart of Jesus for friendship and companionship was spoken in view of the hour when even his own apostles would leave him: "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." The experience of the garden of Gethsemane also shows in a wonderful way the Lord's craving for sympathy. In his great sorrow he wished to have his best friends near him, that he might lean on them, and draw from their love a little strength for his hour of bitter need. It was an added element in the sorrow of that night

that he failed to get the help from human sympathy which he yearned for and expected. When he came back each time after his supplication, he found his apostles sleeping.

These are some of the glimpses which we get in the Gospel story of the longing heart of Jesus. He loved deeply, and sought to be loved. He was disappointed when he failed to find affection. He welcomed love wherever it came to him, — the love of the poor, the gratitude of those whom he had helped, the trusting affection of little children. We can never know how much the friendship of the beloved disciple was to Jesus. What a shelter and comfort the Bethany home was to him, and how his strength was renewed by its sweet fellowship! How even the smallest kindnesses were a solace to his heart! How he was comforted by the affection and the ministries of the women-friends who followed him!

In the chapters of this book which follow, the attempt is made to tell the story of some of the friendships of Jesus, gathering up the

threads from the Gospel pages. Sometimes the material is abundant, as in the case of Peter and John; sometimes we have only a glimpse or two in the record, albeit enough to reveal a warm and tender friendship, as in the case of the Bethany sisters, and of Andrew, and of Joseph. It may do us good to study these friendship stories. It will at least show us the humanheartedness of Jesus, and his method in blessing and saving the world. The central fact in every true Christian life is a personal friendship with Jesus. Men were called to follow him, to leave all and cleave to him, to believe on him, to trust him, to love him, to obey him; and the result was the transformation of their lives into his own beauty. That which alone makes one a Christian is being a friend of Jesus. Friendship transforms — all human friendship transforms. We become like those with whom we live in close, intimate relations. Life flows into life, heart and heart are knit together, spirits blend, and the two friends become one.

We have but little to give to Christ; yet it

is a comfort to know that our friendship really is precious to him, and adds to his joy, poor and meagre though its best may be—but he has infinite blessings to give to us. “I call you friends.” No other gift he gives to us can equal in value the love and friendship of his heart. When Cyrus gave Artabazus, one of his courtiers, a gold cup, he gave Chrysanthus, his favorite, only a kiss. And Artabazus said to Cyrus, “The cup you gave me was not so good gold as the kiss you gave Chrysanthus.” No good man’s money is ever worth so much as his love. Certainly the greatest honor of this earth, greater than rank or station or wealth, is the friendship of Jesus Christ. And this honor is within the reach of every one. “Henceforth I call you not servants . . . I have called you friends.” “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

The stories of the friendships of Jesus when he was on the earth need cause no one to sigh, “I wish that I had lived in those days, when Jesus lived among men, that I might have been his friend too, feeling the warmth of his

love, my life enriched by contact with his, and my spirit quickened by his love and grace!" The friendships of Jesus, whose stories we read in the New Testament, are only patterns of friendships into which we may enter, if we are ready to accept what he offers, and to consecrate our life to faithfulness and love.

The friendship of Jesus includes all other blessings for time and for eternity. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's." His friendship sanctifies all pure human bonds—no friendship is complete which is not woven of a threefold cord. If Christ is our friend, all life is made rich and beautiful to us. The past, with all of sacred loss it holds, lives before us in him. The future is a garden-spot in which all life's sweet hopes, that seem to have perished on the earth, will be found growing for us.

"Fields of the past to thee shall be no more  
The burialground of friendships once in bloom,  
But the seed-plots of a harvest on before,  
And prophecies of life with larger room  
For things that are behind.

Live thou in Christ, and thy dead past shall be  
Alive forever with eternal day;  
And planted on his bosom thou shalt see  
The flowers revived that withered on the way  
Amid the things behind."

## CHAPTER II.

### JESUS AND HIS MOTHER.

Sleep, sleep, mine Holy One!  
My flesh, my Lord!—what name? I do not know  
A name that seemeth not too high or low,  
Too far from me or heaven.  
My Jesus, *that* is best!

. . . . .

Sleep, sleep, my saving One.

MRS. BROWNING.

THE first friend a child has in this world is its mother. It comes here an utter stranger, knowing no one; but it finds love waiting for it. Instantly the little stranger has a friend, a bosom to nestle in, an arm to encircle it, a hand to minister to its helplessness. Love is born with the child. The mother presses it to her breast, and at once her heart's tendrils twine about it.

It is a good while before the child becomes conscious of the wondrous love that is bending

over it, yet all the time the love is growing in depth and tenderness. In a thousand ways, by a thousand delicate arts, the mother seeks to waken in her child a response to her own yearning love. At length the first gleams of answering affection appear — the child has begun to love. From that hour the holy friendship grows. The two lives become knit in one.

When God would give the world a great man, a man of rare spirit and transcendent power, a man with a lofty mission, he first prepares a woman to be his mother. Whenever in history we come upon such a man, we instinctively begin to ask about the character of her on whose bosom he nestled in infancy, and at whose knee he learned his life's first lessons. We are sure of finding here the secret of the man's greatness. When the time drew nigh for the incarnation of the Son of God, we may be sure that into the soul of the woman who should be his mother, who should impart her own life to him, who should teach him his first lessons, and prepare

him for his holy mission, God put the loveliest and the best qualities that ever were lodged in any woman's life. We need not accept the teaching that exalts the mother of Jesus to a place beside or above her divine Son. We need have no sympathy whatever with the dogma that ascribes worship to the Virgin Mary, and teaches that the Son on his throne must be approached by mortals through his more merciful, more gentle-hearted mother. But we need not let these errors concerning Mary obscure the real blessedness of her character. We remember the angel's greeting, "Blessed art thou among women." Hers surely was the highest honor ever conferred upon any woman.

" Say of me as the Heavenly said, ' Thou art  
The blessedest of women ! ' — blessedest,  
Not holiest, not noblest, — no high name,  
Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame,  
When I sit meek in heaven ! "

We know how other men, men of genius, rarely ever have failed to give to their mothers the honor of whatever of greatness or worth

they had attained. But somehow we shrink from saying that Jesus was influenced by his mother as other good men have been; that he got from her much of the beauty and the power of his life. We are apt to fancy that his mother was not to him what mothers ordinarily are to their children; that he did not need mothering as other children do; that by reason of the Deity indwelling, his character unfolded from within, without the aid of home teaching and training, and the other educational influences which do so much in shaping the character of children in common homes.

But there is no Scriptural ground for this feeling. The humanity of Jesus was just like our humanity. He came into the world just as feeble and as untaught as any other child that ever was born. No mother was ever more to her infant than Mary was to Jesus. She taught him all his first lessons. She gave him his first thoughts about God, and from her lips he learned the first lispings of prayer. Jewish mothers cared very tenderly for their children. They taught them with unwearying

patience the words of God. One of the rabbis said, "God could not be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers." This saying shows how sacred was the Jewish thought of the mother's work for her child.

Every true mother feels a sense of awe in her soul when she bends over her own infant child; but in the case of Mary we may be sure that the awe was unusual, because of the mystery of the child's birth. In the annunciation the angel had said to her, "That which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." Then the night of her child's birth there was a wondrous vision of angels, and the shepherds who beheld it hastened into the town; and as they looked upon the baby in the manger, they told the wondering mother what they had seen and heard. We are told that Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. While she could not understand what all this meant, she knew at least that hers was no common child; that in some wonderful sense he was the Son of God.

This consciousness must have given to her motherhood an unusual thoughtfulness and seriousness. How close to God she must have lived! How deep and tender her love must have been! How pure and clean her heart must have been kept! How sweet and patient she must have been as she moved about at her tasks, in order that no harsh or bitter thought or feeling might ever cast a shadow upon the holy life which had been intrusted to her for training and moulding.

Only a few times is the veil lifted to give us a glimpse of mother and child. On the fortieth day he was taken to the temple, and given to God. Then it was that another reminder of the glory of this child was given to the mother. An old man, Simeon, took the infant in his arms, and spoke of him as God's salvation. As he gave the parents his parting blessing he lifted the veil, and showed them a glimmering of the future. "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against." Then to the mother he said sol-

emly, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." This was a foretelling of the sorrow which should come to the heart of Mary, and which came again and again, until at last she saw her son on a cross. The shadow of the cross rested on Mary's soul all the years. Every time she rocked her baby to sleep, and laid him down softly, covering his face with kisses, there would come into her heart a pang as she remembered Simeon's words. Perhaps, too, words from the old prophets would come into her mind,—"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows;" "He was bruised for our iniquities,"—and the tears would come welling into her eyes. Every time she saw her child at play, full of gladness, all unconscious of any sorrow awaiting him, a nameless fear would steal over her as she remembered the ominous words which had fallen upon her ear, and which she could not forget.

Soon after the presentation in the temple came the visit of the magi. Again the mother must have wondered as she heard these

strangers from the East speak of her infant boy as the "King of the Jews," and saw them falling down before him in reverent worship, and then laying their offerings at his feet. Immediately following this came the flight into Egypt. How the mother must have pressed her child to her bosom as she fled with him to escape the cruel danger! By and by they returned, and from that time Nazareth was their home.

Only once in the thirty years do we have a glimpse of mother and child. It was when Jesus went to his first Passover. When the time came for returning home the child tarried behind. After a painful search the mother found him in one of the porches of the temple, sitting with the rabbis, an eager learner. There is a tone of reproach in her words, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." She was sorely perplexed. All the years before this her son had implicitly obeyed her. He had never resisted her will, never withdrawn from her guidance. Now he had

done something without asking her about it — as it were, had taken his life into his own hand. It was a critical point in the friendship of this mother and her child. It is a critical moment in the friendship of any mother and her child when the child begins to think and act for himself, to do things without the mother's guidance.

The answer of Jesus is instructive: "I must be about my Father's business." There was another besides his mother to whom he owed allegiance. He was the Son of God as well as the son of Mary. Parents should remember this always in dealing with their children, — their children are more God's than theirs.

It is interesting to notice what follows that remarkable experience of mother and child in the temple. Jesus returned with his mother to the lowly Nazareth home, and was subject to her. In recognizing his relation to God as his heavenly Father, he did not become any less the child of his earthly mother. He loved his mother no less because he loved God more. Obedience to the Father in heaven did

not lead him to reject the rule of earthly parenthood. He went back to the quiet home, and for eighteen years longer found his Father's business in the common round of lowly tasks which made up the daily life of such a home.

It would be intensely interesting to read the story of mother and son during those years, but it has not been written for us. They must have been years of wondrous beauty. Few things in this world are more beautiful than such friendships as one sometimes sees between mother and son. The boy is more the lover than the child. The two enter into the closest companionship. A sacred and inviolable intimacy is formed between them. The boy opens all his heart to his mother, telling her everything; and she, happy woman, knows how to be a boy's mother and to keep a mother's place without ever startling or checking the shy confidences, or causing him to desire to hide anything from her. The boy whispers his inmost thoughts to his mother, and listens to her wise and

gentle counsels with loving eagerness and childish faith —

“ Her face his holy skies;  
The air he breathes his mother’s breath,  
His stars his mother’s eyes.”

Not always are mother and boy such friends. Some mothers do not think it worth while to give the time and thought necessary to enter into a boy’s life in such confidential way. But we may be sure that between the mother of Jesus and her son the most tender and intimate friendship existed. He opened his soul to her; and she gave him not a mother’s love only, but also a mother’s wise counsel and strong, inspiring sympathy.

It is almost certain that sorrow entered the Nazareth home soon after the visit to Jerusalem. Joseph is not mentioned again; and it is supposed that he died, leaving Mary a widow. On Jesus, as the eldest son, the care of the mother now rested. Knowing the deep love of his heart and his wondrous gentleness, it is easy for us to understand with what unselfish devotion he cared for his mother

after she was widowed. He had learned the carpenter's trade; and day after day, early and late, he wrought with his hands to provide for her wants. Very sacred must have been the friendship of mother and son in those days. Her gentleness, quietness, hopefulness, humility, and prayerfulness, must have wrought themselves into the very tissue of his character as he moved through the days in such closeness. Unto the end he carried in his soul the benedictions of his mother's life.

The thirty silent years of preparation closed, and Jesus went out to begin his public ministry. The first glimpse we have of the mother is at the wedding at Cana. Jesus was there too. The wine failed, and Mary went to Jesus about the matter. "They have no wine," she said. Evidently she was expecting some manifesting of supernatural power. All the years since his birth she had been carrying in her heart a great wonder of expectation. Now he had been baptized, and had entered upon his work as the Messiah. Had not the time come for miracle-working?

The answer of Jesus startles us: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." The words seem to have in them a tone of reproof, or of repulse, unlike the words of so gentle and loving a son. But really there is in his reply nothing inconsistent with all that we have learned to think of the gentleness and lovingness of the heart of Jesus. In substance he said only that he must wait for his Father's word before doing any miracle, and that the time for this had not yet come. Evidently his mother understood him. She was not hurt by his words, nor did she regard them as a refusal to help in the emergency. Her words to the servants show this: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." She had learned her lesson of sweet humility. She knew now that God had the highest claim on her son's obedience, and she quietly waited for the divine voice. The holy friendship was not marred.

There is another long period in which no mention is made of Mary. Probably she lived a secluded life. But one day at Capernaum,

in the midst of his popularity, when Jesus was preaching to a great crowd, she and his brothers appeared on the outside of the throng, and sent a request that they might speak with him. It seems almost certain that the mother's errand was to try to get him away from his exhausting work; he was imperilling his health and his safety. Jesus refused to be interrupted. But it was really only an assertion that nothing must come between him and his duty. The Father's business always comes first. Human ties are second to the bond which binds us to God. No dishonor was done by Jesus to his mother in refusing to be drawn away by her loving interest from his work. The holiest human friendship must never keep us from doing the will of God. Other mothers in their love for their children have made the same mistake that the mother of Jesus made, — have tried to withhold or withdraw their children from service which seemed too hard or too costly. The voice of tenderest love must be quenched when it would keep us from doing God's will.

The next mention of the mother of Jesus is in the story of the cross. Ah, holy mother-love, constant and faithful to the end! At length Simeon's prophecy is fulfilled, — a sword is piercing the mother's soul also. "Jesus was crucified on the cross; Mary was crucified at the foot of the cross."

Note only one feature of the scene, — the mother-love there is in it. The story of clinging mother-love is a wonderful one. A mother never forsakes her child. Mary is not the only mother who has followed a son to a cross. Here we have the culmination of this mother's friendship for her son. She is watching beside his cross. O friendship constant, faithful, undying, and true!

But what of the friendship of the dying son for his mother? In his own anguish does he notice her? Yes; one of the seven words spoken while he hung on the cross told of changeless love in his heart for her. Mary was a woman of more than fifty, "with years before her too many for remembering, too few for forgetting." The world would be des-

olate for her when her son was gone. So he made provision for her in the shelter of a love in which he knew she would be safe. As he saw her led away by the beloved disciple to his own home, part of the pain of dying was gone from his own heart. His mother would have tender care.

The story of this blessed friendship should sweeten forever in Christian homes the relation of mother and child. It should make every mother a better woman and a better mother. It should make every child a truer, holier child. Every home should have its sacred friendships between parents and children. Thus something of heaven will be brought down to our dull earth ; for, as Mrs. Browning says, —

In the pure loves of child and mother  
Two human loves make one divine.

## CHAPTER III.

### JESUS AND HIS FORERUNNER.

Where is the lore the Baptist taught,  
The soul unswerving and the fearless tongue?  
The much-enduring wisdom, sought  
By lonely prayer the haunted rocks among?  
Who counts it gain  
His light should wane,  
So the whole world to Jesus throng?

KEBLE.

THE two Johns appear in many devotional pictures, one on each side of Jesus. Yet the two men were vastly unlike. The Baptist was a wild, rugged man of the desert; the apostle was the representative of the highest type of gentleness and spiritual refinement. The former was the consummate flower of Old Testament prophecy; the latter was the ripe fruit of New Testament evangelism. They appear in history one really on each side of Jesus; one going before him to prepare the way for

him, and the other coming after him to declare the meaning of his mission. They were united in Jesus; both of them were his friends.

It seems probable that Jesus and the Baptist had never met until the day Jesus came to be baptized. This is not to be wondered at. Their childhood homes were not near to each other. Besides, John probably turned away at an early age from the abodes of men to make his home in the desert. He may never have visited Jesus, and it is not unlikely that Jesus had never visited him.

Yet their mothers are said to have been cousins. The stories of their births are woven together in an exquisite way, in the opening chapters of the Gospels. To the same high angel fell the privilege of announcing to the two women, in turn, the tidings which in each case meant so much of honor and blessedness. It would have seemed natural for the boys to grow up together, their lives blending in childhood association and affection. It is interesting to think what the ef-

fect would have been upon the characters of both if they had been reared in close companionship. How would John's stern, rugged, unsocial nature have affected the gentle spirit of Jesus? What impression would the brightness, sweetness, and affectionateness of Jesus have made on the temper and disposition of John?

When at last the two men met, it is evident that a remarkable effect was produced on John. There was something in the face of Jesus that almost overpowered the fearless preacher of the desert. John had been waiting and watching for the Coming One, whose herald and harbinger he was. One day he came and asked to be baptized. John had never before hesitated to administer the rite to any one who stood before him; for in every one he saw a sinner needing repentance and remission of sins. But he who now stood before him waiting to be baptized bore upon his face the light of an inner holiness which awed the rugged preacher. "I have need to be baptized of thee," said John; but Jesus insisted,

and the rite was administered. John's awe must have been deepened by what now took place. Jesus looked up in earnest prayer, and then from the open heaven a white dove descended, resting on the head of the Holy One. An ancient legend tells that from the shining light the whole valley of the Jordan was illuminated. A divine voice was heard also, declaring that this Jesus was the Son of God.

Thus it was that the friendship between Jesus and the Baptist began. It was a wonderful moment. For centuries prophets had been pointing forward to the Messiah who was to come; now John saw him. He had baptized him, thus introducing him to his great mission. This made John the greatest of the prophets; he saw the Messiah whom his predecessors had only foretold. John's rugged nature must have been wondrously softened by this meeting with Jesus.

Brief was the duration of the friendship of the forerunner and the Messiah; but there are evidences that it was strong, deep, and

true. There were several occasions on which this friendship proved its sincerity and its loyalty.

Reports of the preaching of John, and of the throngs who were flocking to him, reached Jerusalem; and a deputation was sent by the Sanhedrin to the desert to ask him who he was. They had begun to think that this man who was attracting such attention might be the Messiah for whom they were looking. But John was careful to say that he was not the Christ. "Art thou Elias? . . . Art thou that prophet?" He answered "No." — "Who art thou, then?" they asked, "that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?"

This gave John an opportunity to claim the highest honor for himself if he had been disposed to do so. He might have admitted that he was the Messiah, or quietly permitted the impression to be cherished; and in the state of feeling and expectation then prevailing among the people, there would have been a great uprising to carry him to a throne. But

his loyalty to truth and to the Messiah whose forerunner he was, was so strong that he firmly resisted the opportunity, with whatever of temptation it may have had for him. "I am a voice," he answered — nothing but a voice. Thus he showed an element of greatness in his lowly estimate of himself.

True, a voice may do great things. It may speak words which shall ring through the world with a blessing in every reverberation. It may arouse men to action, may comfort sorrow, cheer discouragement, start hope in despairing hearts. If one is only a voice, and if there be truth and love and life in the voice, its ministry may be rich in its influence.

Much of the Bible is but a voice coming out of the depths of the past. No one knows the names of all the holy men who, moved by the Spirit, wrote the wonderful words. Many of the sweetest of the Psalms are anonymous. Yet no one prizes the words less, nor is their power to comfort, cheer, inspire, or quicken any less, because they are only voices. After all, it is a great thing to be a voice to which

men and women will listen, and whose words do good wherever they go.

Yet John's speaking thus of himself shows his humility. He sought no earthly praise or recognition. He was not eager to have his name sounding on people's lips. He knew well how empty such honor was. He wished only that he might be a voice, speaking out the word he had been sent into the world to speak. He knew that he had a message to deliver, and he was intent on delivering it. It mattered not who or what he was, but it did matter whether his "word or two" were spoken faithfully or not.

Every one of us has a message from God to men. We are in this world for a purpose, with a mission, with something definite to do for God and man. It makes very little difference whether people hear about us or not, whether we are praised, loved, and honored, or despised, hated, and rejected, so that we get our word spoken into the air, and set going in men's hearts and lives. John was a worthy voice, and his tones rang out with clarion clear-

ness for truth and for God's kingdom. It was his mission to go in advance of the King, and tell men that he was coming, calling them to prepare the way before him. This he did; and when the King came, John's work was done.

The deputation asked him also why he was baptizing if he was neither the Christ nor Elijah. Again John honored his friend by saying, "I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." John set the pattern for friendship for Christ for all time. It is, —

"None of self, and all of thee."

It is pitiable to see how some among the Master's followers fail to learn this lesson. They contend for high places, where they may have prominence among men, where their names shall have honor. The only truly great in Christ's sight are those who forget self that they may honor their Lord. John

said he was not worthy to unloose the shoe-latchet of his friend, so great, so kingly, so worthy was that friend. He said his own work was only external, while the One standing unrecognized among the people had power to reach their hearts. It were well if every follower of Christ understood so perfectly the place of his own work with relation to Christ's.

Another of John's testimonies to Jesus was made a little later, perhaps as Jesus returned after his temptation. Pointing to a young man who was approaching, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It was a high honor which in these words John gave to his friend. That friend was the bearer of the world's sin and of its sorrow. It is not likely that at this early stage John knew of the cross on which Jesus should die for the world. In some way, however, he saw a vision of Jesus saving his people from their sin, and so proclaimed him to the circle that stood round him. He proclaimed him also as the Son of God, thus adding yet another honor to his friend.

A day or two later John again pointed Jesus out to two of his own disciples as the Lamb of God, and then bade them leave him and go after the Messiah. This is another mark of John's noble friendship for Jesus, — he gave up his own disciples that they might go after the new Master. It is not easy to do this. It takes a brave man to send his friends away, that they may give their love and service to another master.

There is further illustration of John's loyal friendship for Jesus. It seems that John's disciples were somewhat jealous of the growing fame and influence of Jesus. The throngs that followed their master were now turning after the new teacher. In their great love for John, and remembering how he had witnessed for Jesus, and called attention to him, before he began his ministry and after, they felt that it was scarcely right that Jesus should rise to prosperity at the expense of him who had so helped him rise. If John had been less noble than he was, and his friendship for Jesus less loyal, such words

from his followers would have embittered him. There are people who do irreparable hurt by such flattering sympathy. A spark of envy is often fanned into a disastrous flame by friends who come with such appeals to the evil that is in every man.

But John's answer shows a soul of wondrous nobleness. He had not been hurt by popularity, as so many men are. Not all good people pass through times of great success, with its attendant elation and adulation, and come out simple-hearted and lowly. Then even a severer test of character is the time of waning favor, when the crowds melt away, and when another is receiving the applause. Many a man, in such an experience, fails to retain sweetness of spirit, and becomes soured and embittered.

John stood both tests. Popularity did not make him vain. The losing of his fame did not embitter him. He kept humble and sweet through it all. The secret was his unwavering loyalty to his own mission as the harbinger of the Messiah. "A man can receive

nothing, except it be given him from heaven," he said. The power over men which he had wielded for a time had been given to him. Now the power had been withdrawn, and given to Jesus. It was all right, and he should not complain of what Heaven had done.

Then John reminded his friends that he had distinctly said that he was not the Christ, but was only one sent before him. In a wondrously expressive way he explained his relation to Jesus. Jesus was the bridegroom, and John was only the bridegroom's friend, and he rejoiced in the bridegroom's honor. It was meet that the bridegroom should have the honor, and that his friend should retire into the background, and there be forgotten. Thus John showed his loyalty to Jesus by rejoicing in his popular favor, when the effect was to leave John himself deserted and alone after a season of great fame. "He must increase, but I must decrease," said the noble-hearted forerunner. John's work was done, and the work of Jesus was now beginning. John understood this, and with devoted loyalty, unsur-

passed in all the bright story of friendship, he rejoiced in the success that Jesus was winning, though it was at his own cost.

This is a model of noble friendship for all time. Envy poisons much human friendship. It is not easy to work loyally for the honor and advancement of another when he is taking our place, and drawing our crowds after him. But in any circumstances envy is despicable and most undivine. Then even in our friendship for Christ we need to be ever most watchful lest we allow self to creep in. We must learn to care only for his honor and the advancement of his kingdom, and never to think of ourselves.

So much for the friendship of John for Jesus. On several occasions we find evidences of very warm friendship in Jesus for John. John's imprisonment was a most pathetic episode in his life. It came from his fidelity as a preacher of righteousness. In view of all the circumstances, we can scarcely wonder that in his dreary prison he began almost to doubt, certainly to question, whether Jesus

were indeed the Messiah. But it must be noted that even in this painful experience John was loyal to Jesus. When the question arose in his mind, he sent directly to Jesus to have it answered. If only all in whose minds spiritual doubts or questions arise would do this, good, and not evil, would result in every case; for Christ always knows how to reassure perplexed faith.

It was after the visit of the messengers from John that Jesus spoke the strong words which showed his warm friendship for his forerunner. John had not forfeited his place in the Master's heart by his temporary doubting. Jesus knew that his disciples might think disparagingly of John because he had sent the messengers with the question; and as soon as they were gone he began to speak about John, and to speak about him in terms of highest praise. It is an evidence of true friendship that one speaks well of one's friend behind his back. Some professed friendship will not stand this test. But Jesus spoke not a word of censure concerning John after the failure of his faith.

On the other hand, he eulogized him in a most remarkable way. He spoke of his stability and firmness; John was not a reed shaken with the wind, he was not a self-indulgent man, courting ease and loving luxury; he was a man ready for any self-denial and hardship. Jesus added to this eulogy of John's qualities as a man, the statement that no greater soul than his had ever been born in this world. This was high praise indeed. It illustrates the loyalty of Jesus to the friend who had so honored him and was suffering now because of faithfulness to truth and duty.

There is another incident which shows how much Jesus loved John. It was after the foul murder of the Baptist. The record is very brief. The friends of the dead prophet gathered in the prison, and, taking up the headless body of their master, they carried it away to a reverent, tearful burial. Then they went and told Jesus. The narrative says, "When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart." His sorrow at the tragic death of his faithful friend

made him wish to be alone. When the Jews saw Jesus weeping beside the grave of Lazarus they said, "Behold how he loved him!" No mention is made of tears when Jesus heard of the death of John; but he immediately sought to break away from the crowds, to be alone, and there is little doubt that when he was alone he wept. He loved John, and grieved over his death.

The story of the friendship of Jesus and John is very beautiful. John's loyalty and faithfulness must have brought real comfort to Jesus. Then to John the friendship of Jesus must have been full of cheer.

As we read the story of the Baptist's life, with its tragic ending, we are apt to feel that he died too soon. He began his public work with every promise of success. For a few months he preached with great power, and thousands flocked to hear him. Then came the waning of his popularity, and soon he was shut up in a prison, and in a little while was cruelly murdered to humor the whim of a wicked and vengeful woman.

Was it worth while to be born, and to go through years of severe training, only for such a fragment of living? To this question we can answer only that John had finished his work. He came into the world—a man sent from God—to do just one definite thing,—to prepare the way for the Messiah. When the Messiah had come, John's work was done. As the friend of Christ he went home; and elsewhere now, in other realms perhaps, he is still serving his Lord.

## CHAPTER IV.

### JESUS' CONDITIONS OF FRIENDSHIP.

But if himself he come to thee, and stand

. . . . .

And reach to thee himself the Holy Cup,

. . . . .

Pallid and royal, saying, "Drink with me,"

Wilt thou refuse? Nay, not for paradise!

The pale brow will compel thee, the pure hands

Will minister unto thee; thou shalt take

Of that communion through the solemn depths

Of the dark waters of thine agony,

With heart that praises him, that yearns to him

The closer through that hour.

*Ugo Bassi's Sermon.*

EVERY thoughtful reader of the Gospels notes two seemingly opposing characteristics of Christ's invitations, — their wideness and their narrowness. They were broad enough to include all men; yet by their conditions they were so narrowed down that only a few seemed able to accept them.

The gospel was for the world. It was as broad as the love of God, and that is absolutely without limit. God loved the world. When Jesus went forth among men his heart was open to all. He was the patron of no particular class. For him there were no outcasts whom he might not touch, with whom he might not speak in public, or privately, or who were excluded from the privileges of friendship with him. He spoke of himself as the Son of man — not the son of a man, but the Son of man, and therefore the brother of every man. Whoever bore the image of humanity had a place in his heart. Wherever he found a human need it had an instant claim on his sympathy, and he was eager to impart a blessing. No man had fallen so low in sin that Jesus passed him by without love and compassion. To be a man was the passport to his heart.

The invitations which Jesus gave all bear the stamp of this exceeding broadness. “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Him that cometh

to me I will in no wise cast out." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Such words as these were ever falling from his lips. No man or woman, hearing these invitations, could ever say, "There is nothing there for me." There was no hint of possible exclusion for any one. Not a word was ever said about any particular class of persons who might come,—the righteous, the respectable, the cultured, the unsoiled, the well-born, the well-to-do. Jesus had no such words in his vocabulary. Whoever labored and was heavy laden was invited. Whoever would come should be received—would not in any wise be cast out. Whoever was athirst was bidden to come and drink.

Some teachers are not so good as their teachings. They proclaim the love of God for every man, and then make distinctions in their treatment of men. Professing love for all, they gather their skirts close about them when fallen ones pass by. But Jesus lived out all of the love of God that he taught. It was literally true in his case, that not one who

came to him was ever cast out. He disregarded the proprieties of righteousness which the religious teachers of his own people had formulated and fixed. They read in the synagogue services, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," but they limited the word neighbor until it included only the circle of the socially and spiritually *élite*. Jesus taught that a man's neighbor is a fellow-man in need, whoever he may be. Then, when the lost and the outcast came to him they found the love of God indeed incarnate in him.

At one time we read that all the publicans and sinners drew near unto him to hear him. The religious teachers of the Jews found sore fault with him, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." But he vindicated his course by telling them that he had come for the very purpose of seeking the lost ones. On another occasion he said that he was a physician, and that the physician's mission was not to the whole, but to the sick. He had come not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. A poor woman who

was a sinner, having heard his gracious invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," came to his feet, at once putting his preaching to the test. She came weeping, and, falling at his feet, wet them with her tears, and then wiped them with her dishevelled hair and kissed them. Then she took an alabaster box, and breaking it, poured the ointment on his feet. It was a violation of all the proprieties to permit such a woman to stay at his feet, making such demonstrations. If he had been a Jewish rabbi, he would have thrust her away with execrations, as bringing pollution in her touch. But Jesus let the woman stay and finish her act of penitence and love, and then spoke words which assured her of forgiveness and peace.

"She sat and wept, and with her untressed hair  
Still wiped the feet she was so blest to touch;  
And he wiped off the soiling of despair  
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much."

This is but one of the many proofs in Jesus' life of the sincerity of the wide invitations he gave. Continually the lost and fallen

came to him, for there was something in him that made it easy for them to come and tell him all the burden of their sin and their yearning for a better life. Even one whom he afterward chose as an apostle was a publican when Jesus called him to be his disciple. He took him in among his friends, into his own inner household; and now his name is on one of the foundations of the heavenly city, as an apostle of the Lamb.

Thus we see how broad was the love of Christ, both in word and in act. Toward every human life his heart yearned. He had a blessing to bestow upon every soul. Whosoever would might be a friend of Jesus, and come in among those who stood closest to him. Not one was shut out.

Then, there is another class of words which appear to limit these wide invitations and this gracious love. Again and again Jesus seems to discourage discipleship. When men would come, he bids them consider and count the cost before they decide. One passage tells of three aspirants for discipleship, for all of

whom he seems to have made it hard to follow him.

One man came to him, and with glib and easy profession said, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." This seemed all that could have been asked. No man could do more. Yet Jesus discouraged this ardent scribe. He saw that he did not know what he was saying, that he had not counted the cost, and that his devotion would fail in the face of the hardship and self-denial which discipleship would involve. So he answered, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." That is, he painted a picture of his own poverty and homelessness, as if to say, "That is what it will mean for you to follow me; are you ready for it?"

Then Jesus turned to another, and said to him, "Follow me." But this man asked time. "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." This seemed a reasonable request. Filial duties stand high in all inspired teaching. Yet Jesus said, "No; leave the dead to

bury their own dead ; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God." Discipleship seems severe in its demands if even a sacred duty of love to a father must be foregone that the man might go instantly to his work as a missionary.

There was a third case. Another man, overhearing what had been said, proposed also to become a disciple — but not yet. "I will follow thee ; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." That, too, appeared only a fit thing to do ; but again the answer seems stern and severe. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Even the privilege of running home to say "Good-by" must be denied to him who follows Jesus.

These incidents show, not that Jesus would make it hard and costly for men to be his disciples, but that discipleship must be unconditional, whatever the cost, and that even the holiest duties of human love must be made secondary to the work of Christ's kingdom.

Another marked instance of like teaching was in the case of the young ruler who wanted to know the way of life. We try to make it easy for inquirers to begin to follow Christ, but Jesus set a hard task for this rich young man. He must give up all his wealth, and come empty-handed with the new Master. Why did he so discourage this earnest seeker? He saw into his heart, and perceived that he could not be a true disciple unless he first won a victory over himself. The issue was his money or Jesus — which? The way was made so hard that for that day, at least, the young man turned away, clutching his money, leaving Jesus.

Really, a like test was made in every discipleship. Those who followed him left all, and went empty-handed with him. They were required to give up father and mother, and wife and children, and lands, and to take up their cross and follow him.

Why were the broad invitations of the heart of Jesus so narrowed in their practical application? The answer is very simple. Jesus was

the revealing of God — God manifest in the flesh. He had come into this world not merely to heal a few sick people, to bring back joy to a few darkened homes by the restoring of their dead, to formulate a system of moral and ethical teachings, to start a wave of kindness and a ministry of mercy and love; he had come to save a lost world, to lift men up out of sinfulness into holiness.

There was only one way to do this, — men must be brought back into loyalty to God. Jesus astonishes us by the tremendous claims and demands he makes. He says that men must come unto him if they would find rest; that they must believe on him if they would have everlasting life; that they must love him more than any human friend; that they must obey him with absolute, unquestioning obedience; that they must follow him as the supreme and only guide of their life, committing all their present and eternal interests into his hands. In a word, he puts himself deliberately into the place of God, demanding for himself all that God demands, and then promising to

those who accept him all the blessings that God promises to his children.

This was the way Jesus sought to save men. As the human revealing of God, coming down close to humanity, and thus bringing God within their reach, he said, "Believe on me, love me, trust me, and follow me, and I will lift you up to eternal blessedness." While the invitation was universal, the blessings it offered could be given only to those who would truly receive Christ as the Son of God. If Jesus seemed to demand hard things of those who would follow him, it was because in no other way could men be saved. No slight and easy bond would bind them to him, and only by their attachment to him could they be led into the kingdom of God. If he sometimes seemed to discourage discipleship, it was that no one might be deceived as to the meaning of the new life to which Jesus was inviting men. He would have no followers who did not first count the cost, and know whether they were ready to go with him. Men could be lifted up into a heavenly life only by a

friendship with Jesus which would prove stronger than all other ties.

Religion, therefore, is a passion for Christ. "I have only one passion," said Zinzendorf, "and that is he." Love for Christ is the power that during these nineteen centuries has been transforming the world. Law could never have done it, though enforced by the most awful majesty. The most perfect moral code, though proclaimed with supreme authority, would never have changed darkness to light, cruelty to humaneness, rudeness to gentleness. What is it that gives the gospel its resistless power? It is the Person at the heart of it. Men are not called to a religion, to a creed, to a code of ethics, to an ecclesiastical system,—they are called to love and follow a Person.

But what is it in Jesus that so draws men, that wins their allegiance away from every other master, that makes them ready to leave all for his sake, and to follow him through peril and sacrifice, even to death? Is it his wonderful teaching? "No man ever spake

like this man." Is it his power as revealed in his miracles? Is it his sinlessness? The most malignant scrutiny could find no fault in him. Is it the perfect beauty of his character? Not one nor all of these will account for the wonderful attraction of Jesus. Love is the secret. He came into the world to reveal the love of God — he was the love of God in human flesh. His life was all love. In a most wonderful way during all his life did he reveal love. Men saw it in his face, and felt it in his touch, and heard it in his voice. This was the great fact which his disciples felt in his life. His friendship was unlike any friendship they had ever seen before, or even dreamed of. It was this that drew them to him, and made them love him so deeply, so tenderly. Nothing but love will kindle love. Power will not do it. Holiness will not do it. Gifts will not do it — men will take your gifts, and then repay you with hatred. But love begets love; heart responds to heart. Jesus loved.

But the love he revealed in his life, in his tender friendship, was not the supremest man-

ifesting of his love. He crowned it all by giving his life. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." This was the most wonderful exhibition of love the world had ever seen. Now and then some one had been willing to die for a choice and prized friend; but Jesus died for a world of enemies. It was not for the beloved disciple and for the brave Peter that he gave his life, — then we might have understood it, — but it was for the race of sinful men that he poured out his most precious blood, — the blood of eternal redemption. It is this marvellous love in Jesus which attracts men to him. His life, and especially his cross, declares to every one: "God loves you. The Son of God gave himself for you." Jesus himself explained the wonderful secret in his words: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It is on his cross that his marvellous power is most surpassingly revealed. The secret of the attraction of the cross is love. "He loved me, and he gave himself for me."

Thus we find hints of what Jesus is as a friend — what he was to his first disciples, what he is to-day. His is perfect friendship. The best and richest human friendships are only little fragments of the perfect ideal. Even these we prize as the dearest things on earth. They are more precious than rarest gems. We would lose all other things rather than give up our friends. They bring to us deep joys, sweet comforts, holy inspirations. Life without friendship would be empty and lonely. Love is indeed the greatest thing. Nothing else in all the world will fill and satisfy the heart. Even earth's friendships are priceless. Yet the best and truest of them are only fragments of the perfect friendship. They bring us only little cupfuls of blessing. Their gentleness is marred by human infirmity, and sometimes turns to harshness. Their helpfulness at best is impulsive and uncertain, and oftentimes is inopportune and ill-timed.

But the friendship of Jesus is perfect. Its touch is always gentle and full of healing. Its helpfulness is always wise. Its tenderness

is like the warmth of a heavenly summer, brooding over the life which accepts it. All the love of God pours forth in the friendship of Jesus. To be his beloved is to be held in the clasp of the everlasting arms. "I and my Father are one," said Jesus; his friendship, therefore, is the friendship of the Father. Those who accept it in truth find their lives flooded with a wealth of blessing.

Creeds have their place in the Christian life; their articles are the great framework of truth about which the fabric rises and from which it receives its strength. Worship is important, if it is vitalized by faith and the Holy Spirit. Rites have their sacred value as the channels through which divine grace is communicated. But that which is vital in all spiritual life is the friendship of Jesus, coming to us in whatever form it may. To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge is living religion. Creeds and services and rites and sacraments bring blessing to us only as they interpret to us this love, and draw us into closer personal relations with Christ.

“Behold him now where he comes!  
Not the Christ of our subtile creeds,  
But the light of our hearts, of our homes,  
Of our hopes, our prayers, our needs,  
The brother of want and blame,  
The lover of women and men.”

The friendship of Jesus takes our poor earthly lives, and lifts them up out of the dust into beauty and blessedness. It changes everything for us. It makes us children of God in a real and living sense. It brings us into fellowship with all that is holy and true. It kindles in us a friendship for Christ, turning all the tides of our life into new and holy channels. It thus transforms us into the likeness of our Friend, whose we are, and whom we serve.

Thus Jesus is saving the world by renewing men's lives. He is setting up the kingdom of heaven on the earth. His subjects are won, not by force of arms, not by a display of Sinaitic terrors, but by the force of love. Men are taught that God loves them; they see that love first in the life of Jesus, then on his cross, where he died as the Lamb

of God, bearing the sin of the world. Under the mighty sway of that love they yield their hearts to heaven's King. Thus love's conquests are going on. The friendship of Jesus is changing earth's sin and evil into heaven's holiness and beauty.

## CHAPTER V.

### JESUS CHOOSING HIS FRIENDS.

He seeks not thine, but thee, such as thou art,  
For lo, his banner over thee is love.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

If you loved only what were worth your love,  
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you.  
Make the low nature better by your throes !  
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above.

BROWNING.

NOTHING in life is more important than the choosing of friends. Many young people wreck all by wrong choices, taking into their life those who by their influence drag them down. Many a man's moral failure dates from the day he chose a wrong friend. Many a woman's life of sorrow or evil began with the letting into her heart of an unworthy friendship. On the other hand, many a career of happiness, of prosperity, of success, of upward

climbing, may be traced to the choice of a pure, noble, rich-hearted, inspiring friend. Mrs. Browning asked Charles Kingsley, "What is the secret of your life? Tell me, that I may make mine beautiful too." He replied, "I had a friend." There are many who have reached eminence of character or splendor of life who could give the same answer. They had a friend who came into their life at the right time, sent from God, and inspired in them whatever is beautiful in their character, whatever is worthy and noble in their career.

We may not put our Lord's choice of his apostles on precisely the same plane as our selecting of friends, as those men were to be more than ordinary friends; he was to put his mantle upon them, and they were to be the founders of his Church. Nevertheless, we may take lessons from the story for ourselves.

Jesus chose his friends deliberately. His disciples had been gathering about him for months. It was at least a year after the beginning of his public ministry that he chose the Twelve. He had had ample time to get

well acquainted with the company of his followers, to test them, to study their character, to learn their qualities of strength or weakness.

Many fatal mistakes in the choosing of friends come from unfit haste. We would better take time to know our possible friends, and be sure that we know them well, before making the solemn compact that seals the attachment.

Jesus made his choice of friends a subject of prayer. He spent a whole night in prayer with God, and then came in the morning to choose his apostles. If Jesus needed thus to pray before choosing his friends, how much more should we seek God's counsel before taking a new friendship into our life! We cannot know what it may mean to us, whither it may lead us, what sorrow, care, or pain it may bring to us, what touches of beauty or of marring it may put upon our soul, and we dare not admit it unless God gives it to us. In nothing do young people need more the guidance of divine wisdom than when they

are settling the question of who shall be their friends. At the Last Supper Jesus said in his prayer, referring to his disciples, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." It makes a friendship very sacred to be able to say, "God gave it to me. God sent me this friend."

In choosing his friends, Jesus thought not chiefly of the comfort and help they would be to him, but far more of what he might be to them. He did crave friendship for himself. His heart needed it just as any true human heart does. He welcomed affection whenever any one brought the gift to him. He accepted the friendship of the poor, of the children, of those he helped. We cannot understand how much the Bethany home was to him, with its confidence, its warmth, its shelter, its tender affection. One of the most pathetic incidents in the whole Gospel story is the hunger of Jesus for sympathy in the garden, when he came again and again to his human friends, hoping to find them alert in watchful love, and found them asleep. It was a cry of deep

disappointment which came from his lips, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" Jesus craved the blessing of friendship for himself, and in choosing the Twelve expected comfort and strength from his fellowship with them.

But his deepest desire was that he might be a blessing to them. He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" not to have friends, but to be a friend. He chose the Twelve that he might lift them up to honor and good; that he might purify, refine, and enrich their lives; that he might prepare them to be his witnesses, the conservators of his gospel, the interpreters to the world of his life and teachings. He sought nothing for himself, but every breath he drew was full of unselfish love.

We should learn from Jesus that the essential quality in the heart of friendship is not the desire to have friends, but the desire to be a friend; not to get good and help from others, but to impart blessing to others. Many of the sighings for friendship which we have are

merely selfish longings, — a desire for happiness, for pleasure, for the gratification of the heart, which friends would bring. If the desire were to be a friend, to do others good, to serve and to give help, it would be a far more Christlike longing, and would transform the life and character.

We are surprised at the kind of men Jesus chose for his friends. We would suppose that he, the Son of God, coming from heaven, would have gathered about him as his close and intimate companions the most refined and cultivated men of his nation, — men of intelligence, of trained mind, of wide influence. Instead of going to Jerusalem, however, to choose his apostles from among rabbis, priests, scribes, and rulers, he selected them from among the plain people, largely from among fishermen of Galilee. One reason for this was that he must choose these inner friends from the company which had been drawn to him and were already his followers, in true sympathy with him; and there were none of the great, the learned, the cultured, among these. But an-

other reason was, that he cared more for qualities of the heart than for rank, position, name, worldly influence, or human wisdom. He wanted near him only those who would be of the same mind with him, and whom he could train into loyal, sympathetic apostles.

Jesus took these untutored, undisciplined men into his own household, and at once began to prepare them for their great work. It is worthy of note, that instead of scattering his teachings broadcast among the people, so that who would might gather up his words, and diffusing his influence throughout a mass of disciples, while distinctly and definitely impressing none ineffaceably, Jesus chose twelve men, and concentrated his influence upon them. He took them into the closest relations to himself, taught them the great truths of his kingdom, impressed upon them the stamp of his own life, and breathed into them his own spirit. We think of the apostles as great men; they did become great. Their influence filled many lands — fills all the world to-day. They sit on thrones, judging all the tribes of men.

But all that they became, they became through the friendship of Jesus. He gave them all their greatness. He trained them until their rudeness grew into refined culture. No doubt he gave much time to them in private. They were with him continually. They saw all his life.

It was a high privilege to live with Jesus those three years, — eating with him, walking with him, hearing all his conversations, witnessing his patience, his kindness, his thoughtfulness. It was almost like living in heaven; for Jesus was the Son of God — God manifest in the flesh. When Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” Jesus answered, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Living with Jesus was, therefore, living with God — his glory tempered by the gentle humanity in which it was veiled, but no less divine because of this. For three years the disciples lived with God. No wonder that their lives were transformed, and that the best that was in them was wooed out by the blessed summer weather of love in which they moved.

“He chose twelve.” Probably this was because there were twelve tribes of Israel, and the number was to be continued. One evangelist says that he sent them out two and two. Why by two and two? With all the world to evangelize, would it not have been better if they had gone out one by one? Then they would have reached twice as many points. Was it not a waste of force, of power, to send two to the same place?

No doubt Jesus had reasons. It would have been lonely for one man to go by himself. If there were two, one would keep the other company. There was opposition to the gospel in those days, and it would have been hard for one to endure persecution alone. The hand-clasp of a brother would make the heart braver and stronger. We do not know how much we owe to our companionships, how they strengthen us, how often we would fail and sink down without them.

One of the finest definitions of happiness in literature is that given by Oliver Wendell Holmes. “Happiness,” said the Autocrat, “is

four feet on the fender." When his beloved wife was gone, and an old friend came in to condole with him, he said, shaking his gray head, "Only two feet on the fender now." Congenial companionship is wonderfully inspiring. Aloneness is pain. You cannot kindle a fire with one coal. A log will not burn alone. But put two coals or two logs side by side, and the fire kindles and blazes and burns hotly. Jesus yoked his apostles in twos that mutual friendship might inspire them both.

There was another reason for mating the Twelve. Each of them was only a fragment of a man — not one of them was full-rounded, a complete man, strong at every point. Each had a strength of his own, with a corresponding weakness. Then Jesus yoked them together so that each two made one good man. The hasty, impetuous, self-confident Peter needed the counterbalancing of the cautious, conservative Andrew. Thomas the doubter was matched by Matthew the strong believer. It was not an accidental grouping by which the Twelve fell into six parts. Jesus knew what

was in man ; and he yoked these men together in a way which brought out the best that was in each of them, and by thus blending their lives, turned their very faults and weaknesses into beauty and strength. He did not try to make them all alike. He made no effort to have Peter grow quiet and gentle like John, or Thomas become an enthusiastic, unquestioning believer like Matthew. He sought for each man's personality, and developed that. He knew that to try to recast Peter's tremendous energy into staidness and caution would only rob him of what was best in his nature. He found room in his apostle family for as many different types of temperament as there were men, setting the frailties of one over against the excessive virtues of the other.

It is interesting to note the method of Jesus in training his apostles. The aim of true friendship anywhere is not to make life easy for one's friend, but to make something of the friend. That is God's method. He does not hurry to take away every burden under which he sees us bending. He does not instantly

answer our prayer for relief, when we begin to cry to him about the difficulty we have, or the trial we are facing, or the sacrifice we are making. He does not spare us hardship, loss, or pain. He wants not to make things easy for us, but to make something of us. We grow under burdens. It is poor, mistaken fathering or mothering that thinks only of saving a child from hard tasks or severe discipline. It is weak friendship that seeks only pleasure and indulgence for a loved one. "The chief want in life is somebody who shall make us do the best we can."

Jesus was the truest of friends. He never tried to make the burden light, the path smooth, the struggle easy. He wished to make men of his apostles,—men who could stand up and face the world; men whose character would reflect the beauty of holiness in its every line; men in whose hands his gospel would be safe when they went out as his ambassadors. He set for each apostle a high ideal, and then helped him to work up to the ideal. He taught them that the law of the

cross is the law of life, that the saving of one's life is the losing of it, and that only when we lose our life, as men rate it, giving it out in love's service, do we really save it.

It is not easy to make a man. It is said that the violin-makers in distant lands, by breaking and mending with skilful hands, at last produce instruments having a more wonderful capacity than ever was possible to them when new, unbroken and whole. Whether this be true or not of violins, it certainly is true of human lives. We cannot merely grow into strength, beauty, nobleness, and power of helpfulness, without discipline, pain, and cost. It is written even of Jesus himself that he was made perfect through suffering. There was no sin in him; but his perfectness as a sympathizing Friend, as a helpful Saviour, came through struggle, trial, pain, and sorrow. Not one of the apostles reached his royal strength as a man, as a helper of men, as a representative of Jesus, without enduring loss and suffering. No man who ever rises to a place of real worth and usefulness in the world walks

on a rose-strewn path. We never can be made fit for anything beautiful and worthy without cost of pain and tears. Always it is true that—

“Things that hurt and things that mar  
Shape the man for perfect praise;  
Shock and strain and ruin are  
Friendlier than the smiling days.”

How about ourselves? Life is made very real to our thought when we remember that in all the experiences of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, success and failure, health and sickness, quiet or struggle, God is making men of us. Then he watches us to see if we fail. Here is a man who is passing through sore trial. For many months his wife has been a great sufferer. All the while he has been carrying a heavy burden,—a financial burden, a burden of sympathy; for every moment's pain that his wife has suffered has been like a sword in his own heart,—burdens of care, with broken nights and weary days. We may be sure of God's tender interest in the wife who suffers in the sick-room; but his eye is even more intently fixed upon him who is bear-

ing the burden of sympathy and care. He is watching to see if the man will stand the test, and grow sweeter and stronger. Everything hard or painful in a Christian's life is another opportunity for him to get a new victory, and become a little more a man.

It is remarkable how little we know about the apostles. A few of them are fairly prominent. Peter and James and John we know quite well, as their names are made familiar in the inspired story. Matthew we know by the Gospel he wrote. Thomas we remember by his doubts. Another Judas, not Iscariot, probably left us a little letter. Of the rest we know almost nothing but their names. Indeed, few Bible readers can give even the names of all the Twelve.

No doubt one reason why no more is told us about the apostles is that the Bible magnifies only one name. It is not a book of biographies, but the book of the Lord Jesus Christ. Each apostle had a sacred friendship all his own with his Master, a friendship with which no other could intermeddle. We can

imagine the quiet talks, the long walks with the deep communings, the openings of heart, the confessions of weakness and failure, the many prayers together. We may be very sure that through those three wonderful years there ran twelve stories of holy friendship, with their blessed revealings of the Master's heart to the heart of each man. But not a word of all this is written in the New Testament. It was too sacred to be recorded for any eye of earth to read.

We may be sure, too, that each man of the Twelve did a noble work after the Ascension, but no pen wrote the narratives for preservation. There are traditions, but there is in them little that is certainly history. The Acts is not the acts of the apostles. The book tells a little about John, a little more about Peter, most about Paul, and of the others gives nothing but a list of their names in the first chapter.

Yet we need not trouble ourselves about this. It is the same with the good and the useful in every age. A few names are pre-

served, but the great multitude are forgotten. Earth keeps scant record of its benefactors. But there is a place where every smallest kindness done in the name of Christ is recorded and remembered.

Long, long ages ago a beautiful fern grew in a deep vale, nodding in the breeze. One day it fell, complaining as it sank away that no one would remember its grace and beauty. The other day a geologist went out with his hammer in the interest of his science. He struck a rock; and there in the seam lay the form of a fern—every leaf, every fibre, the most delicate tracteries of the leaves. It was the fern which ages since grew and dropped into the indistinguishable mass of vegetation. It perished; but its memorial was preserved, and to-day is made manifest.

So it is with the stories of the obscure apostles, and of all beautiful lives which have wrought for God and for man and have vanished from earth. Nothing is lost, nothing is forgotten. The memorials are in other lives, and some day every touch and trace and in-

fluence and impression will be revealed. In the book of The Revelation we are told that in the foundations of the heavenly city are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The New Testament does not tell the story of their worthy lives, but it is cut deep in the eternal rock, where all eyes shall see it forever.

On the lives of these chosen friends Jesus impressed his own image. His blessed divine-human friendship transformed them into men who went to the ends of the world for him, carrying his name. It was a new and strange influence on the earth—this holy friendship of Jesus Christ started in the hearts and lives of the apostles. At once it began to make this old world new. Those who believed received the same wonderful friendship into their own hearts. They loved each other in a way men had never loved before. Christians lived together as one family.

Ever since the day of Pentecost this wonderful friendship of Jesus has been spreading wherever the gospel has gone. It has given

to the world its Christian homes with their tender affections; it has built hospitals and asylums, and established charitable institutions of all kinds in every place where its story has been told. From the cross of Jesus a wave of tenderness, like the warmth of summer, has rolled over all lands. The friendship of Jesus, left in the hearts of his apostles, as his legacy to the world, has wrought marvellously; and its ministry and influence will extend until everything unlovely shall cease from earth, and the love of God shall pervade all life.

## CHAPTER VI.

### JESUS AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE.

My Lord, my Love! in pleasant pain  
How often have I said,  
"Blessed that John who on thy breast  
Laid down his head."  
It was that contact all divine  
Transformed him from above,  
And made him amongst men the man  
To show forth holy love.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

LOVE is regenerating the world. It is the love of God that is working this mighty transformation. The world was cold and loveless before Christ came. Of course there always was love in the race, — father-love, mother-love, filial love, love for country. There have always been human friendships which were constant, tender, and true, whose stories shine in bright lustre among the records of life. Natural affection there has always been, but

Christian love was not in the world till Christ came.

The incarnation was the breaking into this world of the love of God. For three and thirty years Jesus walked among men, pouring out love in every word, in every act, in all his works, and in every influence of his life. Then on the cross his heart broke, spilling its love upon the earth. As Mary's ointment filled all the house where it was emptied out, so the love of God poured out in Christ's life and death is filling all the world.

Jesus put his love into human hearts that it might be carried everywhere. Instantly there was a wondrous change. The story of the Church after the day of Pentecost shows a spirit among the disciples of Christ which the world had never seen before. They had all things common. The strong helped the weak. They formed a fellowship which was almost heavenly. From that time to the present the leaven of love has been working. It has slowly wrought itself into every department of life, — into art, literature, music, laws,

education, morals. Every hospital, orphanage, asylum, and reformatory in the world has been inspired by the love of Christ. Christian civilization is a product of this same divine affection working through the nations.

Perhaps no other of the Master's disciples has done so much in the interpreting and the diffusing of the love of Christ in the world as the beloved disciple has done. Peter was the mightiest force at the beginning in the founding of the Church. Then came Paul with his tremendous missionary energy, carrying Christianity to the ends of the earth. Each of these apostles was greatest in his own way and place. But John has done more than either of these to bless the world with love. His influence is everywhere. He is likest Jesus of all the disciples. His influence is slowly spreading among men. We see it in the enlarging spirit of love among Christians, in the increase of philanthropy, in the growing sentiment that war must cease among Christian nations, all disputes to be settled by arbitration, and in the feeling of universal

brotherhood which is softening all true men's hearts toward each other.

It cannot but be intensely interesting to trace the story of the friendship of Jesus and John, for it was in this hallowed friendship that John learned all that he gave the world in his life and words. We are able to fix its beginning—when Jesus and John met for the first time. One day John the Baptist was standing by the Jordan with two of his disciples. One of these was Andrew; and the other we know was John—we know it because in John's own Gospel, where the incident is recorded, no name is given. The two young men had not yet seen Jesus; but the Baptist knew him, and pointed him out as he passed by, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

The two young men went after Jesus, no doubt eager to speak with him. Hearing their footsteps behind him, he turned, and asked them what they sought. They asked, "Rabbi, where abidest thou?" He said, "Come, and ye shall see." They gladly accepted the invitation, went with him to his lodgings, and

remained until the close of the day. We have no account of what took place during those happy hours. It would be interesting to know what Jesus said to his visitors, but not a word of the conversation has been preserved. We may be sure, however, that the visit made a deep impression on John.

Most days in our lives are unmarked by any special event. There are thousands of them that seem just alike, with their common routine. Once or twice, however, in the lifetime of almost every person, there is a day which is made forever memorable by some event or occurrence, — the first meeting with one who fills a large place in one's after years, a compact of sacred friendship, a revealing of some new truth, a decision which brought rich blessing, or some other experience which set the day forever apart among all days.

John lived to be a very old man ; but to his latest years he must have remembered the day when he first met Jesus, and began with him the friendship which brought him such blessing. We may be sure that as at their

first meeting the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul, so at this first meeting the soul of John was knit with the soul of Jesus in a holy friendship which brought unspeakable good to his life. There was that in Jesus which at once touched all that was best in John, and called out the sweetest music of his soul.

“Thou shalt know him when he comes  
Not by any din of drums,  
Nor the vantage of his airs;  
Neither by his crown,  
Nor by his gown,  
Nor by anything he wears.  
He shall only well-known be  
By the holy harmony  
That his coming makes in thee!”

John calls himself the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” This designation gives him a distinction even among the Master’s personal friends. Jesus loved all the apostles, but there were three who belonged in an inner circle. Then, of these three, John was the best beloved. We are not told what it was in John that gave him

this highest honor. He was probably a cousin of Jesus, as it is thought by many that their mothers were sisters. This blood relationship, however, would not account for the strong love that bound them together. There must have been certain qualities in John which fitted him in a peculiar way for being the closest friend of Jesus.

We know that John's personality was very winning. He was only a fisherman, and in his youth lacked opportunities for acquiring knowledge or refinement. If Mary and Salome were sisters, the blood of David's line was in John as well as in Jesus. It is something to have back of one's birth a long and noble descent. Besides, John was one of those rare men "who appear to be formed of finer clay than their neighbors, and cast in a gentler mould." Evidently he was by nature a man of sympathetic spirit, one born to be a friend.

The study of John's writings helps us to answer our question. Not once in all his Gospel does he refer to himself by name; yet as one reads the wonderful chapters, one is

aware of a spirit, an atmosphere, of sweetness. There are fields and meadows in which the air is laden with fragrance, and yet no flowers can be seen. But looking closely, one finds, low on the ground, hidden by the tall grasses, a multitude of little lowly flowers. It is from these that the perfume comes. In every community there are humble, quiet lives, almost unheard of among men, who shed a subtle influence on all about them. Thus it is in the chapters of John's Gospel. The name of the writer nowhere appears, but the charm of his spirit pervades the whole book.

In the designation which he adopts for himself, there is a fine revealing of character. There is a beautiful self-obliteration in the hiding away of the author's personality that only the name and glory of Jesus may be seen. There are some good men, who, even when trying to exalt and honor their Lord, cannot resist the temptation to write their own name large, that those who see the Master may also see the Master's friend. In John there is an utter absence of this spirit. As the Baptist,

when asked who he was, refused to give his name, and said he was only a voice proclaiming the coming of the King, so John spoke of himself only as one whom the Master loved.

We must note, too, that he does not speak of himself as the disciple who loved Jesus,—this would have been to boast of himself as loving the Master more than the other disciples did,—but as the disciple whom Jesus loved. In this distinction lies one of the subtlest secrets of Christian peace. Our hope does not rest in our love for Jesus, but in his love for us. Our love at the best is variable in its moods. To-day it glows with warmth and joy, and we say we could die for Christ; to-morrow, in some depression, we question whether we really love him at all, our feeling responds so feebly to his name. A peace that depends on our loving Christ is as variable as our own consciousness. But when it is Christ's love for us that is our dependence, our peace is undisturbed by any earthly changes.

Thus we find in John a reposeful spirit. He

was content to be lowly. He knew how to trust. His spirit was gentle. He was of a deeply spiritual nature. Yet we must not think of him as weak or effeminate. Perhaps painters have helped to give this impression of him; but it is one that is not only untrue, but dishonoring. John was a man of noble strength. In his soul, under his quietness and sweetness of spirit, dwelt a mighty energy. But he was a man of love, and had learned the lesson of divine peace; thus he was a self-controlled man.

These are hints of the character of the disciple whom Jesus loved, whom he chose to be his closest friend. He was only a lad when Jesus first met him, and we must remember that the John we chiefly know was the man as he developed under the influence of Jesus. What Jesus saw in the youth who sat down beside him in his lodging-place that day, drank in his words, and opened his soul to him as a rose to the morning sun, was a nature rich in its possibilities of noble and beautiful character. The John we know is the man as he

ripened in the summer of Christ's love. He is a product of pure Christ-culture. His young soul responded to every inspiration in his Master, and developed into rarer loveliness every day. Doubtless one of the qualities in John that fitted him to be the closest friend of Jesus was his openness of heart, which made him such an apt learner, so ready to respond to every touch of Christ's hand.

It would be interesting to trace the story of this holy friendship through the three years Jesus and John were together, but only a little of the wonderful narrative is written. Some months after the first meeting, there was another beside the sea. For some reason John and his companions had taken up their fishing again. Jesus came by in the early morning, and found the men greatly discouraged because they had been out all night and had caught nothing. He told them to push out, and to cast their net again, telling them where to cast it. The result was a great draught of fishes. It was a revealing of divine power which mightily impressed the fishermen. He then

bade them to follow him, and said he would make them become fishers of men. Immediately they left the ship, and went with Jesus.

Thus John had now committed himself altogether to his new Master. From this time he remained with Jesus, following him wherever he went. He was in his school, and was an apt scholar. A little later there came another call. Jesus chose twelve men to be apostles, and among them was the beloved disciple. This choice and call brought him into yet closer fellowship with Jesus. Now the transformation of character would go on more rapidly because of the constancy and the closeness of John's association with his Master.

A peculiar designation is given to the brothers James and John. Jesus surnamed them Boanerges, the sons of thunder. There must have been a meaning in such a name given by Jesus himself. Perhaps the figure of thunder suggests capacity for energy—that the soul of John was charged, as it were, with fiery zeal. It appears to us, as we read John's writings, that this could not have been true. He

seems such a man of love that we cannot think of him as ever being possessed of an opposite feeling. But there is evidence that by nature he was full of just such energy held in reserve. We see John chiefly in his writings; and these were the fruit of his mellow old age, when love's lessons had been well learned. It seems likely that in his youth he had in his breast a naturally quick, fiery temper. But under the culture of Jesus this spirit was brought into complete mastery. We have one illustration of this earlier natural feeling in a familiar incident. The people of a certain village refused to receive the Master, and John and his brother wished to call down fire from heaven to consume them. But Jesus reminded them that he was not in the world to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

We know not how often this lesson had to be taught to John before he became the apostle of love. It was well on in St. Paul's old age that he said he had learned in whatsoever state he was therein to be content. It is a comfort to us to know that he was not always able

to say this, and that the lesson had to be learned by him just as it has to be learned by us. It is a comfort to us also to be permitted to believe that John had to *learn* to be the loving, gentle disciple he became in later life, and that the lesson was not an easy one.

It is instructive also to remember that it was through his friendship with Jesus that John received his sweetness and lovingness of character. An old Persian apologue tells that one found a piece of fragrant clay in his garden, and that when asked how it got its perfume the clay replied, "One laid me on a rose." John lived near the heart of Jesus, and the love of that heart of gentleness entered his soul and transformed him. There is no other secret for any who would learn love's great lesson. Abiding in Christ, Christ abides also in us, and we are made like him because he lives in us.

John's distinction of being one of the Master's closest friends brought him several times into experiences of peculiar sacredness. He witnessed the transfiguration, when for an hour

the real glory of the Christ shone out through his investiture of flesh. This was a vision John never forgot. It must have impressed itself deeply upon his soul. He was also one of those who were led into the inner shadows of Gethsemane, to be near Jesus while he suffered, and to comfort him with love.

This last experience especially suggests to us something of what the friendship of John was to Jesus. There is no doubt that this friendship brought to John immeasurable comfort and blessing, enriching his life, and transforming his character. But what was the friendship to Jesus? There is no doubt that it was a great deal to him. He craved affection and sympathy, as every noble heart does just in the measure of its humanness. One of the saddest elements of the Gethsemane sorrow was the disappointment of Jesus, when, hungry for love, he went back to his chosen three, expecting to find a little comfort and strength, and found them sleeping.

The picture of John at the Last Supper, leaning on Jesus' breast, shows him to us in

the posture in which we think of him most. It is the place of confidence; the bosom is only for those who have a right to closest intimacy. It is the place of love, near the heart. It is the place of safety, for he is in the clasp of the everlasting arms, and none can snatch him out of the impregnable shelter. It was the darkest night the world ever saw that John lay on the bosom of Jesus. That is the place of comfort for all sorrowing believers, and there is abundance of room for them all on that breast. John *leaned* on Jesus' breast, — weakness reposed on strength, helplessness on almighty help. We should learn to lean, to lean our whole weight, on Christ. That is the privilege of Christian faith.

There was one occasion when John seems to have broken away from his usual humility. He joined with his brother in a request for the highest places in the new kingdom. This is only one of the evidences of John's humanness, — that he was of like passions with the rest of us. Jesus treated the brothers with

gentle pity — “Ye know not what ye ask.” Then he explained to them that the highest places must be reached through toil and sorrow, through the paths of service and suffering. Later in life John knew what the Master’s words meant. He found his place nearest to Christ, but it was not on the steps of an earthly throne; it was a nearness of love, and the steps to it were humility, self-forgetfulness, and ministry.

It must have given immeasurable comfort to Jesus to have John stay so near to him during the last scenes. If he fled for a moment in the garden when all the apostles fled, he soon returned; for he was close to his Master during his trial. Then, when he was on the cross, Jesus saw a group of loving friends near by, watching with breaking hearts; and among these was John. It lifted a heavy burden off the heart of Jesus to be able then to commit his mother to John, and to see him lead her away to his own home. It was a supreme expression of friendship, — choosing John from among all his friends for the sacred duty of sheltering this blesseddest of women.

The story of this beautiful friendship of Jesus and John shows us what is possible in its own measure to every Christian discipleship. It is not possible for every Christian to be a St. John, but close friendship with Jesus is the privilege of every true believer ; and all who enter into such a friendship will be transformed into the likeness of their Friend.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JESUS AND PETER.

“As the mighty poets take  
Grief and pain to build their song,  
Even so for every soul,  
Whatsoe'er its lot may be, —  
Building, as the heavens roll,  
Something large and strong and free, —  
Things that hurt and things that mar  
Shape the man for perfect praise;  
Shock and strain and ruin are  
Friendlier than the smiling days.”

OUR first glimpse of Simon in the New Testament is as he was being introduced to Jesus. It was beside the Jordan. His brother had brought him; and that moment a friendship began which not only was of infinite and eternal importance to Simon himself, but which has left incalculable blessing in the world.

Jesus looked at him intently, with deep, penetrating gaze. He saw into his very soul.

He read his character; not only what he was then, but the possibilities of his life, — what he would become under the power of grace. He then gave him a new name. “When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon: . . . thou shalt be called Cephias, which is by interpretation, a stone.”

In a gallery in Europe there hang, side by side, Rembrandt's first picture, a simple sketch, imperfect and faulty, and his great masterpiece, which all men admire. So in the two names, Simon and Peter, we have, first the rude fisherman who came to Jesus that day, the man as he was before Jesus began his work on him; and second, the man as he became during the years when the friendship of Jesus had warmed his heart and enriched his life; when the teaching of Jesus had given him wisdom and kindled holy aspirations in his soul; and when the experiences of struggle and failure, of penitence and forgiveness, of sorrow and joy, had wrought their transformations in him.

“Thou art Simon.” That was his name

then. "Thou shalt be called Cephas." That was what he should become. It was common in the East to give a new name to denote a change of character, or to indicate a man's position among men. Abram's name was changed to Abraham — "Father of a multitude" — when the promise was sealed to him. Jacob's name, which meant supplanter, one who lived by deceit, was changed to Israel, a prince with God, after that night when the old nature was maimed and defeated while he wrestled with God, and overcame by clinging in faith and trust. So Simon received a new name when he came to Jesus, and began his friendship with him. "Thou shalt be called Cephas."

This did not mean that Simon's character was changed instantly into the quality which the new name indicated. It meant that Jesus saw in him the possibilities of firmness, strength, and stability, of which a stone is the emblem. It meant that this should be his character by and by, when the work of grace in him was finished. The new name was a prophecy

of the man that was to be, the man that Jesus would make of him. Now he was only Simon — rash, impulsive, self-confident, vain, and therefore weak and unstable.

Some of the processes in this making of a man, this transformation of Simon into Cephas, we may note as we read the story. There were three years between the beginning of the friendship of Jesus and Simon and the time when the man was ready for his work. The process was not easy. Simon had many hard lessons to learn. Self-confidence had to be changed into humility. Impetuosity had to be chastened and disciplined into quiet self-control. Presumption had to be awed and softened into reverence. Thoughtfulness had to grow out of heedlessness. Rashness had to be subdued into prudence, and weakness had to be tempered into calm strength. All this moral history was folded up in the words, "Thou shalt be called Cephas — a stone."

The meeting by the Jordan was the beginning. A new friendship coming into a life

may color all its future, may change its destiny. We never know what may come of any chance meeting. But the beginning of a friendship with Jesus has infinite possibilities of good. The giving of the new name must have put a new thought of life's meaning into Simon's heart. It must have set a new vision in his soul, and kindled new aspirations within his breast. Life must have meant more to him from that hour. He had glimpses of possibilities he had never dreamed of before. It is always so when Jesus truly comes into any one's life. A new conception of character dawns on the soul, a new ideal, a revelation which changes all thoughts of living. The friendship of Jesus is most inspiring.

Some months passed, and then came a formal call which drew Simon into close and permanent relations with Jesus. It was on the Sea of Galilee. The men were fishing. There had been a night of unsuccessful toil. In the morning Jesus used Simon's boat for a pulpit, speaking from its deck to the throngs on the shore. He then bade the men push

out into deep water and let down their net. Simon said it was not worth while — still he would do the Master's bidding. The result was an immense haul of fishes.

The effect of the miracle on Simon's mind was overwhelming. Instantly he felt that he was in the presence of divine revealing, and a sense of his own sinfulness and unworthiness oppressed him. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," he cried. Jesus quieted his terror with his comforting "Fear not." Then he said to him, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." This was another self-revealing. Simon's work as a fisherman was ended. He forsook all, and followed Jesus, becoming a disciple in the full sense. His friendship with Jesus was deepening. He gave up everything he had, going with Jesus into poverty, homelessness, and — he knew not what.

Living in the personal household of Jesus, Simon saw his Master's life in all its manifold phases, hearing the words he spoke whether in public or in private conversation, and witnessing every revealing of his character, dispo-

sition, and spirit. It is impossible to estimate the influence of all this on the life of Simon. He was continually seeing new things in Jesus, hearing new words from his lips, learning new lessons from his life. One cannot live in daily companionship with any good man without being deeply influenced by the association. To live with Jesus in intimate relations of friendship was a holy privilege, and its effect on Simon's character cannot be estimated.

An event which must have had a great influence on Simon was his call to be an apostle. Not only was he one of the Twelve, but his name came first — it is always given first. He was the most honored of all, was to be their leader, occupying the first place among them. A true-hearted man is not elated or puffed up by such honoring as this. It humbles him, rather, because the distinction brings with it a sense of responsibility. It awes a good man to become conscious that God is intrusting him with place and duty in the world, and is using him to be a blessing to others. He must walk worthy of his high calling. A new

sanctity invests him — the Lord has set him apart for holy service.

Another event which had a marked influence on Simon was his recognition of the Messiahship of Jesus. Just how this great truth dawned upon his consciousness we do not know, but there came a time when the conviction was so strong in him that he could not but give expression to it. It was in the neighborhood of Cæsarea Philippi. Jesus had led the Twelve apart into a secluded place for prayer. There he asked them two solemn questions. He asked them first what the people were saying about him — who they thought he was. The answer showed that he was not understood by them; there were different opinions about him, none of them correct. Then he asked the Twelve who they thought he was. Simon answered, "The Christ, the Son of the living God." The confession was wonderfully comprehensive. It declared that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he was a divine being — the Son of the living God.

It was a great moment in Simon's life when

he uttered this wonderful confession. Jesus replied with a beatitude for Simon, and then spoke another prophetic word: "Thou art Peter," using now the new name which was beginning to be fitting, as the new man that was to be was growing out of the old man that was being left behind. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." It was a further unveiling of Simon's future. It was in effect an unfolding or expansion of what he had said when Simon first stood before him. "Thou shalt be called Cephas." As a confessor of Christ, representing all the apostles, Peter was thus honored by his Lord.

But the Messianic lesson was yet only partly learned. Simon believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but his conception of the Messiah was still only an earthly one. So we read that from that time Jesus began to teach the apostles the truth about his mission, — that he must suffer many things, and be killed. Then it was that Simon made his grave mistake in seeking to hold his Master back from the cross. "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never

be unto thee," he said with great vehemence. Quickly came the stern reply, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me." Simon had to learn a new lesson. He did not get it fully learned until after Jesus had risen again, and the Holy Spirit had come, — that the measure of rank in spiritual life is the measure of self-forgetting service.

We get a serious lesson here in love and friendship. It is possible for us to become Satan even to those we love the best. We do this when we try to dissuade them from hard toil, costly service, or perilous missions to which God is calling them. We need to exercise the most diligent care, and to keep firm restraint upon our own affections, lest in our desire to make the way easier for our friends we tempt them to turn from the path which God has chosen for their feet.

Thus lesson after lesson did Simon have to learn, each one leading to a deeper humility. "Less of self and more of thee — none of self and all of thee." Thus we reach the last night with its sad fall. The denial of Peter was a

terrible disappointment. We would have said it was impossible, as Peter himself said. He was brave as a lion. He loved Jesus deeply and truly. He had received the name of the rock. For three years he had been under the teaching of Jesus, and he had been received into special honor and favor among the apostles. He had been faithfully forewarned of his danger, and we say, "Forewarned is forearmed." Yet in spite of all, this bravest, most favored disciple, this man of rock, fell most ignominiously, at a time, too, when friendship to his Master ought to have made him truest and most loyal.

It was the loving gentleness of Jesus that saved him. What intense pain there must have been in the heart of the Master when, after hearing Peter's denial, he turned and looked at Peter!

"I think the look of Christ might seem to say,—  
    'Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone  
Which I at last must break my heart upon,  
For all God's charge to his high angels may  
Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday

Wash thy feet, my beloved, that they should run  
Quick to deny me 'neath the morning sun?  
And do thy kisses like the rest betray?  
The cock crows coldly. Go and manifest  
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!  
For when thy final need is dreariest,  
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here.  
My voice, to God and angels, shall attest,  
"Because I know this man, let him be clear." "

It was after this look of wondrous love that Peter went out and wept bitterly. At last he remembered. It seemed too late, but it was not too late. The heart of Jesus was not closed against him, and he rose from his fall a new man.

What place had the denial in the story of the training of Peter? It had a very important place. Up to that last night, there was still a grave blemish in Simon's character. His self-confidence was an element of weakness. Perhaps there was no other way in which this fault could be cured but by allowing him to fall. We know at least that, in the bitter experience of denial, with its solemn repenting, Peter lost his weakness. He came

from his penitence a new man. At last he was disinthralled. He had learned the lesson of humility. It was never again possible for him to deny his Lord. A little later, after a heart-searching question thrice repeated, he was restored and recommissioned — “Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.”

So the work was completed; the vision of the new man had been realized. Simon had become Cephas. It had been a long and costly process, but neither too long nor too costly. While the marble was wasting, the image was growing.

You say it was a great price that Simon had to pay to be fashioned into Peter. You ask whether it was worth while, whether it would not have been quite as well for him if he had remained the plain, obscure fisherman he was when Jesus first found him. Then he would have been only a fisherman, and after living among his neighbors for his allotted years, he would have had a quiet funeral one day, and would have been laid to rest beside the sea. As it was, he had a life of poverty

and toil and hard service. It took a great deal of severe discipline to make out of him the strong, firm man of rock that Jesus set out to produce in him. But who will say to-day that it was not worth while? The splendid Christian manhood of Peter has been now for nineteen centuries before the eyes of the world as a type of character which Christian men should emulate—a vision of life whose influence has touched millions with its inspiration. The price which had to be paid to attain this nobleness of character and this vastness of holy influence was not too great.

But how about ourselves? It may be quite as hard for some of us to be made into the image of beauty and strength which the Master has set for us. It may require that we shall pass through experiences of loss, trial, temptation, and sorrow. Life's great lessons are very long, and cannot be learned in a day, nor can they be learned easily. But life, at whatever cost, is worth while. It is worth while for the gold to pass through the fire to be made pure and clean. It is worth while

for the gem to endure the hard processes necessary to prepare it for shining in its dazzling splendor. It is worth while for a life to submit to whatever of severe discipline may be required to bring out in it the likeness of the Master, and to fit it for noble doing and serving. Poets are said to learn in suffering what they teach in song. If only one line of noble, inspiring, uplifting song is sung into the world's air, and started on a world-wide mission of blessing, no price paid for the privilege is too much to pay. David had to suffer a great deal to be able to write the Twenty-Third Psalm, but he does not now think that psalm cost him too much. William Canton writes:—

“A man lived fifty years—joy dashed with tears;  
Loved, toiled; had wife and child, and lost them; died;  
And left of all his long life's work one little song.  
That lasted—naught beside.

Like the monk Felix's bird, that song was heard;  
Doubt prayed, Faith soared, Death smiled itself to sleep;  
That song saved souls. You say the man paid stiffly?  
Nay.  
God paid—and thought it cheap.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### JESUS AND THOMAS.

I have a life in Christ to live,  
I have a death in Christ to die ;  
And must I wait till science give  
All doubts a full reply ?

Nay, rather while the sea of doubt  
Is raging wildly round about,  
Questioning of life and death and sin,  
Let me but creep within  
Thy fold, O Christ ! and at thy feet  
Take but the lowest seat.

PRINCIPAL SHAIRP.

THERE is no record of the beginning of the friendship of Jesus and Thomas. We do not know when Thomas became a disciple, nor what first drew him to Jesus. Did a friend bring him ? Did he learn of the new rabbi through the fame of him that went everywhere, and then come to him without solicitation ? Did he hear him speak one day, and find himself drawn to him by the power of his gracious

words? Or did Jesus seek him out in his home or at his work, and call him to be a follower?

We do not know. The manner of his coming is veiled in obscurity. The first mention of his name is in the list of the Twelve. As the apostles were chosen from the much larger company of those who were already disciples, Thomas must have been a follower of Jesus before he was an apostle. He and Jesus had been friends for some time, and there is evidence that the friendship was a very close and tender one. Even in the scant material available for the making up of the story, we find evidence in Thomas of strong loyalty and unwavering devotion, and in Jesus of marvelous patience and gentleness toward his disciple.

We have in the New Testament many wonderfully lifelike portraits. Occurring again and again, they are always easily recognizable. In every mention of Peter, for example, the man is indubitably the same. He is always active, speaking or acting; not always wisely, but in every case characteristically,—impetu-

ous, self-confident, rash, yet ever warm-hearted. We would know him unmistakably in every incident in which he appears, even if his name were not given. John, too, whenever we see him, is always the same,—reverent, quiet, affectionate, trustful, the disciple of love. Andrew appears only a few times, but in each of these cases he is engaged in the same way,—bringing some one to Jesus. Mary of Bethany comes into the story on only three occasions; but always we see her in the same attitude,—at Jesus' feet,—while Martha is ever active in her serving.

The character of Thomas also is sketched in a very striking way. There are but three incidents in which this apostle appears; but in all of these the portrait is the same, and is so clear that even Peter's character is scarcely better known than that of Thomas. He always looks at the dark side. We think of him as the doubter; but his doubt is not of the flippant kind which reveals lack of reverence, oftentimes ignorance and lack of earnest thought; it is rather a constitutional tendency to ques-

tion, and to wait for proof which would satisfy the senses, than a disposition to deny the facts of Christianity. Thomas was ready to believe, glad to believe, when the proof was sufficient to convince him. Then all the while he was ardently a true and devoted friend of Jesus, attached to him, and ready to follow him even to death.

The first incident in which Thomas appears is in connection with the death of Lazarus. Jesus had now gone beyond the Jordan with his disciples. The Jews had sought to kill him; and he escaped from their hands, and went away for safety. When news of the sickness of Lazarus came, Jesus waited two days, and then said to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." The disciples reminded him of the hatred of the Jews, and of their recent attempts to kill him. They thought that he ought not to venture back again into the danger, even for the sake of carrying comfort to the sorrowing Bethany household. Jesus answered with a little parable about one's security while walking during the day. The

meaning of the parable was that he had not yet reached the end of his day, and therefore could safely continue the work which had been given him to do. Every man doing God's will is immortal till the work is done. Jesus then announced to his disciples that Lazarus was dead, and that he was going to waken him.

It is at this point that Thomas appears. He said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." He looked only at the dark side. He took it for granted that if Jesus returned to Judea he would be killed. He forgot for the time the divine power of Jesus, and the divine protection which sheltered him while he was doing the Father's will. He failed to understand the words Jesus had just spoken about his security until the hours of his day were finished. He remembered only the bitterness which the Jews had shown toward Jesus, and their determination to destroy his life. He had no hope that if Jesus returned they would not carry out their wicked purpose. There was no blue in the sky for him. He saw only darkness.

Thomas represents a class of good people who are found in every community. They see only the sad side of life. No stars shine through their cypress-trees. In the time of danger they forget that there are divine refuges into which they may flee and be safe. They know the promises, and often quote them to others; but when trouble comes upon them, all these words of God fade out of their minds. In sorrow they fail to receive any true and substantial comfort from the Scriptures. Hope dies in their hearts when the shadows gather about them. They yield to discouragement, and the darkness blots out every star in their sky. Whatever the trouble may be that comes into their life, they see the trouble only, and fail to perceive the bright light in the cloud.

This habit of mind adds much to life's hardness. Every burden is heavier because of the sad heart that beats under it. Every pain is keener because of the dispiriting which it brings with it. Every sorrow is made darker by the hopelessness with which it is endured. Every care is magnified, and the sweetness of

every pleasure is lessened, by this pessimistic tendency. The beauty of the world loses half its charm in the eyes which see all things in the hue of despondent feeling. Slightest fears become terrors, and smallest trials grow into great misfortunes. Our heart makes our world for us; and if the heart be without hope and cheer, the world is always dark. We find in life just what we have the capacity to find. One who is color-blind sees no loveliness in nature. One who has no music in his soul hears no harmonies anywhere. When fear sits regnant on the throne, life is full of alarms.

On the other hand, if the heart be full of hope, every joy is doubled, and half of every trouble vanishes. There are sorrows, but they are comforted. There are bitter cups, but the bitterness is sweetened. There are heavy burdens, but the songful spirit lightens them. There are dangers, but cheerful courage robs them of terror. All the world is brighter when the light of hope shines within.

But we have read only half the story of the

fear of Thomas. He saw only danger in the Master's return to Judea. "The Jews will kill him; he will go back to certain death," he said. But Thomas would not forsake Jesus, though he was going straight to martyrdom. "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Thus, mingled with his fear, was a noble and heroic love for Jesus. The hopelessness of Thomas as he thought of Jesus going to Bethany makes his devotion and his cleaving to him all the braver and nobler. He was sure it was a walk to death, but he faltered not in his loyalty.

This is a noble spirit in Thomas, which we would do well to emulate. It is the true soldier spirit. Its devotion to Christ is absolute, and its following unconditional. It has only one motive, — love; and one rule, — obedience. It is not influenced by any question of consequences; but though it be to certain death, it hesitates not. This is the kind of discipleship which the Master demands. He who loves father or mother more than him is not worthy of him. He who hates not his

own life cannot be his disciple. A follower of Jesus must be ready and willing to follow him to his cross. Thomas proved his friendship for his Master by a noble heroism. It is the highest test of courage to go forward unflinching in the way of duty when one sees only personal loss and sacrifice as the result. The soldier who trembles, and whose face whitens from constitutional physical fear, and who yet marches steadily into the battle, is braver far than the soldier who without a tremor presses into the engagement.

The second time at which Thomas appears is in the upper room, after the Holy Supper had been eaten. Jesus had spoken of the Father's house, and had said that he was going away to prepare a place for his disciples, and that then he would come again to receive them unto himself. Thomas could not understand the Master's meaning, and said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" He would not say he believed until he saw for himself. That is all that his question in the upper room meant

—he wished the Master to make the great teaching a little plainer. It were well if more Christians insisted on finding the ground of their faith, the reasons why they are Christians. Their faith would then be stronger, and less easily shaken. When trouble comes, or any testing, it would continue firm and unmoved, because it rests on the rock of divine truth.

The last incident in the story of Thomas is after the resurrection. The first evening the apostles met in the upper room to talk over the strange things which had occurred that day. For some reason Thomas was not at this meeting. We may infer that his melancholy temperament led him to absent himself. He had loved Jesus deeply, and his sorrow was very great. There had been rumors all day of Christ's resurrection, but Thomas put no confidence in these. Perhaps his despondent disposition made him unsocial, and kept him from meeting with the other apostles, even to weep with them.

That evening Jesus entered through the

closed doors, and stood in the midst of the disciples, and greeted them as he had done so often before, "Peace be unto you!" They told Thomas afterwards that they had seen the Lord. But he refused to believe them; that is, he doubted the reality of what they thought they had seen. He said that they had been deceived; and he asserted that he must not only see for himself, but must have the opportunity of subjecting the evidence to the severest test. He must see the print of the nails, and must also be permitted to put his finger into the place.

It is instructive to think of what this doubting disposition of Thomas cost him. First, it kept him from the meeting of the disciples that evening, when all the others came together. He shut himself up with his gloom and sadness. His grief was hopeless, and he would not seek comfort. The consequence was, that when Jesus entered the room, and showed himself to his friends, Thomas missed the revealing which gave them such unspeakable gladness. From that hour their sorrow

was changed to joy; but for the whole of another week Thomas remained in the darkness in which the crucifixion had infolded him.

Doubt is always costly. It shuts out heavenly comfort. There are many Christian people who, especially in the first shock of sorrow, have an experience similar to that of Thomas. They shut themselves up with their grief, and refuse to accept the comfort of the gospel of Christ. They turn away their ears from the voices of love which speak to them out of the Bible, and will not receive the divine consolations. The light shines all about them; but they close doors and windows, and keep it from entering the darkened chamber where they sit. The music of peace floats on the air in sweet, entrancing strains, but no gentle note finds its way to their hearts.

Too many Christian mourners fail to find comfort in their sorrow. They believe the great truths of Christianity, that Jesus died for them and rose again; but their faith fails them for the time in the hour of sorest dis-

tress. Meanwhile they walk in darkness as Thomas did. On the other hand, those who accept, and let into their hearts the great truths of Christ's resurrection and the immortal life in Christ, feel the pain of parting no less sorely, but they find abundant consolation in the hope of eternal life for those whom they have lost for a time.

We have an illustration of the deep, tender, patient, and wise friendship of Jesus for Thomas in the way he treated this doubt of his apostle. He did not say that if Thomas could not believe the witness of the apostles to his resurrection he must remain in the darkness which his unbelief had made for him. He treated his doubt with exceeding gentleness, as a skilful physician would deal with a dangerous wound. He was in no haste. A full week passed before he did anything. During those days the sad heart had time to react, to recover something of its self-poise. Thomas still persisted in his refusal to believe, but when a week had gone he found his way with the others to their meeting. Perhaps their belief

in the Lord's resurrection made such a change in them, so brightened and transformed them, that Thomas grew less positive in his unbelief as he saw them day after day. At least he was ready now to be convinced. He wanted to believe.

That night Jesus came again into the room, the doors being shut, and standing in the midst of his friends, breathed again upon them his benediction of peace. Then he turned to Thomas; and holding out his hands, with the print of the nails in them, he asked him to put the evidences of his resurrection to the very tests he had said he must make before he could believe. Now Thomas was convinced. He did not make the tests he had insisted that he must make. There was no need for it. To look into the face of Jesus, to hear his voice, and to see the prints of the nails in his hands, was evidence enough even for Thomas. All his doubts were swept away. Falling at the Master's feet, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"

Thus the gentleness of Jesus in dealing with

his doubts saved Thomas from being an unbeliever. It is a great thing to have a wise and faithful friend when one is passing through an experience of doubt. Many persons are only confirmed in their scepticism by the well-meant but unwise efforts that are made to convince them of the truth concerning which they doubt. It is not argument that they need, but the patience of love, which waits in silence till the right time comes for words, and which then speaks but little. Thomas was convinced, not by words, but by seeing the proofs of Christ's love in the prints of the nails.

We may be glad now that Thomas was hard to convince of the truth of Christ's resurrection. It makes the proofs more indubitable to us that one even of the apostles refused at first to believe, and yet at length was led into triumphant faith. If all the apostles had believed easily, there would have been no comfort in the gospel for those who find it hard to believe, and yet who sincerely want to believe. The fact that one doubted, and even

refused to accept the witness of his fellow-apostles, and then at length was led into clear, strong faith, forever teaches that doubt is not hopeless. Ofttimes it may be but a process in the development of faith.

The story of Thomas shows, too, that there may be honest doubt. While he doubted, he yet loved ; perhaps no other one of the apostles loved Jesus more than did Thomas. He never made any such bold confession as Peter did, but neither did he ever deny Christ. Thomas has been a comfort to many because he has shown them that they can be true Christians, true lovers of Christ, and yet not be able to boast of their assurance of faith.

No doubt faith is better than questioning, but there may be honest questioning which yet is intensely loyal to Christ. Questioning, too, which is eager to find the truth and rest on the rock, may be better than easy believing, that takes no pains to know the reason of the hope it cherishes, and lightly recites the noble articles of a creed it has never seriously studied. Tennyson, in "In Memoriam," tells

the story of a faith that grew strong through its doubting.

You say, but with no touch of scorn,  
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes  
Are tender over drowning flies,  
You tell me, doubt is devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew  
In many a subtle question versed,  
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,  
But ever strove to make it true:

Perplex in faith, but pure in deeds,  
At last he beat his music out.  
There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength;  
He would not make his judgment blind;  
He faced the spectres of the mind  
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;  
And power was with him in the night,  
Which makes the darkness and the light,  
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,  
As over Sinai's peaks of old,  
While Israel made their gods of gold,  
Although the trumpet blew so loud.

That which saved Thomas was his deep, strong friendship for Christ. "The characteristic of Thomas," says Ian Maclaren, "is not that he doubted, — that were an easy passport to religion, — but that he doubted and loved. His doubt was the measure of his love; his doubt was swallowed up in love." If friendship for Christ be loyal and true, we need not look upon questioning as disloyalty; it may be but love finding the way up the rugged mountain-side to the sunlit summit of a glorious faith. There is a scepticism whose face is toward wintriness and death; but there is a doubt which is looking toward the sun and toward all blessedness.

Thomas teaches us that one may look on the dark side and yet be a Christian, an ardent lover of Jesus, ready to die for him. But we must admit that this is not the best way to live. No one would say that Thomas was the ideal among the apostles, that his character was the most beautiful, his life the noblest and the best. Faith is better than doubt, and confidence better than questioning. It is better

to be a sunny Christian, rejoicing, songful, happy, than a sad, gloomy, despondent Christian. It makes one's own life sweeter and more beautiful. Then it makes others happier. A gloomy Christian casts dark shadows wherever he goes ; a sunny Christian is a benediction to every life he touches

## CHAPTER IX.

### JESUS' UNREQUITED FRIENDSHIPS.

“Friend, my feet bleed.  
Open thy door to me and comfort me.”  
I will not open; trouble me no more.  
Go on thy way footsore;  
I will not rise and open unto thee.  
“Then it is nothing to thee? Open, see  
Who stands to plead with thee.  
Open, lest I should pass thee by, and thou  
One day entreat my face  
And howl for grace,  
And I be deaf as thou art now.  
Open to me.”

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

THERE is a great deal of unrequited love in this world. There are hearts that love with all the strength of purest and holiest affection, whose love seems to meet no requital. There is much unrequited mother-love and father-love. Parents live for their children. In helpless infancy they begin to pour out their affec-

tion on them. They toil for them, suffer for them, deny themselves to provide comforts for them, bear their burdens, watch beside them when they are sick, pray for them, and teach them. Parent-love is likest God's love of all earthly affections. It is one of the things in humanity which at its best seems to have come from the Fall almost unimpaired. Much parent-love is worthily honored and fittingly requited. Few things in this world are more beautiful than the devotion of children to parents which one sees in some homes. But not always is there such return. Too often is this almost divine love unrequited.

Much philanthropic love also is unrequited. There are men who spend all their life in doing good, and then meet no return. Men have served their country with loyalty and disinterestedness, and have received no reward—perhaps have been left to suffering, and have died in poverty, neglected and forgotten; too often have lain in prison, or been put to death, or exiled by the country which was indebted to their patriotism and loyal service for much

of its glory and greatness. Many hearts break because of men's ingratitude.

Jesus was the world's greatest benefactor. No other man ever loved the race, or could have loved it, as he did. He was the divine messenger who came to save the world. His whole life was a revealing of love. It was the love of God too,—a love of infinite depth and strength and tenderness, and not any merely human love, however rich and faithful it might be, that was manifested in Jesus Christ. Yet much of his wonderful love was unrequited. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." A few individuals recognized him and accepted his love; but the great masses of the people paid him no heed, saw no beauty in him, rejected the blessings he bore and proffered to all, and let his love waste itself in unavailing yearnings and beseechings. Then one cruel day they nailed him on a cross, thinking to quench the affection of his mighty heart.

There are many illustrations of the unrequiting of the holy friendship of Jesus. The treatment he received at Nazareth was one instance. He had been brought up among the people. They had seen his beautiful life during the thirty years he had lived in the village. They had known him as a child when he played in their streets. They had known him as a youth and young man in his noble strength. They had known him as a carpenter when day after day he wrought among them in humble toil.

It is interesting to think of the sinless life of Jesus all these years. There was no halo about his head but the shining of manly character. There were no miracles wrought by his hands but the miracles of duty, faithful service, and gentle kindness. Yet we cannot doubt that his life in Nazareth was one of rare grace and beauty, marked by perfect unselfishness and great helpfulness.

By and by he went away from Nazareth to begin his public ministry as the Messiah. From that time the people saw him no more.

The carpenter shop was closed, and the tools lay unused on the bench. The familiar form appeared no more on the streets. A year or more passed, and one day he came back to visit his old neighbors. He stayed a little while, and on the Sabbath was at the village church as had been his wont when his home was at Nazareth. When the opportunity was given him, he unrolled the Book of Isaiah, and read the passage which tells of the anointing of the Messiah, and gives the wonderful outline of his ministry. When he had finished the reading, he told the people that this prophecy was now fulfilled in their ears. That is, he said that he was the Messiah whose anointing and work the prophet had foretold. For a time the people listened spellbound to his gracious words, and then they began to grow angry, that he whom they knew as the carpenter of their village should make such an astounding claim. They rose up in wrath, thrust him out of the synagogue, and would have hurled him over the precipice had he not eluded them and gone on his way.

He had come to them in love, bearing rich blessings; but they drove him away with the blessings. He had come to heal their sick, to cure their blind and lame, to cleanse their lepers, to comfort their sorrowing ones; but he had to go away and leave these works of mercy unwrought, while the sufferers continued to bear their burdens. His friendship for his old neighbors was unrequited.

Another instance of unrequited friendship in the life of Jesus was in the case of the rich young man who came to him. He had many excellent traits of character, and was also an earnest seeker after the truth. We are distinctly told that Jesus loved him. Thus he belongs with Martha and Mary and Lazarus, of whom the same was said. But here, again, the love was unrequited. The young man was deeply interested in Jesus, and wanted to go with him; but he could not pay the price, and turned and went away.

It is interesting to think what might have been the result if he had chosen Christ and gone with him. He might have occupied an

important place in the early church, and his name might have lived through all future generations. But he loved his money too much to give it up for Christ, and rejected the way of the cross marked out for him. He refused the friendship of Jesus, and thus threw away all that was best in life. In shutting love out of his heart, he shut himself out from love.

Of all the examples of unrequited friendship in the story of Jesus, that of Judas is the saddest. We do not know the beginning of the story of his discipleship, when Judas first came to Jesus, or who brought him. But he must have been a follower some time before he was chosen to be an apostle. Jesus thought over the names of those who had left all to be with him. Then after a night of prayer he chose twelve of these to be his special messengers and witnesses. He loved them all, and took them into very close relations.

Think what a privilege it was for these men to live with Jesus. They heard all his words. They saw every phase of his life. Some friends it is better not to know too intimately.

They are not as good in private as they are in public. Their life does not bear too close inspection. We discover in them dispositions, habits, ways, tempers, feelings, motives, which dim the lustre we see in them at greater distance. Intimacy weakens the friendship. But, on the other hand, there are those who, the more we see of their private life, the more we love them. Close association reveals loveliness of character, fineness of spirit, richness of heart, sweetness of disposition — habits, feelings, tempers, noble self-denials, which add to the attractiveness of the life and the charm of our friend's personality. We may be sure that intimacy with Jesus only made him appear all the more winning and beautiful to his friends. Judas lived in the warmth of this wondrous love, under the influence of this gracious personality, month after month. He witnessed the pure and holy life of Jesus in all its manifold phases, heard his words, and saw his works. Doubtless, too, in his individual relation with the Master, he received many marks of affection and personal friendship.

A careful reading of the Gospels shows that Judas was frequently warned of the very sin which in the end wrought his ruin. Continually Jesus spoke of the danger of covetousness. In the Sermon on the Mount he exhorted his disciples to lay up their treasure, not upon earth, but in heaven, and said that no one could serve God and mammon. It was just this that Judas was trying to do. In more than one parable the danger of riches was emphasized. Can we doubt that in all these reiterations and warnings on the one subject, Judas was in the Master's mind? He was trying in the faithfulness of loyal friendship to save him from the sin which was imperilling his very life.

But Judas resisted all the mighty love of Christ. It made no impression upon him; he was unaffected by it. In his heart there grew on meanwhile, unchecked, unhindered, his terrible greed for money. First it made him a thief. The money given to Jesus by his friends to provide for his wants, or to use for the poor, Judas, who was the treasurer,

began at length to purloin for himself. This was the first step. The next was the selling of his Master for thirty pieces of silver. This was a more fearful fruit of his nourished greed than the purloining was. It is bad enough to steal. It is a base form of stealing which robs a church treasury as Judas did. But to take money as the price of betraying a friend — could any sin be baser? Could any crime be blacker than that? To take money as the price of betraying a friend in whose confidence one has lived for years, at whose table one has eaten day after day, in the blessing of whose friendship one has rested for months and years — are there words black enough to paint the infamy of such a deed?

All the participators in the crime of that Good Friday wear a peculiar brand of infamy as they are portrayed on the pages of history; but among them all, the most despicable, the one whose name bears the deepest infamy, is Judas, an apostle turned traitor, for a few miserable coins betraying his best friend into the hands of malignant foes.

This is the outcome of the friendship of Jesus for Judas; this was the fruit of those years of affection, cherishing, patient teaching. Think what Judas might have been. He was chosen and called to be an apostle. There was no reason in the heart of Jesus why Judas might not have been true and worthy. Sin is not God's plan for any life. Treachery and infamy were not in God's purpose for Judas. Jesus would not have chosen him for one of the Twelve if it had not been possible for him to be a good and true man. Judas fell because he had never altogether surrendered himself to Christ. He tried to serve God and mammon; but both could not stay in his heart, and instead of driving out mammon, mammon drove out Christ.

This suggests to us what a battlefield the human heart sometimes is—a Waterloo where destinies are settled. God or mammon— which? That is the question every soul must answer. How goes the battle in your soul? Who is winning on your field—Christ or money? Christ or pleasure? Christ or sin?

Christ or self? Judas lost the battle; the Devil won.

A picture in Brussels represents Judas wandering about the night after the betrayal. By chance he comes upon the workmen who have been preparing the cross for Jesus. A fire burning close by throws its weird light on the faces of the men who are now sleeping. The face of Judas is somewhat in the shade; but one sees on it remorse and agony, as the traitor's eyes fall upon the cross and the tools which have been used in making it, — the cross to which his treason had doomed his friend. But though suffering in the torments of a guilty conscience, he still tightly clutches his money-bag as he hurries on into the night. The picture tells the story of the fruit of Judas's sin, — the money-bag, with eighteen dollars and sixty cents in it, and even that soon to be cast away in the madness of despair.

Unrequited friendship! Yes; and in shutting out that blessed friendship, Judas shut out hope. Longfellow puts into his mouth the despairing words: —

“Lost, lost, forever lost! I have betrayed  
The innocent blood . . .

. . . . .  
Too late! too late! I shall not see him more  
Among the living. That sweet, patient face  
Will nevermore rebuke me, nor those lips  
Repeat the words, ‘One of you shall betray me.’”

The great lesson from all this is the peril of rejecting the friendship of Jesus Christ. In his friendship is the only way to salvation, the only way of obtaining eternal life. He calls men to come to him, to follow him, to be his friends; and thus alone can they come unto God, and be received into his family.

There is something appalling in the revealing which this truth teaches, — the power each soul possesses of shutting out all the love of God, of resisting the infinite blessing of the friendship of Christ. It is possible for us to be near to Christ through all our life, with his grace flowing about us like an ocean, and yet to have a heart that remains unblessed by divine love. We may make God’s love in vain, wasted, as sunshine is wasted that falls upon desert sands, so far as we are concerned. The

love that we do not requite with love, that does not get into our heart to warm, soften, and enrich it, and to mellow and bless our life, is love poured out in vain. It is made in vain by our unbelief. We may make even the dying of Jesus for us in vain, — a waste of precious life, so far as we are concerned. It is in vain for us that Jesus died if we do not let his love into our heart.

Ofttimes the unrequiting of human love makes the heart bitter. When holy friendship has been despised, rejected, and cast away, when one has loved, suffered, and sacrificed in vain, receiving only ingratitude and wrong in return for love's most sacred gifts freely lavished, the danger is that the heart may lose its sweetness, and grow cold, hard, and misanthropic. But not thus was the heart of Jesus affected by the unrequiting of his love and friendship. One Judas in the life of most men would have ended the whole career of generous kindness, drying up the fountains of affection, thus robbing those who would come after of the wealth of tenderness which ought to have

been theirs. But through all the unrequiting and resisting of its love, the heart of Jesus still remained gentle as a mother's, rich in its power to love, and sweet in its spirit.

This is one of the great problems of true living, — how to keep the heart warm, gentle, compassionate, kind, full of affection's best and truest helpfulness, even amid life's hardest experiences. We cannot live and not at some time suffer wrong. We will meet injustice, however justly we ourselves may live. We will find a return of ingratitude many a time when we have done our best for others. Favors rendered are too easily forgotten by many people. There are few of us who do not remember helping others in time of great need and distress, only to lose their friendship in the end, perhaps, as a consequence of our serving them in their need. Sometimes the only return for costly kindness is cruel unkindness.

It is easy to allow such unrequiting, such ill treatment of love, to embitter the fountain of the heart's affection; but this would be to

miss the true end of living, which is to get good and not evil to ourselves from every experience through which we pass. No ingratitude, injustice, or unworthiness in those to whom we try to do good should ever be allowed to turn love's sweetness into bitterness in us. Like fresh-water springs beside the sea, over which the brackish tide flows, but which when the bitter waters have receded are found sweet as ever, so should our hearts remain amid all experiences of love's unrequiting, ever sweet, thoughtful, unselfish, and generous.

## CHAPTER X.

### JESUS AND THE BETHANY SISTERS.

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,  
Nor other thought her mind admits  
But, he was dead, and there he sits,  
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede  
All other, when her ardent gaze  
Roves from the living brother's face,  
And rests upon the Life indeed.

TENNYSON.

THE story of Jesus and the Bethany home is intensely interesting. Every thoughtful Christian has a feeling of gratitude in his heart when he remembers how much that home added to the comfort of the Master by means of the hospitality, the shelter, and the love it gave to him. One of the legends of Brittany tells us that on the day of Christ's crucifixion, as he was on his way to his cross, a bird, pitying the weary sufferer bearing his

heavy burden, flew down, and plucked away one of the thorns that pierced his brow. As it did so, the blood spurted out after the thorn, and splashed the breast of the bird. Ever since that day the bird has had a splash of red on its bosom, whence it is called robin-redbreast. Certainly the love of the Bethany home drew from the breast of Jesus many a thorn, and blessed his heart with many a joy.

We have three glimpses within the doors of this home when the loved guest was there. The first shows us the Master and his disciples one day entering the village. It was Martha who received him. Martha was the mistress of the house. "She had a sister called Mary," a younger sister.

Then we have a picture as if some one had photographed the scene. We see Mary drawing up a low stool, and sitting down at the Master's feet to listen to his words. We see Martha hurrying about the house, busy preparing a meal for the visitors who had come in suddenly. This was a proper thing to do; it was needful that hospitality be shown. There

is a word in the record, however, which tells us that Martha was not altogether serene as she went about her work. "Martha was cumbered about much serving." A marginal reading gives, "was distracted."

Perhaps there are many modern Christian housekeepers who would be somewhat cumbered, or distracted too, if thirteen hungry men dropped in suddenly some day, and they had to entertain them, preparing them a meal. Still, the lesson unmistakably is that Martha should not have been fretted; that she should have kept sweet amid all the pressure of work that so burdened her.

It was not quite right for her to show her impatience with Mary as she did. Coming into the room, flushed and excited, and seeing Mary sitting quietly and unconcernedly at the Rabbi's feet, drinking in his words, she appealed to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

I am not sure that Martha was wrong or unreasonable in thinking that Mary should

have helped her. Jesus did not say she was wrong; he only reminded Martha that she ought not to let things fret and vex her. "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things." It was not her serving that he reproved, but the fret that she allowed to creep into her heart.

The lesson is, that however heavy our burdens may be, however hurried or pressed we may be, we should always keep the peace of Christ in our heart. This is one of the problems of Christian living, — not to live without cares, which is impossible, but to keep quiet and sweet in the midst of the most cumbering care.

At the second mention of the Bethany home there is sore distress in it. A beloved one is very sick, sick unto death. Few homes are entire strangers to the experience of those days when the sufferer lay in the burning fever. Love ministered and prayed and waited. Jesus was far away, but word was sent to him. He came at length, but seemed to have come too late. "If thou hadst been here!" the

sisters said, each separately, when they met the Master. But we see now the finished providence, not the mere fragment of it which the sisters saw; and we know he came at the right time. He comforted the mourners, and then he blotted out the sorrow, bringing back joy to the home.<sup>1</sup>

The third picture of this home shows us a festal scene. A dinner was given in honor of Jesus. It was only a few days before his death. Here, again, the sisters appear, each true to her own character. Martha is serving, as she always is; and again Mary is at Jesus' feet. This time she is showing her wonderful love for the friend who has done so much for her. The ointment she pours upon him is an emblem of her heart's pure affection.

Mary's act was very beautiful. Love was the motive. Without love no service, however great or costly, is of any value in heaven's sight. The world may applaud, but angels turn away with indifference when love

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller treatment of this incident, see Chapter XI.

is lacking. "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." But love makes the smallest deed radiant as angel ministry. We need not try doing things for Christ until we love him. It would be like putting rootless rods in a garden-bed, expecting them to grow into blossoming plants. Love must be the root. It was easy for Mary to bring her alabaster box, for her heart was full of overmastering love.

Service is the fruit of love. It is not all of its fruit. Character is part too. If we love Christ, we will have Christ's beauty in our soul. Mary grew wondrously gentle and lovely as Christ's words entered her heart. Friendship with Christ makes us like Christ. But there will be service too. Love is like light, it cannot be hid. It cannot be shut up in the heart. It will not be imprisoned and restrained. It will live and speak and act. Love in the heart of Jesus brought him from heaven down to earth to be the lost world's Redeemer. Love in his apostles took them

to the ends of the earth to tell the gospel story to the perishing.

It is not enough to try to hew and fashion a character into the beauty of holiness, until every feature of the image of Christ shines in the life, as the sculptor shapes the marble into the form of his vision. The most radiant spiritual beauty does not make one a complete Christian. It takes service to fill up the measure of the stature of Christ. The young man said he had kept all the commandments from his youth. "One thing thou lackest," said the Master; "sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." Service of love was needed to make that morally exemplary life complete.

The lesson is needed by many Christian people. They are good, with blameless life, flawless character, consistent conduct; but they lack one thing,—service. Love for Christ should always serve. There is a story of a friar who was eager to win the favor of God, and set to work to illuminate the pages of the Apocalypse, after the custom of his time.

He became so absorbed in his delightful occupation that he neglected the poor and the sick who were suffering and dying in the plague. He came at last, in the course of his work, to the painting of the face of his Lord in the glory of his second coming; but his hand had lost its skill. He wondered why it was, and realized that it was because, in his eagerness to paint his pictures, he had neglected his duty of serving.

Rebuffed and humiliated by the discovery, the friar drew his cowl over his head, laid aside his brushes, and went down among the sick and dying to minister to their needs. He wrought on, untiringly, until he himself was smitten with the fatal plague. Then he tottered back to his cell and to his easel, to finish his loved work before he died. He knelt in prayer to ask help, when, lo! he saw that an angel's hand had completed the picture of the glorified Lord, and in a manner far surpassing human skill.

It is only a legend, but its lesson is well worthy our serious thought. Too many peo-

ple in their life as Christians, while they strive to excel in character, in conduct, and in the beautiful graces of disposition, and to do their work among men faithfully, are forgetting meanwhile the law of love which bids every follower of Christ go about doing good as the Master did. To be a Christian is far more than to be honest, truthful, sober, industrious, and decorous; it is also to be a cross-bearer after Jesus; to love men, and to serve them. Ofttimes it is to leave your fine room, your favorite work, your delightful companionship, your pet self-indulgence, and to go out among the needy, the suffering, the sinning, to try to do them good. The monk could not paint the face of the Lord while he was neglecting those who needed his ministrations and went unhelped because he came not. Nor can any Christian paint the face of the Master in its full beauty on his soul while he is neglecting any service of love.

We may follow a little the story of what happened after Mary brought her alabaster box. Some of the disciples of Jesus were

angry. There always are some who find fault with the way other people show their love for Christ. It is so even in Christian churches. One member criticises what another does, or the way he does it. It will be remembered that it was Judas who began this blaming of Mary. He said the ointment would better have been sold, and the proceeds given to the poor. St. John tells us very sadly the real motive of this pious complaining; not that Judas cared for the poor, but that he was a thief, and purloined the money given for the poor.

Jesus came to Mary's defence very promptly, and in a way that must have wonderfully comforted her hurt heart. It is a grievous sin against another to find fault with any sweet, beautiful serving of Jesus which the other may have done. Christ's defence and approval of Mary should be a comfort to all who find their deeds of love criticised or blamed by others.

“Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.” The disciples had said it was a waste. That is

what some persons say about much that is done for Christ. The life is wasted, they say, which is poured out in self-denials and sacrifices to bless others. But really the wasted lives are those which are devoted to pleasure and sin. Those who live a merely worldly life are wasting what it took the dying of Jesus to redeem. Oh, how pitiful much of fashionable, worldly life must appear to the angels!

“She hath done what she could.” That was high praise. She had brought her best to her Lord. Perhaps some of us make too much of our little acts and trivial sacrifices. Little things are acceptable if they are really our best. But Mary’s deed was not a small one. The ointment she brought was very costly. She did not use just a little of this precious nard, but poured it all out on the head and feet of Jesus. “What she could” was the best she had to give.

We may take a lesson. Do we always give our best to Christ? He gave his best for us, and is ever giving his best to us. Do we not too often give him only what is left after

we have served ourselves? Then we try to soothe an uneasy conscience by quoting the Master's commendation of Mary, "She hath done what she could." Ah, Mary's "what she could" was a most costly service. It was the costliest of all her possessions that she gave. The word of Jesus about her and her gift has no possible comfort for us if our little is not our best. The widow's mites were her best, small though the money value was — she gave all she had. The poor woman's cup of cold water was all she could give. But if we give only a trifle out of our abundance, we are not doing what we could.

It is worthy of notice that the alabaster box itself was broken in this holy service. Nothing was kept back. Broken things have an important place in the Bible. Gideon's pitchers were broken as his men revealed themselves to the enemy. Paul and his companions escaped from the sea on broken pieces of the ship. It is the broken heart that God accepts. The body of Jesus was broken that it might become bread of life for the world.

Out of sorrow's broken things God builds up  
radiant beauty. Broken earthly hopes be-  
come oftentimes the beginnings of richest heav-  
enly blessings. We do not get the best out  
of anything until it is broken.

“They tell me I must bruise  
The rose's leaf  
Ere I can keep and use  
Its fragrance brief.

They tell me I must break  
The skylark's heart  
Ere her cage song will make  
The silence start.

They tell me love must bleed,  
And friendship weep,  
Ere in my deepest need  
I touch that deep.

Must it be always so  
With precious things?  
Must they be bruised, and go  
With beaten wings?

Ah, yes! By crushing days,  
By caging nights, by scar  
Of thorns and stony ways,  
These blessings are.”

Even sorrow is not too great a price to pay for the blessings which can come only through grief and pain. We must not be afraid to be broken if that is God's will; that is the way God would make us vessels meet for his service. Only by breaking the alabaster vase can the ointment that is in it give out its rich perfume.

"She hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying." I like the word aforehand. Nicodemus, after Jesus was dead, brought a large quantity of spices and ointments to put about his body when it was laid to rest in the tomb. That was well; it was a beautiful deed. It honored the Master. We never can cease to be grateful to Nicodemus, whose long-time shy love at last found such noble expression, in helping to give fitting burial to him whom we love so deeply. But Mary's deed was better; she brought her perfume aforehand, when it could give pleasure, comfort, and strengthening, to the Master in his time of deepest sorrow. We know that his heart was gladdened by the act of love. It made his spirit

a little stronger for the events of that last sad week. "She hath wrought a good work on me."

We should get a lesson in friendship's ministry. Too many wait until those they love are dead, and then bring their alabaster boxes of affection and break them. They keep silent about their love when words would mean so much, would give such cheer, encouragement, and hope, and then, when the friend lies in the coffin, their lips are unsealed, and speak out their glowing tribute on ears that heed not the laggard praise.

Many persons go through life, struggling bravely with difficulty, temptation, and hardship, carrying burdens too heavy for them, pouring out their love in unselfish serving of others, and yet are scarcely ever cheered by a word of approval or commendation, or by delicate tenderness of friendship; then, when they lie silent in death, a whole circle of admiring friends gathers to do them honor. Every one remembers a personal kindness received, a favor shown, some help given, and speaks of

it in grateful words. Letters full of appreciation, commendation, and gratitude are written to sorrowing friends. Flowers are sent and piled about the coffin, enough to have strewn every hard path of the long years of struggle. How surprised some good men and women would be, after lives with scarcely a word of affection to cheer their hearts, were they to awake suddenly in the midst of their friends, a few hours after their death, and hear the testimonies that are falling from every tongue, the appreciations, the grateful words of love, the rememberings of kindness! They had never dreamed in life that they had so many friends, that so many had thought well of them, that they were helpful to so many.

After a long and worthy life, given up to lowly ministry, a good clergyman was called home. Soon after his death, there was a meeting of his friends, and many of them spoke of his beautiful life. Incidents were given showing how his labors had been blessed. Out of full hearts one after another gave grateful tribute of love. The minister's widow was

present; and when all the kindly words had been spoken, she thanked the friends for what they had said. Then she asked, amid her tears, "But why did you never tell him these things while he was living?"

Yes, why not? He had wrought for forty years in a most unselfish way. He had poured out his life without stint. He had carried his people in his heart by day and by night, never sparing himself in any way when he could be of use to one of God's children. His people were devoted to him, loved him, and appreciated his labors. Yet rarely, all those years, had any of them told him of the love that was in their hearts for him, or of their gratitude for service given or good received. He was conscious of the Master's approval, and this cheered him, — it was the commendation he sought; but it would have comforted him many a time, and made the burdens seem lighter and the toil easier and the joy of serving deeper, if his people — those he loved and lived for, and helped in so many ways — had sometimes told him how much he was to them.

All about us move, these common days, those who would be strengthened and comforted by the good cheer which we could give. Let us not reserve all the flowers for coffin-lids. Let us not keep our alabaster boxes sealed and unbroken till our loved ones are dead. Let us show kindness when kindness will do good. It will make sorrow all the harder to bear if we have to say beside our dead, "I might have brightened the way a little if only I had been kinder."

It was wonderful honoring which Jesus gave to Mary's deed, when he said that wherever the gospel should be preached throughout the whole world the story of this anointing should be told. So, right in among the memorials of his own death, this ministry of love is enshrined. As the odor of the ointment filled all the room where the guests sat at table, so the aroma of Mary's love fills all the Christian world to-day. The influence of her deed, with the Master's honoring of it, has shed a benediction on countless homes, making hearts gentler, and lives sweeter and truer.

## CHAPTER XI.

### JESUS COMFORTING HIS FRIENDS.

Not all regret ; the face will shine  
    Upon me while I muse alone ;  
    And that dear voice, I once have known,  
Still speak to me of me and mine :

Yet less of sorrow lives in me  
    For days of happy commune dead ;  
    Less yearning for the friendship fled,  
Than some strong bond which is to be.

TENNYSON.

A GOSPEL with no comfort for sorrow would not meet the deepest needs of human hearts. If Jesus were a friend only for bright hours, there would be much of experience into which he could not enter. But the gospel breathes comfort on every page ; and Jesus is a friend for lonely hours and times of grief and pain, as well as for sunny paths and days of gladness and song. He went to a marriage feast, and wrought his first miracle to prolong the

festivity; but he went also to the home of grief, and turned its sorrow into joy.

It is well worth our while to study Jesus as a comforter, to learn how he comforted his friends. For one thing, it will teach us how to find consolation when we are in trouble. This is a point at which, with many Christians, the gospel seems oftenest to fail. In the days of the unbroken circle and of human gladness, the friends of Jesus rejoice in his love, and walk in his light with songs; but when ties are broken, and grief enters the home, the hearts that were so full of praise refuse to take the consolation of the gospel. This ought not so to be. If we knew Christ as a comforter, we would sing our songs of trust even in the night.

Another help that we may get from such a study of Jesus will be power to become a true comforter of others. This every Christian should seek to be, but this very few Christians really are. Most of us would better stay away altogether from our friends in their times of sorrow, than go to them as we

do. Instead of being comforters to make them stronger to endure, we only make their grief seem bitterer, and their loss more unendurable, doing them harm instead of good. This is because we have not learned the art of giving comfort. Our Master should be our teacher; and if we study his method, we shall know how to be a blessing to our friends in their times of loss and pain.

Much of the ministry of Jesus was with those who were in trouble. There was one special occasion, however, when there was a great sorrow in the circle of his best friends. We may learn many lessons if we read over thoughtfully the story of the way Jesus comforted them.

It was the Bethany home. Before the sorrow came, Jesus was a familiar guest, a close and intimate friend of the members of the household. He always had kindly welcome and generous hospitality when he came to their door. They did not make his acquaintance for the first time when their hearts were broken. They had known him for a long time,

and had listened to his gracious words when there was no grief in their home. This made it easy to turn to him and to receive his comfort when the dark days of sorrow came.

There are some who think of Christ only as a friend whom they will need in trouble. In their time of unbroken gladness they do not seek his friendship. Then, when trouble comes suddenly, they do not know how or where to find the Comforter. Wiser far are they who take Christ into their life in the glad days when the joy is unbroken. He blesses their joy. A happy home is all the happier because Jesus is a familiar guest in it. Love is all the sweeter because of his benediction. Then, when sorrow's shadow falls, there is light in the darkness.

There seems to be no need of the stars in the daytime, for the sunshine then floods all earth's paths. But when the sun goes down, and God's great splendor of stars appears hanging over us, dropping their soft, quiet light upon us, how glad we are that they were there all the while, waiting to be revealed!

So it is that the friendship of Jesus in the happy years hangs above our heads the stars of heavenly comfort. We do not seem to need them at the time, and we scarcely know that they are there; we certainly have no true realization of the blessing that hides in the shining words. But when, one sad day, the light of human joy is suddenly darkened, then the divine comforts reveal themselves. We do not have to hasten here and there in pitiable distress, trying to find consolation, for we have it already in the love and grace of Christ. The Friend we took into our life in the joy-days stands close beside us now in our sadness, and his friendship never before seemed so precious, so tender, so divine.

When Lazarus fell sick, Jesus was in another part of the country. As the case grew hopeless, the sisters sent a message to Jesus to say, "He whom thou lovest is sick." The message seems remarkable. There was no urgency expressed in it, no wild, passionate pleading that Jesus would hasten to come. Its few words told of the quietness and con-

fidence of trusting hearts. We get a lesson concerning the way we should pray when we are in distress. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of," and there is no need for piteous clamor. Far better is the prayer of faith, which lays the burden upon the divine heart, and leaves it there without anxiety. It is enough, when a beloved one is lying low, to say, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick."

We are surprised, as we read the narrative, that Jesus did not respond immediately to this message from his friends. But he waited two days before he set out for Bethany. We cannot tell why he did this, but there is something very comforting in the words that tell us of the delay. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When, therefore, he heard that Lazarus was sick, he abode at that time two days in the place where he was." In some way the delay was because of his love for all the household. Perhaps the meaning is that through the dying of Lazarus blessing would come to them all.

At length he reached Bethany. Lazarus

had been dead four days. The family had many friends; and their house was filled with those who had come, after the custom of the times, to console them. Jesus lingered at some distance from the house, perhaps not caring to enter among those who in the conventional way were mourning with the family. He wished to meet the sorrowing sisters in a quiet place alone. So he tarried outside the village, probably sending a message to Martha, telling her that he was coming. Soon Martha met him.

We may think of the eagerness of her heart to get into his presence when she heard that he was near. What a relief it must have been to her, after the noisy grief that filled her home, to get into the quiet, peaceful presence of Jesus! He was not disturbed. His face was full of sympathy, and it was easy to see there the tokens of deep and very real grief, but his peace was not broken. He was calm and composed. Martha must have felt herself at once comforted by his mere presence. It was quieting and reassuring.

The first thing to do when we need comfort is to get into the presence of Christ. Human friendship means well when it hastens to us in our sorrow. It feels that it must do something for us, that to stay away and do nothing would be unkindness. Then, when it comes, it feels that it must talk, and must talk about our sorrow. It feels that it must go over all the details, questioning us until it seems as if our heart would break with answering. Our friends think that they must explore with us all the depths of our grief, dwelling upon the elements that are specially poignant. The result of all this "comforting" is that our burden of sorrow is made heavier instead of lighter, and we are less brave and strong than before to bear it. If we would be truly comforted we would better flee away to Christ; for in his presence we shall find consolation, which gives peace and strength and joy.

It is worth our while to note the comfort which Jesus gave to these sorrowing sisters. First, he lifted the veil, and gave them a glimpse of what lies beyond death. "Thy

brother shall rise again." "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." Thus he opened a great window into the other world. It is plainer to us than it could be to Martha and Mary; for a little while after he spoke these words, Jesus himself passed through death, coming again from the grave in immortal life. It is a wonderful comfort to those who sorrow over the departure of a Christian friend to know the true teaching of the New Testament on the subject of dying. Death is not the end; it is a door which leads into fulness of life.

Perhaps many in bereavement, though believing the doctrine of a future resurrection, fail to get present comfort from it. Jesus assured Martha that her brother should rise again. "Yes, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Her words show that this hope was too distant to give her much comfort. Her sense of present loss outweighed every other thought and

feeling. She craved back again the companionship she had lost. Who that has stood by the grave of a precious friend has not experienced the same feeling of inadequateness in the consolation that comes from even the strongest belief in a far-off rising again of all who are in their graves?

The reply of Jesus to Martha's hungry heart-cry was very rich in its comfort. "I am the resurrection." This is one of the wonderful present tenses of Christian hope. Martha had spoken of a resurrection far away. "I am the resurrection," Jesus declared. It was something present, not remote. His words embrace the whole blessed truth of immortal life. "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." There is no death for those who are in Christ. The body dies, but the person lives on. The resurrection may be in the future, but really there is no break in the life of a believer in Christ. He is not here; our eyes see him not, our ears hear not his voice, we cannot touch him with our hands, but he still lives and thinks and feels and loves. No

power in his being has been quenched by dying, no beauty dimmed, no faculty destroyed.

This is a part of the comfort which Jesus gave to his friends in their bereavement. He assured them that there is no death, that all who believe in him have eternal life. There remains for those who stay here the pain of separation and of loneliness, but for those who have passed over we need have no fear.

How does Jesus comfort his friends who are left? As we read over the story of the sorrow of the Bethany home we find the answer to our question. You say, "He brought back their dead, thus comforting them with the literal undoing of the work of death and grief. If only he would do this now, in every case where love cries to him, that would be comfort indeed." But we must remember that the return of Lazarus to his home was only a temporary restoration. He came back to the old life of mortality, of temptation, of sickness and pain and death. He came back only for a season. It was not a resurrection to immortal life; it was only a restoration to mortal

life. He must pass again through the mystery of dying, and his sisters must a second time experience the agony of separation and loneliness. We can scarcely call it comfort; it was merely a postponement for a little while of the final separation.

But Jesus gave the sisters true consoling besides this. His mere presence brought them comfort. They knew that he loved them. Many times before when he had entered their home he had brought a benediction. They had a feeling of security and peace in his presence. Even their inconsolable grief lost something of its poignancy when the light of his face fell upon them. Every strong, tender, and true human love has a wondrous comforting power. We can pass through a sore trial if a trusted friend is beside us. The believer can endure any sorrow if Jesus is with him.

Another element of comfort for these sorrowing sisters was in the sympathy of Jesus. He showed this sympathy with them in coming all the way from Perea, to be with them in

their time of distress. He showed it in his bearing toward them and his conversation with them. There is a wonderful gentleness in his manner as he receives first one and then the other sister. Mary's grief was deeper than Martha's; and when Jesus saw her weeping, and her friends who were with her weeping, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. Then, in the shortest verse in the Bible, we have a window into the very heart of Christ, and find there most wonderful sympathy.

"Jesus wept." It is a great comfort in time of sorrow to have even human sympathy, to know that somebody cares, that some one feels with us. The measure of the comfort in such cases is in proportion to the honor in which we hold the person. It would have had something—very much—of comfort for the sisters, if John or Peter or James had wept with them beside their brother's grave. But the tears of Jesus meant incalculably more; they told of the holiest sympathy that this world ever saw—the Son of God wept with two sisters in a great human sorrow.

This shortest verse was not written merely as a fragment of a narrative—it contains a revealing of the heart of Jesus for all time. Wherever a friend of Jesus is sorrowing, One stands by, unseen, who shares the grief, whose heart feels every pang of the sorrow. There is immeasurable comfort in this thought that the Son of God suffers with us in our suffering, is afflicted in all our affliction. We can endure our trouble more quietly when we know that God understands all about it.

There is yet another thing in the manner of Christ's comforting his friends which is very suggestive. His sympathy was not a mere sentiment. Too often human sympathy is nothing but a sentiment. Our friends cry with us, and then pass by on the other side. They tell us they are sorry for us, but they do nothing to help us. The sympathy of Jesus at Bethany was very practical. Not only did he show his love to his friends by coming away from his work in another province, to be with them in their sore trouble; not only did he speak to them words of divine comfort,

words which have made a shining track through the world ever since ; not only did he weep with them in their grief,—but he wrought the greatest of all his many miracles to restore the joy of their hearts and their home. It was a costly miracle, too, for it led to his own death.

Yet, knowing well what would come from this ministry of friendship, he hesitated not. For some reason he saw that it would be indeed a blessing to his friends to bring back the dead. It was because he loved the sisters and the brother that he lingered, and did not hasten when the message reached him beyond the river. We may be sure, therefore, that the raising of Lazarus, though only to a little more of the old life of weakness, had a blessing in it for the family. This was the best way in which Jesus could show his sympathy, the best comfort he could give his friends.

No doubt thousands of other friends of Jesus in the sorrow of bereavement have wished that he would comfort them in like way, by giving back their beloved. Ofttimes

he does what is in effect the same, — in answer to the prayer of faith he spares the lives of those who are dear. When we pray for our sick friends, we only ask submissively that they may recover. “Not my will, but thine be done,” is the refrain of our pleading. Even our most passionate longing we subdue in the quiet confidence of our faith. If it is not best for our dear ones; if it would not be a real blessing; if it is not God’s way, — then “Thy will be done.” If we pray the prayer of faith, we must believe that the issue, whatever it may be, is God’s best for us.

If our friend is taken away after such committing of faith to God’s wisdom and love, there is immeasurable comfort at once in the confidence that it was God’s will. Then, while no miracle is wrought, bringing back our dead, the sympathy of Christ yet brings practical consolation. The word comfort means strengthening. We are helped to bear our sorrow.

The teaching of the Scriptures is that when we come with our trials to God, he either re-

lieves us of them, or gives us the grace we need to endure them. He does not promise to lift away the burden that we cast upon him, but he will sustain us in our bearing of the burden. When the human presence is taken from us, Christ comes nearer than before, and reveals to us more of his love and grace.

The problem of sorrow in a Christian life is a very serious one. It is important that we have a clear understanding upon the subject, that we may receive blessing and not hurt from our experience. Every sorrow that comes into our life brings us something good from God; but we may reject the good, and if we do, we receive evil instead. The comfort God gives is not the taking away of the trouble, nor is it the dulling of our heart's sensibilities so that we shall not feel the pain so keenly. God's comfort is strength to endure in the experience. If we put our life into the hands of Christ in the time of sorrow, and with quiet faith and sweet trust go on with our duty, all shall be well. If we resist and

struggle and rebel, we shall not only miss the blessing of comfort that is infolded for us in our sorrow, but we shall receive hurt in our own life. When one is soured and embittered by trial, one has received hurt rather than blessing; but if we accept our sorrow with love and trust, we shall come out of it enriched in life and character, and prepared for better work and greater usefulness.

There is a picture of a woman sitting by the sea in deep grief. The dark waters have swallowed up her heart's treasures, and her sorrow is inconsolable. Close behind her is an angel striking his harp, — the Angel of Consolation. But the woman in her stony grief sees not the angel's shining form, nor hears the music of his harp. Too often this is the picture in Christian homes. With all the boundlessness of God's love and mercy, the heart remains un comforted.

This ought not so to be. There is in Jesus Christ an infinite resource of consolation, and we have only to open our heart to receive it. Then we shall pass through sorrow sustained

by divine help and love, and shall come from it enriched in character, and blessed in every phase of life. The griefs of our life set lessons for us to learn. In every pain is the seed of a blessing. In every tear a rainbow hides. Dr. Babcock puts it well in his lines:—

The dark-brown mould's upturned  
By the sharp-pointed plough —  
And I've a lesson learned.

My life is but a field,  
Stretched out beneath God's sky,  
Some harvest rich to yield.

Where grows the golden grain?  
Where faith? Where sympathy?  
In a furrow cut by pain.

## CHAPTER XII.

### JESUS AND HIS SECRET FRIENDS.

How many souls — his loved ones —  
Dwell lonely and apart,  
Hiding from all but One above  
The fragrance of their heart.

PROCTER.

NOT all the friends of Jesus were open friends. No doubt many believed on him who had not the courage to confess him. Two of his secret friends performed such an important part at the close of his life, boldly honoring him, that the story of their discipleship is worthy of our careful study.

One of these is mentioned several times; the other we meet nowhere until he suddenly emerges from the shadows of his secret friendship, when the body of Jesus hung dead on the cross, and boldly asks leave to take it away, and with due honor bury it,

Several facts concerning Joseph are given in the Gospels. He was a rich man. Thus an ancient prophecy was fulfilled. According to Isaiah, the Messiah was to make his grave with the rich. This prediction seemed very unlikely of fulfilment when Jesus hung on the cross dying. He had no burying-place of his own, and none of his known disciples could provide him with a tomb among the rich. It looked as if his body must be cast into the Potter's Field with the bodies of the two criminals who hung beside him. Then came Joseph, a rich man, and buried Jesus in his own new tomb. "He made his grave with the rich."

Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin. This gave him honor among men, and he must have been of good reputation to be chosen to so exalted a position. We are told also that he was a good man and devout, and had not consented to the counsel and deed of the court in condemning Jesus. Perhaps he had absented himself from the meeting of the Sanhedrin when Jesus was before the court. If

he were present, he took no part in the condemning of the prisoner.

Then it is said further that he was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews." That is, he was one of the friends of Jesus, believing in his Messiahship. We have no way of knowing how long he had been a disciple, but it is evident that the friendship had existed for some time. We may suppose that Joseph had sought Jesus quietly, perhaps by night, receiving instruction from him, communing with him, drinking in his spirit; but he had never yet openly declared his discipleship.

The reason for this hiding of his belief in Jesus is frankly given, — "for fear of the Jews." He lacked courage to confess himself "one of this man's friends." We cannot well understand what it would have cost Joseph, in his high place as a ruler, to say, "I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is our Messiah." It is easy for us to condemn him as wanting in courage, but we must put ourselves back in his place when we think of what he failed

to do. This was before Jesus was glorified. He was a lowly man of sorrows. Many of the common people had followed him; but it was chiefly to see his miracles, and to gather benefit for themselves from his power. There was only a little band of true disciples, and among these were none of the rulers and great men of the people. There is no evidence that one rabbi, one member of the Sanhedrin, one priest, one aristocratic or cultured Jew, was among the followers of Jesus during his life.

It would have taken sublime courage for one of these to confess Jesus as the Messiah, and the cost of such avowal would have been incalculable. A number of years later, when Christianity had become an acknowledged power in the world, St. Paul tells us that he had to suffer the loss of all things in becoming a Christian. For Joseph, a member of the highest court of the Jews, to have said to his fellow-members in those days, before the death of Jesus, "I believe in this Nazarene whom you are plotting to kill, and I am one

of his disciples and friends," would have taken a courage which too few men possess.

However, one need not apologize for Joseph. The record frankly admits his fault, his weakness; for it is never a noble or a manly thing to be afraid of man or devil when duty is clear. Yet we are told distinctly that he was really a disciple of Jesus; though it was secretly, and though the reason for the secrecy was an unworthy one, — fear of the Jews. Jesus had not refused his discipleship because of its impairment. He had not said to him, "Unless you rise up in your place in the court-room, and tell your associates that you believe in me, and are going to follow me, you cannot be my disciple, and I will not have you as my friend." Evidently Jesus had accepted Joseph as a disciple, even in the shy way he had come to him; and it seems probable that a close and deep friendship existed between the two men. Possibly it may have existed for many months; and no doubt Joseph had been a comfort to Jesus in many ways before his death, although the world did not

know that this noble and honorable councillor was his friend at all.

The other secret friend of Jesus who assisted in his burial was Nicodemus. It was during the early weeks or months of our Lord's public ministry that he came to Jesus for the first time. It is specially mentioned that he came by night. Nicodemus also was a man of distinction,—a member of the Sanhedrin and a Pharisee, belonging thus to the class highest in rank among his people.

A great deal of blame has been charged against Nicodemus because he came to Jesus by night, but again we must put ourselves back into his circumstances before we can judge intelligently and fairly of his conduct. Very few persons believed in Jesus when Nicodemus first sought him by night. Besides, may not night have been the best time for a public and prominent man to see Jesus? His days were filled—thronging were always about him, and there was little opportunity then for earnest and satisfactory conversation. In the evening Nicodemus could sit down

with Jesus for a long, quiet talk without fear of interruption.

Then Nicodemus came first only as an inquirer. He was not then ready to be a disciple. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God," was all he could say that first night. He did not concede Jesus' Messiahship. He knew him then only by what he had heard of his miracles. He was not ready yet to declare that the son of the carpenter was the Christ, the Son of God. When we remember the common Jewish expectations regarding the Messiah, and then the lowliness of Jesus and the high rank of Nicodemus, we may understand that it required courage and deep earnestness of soul for this "master in Israel" to come at all to the peasant rabbi from Galilee as a seeker after truth and light. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that he came by night.

Then, at that time the teaching and work of Jesus were only beginning. There had been some miracles, and it is written that because of these many had believed in the

name of Jesus. Already, however, there had been a sharp conflict with the priests and rulers. Jesus had driven out those who were profaning the temple by using it for purposes of trade. This act had aroused intense bitterness against Jesus among the ruling classes to which Nicodemus belonged. This made it specially hard for any one of the rulers to come among the friends of Jesus, or to show even the least sympathy with him.

No doubt Nicodemus in some degree lacked the heroic quality. He was not a John Knox or a Martin Luther. Each time his name is mentioned he shows timidity, and a disposition to remain hidden. Even in the noble deed of the day Jesus died, it is almost certain that Nicodemus was inspired to his part by the greater courage of Joseph.

Yet we must mark that Jesus said not one word to chide or blame Nicodemus when he came by night. He accepted him as a disciple, and at once began to teach him the great truths of his kingdom. We are not told that the ruler came more than once; but

we may suppose that whenever Jesus was in Jerusalem, Nicodemus sought him under the cover of the night, and sat at his feet as a learner. Doubtless Jesus and he were friends all the three years that passed between that first night when they talked of the new birth, and the day when this noble councillor assisted his fellow-member of the Sanhedrin in giving honorable and loving burial to this Teacher come from God.

Once we have a glimpse of Nicodemus in his place in the Sanhedrin. Jesus has returned to Jerusalem, and multitudes follow him to hear his words. Many believe on him. The Pharisees and priests are filled with envy that this peasant from Galilee should have such tremendous influence among the people. They feel that the power is passing out of their hands, and that they must do something to silence the voice the people so love to hear.

A meeting of the Great Council is called to decide what to do. Officers are sent to arrest Jesus, and bring him to the bar of the court. The officers find Jesus in the temple, in the

midst of an eager throng, to whom he is speaking in his gracious, winning way. That was the day he said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." The officers listen as the wonderful words fall from his lips, and they, too, become interested; their attention is enchained; they come under the same spell which holds all the multitude. They linger till his discourse is ended; and then, instead of arresting him, they go back without him, only giving to the judges as reason for not obeying, "Never man spake like this man."

The members of the court were enraged at this failure of their effort. Even their own police officers had proved untrue. "Are ye also deceived or led astray?" they cry in anger. Then they ask, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this multitude which knoweth not the law, are accursed." They would have it that only the ignorant masses had been led away by this delusion; none of the great men, the wise men, had accepted this Nazarene as the Messiah. They did not suspect that at least one

of their own number, possibly two, had been going by night to hear this young rabbi.

It was a serious moment for Nicodemus. He sat there in the council, and saw the fury of his brother judges. In his heart he was a friend of Jesus. He believed that he was the Messiah. Loyalty to his friend, to the truth, and to his own conscience, demanded that he should cast away the veil he was wearing, and reveal his faith in Jesus. At least he must say some word on behalf of the innocent man whom his fellow-members were determined to destroy. It was a testing-time for Nicodemus, and sore was the struggle between timidity and a sense of duty. The storm in the court-room was ready to burst; the council was about taking violent measures against Jesus. We know not what would have happened if no voice had been lifted for fair trial before condemnation. But then Nicodemus arose, and in the midst of the terrible excitement spoke quietly and calmly his few words, —

“Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?”

It was only a plea for fairness and for justice; but it showed the working of a heart that would be true to itself, in some measure at least, in spite of its shyness and shrinking, and in spite of the peril of the hour. The question at first excited anger and contempt against Nicodemus himself; but it checked the gathering tides of violence, probably preventing a public outbreak.

We may note progress in the friendship of this secret disciple. During the two years since he first came to Jesus by night the seed dropped into his heart that night had been growing silently. Nicodemus was not yet ready to come out boldly as a disciple of Jesus; but he proved himself the friend of Jesus, even by the few words he spoke in the council when it required firm courage to speak at all. "He who at the first could come to Jesus only by night, now stands by him in open day, and in the face of the most formidable opposition, before which the courage of the strongest might have quailed."

It is beautiful to see young Christians, as

the days pass, growing more and more confident and heroic in their confession of Christ. At first they are shy, retiring, timid, and disposed to shrink from public revealing of themselves. But if, as they receive more of the Spirit of God in their heart, they grow more courageous in speaking for Christ and in showing their colors, they prove that they are true disciples, learners, growing in grace.

The only other mention of Nicodemus is some months after the heroic word spoken in the council. What has been going on in his experience, meanwhile, we do not know. There is no evidence that he has yet declared himself a follower of Jesus. He is still a secret disciple. But the hidden life in his heart has still been growing.

One day a terrible thing happened. Jesus was crucified. In their fright and panic all his friends at first forsook him, some of them, however, gathering back, with broken hearts, and standing about his cross. But never was there a more hopeless company of men in this world than the disciples of Jesus that

Good Friday, when their Master hung upon the cross. They did not understand the meaning of the cross as we do to-day,—they thought it meant defeat for all the hopes they had cherished. They stood round the cross in the despair of hopeless grief.

They were also powerless to do anything to show their love, or to honor the body of their Friend. They were poor and unknown men, without influence. None of them had a grave in which the body could be laid. Nor had they power to get leave to take the body away; it required a name of influence to get this permission. Their love was equal to anything, but they were helpless. In the dishonor of that day all the friends of Jesus shared.

What could be done? Soon the three bodies on the crosses would be taken down by rude hands of heartless men, and cast into the Potter's Field in an indistinguishable heap.

No; there is a friend at Pilate's door. He is a man of rank among the Jews—a rich man too. He makes a strange request,—he asks leave to take the body of Jesus away

for burial. Doubtless Pilate was surprised that a member of the court which had condemned Jesus should now desire to honor his body, but he granted the request; perhaps he was glad thus to end a case which had cost him so much trouble. Joseph took charge of the burial of the body of Jesus.

Then came another rich man and joined Joseph. "There came also Nicodémus, he who at the first came to him by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. So they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury." It certainly is remarkable that the two men who thus met in honoring the body of Jesus had both been his secret disciples, hidden friends, who until now had not had courage to avow their friendship and discipleship.

No doubt there were many other secret friends of Jesus who during his life did not publicly confess him. The great harvest of the day of Pentecost brought out many of

these for the first time. No doubt there always are many who love Christ, believe on him, and are following him in secret. They come to Jesus by night. They creep to his feet when no eye is looking at them. They cannot brave the gaze of their fellowmen. They are shy and timid. We may not say one harsh word regarding such disciples. The Master said not one word implying blame of his secret disciples.

Yet it cannot be doubted that secret discipleship is incomplete. It is not just to Christ himself that we should receive the blessings of his love and grace, and not speak of him to the world. We owe it to him who gave himself for us to speak his name wherever we go, and to honor him in every way. Secret discipleship does not fulfil love's duty to the world. If we have found that which has blessed us richly, we owe it to others to tell them about it. To hide away in our own heart the knowledge of Christ is to rob those who do not know of him. It is the worst selfishness to be willing to be saved alone. Further, secret dis-

discipleship misses the fulness of blessing which comes to him who confesses Christ before men. It is he who believes with his heart and confesses with his mouth, who has promise of salvation. Confession is half of faith. Secret discipleship is repressed, restrained, confined, and is therefore hampered, hindered, stunted discipleship. It never can grow into the best possible strength and richness of life. It is only when one stands before the world in perfect freedom, with nothing to conceal, that one grows into the fullest, loveliest Christlikeness. To have the friendship of Christ, and to hide it from men. is to lose its blessing out of our own heart.

“To lie by the river of life and see it run to waste,  
To eat of the tree of heaven while the nations go unfed,  
To taste the full salvation — the only one to taste —  
To live while the rest are lost — oh, better by far be dead !

For to share is the bliss of heaven, as it is the joy of earth;  
And the unshared bread lacks savor, and the wine unshared,  
lacks zest;  
And the joy of the soul redeemed would be little, little worth  
If, content with its own security, it could forget the rest.”

In the case of Nicodemus and Joseph, Jesus was very gentle with timidity ; but under the nurture of his gentleness timidity grew into noble courage. Yet, beautiful as was their deed that day, who will not say that it came too late for fullest honoring of the Master? It would have been better if they had shown their friendship while he was living, to have cheered him by their love. Mary's ointment poured upon the tired feet of Jesus before his death was better than the spices of Nicodemus piled about his body in the grave.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### JESUS' FAREWELL TO HIS FRIENDS.

“What meaneth it that we should weep  
More for our joys than for our fears,—  
That we should sometimes smile at grief,  
And look at pleasure's show through tears?

Alas! but homesick children we,  
Who would, but cannot, play the while  
We dream of nobler heritage,  
Our Father's house, our Father's smile.”

AT last the end came. The end comes for every earthly friendship. The sweetest life together of loved ones must have its last walk, its last talk, its last hand-clasp, when one goes, and the other stays. One of every two friends must stand by the other's grave, and drop tears all the hotter because they are shed alone.

The friendship of Jesus with his disciples was very sweet; it was the sweetest friendship this world ever knew, for never was there

any other heart with such capacity for loving and for kindling love as the heart of Jesus. But even this holy friendship in its earthly duration was but for a time. Jesus' hour came at last. To-morrow he was going back to his Father.

Very tender was the farewell. The place chosen for it was the upper room—almost certainly in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. So full is the narrative of the evangelists that we can follow it through its minutest details. In the afternoon two of the closest friends of Jesus came quietly into the city from Bethany to find a room, and prepare for the Passover. All was done with the utmost secrecy. No inquiry was made for a room; but a man appeared at a certain point, bearing a pitcher of water,—a most unusual occurrence,—and the messengers silently followed him, and thus were led to the house in which was the guest-chamber which Jesus and his friends were to use. There the two disciples made the preparations necessary for the Passover.

Toward the evening Jesus and the other apostles came, and found their way to the upper room. First there was the Passover feast, observed after the manner of the Jews. Then followed the institution of the new memorial—the Lord's Supper. This brought the Master and his disciples together in very sacred closeness. Judas, the one discordant element in the communion, had gone out, and all who remained were of one mind and one heart. Then began the real farewell. Jesus was going away, and he longed to be remembered. This was a wonderfully human desire. No one wishes to be forgotten. No thought could be sadder than that one might not be remembered after he is gone, that in no heart his name shall be cherished, that nowhere any memento of him shall be preserved. We all hope to live in the love of our friends long after our faces have vanished from earth. The deeper and purer our love may have been, and the closer our friendship, the more do we long to keep our place in the hearts of those we have loved.

There are many ways in which men seek to keep their memory alive in the world. Some build their own tomb: few things are more pathetic than such planning for earthly immortality. Some seek to do deeds which will live in history. Some embalm their names in books, hoping thus to perpetuate them. Love's enshrining is the best way.

The institution of the Last Supper showed the craving of the heart of Jesus to be remembered. "Do not forget me when I am gone," he said. That he might not be forgotten, he took bread and wine, and, breaking the one and pouring out the other, he gave them to his friends as mementos of himself. He associated this farewell meal with the great acts of his redeeming love. "This bread which I break, let it be the emblem of my body broken to be bread for the world. This wine which I empty out, let it be the emblem of my blood which I give for you." Whatever else the Lord's Supper may mean, it is first of all a remembrancer; it is the expression of the Master's desire to be remembered by his

friends. It comes down to us — Christ's friends of to-day — with the same heart-craving. "Remember me; do not forget me; think of my love for you." Jesus' farewell was thus made wondrously sacred; its memories have blessed the world ever since by their warmth and tenderness. No one can ever know the measure of the influence of that last night in the upper room upon the life of these nineteen Christian centuries.

The Lord's Supper was not all of the Master's farewell. There were also words spoken which have been bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus, to believers ever since. To the eleven men gathered about that table these words were inexpressibly precious. One of them, one who leaned his head upon the Master's breast that night, remembered them in his old age, and wrote them down, so that we can read them for ourselves.

It is impossible in a short chapter to study the whole of this wonderful farewell address; only a few of its great features can be gathered together. It began with an exhortation, a

new commandment, — “That ye love one another.” We cannot understand how really new this commandment was when given to the Master’s friends. The world had never before known such love as Jesus brought into its wintry atmosphere. He had lived out the divine love among men; now his friends were to continue that love. “As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Very imperfectly have the friends of the Master learned that love; yet wherever the gospel has gone, a wave of tenderness has rolled.

Next was spoken a word of comfort whose music has been singing through the world ever since. “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” Unless it be the Twenty-Third Psalm, no other passage in all the Bible has had such a ministry of comfort as the first words of the fourteenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel. They told the sorrowing disciples that their Master would not forget them, that his work for them would not be broken off by his death, that he was only going away to prepare a place for

them, and would come again to receive them unto himself, so that where he should be they might be also. He assured them, too, that while he was going away, something better than his bodily presence would be given them instead, — another Comforter would come, so that they should not be left orphans.

Part of the Master's farewell words were answers to questions which his friends asked him, — a series of conversations with one and another. These men had their difficulties; and they brought these to Jesus, and he explained them. First, Peter had a question. Jesus had spoken of going away. Peter asked him, "Lord, whither goest thou?" Jesus told him that where he was going he could not follow him then, but he should follow him by and by. Peter was recklessly bold, and he would not have it said that there was any place he could not follow his Master. He declared that he would even lay down his life for his sake. "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" answered the Master. "Wilt thou, indeed?" Then he foretold Peter's sad, hu-

miliating fall — that, instead of laying down his life for his Lord.

After the words had been spoken about the Father's house and the coming again of Jesus for his friends, Thomas had a question. Jesus had said, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas was slow in his perceptions, and was given to questioning. He would take nothing for granted. He would not believe until he could understand. "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" We are glad Thomas asked such a question, for it brought a wonderful answer. Jesus himself is the way and the truth and the life. That is, to know Christ is to know all that we need to know about heaven and the way there; to have Christ as Saviour, Friend, and Lord, is to be led by him through the darkest way — home. Not only is he the door or gate which opens into the way, but he is the way. He is the guide in the way; he has gone over it himself; everywhere we find his footprints. More than that; he is the very way itself, and the

very truth about the way, and the life which inspires us in the way. To be his friend is enough; we need ask neither whither he has gone, nor the road: we need only abide in him.

“Thank God, thank God, the Man is found,  
Sure-footed, knowing well the ground.  
He knows the road, for this the way  
He travelled once, as on this day.  
He is our Messenger beside,  
He is our Door and Path and Guide.”

Then Philip had a question. He had heard the Master's reply to Thomas. Philip was slow and dull, loyal-hearted, a man of practical common-sense, but without imagination, unable to understand anything spiritual, anything but bare, cold, material facts. The words of Jesus about knowing and seeing the Father caught his ear. That was just what he wanted,—to see the Father. So in his dulness he said, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” He was thinking of a theophany,—a glorious vision of God. Jesus was wondrously patient with the dulness of his disciples; but this word pained him, for it showed

how little Philip had learned after all his three years of discipleship. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" Then Jesus told him that he had been showing him the Father, the very thing Philip craved, all the while.

Jesus went on with his gracious words for a little while, and was speaking of manifesting himself to his disciples, when he was interrupted by another question. This time it was Judas who spoke. "Not Iscariot," St. John is careful to say, for the name of Iscariot was now blotted with the blotch of treason. He had gone out into the night, and was of the disciple family no more. Judas could not understand in what special and exclusive manner Jesus would manifest himself to his own. Perhaps he expected some setting apart of Christ's followers like that which had fenced off Israel from the other nations. But Jesus swept away his disciple's thought of any narrow manifestation. There was only one condition—love. To every one who loved him and obeyed his words he would reveal himself.

The manifesting would not be any theophany, as in the ancient Shekinah, but the spiritual in-dwelling of God.

After these questions of his disciples had all been answered, Jesus continued his farewell words. He left several bequests to his friends, distributing among them his possessions. We are apt to ask what he had to leave. He had no houses or lands, no gold or silver. While he was on his cross the soldiers divided his clothes among themselves. Yet there are real possessions besides money and estates. One may have won the honor of a noble name, and may bequeath this to his family when he goes away. One may have acquired power which he may transmit. It seemed that night in the upper room as if Jesus had neither name nor power to leave to his friends. To-morrow he was going to a cross, and that would be the end of everything of hope or beauty in his life.

Yet he quietly made his bequests, fully conscious that he had great possessions, which would bless the world infinitely more than if

he had left any earthly treasure. One of these bequests was his peace. "Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you." It was his own peace ; if it had not been his own he could not have bequeathed it to his friends. A man cannot give to others what he has not himself. It was his own because he had won it. Peace is not merely ease, the absence of strife and struggle ; it is something which lives in the midst of the fiercest strife and the sorest struggle. Jesus knew not the world's peace, — ease and quiet ; but he had learned a secret of heart-quietness which the world at its worst could not disturb. This peace he left to his disciples, and it made them richer than if he had given them all the world's wealth.

Another of his possessions which he bequeathed was his joy. We think of Jesus as the Man of sorrows, and we ask what joy he had to give. It seemed a strange time, too, for him to be speaking of his joy ; for in another hour he was in the midst of the Gethsemane anguish, and to-morrow he was on

his cross. Yet in the upper room he had in his heart a most blessed joy. Even in the terrible hours that came afterwards, that joy was not quenched; for we are told that for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame. This joy also he bequeathed to his friends. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you." We remember, too, that they really received this legacy. The world wondered at the strange secret of joy those men had when they went out into the world. They sang songs in the darkest night. Their faces shone as with a holy inner light in the deepest sorrow. Christ's joy was fulfilled in them.

He also put within the reach of his friends, as he was about to leave them, the whole of his own inheritance as the only begotten Son of God. He gave into their hands the key of heaven. He told them they should have power to do the works which they had seen him do, and even greater works than these. He told them that whatsoever they should ask the Father in his name the Father

would give to them. The whole power of his name should thus be theirs, and they might use it as they would. Nothing they might ask should be refused to them ; all the heavenly kingdom was thrown open to them.

These are mere suggestions of the farewell gifts which Jesus left to his friends when he went away, — his peace, his joy, the key to all the treasures of his kingdom. He had blessed them in wonderful ways during his life ; but the best and richest things of his love were kept to the last, and given only after he was gone. Indeed, the best things were given through his death, and could be given in no other way. Other men live to do good ; they hasten to finish their work before their sun sets. God's plan for them is something they must do before death comes to write "Finis" at the end of their days. But the plan of God for Jesus centred in his death. It was the blessings that would come through his dying that were set forth in the elements used in the Last Supper, —

the body broken, the blood shed. The great gifts to his friends, of which he spoke in his farewell words, would come through his dying. He must be lifted up in order to draw all men to him. He must shed his blood in order that remission of sins might be offered. It was expedient for him to go away in order that the Comforter might come. His peace and his joy were bequests which could be given only when he had died as the world's Redeemer. His name would have power to open heaven's treasures only when the atonement had been made, and the Intercessor was at God's right hand in heaven.

There was one other act in this farewell of Jesus. After he had ended his gracious words, he lifted up his eyes in prayer to his Father. The pleading is full of deep and tender affection. It is like that of a mother about to go away from earth, and who is commending her children to the care of the heavenly Father, when she must leave them without mother-love and mother-shelter among unknown and dangerous enemies,

Every word of the wonderful prayer throbs with love, and reveals a heart of most tender affection. While he had been with his friends, Jesus had kept them in the shelter of his own divine strength. None of them had been lost, so faithful had been his guardianship over them — none but the son of perdition. He, too, had received faithful care; it had not been the Good Shepherd's fault that he had perished. He had been lost because he resisted the divine love, and would not accept the divine will. There must have been a pang of anguish in the heart of Jesus as he spoke to his Father of the one who had perished. But the others all were safe. Jesus had guarded them through all the dangers up to the present moment.

But now he is about to leave them. He knows that they must encounter great dangers, and will not have him to protect them. The form of his intercession for them is worthy of note. He does not ask that they should be taken out of the world. This would have seemed the way of tenderest love. But it is

not the divine way to take us out of the battle. These friends of Jesus had been trained to be his witnesses, to represent him when he had gone away. Therefore they must stay in the world, whatever the dangers might be. The prayer was that they should be kept from the evil. There is but one evil. They were not to be kept from persecution, from earthly suffering and loss, from pain or sorrow: these are not the evils from which men's lives need to be guarded. The only real evil is sin. Our danger in trouble or adversity is not that we may suffer, but that we may sin. The pleading of Jesus was that his friends might not be hurt in their souls, in their spiritual life, by sin.

If enemies wrong or injure us, the peril is not that they may cause us to suffer injustice, but that in our suffering we may lose the love out of our heart, and grow angry, or become bitter. In time of sickness, trial, or bereavement, that which we should fear is not the illness or the sorrow, but that we shall not keep sweet, with the peace of God in our breast.

The only thing that can do us real harm is sin. So the intercession on our behalf ever is, not that we may be kept from things that are hard, from experiences that are costly or painful, but that we may be kept pure, gentle, and submissive, with peace and joy in our heart.

There was a pleading also that the disciples might be led into complete consecration of spirit, and that they might be prepared to go out for their Master, to be to the world what he had been to them. This was not a prayer for a path of roses; rather it was for a cross, the utter devotion of their lives to God. Before the prayer closed, a final wish for his friends was expressed, — that when their work on earth was done, they might be received home; that where he should be they might be also, to behold his glory.

Surely there never has been on earth another gathering of such wondrously deep and sacred meaning as that farewell meeting in the upper room. There the friendship of Jesus and his chosen ones reached its holiest experience. His deep human love appears in his giving

up the whole of this last evening to this tryst with his own. He knew what was before him after midnight, — the bitter agony of Gethsemane, the betrayal, the arrest, the trial, and then the terrible shame and suffering of tomorrow. But he planned so that there should be these quiet, uninterrupted hours alone with his friends, before the beginning of the experiences of his passion. He did it for his own sake; his heart hungered for communion with his friends; with desire he desired to eat the Passover, and enjoy these hours with them before he suffered. We may be sure, too, that he received from the holy fellowship comfort and strength, which helped him in passing through the bitter hours that followed. Then, he did it also for the sake of his disciples. He knew how their hearts would be broken with sorrow when he was taken from them, and he wished to comfort them and make them stronger for the way. The memory of those holy hours hung over them like a star in all the dark night of their sorrow, and was a benediction to them as long as they lived.

Then, who can tell what blessings have gone out from that farewell into the whole Church of Christ through all the centuries? It is the holy of holies of Christian history. The Lord's Supper, instituted that night, and which has never ceased to be observed as a memorial of the Master's wonderful love and great sacrifice, has sweetened the world with its fragrant memories. The words spoken by the Master at the table have been repeated from lip to heart wherever the story of the gospel has gone, and have given unspeakable comfort to millions of hearts. The petitions of the great intercessory prayer have been rising continually, like holy incense, ever since they were first uttered, taking into their clasp each new generation of believers. This farewell has kept the Christian hearts of all the centuries warm and tender with love toward him who is the unchanging Friend the same yesterday and to-day and forever.

## CHAPTER XIV

### JESUS' FRIENDSHIPS AFTER HE AROSE.

“Our own are our own forever—God taketh not back his gift;  
They may pass beyond our vision, but our soul shall find  
them out

When the waiting is all accomplished, and the deathly shadows  
lift,

And the glory is given for grieving, and the surety of God  
for doubt.”

WE cannot but ask questions about the after life. What is its character? What shall be the relations there of those who in the present life have been united in friendship? What effect has dying on the human affections? Does it dissolve the bonds which here have been so strong? Or do friendships go on through death, interrupted for a little time only, to be taken up again in the life beyond? Surely God will not blame us for our eagerness to know all we can learn about the world to which we are going.

True, we cannot learn much about this blessed life while we stay in this world. Human eyes cannot penetrate into the deep mystery. We are like men standing on the shore of a great sea, wondering what lies on the other side. No one has come back to tell us what he found in that far country. We bring our questions to the word of God, but it avails little; even inspiration does not give us explicit revealings concerning the life of the blessed. We know that the Son of God had dwelt forever in heaven before his incarnation, and we expect that he will shed light upon the subject of life within the gates of heaven. But he is almost silent to our questions. Indeed, he seems to tell us really nothing. He gives us no description of the place from which he came, to which he returned, and to which he said his disciples shall be gathered. He says nothing about the occupations of those who dwell there. He satisfies no human yearnings to know the nature of friendship after death. We are likely to turn away from our quest for definite knowl-

edge, feeling that even Jesus has told us nothing. Yet he has told us a great deal.

There is one wonderful revelation of which perhaps too little has been made. After Jesus had died, and lain in the grave for three days, he rose again, and remained for forty days upon the earth. During that time he did not resume the old relations. He was not with his disciples as he had been during the three years of his public ministry, journeying with them, speaking to them, working miracles; yet he showed himself to them a number of times.

The remarkable thing in these appearances of Jesus during the forty days is that we see in him one beyond death. Lazarus was brought back to earth after having died, but it was only the old life to which he returned. The human relations between him and his sisters and friends were restored, but probably they were not different from what they had been in the past. Lazarus was the same mortal being as before, with human frailties and infirmities.

Jesus, however, after his return from the grave, was a man beyond death. He was the same person who had lived and died, and yet he was changed. He appeared and disappeared at will. He entered rooms through closed and barred doors. At last his body ascended from the earth, and passed up to heaven, subject no longer to the laws of gravitation. We see in Jesus, therefore, during the forty days, one who has passed into what we call the other life. What he was then his people will be when they have emerged from death with their spiritual bodies, for he was the first-fruits of them that are asleep.

As we study Jesus in the story of those days, we are surprised to see how little he was changed. Death had left no strange marks upon him. Nothing beautiful in his life had been lost in the grave. He came back from the shadows as human as he was before he entered the valley. Dying had robbed him of no human tenderness, no gentle grace of disposition, no charm of manner. As we watch him in his intercourse with his disciples,

we recognize the familiar traits which belonged to his personality during the three years of his active ministry.

We may rightly infer that in our new life we shall be as little changed as Jesus was. We shall lose our sin, our frailties and infirmities, all our blemishes and faults. The long-hindered and hampered powers of our being shall be liberated. Hidden beauties shall shine out in our character, as developed pictures in the photographer's sensitized plate. There will be great changes in us in these and other regards, but our personality will be the same. Jesus was easily recognized by his friends; so shall we be by those who have known us. Whatever is beautiful and good in us here,—the fruits of spiritual conquest, the lessons learned in earth's experiences, the impressions made upon us by the Word of God, the silver and golden threads woven in our life-web by pure friendships, the effects of sorrow upon us, the work wrought in us by the Holy Spirit,—all this shall appear in our new life. We shall have incorruptible,

spiritual, and glorious bodies, no longer mortal and subject to the limitations of matter; death will rob us of nothing that is worthy and true, and fit for the blessed life.

“We are quite sure  
 That he will give them back —  
 Bright, pure, and beautiful.  
 . . . . .  
 He does not mean — though heaven be fair —  
 To change the spirits entering there  
 That they forget  
 The eyes upraised and wet,  
 The lips too still for prayer,  
 The mute despair.  
 He will not take  
 The spirits which he gave, and make  
 The glorified so new  
 That they are lost to me and you.  
 . . . . .  
 I do believe that just the same sweet face,  
 But glorified, is waiting in the place  
 Where we shall meet.  
 . . . . .  
 God never made  
 Spirit for spirit, answering shade for shade,  
 And placed them side by side —  
 So wrought in one, though separate, mystified,  
 And meant to break  
 The quivering threads between.”

It is interesting, too, to study the friendships of Jesus after he came from the grave. He did not take up again the public life of the days before his death. He made no more journeys through the country. He spoke no more to throngs in the temple courts or by the seaside. He no more went about healing, teaching, casting out demons, and raising the dead. He made no appearances in public. Only his disciples saw him. We have but few details of his intercourse with individuals, but such glimpses as we have are exceedingly interesting. They show us that no tender tie of friendship had been hurt by his experience of dying. The love of his heart lived on through death, and reappeared during the forty days in undiminished gentleness and kindness. He did not meet his old friends as strangers, but as one who had been away for a few days, and had come again.

The first of his friends to whom he showed himself after he arose was Mary Magdalene. Her story is pathetic in its interest. The traditions of the centuries have blotted her

name, but there is not the slightest evidence in the New Testament that she was ever a woman of blemished character. There is no reason whatever for identifying her with the woman that was a sinner, who came to Jesus in Simon's house. All that is said of Mary's former condition is that she was possessed of seven demons, and that Jesus freed her from this terrible bondage. In gratitude for this unspeakable deliverance Mary followed Jesus, leaving her home, and going with him until the day of his death. She was one of several women friends who accompanied him and ministered to him of their substance.

Mary's devotion to Jesus was wonderful. When the tomb was closed she was one of the watchers who lingered, loath to leave it. Then, at the dawn of the first day morning she was again one of those who hurried through the darkness to the tomb, with spices for the anointing of the body—last at his cross, and earliest at his tomb. Mary's devotion was rewarded; for to her first of all his friends did Jesus appear, as she stood weeping by the

empty grave. She did not recognize him at once. She was not expecting to see him risen. Then, her eyes were blinded with her tears. But the moment he spoke her name, "Mary," she knew him, and answered, "Rabboni." He was not changed to her. He had not forgotten her. The love in his heart had lost none of its tenderness. He was as accessible as ever. Dying had made him no less a friend, and no less sympathetic, than he was before he died.

Soon after Mary had met Jesus, and rejoiced to find him her friend just as of old, he appeared to the other women of the company who had followed him with their grateful ministries. They also knew him, and he knew them; and their hearts suffered no wrench at the meeting, for they found the same sweet friendship they thought they had lost, just as warm and tender as ever.

That same day Jesus appeared to Peter. A veil is drawn by the evangelists over the circumstances of this meeting. The friendship of Jesus and Peter had continued for three

years. He had often given his Master pain and trouble through his impulsive ways. But the culmination of it all came on the night of the betrayal, when, in the hall of the high priest's palace, Peter denied being a disciple of Jesus, denied even knowing him. While for the third time the base and cowardly words were on his lips, Jesus turned and looked upon his faithless disciple with a look of grieved love, and then Peter remembered the forewarning the Master had given him. His heart was broken with penitence, and he went out and wept bitterly. But he had no opportunity to seek forgiveness; for the next morning Jesus was on his cross, and in the evening was in his grave. Peter's sorrow was very deep, for his love for his Master was very strong.

We can imagine that when the truth of the resurrection began to be believed that morning, Peter wondered how Jesus would receive him. But he was not long kept in suspense. The women who came first to the tomb, to find it empty, received a message for "the disciples *and* Peter." This singling out of his name

for special mention must have given unspeakable joy to Peter. It told him that the love of Jesus was not only stronger than death, but also stronger than sin. Then, sometime during the day, Jesus appeared to Peter alone. No doubt then, in the sacredness of love, the disciple made confession, and the Master granted forgiveness. Several times during the forty days Jesus and Peter met again. The friendship had not been marred by death. The risen Lord loved just as he had loved in the days of common human intercourse.

One of the most interesting of the after resurrection incidents is that of the walk to Emmaus. Cleophas and his friend were journeying homeward with sad hearts, when a stranger joined them. His conversation was wonderfully tender as he walked with them and explained the Scriptures. Then followed the evening meal, and the revealing of the risen Jesus in the breaking of bread. Again it was the same sweet friendship which had so warmed their hearts in the past, resumed by the Master on the other side of death.

It was the same with all the recorded appearances of Jesus. Those who had been his friends previous to his death found him the same friend as before. He took up with each of them the threads of affection just where they had been dropped when the betrayal and arrest wrought such panic among his disciples, scattering them away, and went on with the weaving.

May we not conclude that it will be with us even as it was with Jesus? His resurrection was not only a pledge of what that of believers will be, carrying within itself the seed and potency of a blessed immortality, but it was also a sample of what ours will be. Death will produce far less change in us than we imagine it will do. We shall go on with living very much as if nothing had happened. Dying is an experience we need not trouble ourselves about very much if we are believers in Christ. There is a mystery in it; but when we have passed through it we shall probably find that it is a very simple and natural event — perhaps little more serious than sleeping over night

and waking in the morning. It will not hurt us in any way. It will blot no lovely thing from our life. It will end nothing that is worth while. Death is only a process in life, a phase of development, analogous to that which takes place when a seed is dropped in the earth and comes up a beautiful plant, adorned with foliage and blossoms. Life would be incomplete without dying. The greatest misfortune that could befall any one would be that he should not die. This would be an arresting of development which would be death indeed.

“Death is the crown of life;  
Were death denied, poor man would live in vain;  
Were death denied, to live would not be life;  
Were death denied, e'en fools would wish to die.  
Death wounds to cure: we fall; we rise; we reign;  
Spring from our fetters; hasten to the skies,  
Where blooming Eden withers in our sight.  
Death gives us more than was in Eden lost;  
The king of terrors is the prince of peace.”

There is need for a reconstruction of the prevalent thoughts and conceptions of heaven. We have trained ourselves to think of life

beyond the grave as something altogether different from what life is in this world. It has always been pictured thus to us. We have been taught that heaven is a place of rest, a place of fellowship with God, a place of ceaseless praise. The human element has been largely left out of our usual conceptions of the blessed life. Not much is made of the relations of believers to one another. That which is emphasized in Christian hymns and in most books about heaven is the Godward side. Much is made of the glory of the place as suggested by the visions of St. John in the Apocalypse. In many of these conceptions the chief thought of heavenly blessedness is that it is a release from earth and from earthly conditions. There is no sorrow, no trouble, no pain, no struggle, no toil, in the home to which we are going. We shall sit on the green banks of beautiful rivers, amid unfading flowers, and sing forever. We shall lie prostrate before the throne, and gaze and gaze on the face of God.

But this is not the kind of heaven and

heavenly life which the teachings of Jesus would lead us to imagine. True, he speaks of the place to which he is going, and where, by and by, he would gather all his disciples, as "my Father's house." This suggests home and love; and the thought is in harmony with what we have seen in the life of Jesus during the forty days, — the continuance of the friendships formed and knit in earthly fellowships. But the vision of home life thus suggested need not imply a heaven of inaction. Indeed, no life could be more natural and beautiful than that which the thought of home suggests. We have no perfect homes on earth; but every true home has in it fragments of heaven's meaning, and always the idea is of love's service rather than of blissful indolence.

We may get many thoughts of the heavenly life from other teachings of Jesus. Life is continuous. Whosoever liveth and believeth shall never die. There is no break, no interruption of life, in what we call dying. We think of eternal life as the life of heaven, the glorified life. So it is; but we have its begin-

nings here. The moment we believe, we have everlasting life. The Christian graces we are enjoined to cultivate are heavenly lessons set for us to learn. If we would conceive of the life of heaven, we have but to think of ideal Christian life in this world, and then lift it up to its perfect realization. Heaven is but earth's lessons of grace better learned, earth's best spiritual life glorified. Therefore we get our truest thoughts of it from a study of Christ's ideal for the life of his followers, for it will simply be this life fully realized and infinitely extended.

For example, the one great lesson set for us, the one which includes all others, is love. God is love, and we are to learn to love if we would be like him. All relationships are relationships of love. All graces are graces of love. All duties are parts of one great duty—to love one another. All worthy and noble character is love wrought out in life. All life here is a school, with its tasks, its struggles, its conflicts, its minglings with men, its friendships, its experiences of joy and sor-

row, its burdens, its disappointments and hopes, and the final education to be attained is love. Browning puts it thus in "Rabbi Ben Ezra": —

Our life, with all it yields of joy or woe,  
And hope and fear, — believe the aged friend,  
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,  
How love might be, hath been, indeed, and is.

What is this love which it is the one great lesson of life to learn? Toward God, it may express itself in devotion, worship, praise, obedience, fellowship. This seems to be the chief thought of love in the common conception of heaven. It is all adoration, glorifying. But love has a manward as well as a Godward development. St. John, the disciple of love, teaches very plainly that he who says he loves God must prove it by also loving man. If the whole of our training here is to be in loving and in living out our love, we certainly have the clew to the heavenly life. We shall continue in the doing of the things we have here learned to do. Life in glory will be earth's Christian life intensified and perfected.

Heaven will not be a place of idle repose. Inaction can never be a condition of blessedness for a life made and trained for action. The essential quality of love is service — “not to be ministered unto, but to minister;” and for one who has learned love’s lesson, happiness never can be found in a state in which there is no opportunity for ministering. In heaven it will still be more blessed to give than to receive; and those who are first will be those who with lowly spirit serve most deeply. Heaven will be a place of boundless activity. “His servants shall serve him.” The powers trained here for the work of Christ will find ample opportunity there for doing their best service. Said Victor Hugo in his old age, “When I go down to the grave, I can say, like so many others, ‘I have finished my day’s work;’ but I cannot say, ‘I have finished my life.’ My day’s work will begin again next morning. My tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare; it closes with the twilight to open with the dawn.”

Whatever mystery there may be concerning

the life that believers in Christ shall live in heaven, we may be sure at least that they will carry with them all that is true and divine of their earthly life. The character formed here they will retain through death. The capacity they have gained by the use of their powers they will have for the beginning of their activity in the new life. There can be no doubt that they shall find work commensurate with and fitted to their trained powers.

So heaven will be a far more natural place than we imagine it will be. It will not be greatly unlike the ideal life of earth. We probably shall be surprised when we meet each other to find how little we have changed. The old tenderness will not be missing. We shall recognize our friends by some little gentle ways they used to have here, or by some familiar thoughtfulness that was never wanting in them. The friendships we began here, and had not time to cultivate, we shall have opportunity there to renew, and carry on through immortal years.

Even at the best, human friendships only

begin in this life; in heaven they will reach their best and holiest possibilities. There are lives which only touch each other in this world and then separate, going their different ways—like ships that pass in the night. There will be time enough in heaven for any such faintest beginnings of friendship to be wrought out in beauty. Friendships with Jesus here touch but the shore of an infinite ocean; in heaven, unhindered, in uninterrupted fellowship, we shall be forever learning more of this love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

## CHAPTER XV.

### JESUS AS A FRIEND.

“ Long, long centuries  
Agone, One walked the earth, his life  
A seeming failure ;  
Dying, he gave the world a gift  
That will outlast eternities.”

THE world has always paid high honor to friendship. Some of the finest passages in all history are the stories of noble friendships, — stories which are among the classics of literature. The qualities which belong to an ideal friend have been treated by many writers through all the centuries. But Jesus Christ brought into the world new standards for everything in human life. He was the one complete Man, — God’s ideal for humanity. “Once in the world’s history was born a Man. Once in the roll of the ages, out of innumerable failures, from the stock of human nature,

one bud developed itself into a faultless flower. One perfect specimen of humanity has God exhibited on earth." To Jesus, therefore, we turn for the divine ideal of everything in human life. What is friendship as interpreted by Jesus? What are the qualities of a true friend as illustrated in the life of Jesus?

It is evident that he lifted the ideal of friendship to a height to which it never before had been exalted. He made all things new. Duty had a new meaning after Jesus taught and lived, and died and rose again. He presented among men new conceptions of life, new standards of character, new thoughts of what is worthy and beautiful. Not one of his beatitudes had a place among the world's ideals of blessedness. They all had an unworldly, a spiritual basis. The things he said that men should live for were not the things which men had been living for before he came. He showed new patterns for everything in life.

Jesus presented a conception for friendship which surpassed all the classical models. In his farewell to his disciples he gave them what

he called a "new commandment." The commandment was that his friends should love one another. Why was this called a new commandment? Was there no commandment before Jesus came and gave it that good men should love one another? Was this rule of love altogether new with him?

In the form in which Jesus gave it, this commandment never had been given before. There was a precept in the Mosaic law which at first seems to be the same as that which Jesus gave, but it was not the same. It read, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "As thyself" was the standard. Men were to love themselves, and then love their neighbors as themselves. That was as far as the old commandment went. But the new commandment is altogether different. "As I have loved you" is its measure. How did Jesus love his disciples? As himself? Did he keep a careful balance all the while, thinking of himself, of his own comfort, his own ease, his own safety, and going just that far and no farther in his love for his disciples? No; it

was a new pattern of love that Jesus introduced. He forgot himself altogether, denied himself, never saved his own life, never hesitated at any line or limit of service, of cost or sacrifice, in loving. He emptied himself, kept nothing back, spared not his own life. Thus the standard of friendship which Jesus set for his followers was indeed new. Instead of "Love thy neighbor as thyself," it was "Love as Jesus loved;" and he loved unto the uttermost.

When we turn to the history of Christianity, we see that the type of friendship which Jesus introduced was indeed a new thing in the world. It was new in its motive and inspiration. The love of the Mosaic law was inspired by Sinai; the love of the Christian law got its inspiration from Calvary. The one was only cold, stern law; the other was burning passion. The one was enforced merely as a duty; the other was impressed by the wondrous love of Christ. No doubt men loved God in the Old Testament days, for there were many revealings of his goodness and his grace and

love in the teachings of those who spoke for God to men. But wonderful as were these revelations, they could not for a moment be compared with the manifestation of God which was made in Jesus Christ. The Son of God came among men in human form, and in gentle and lowly life all the blessedness of the divine affection was poured out right before men's eyes. At last there was the cross, where the heart of God broke in love.

No wonder that, with such inspiration, a new type of friendship appeared among the followers of Jesus. We are so familiar with the life which Christianity has produced, where the fruits of the Spirit have reached their finest and best development, that it is well-nigh impossible for us to conceive of the condition of human society as it was before Christ came. Of course there was love in the world before that day. Parents loved their children. There was natural affection, which sometimes even in heathen countries was very strong and tender. Friendships existed between individuals. History has enshrined the story of some

of these. There always were beautiful things in humanity, — fragments of the divine image remaining among the ruins of the fall.

But the mutual love of Christians which began to show itself on the day of Pentecost surpassed anything that had ever been known in even the most refined and gentle society. It was indeed divine love in new-born men. No mere natural human affection could ever produce such fellowship as we see in the pentecostal church. It was a little of heaven's life let down upon earth. Those who so loved one another were new men; they had been born again — born from above. Jesus came to establish the kingdom of heaven upon the earth. In other words, he came to make heaven in the hearts of his believing ones. That is what the new friendship is. A creed does not make one a Christian; commandments, though spoken amid the thunders of Sinai, will never produce love in a life. The new ideal of love which Jesus came to introduce among men was the love of God shed abroad in human hearts. "As I have loved you,

that ye also love one another" was the new requirement.

Since, then, the new ideal of friendship is that which Jesus gave in his own life, it will be worth our while to make a study of this holy pattern, that we may know how to strive toward it for ourselves.

We may note the tenderness of the friendship of Jesus. It has been suggested by an English preacher that Christ exhibited the blended qualities of both sexes. "There was in him the womanly heart as well as the manly brain." Yet tenderness is not exclusively a womanly excellence; indeed, since tenderness can really coexist only with strength, it is in its highest manifestation quite as truly a manly as a womanly quality. Jesus was inimitably tender. Tenderness in him was never softness or weakness. It was more like true motherliness than almost any other human affection; it was infolding, protecting, nourishing love.

We find abundant illustrations of this quality in the story of the life of Jesus. The most kindly and affectionate men are sure sometime

to reveal at least a shade of harshness, coldness, bitterness, or severity. But in Jesus there was never any failure of tenderness. We see it in his warm love for John, in his regard for little children, in his compassion for sinners who came to his feet, in his weeping over the city which had rejected him and was about to crucify him, in his thought for the poor, in his compassion for the sick.

Another quality of the friendship of Jesus was patience. In all his life he never once failed in this quality. We see it in his treatment of his disciples. They were slow learners. He had to teach the same lesson over and over again. They could not understand his character. But he wearied not in his teaching. They were unfaithful, too, in their friendship for him. In a time of alarm they all fled, while one of them denied him, and another betrayed him. But never once was there the slightest impatience shown by him. Having loved his own, he loved them unto the uttermost, through all dulness and all unfaithfulness. He suffered unjustly, but bore all wrong

in silence. He never lost his temper. He never grew discouraged, though all his work seemed to be in vain. He never despaired of making beauty out of deformity in his disciples. He never lost hope of any soul. Had it not been for this quality of unwearying patience nothing would ever have come from his interest in human lives.

The friendship of Jesus was unselfish. He did not choose those whose names would add to his influence, who would help him to rise to honor and renown; he chose lowly, unknown men, whom he could lift up to worthy character. His enemies charged against him that he was the friend of publicans and sinners. In a sense this was true. He came to be a Saviour of lost men. He said he was a physician; and a physician's mission is among the sick, not among the whole and well.

The friendship of Jesus was not checked or foiled by the discovery of faults or blemishes in those whom he had taken into his life. Even in our ordinary human relations we do not know what we are engaging to do when

we become the friend of another. "For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health," runs the marriage covenant. The covenant in all true friendship is the same. We pledge our friend faithfulness, with all that faithfulness includes. We know not what demands upon us this sacred compact may make in years to come. Misfortune may befall our friend, and he may require our aid in many ways. Instead of being a help he may become a burden. But friendship must not fail, whatever its cost may be. When we become the friend of another we do not know what faults and follies in him closer acquaintance may disclose to our eyes. But here, again, ideal friendship must not fail.

What is true in common human relations was true in a far more wonderful way of the friendship of Jesus. We have only to recall the story of his three years with his disciples. They gave him at the best a very feeble return for his great love for them. They were inconstant, weak, foolish, untrustful. They showed personal ambition, striving for first

places, even at the Last Supper. They displayed jealousy, envy, narrowness, ingratitude, unbelief, cowardice. As these unlovely things appeared in the men Jesus had chosen, his friendship did not slacken or unloose its hold. He had taken them as his friends, and he trusted them wholly; he committed himself to them absolutely, without reserve, without condition, without the possibility of withdrawal. No matter how they failed, he loved them still. He was patient with their weaknesses and with their slow growth, and was not afraid to wait, knowing that in the end they would justify his faith in them and his costly friendship for them.

Jesus thought not of the present comfort and pleasure of his friends, but of their highest and best good. Too often human friendship in its most generous and lavish kindness is really most unkind. It thinks that its first duty is to give relief from pain, to lighten burdens, to alleviate hardship, to smoothe the rough path. Too often serious hurt is done by this over-tenderness of human love,

But Jesus made no such mistakes in dealing with his friends. He did not try to make life easy for them. He did not pamper them. He never lowered the conditions of discipleship so that it would be easy for them to follow him. He did not carry their burdens for them, but put into their hearts courage and hope to inspire and strengthen them to carry their own loads.

He did not keep them secluded from the world in a quiet shelter so that they would not come in contact with the world's evil nor meet its assaults; his method with them was to teach them how to live so that they should have the divine protection in the midst of spiritual danger, and then to send them forth to face the perils and fight the battles. His prayer for his disciples was not that they should be taken out of the world, thus escaping its dangers and getting away from its struggles, but that they should be kept from the world's evil. He knew that if they would become good soldiers they must be trained in the midst of the conflict. Hence he did not

fight their battles for them. He did not save Peter from being sifted; it was necessary that his apostle should pass through the terrible experience, even though he should fail in it and fall. His prayer for him was not that he should not be sifted, but that his faith should not altogether fail. His aim in all his dealings with his friends was to train them into heroic courage and invincible character, and not to lead them along flowery paths through gardens of ease.

We are in the habit of saying that the follower of Christ will always find goodness and mercy wherever he is led. This is true; but it must not be understood to mean that there will never be any hardness to endure, any cross to bear, any pain or loss to experience. We grow best under burdens. We learn most when lessons are hard. When we get through this earthly life, and stand on the other side, and can look back on the path over which we have been led, it will appear that we have found our best blessings where we thought the way was most dreary and desolate. We shall

see then that what seemed sternness and severity in Christ was really truest and wisest friendship. One writes:—

“If you could go back to the forks of the road—  
Back the long miles you have carried the load;  
Back to the place where you had to decide  
By this way or that through your life to abide;

Back of the sorrow and back of the care;  
Back to the place where the future was fair—  
If you were there now, a decision to make,  
Oh, pilgrim of sorrow, which road would you take?

Then, after you'd trodden the other long track,  
Suppose that again to the forks you went back,  
After you found that its promises fair  
Were but a delusion that led to a snare—

That the road you first travelled with sighs and unrest,  
Though dreary and rough, was most graciously blest,  
With a balm for each bruise and a charm for each ache,  
Oh, pilgrim of sorrow, which road would you take?”

Sometimes good people are disappointed in the way their prayers are answered. Indeed, they seem not to be answered at all. They ask God to take away some trouble, to lift off some load, and their request is not granted. They continue to pray, for they read that we

must be importunate, that men ought always to pray and not to faint ; but still there seems no answer. Then they are perplexed. They cannot understand why God's promises have failed.

But they have only misread the promises. There is no assurance given that the burdens shall be lifted off and carried for us. God would not be the wise, good, and loving Father he is, if at every cry of any of his children he ran to take away the trouble, or free them from the hardness, or make all things easy and pleasant for them. Such a course would keep us always children, untrained, undisciplined. Only in burden-bearing and in enduring can we learn to be self-reliant and strong. Jesus himself was trained on the battlefield, and in life's actual experiences of trial. He learned obedience by the things that he suffered. It was by meeting temptation and by being victorious in it that he became Master of the world, able to deliver us in all our temptations.

Not otherwise can we grow into Christlike

men. It would be unkindness in our Father to save us from the experiences by which alone we can be disciplined into robust and vigorous strength. The promises do not read that if we call upon God in our trouble he will take the trouble away. Rather the assurance is that if we call upon God he will answer us. The answer may not be relief; it may be only cheer. We are taught to cast our burden upon the Lord, but we are not told that the Lord will take it away. The promise is that he will sustain us under the burden. We are to continue to bear it; and we are assured that we shall not faint under the load, for God will strengthen us. The assurance is not that we shall not be tempted, but that no temptation but such as man can bear shall come to us, and that the faithful God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to endure.

This, then, is what divine friendship does. It does not make it easy for us to live, for then we should get no blessing of strength and goodness from living. How, then, are our

prayers answered? God sustains us so that we faint not; and then, as we endure in faith and patience, his benediction is upon us, giving us wisdom, and imparting strength to us.

The friendship of Jesus was always sympathetic. Many persons, however, misunderstand the meaning of sympathy. They think of it as merely a weak pity, which sits down beside one who is suffering or in sorrow, and enters into the experience, without doing anything to lift him up or strengthen him. Such sympathy is really of very little value in the time of trouble. It may impart a consciousness of companionship which will somewhat relieve the sense of aloneness, but it makes the sufferer no braver or stronger. Indeed, it takes strength from him by aggravating his sense of distress.

It was not thus, however, that the sympathy of Jesus was manifested. There was no real pain or sorrow in any one which did not touch his heart and stir his compassion. He bore the sicknesses of his friends, and carried their sorrows, entering with wonderful love into every human experience. But he did more

than feel with those who were suffering, and weep beside them. His sympathy was always for their strengthening. He never encouraged exaggerated thoughts of pain or suffering — for in many minds there is a tendency to such feelings. He never gave countenance to morbidness, self-pity, or any kind of unwholesomeness in grief. He never spoke of sorrow or trouble in a despairing way. He sought to inculcate hope, and to make men braver and stronger. His ministry was always toward cheer and encouragement. He gave great eternal truths on which his friends might rest in their sorrow, and then bade them be of good cheer, assuring them that he had overcome the world. He gave them his peace and his joy; not sinking down into the depths of sad helplessness with them, but rather lifting them up to sympathy with him in his victorious life.

The wondrous hopefulness of Jesus pervades all his ministry on behalf of others. He was never discouraged. Every sorrow was to him a path to a deeper joy. Every battle was a

way to the blessing of victoriousness. Every load under which men bent was a secret of new strength. In all loss gain was infolded. Jesus lived this life himself; it was no mere theory which he taught to his followers, and had never tried or proved himself. He never asked his friends to accept any such untested theories. He lived all his own lessons. He was not a mere teacher; he was a leader of men. Thus his strong friendship was full of magnificent inspiration. He called men to new things in life, and was ready to help them reach the highest possibilities in achievement and attainment.

This friendship of Jesus is the inspiration which is lifting the world toward divine ideals. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," was the stupendous promise and prophecy of Jesus, as his eye fell on the shadow of the cross at his feet, and he thought of the fruits of his great sorrow and the influence of his love. Every life that is struggling to reach the beauty and perfectness of God's thought for it is feeling the power

of this blessed friendship, and is being lifted up into the likeness of the Master.

This friendship of Jesus waits as a mighty divine yearning at the door of every human heart. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," is its call. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This blessed friendship waits before each life, waits to be accepted, waits to receive hospitality. Wherever it is received, it inspires in the heart a heavenly love which transforms the whole life. To be a friend of Christ is to be a child of God in the goodly fellowship of heaven.









