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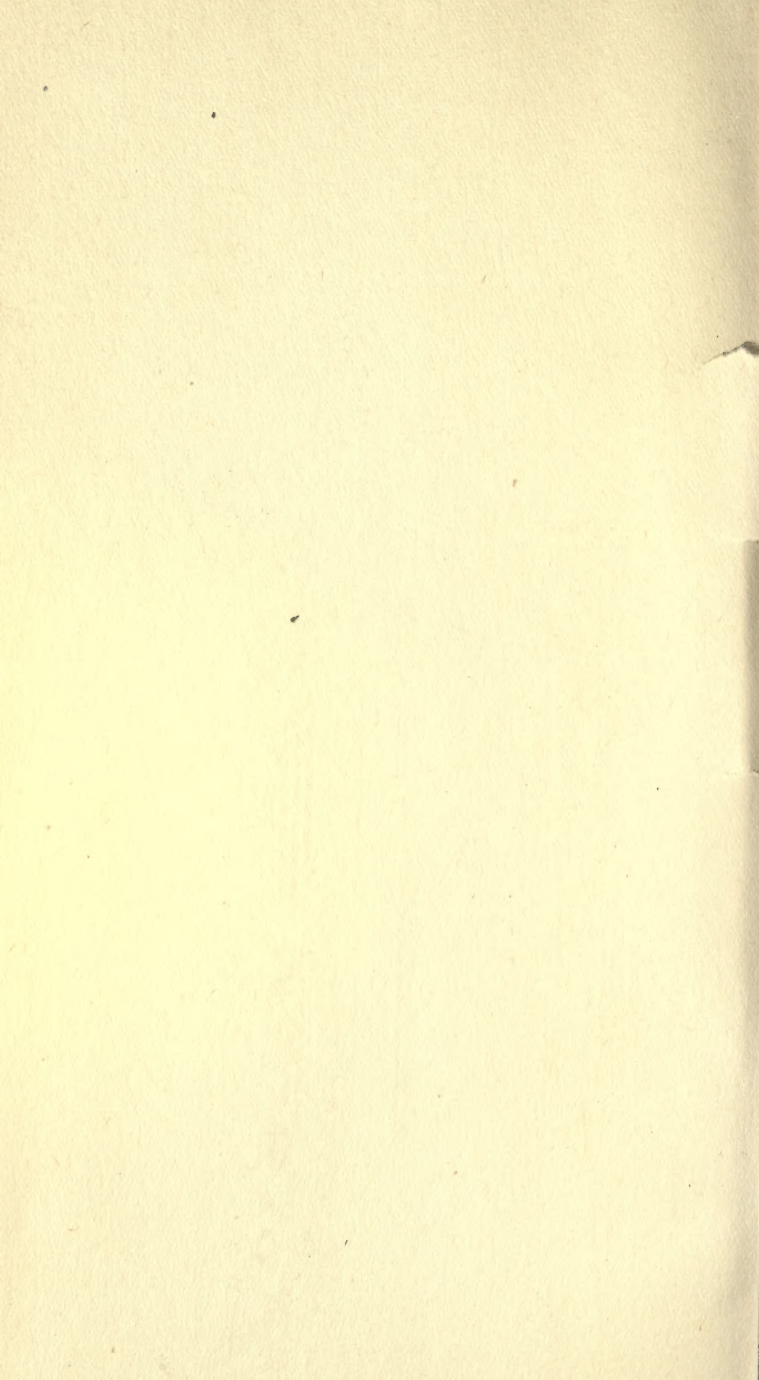
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ALBERT DURRANT WATSON

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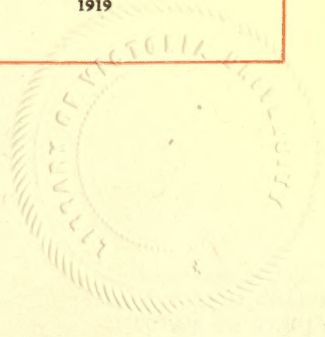
THREE COMRADES OF JESUS

Three
Comrades
of Jesus

BY
ALBERT D. WATSON




THE RYERSON PRESS
TORONTO
1919



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PETER

ON the northern shore of Lake Galilee, west of that point where the upper Jordan flows with rapid course into the little sea, a firm of fishers plied their trade. The lake abounded in fish, the great city of Capernaum was a convenient market, and at least two of the partners lived there.

The firm consisted of Zebedee, his sons, James and John, Simon, and his brother Andrew. Like all workers on the waters, these were elemental natures. The temper of Zebedee's sons was so much like the lightning that they were sometimes called "The Sons of Thunder." Simon was impulsive in speech and action, but his heart was kind. He conquered his fitful temper and became as stable as a rock, hence he was afterwards called "Peter."

One afternoon when the shadows of the declining sun were beginning to slant across the blue Galilean waters, these men were working at their nets. Only yesterday they had met the young Prophet of Nazareth, and heard Him say with great assurance :

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The white cords of the nets were handled almost unconsciously, for the hope of Israel was strong in their hearts. Could it be that

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this young Teacher was really *the Desire of the nations?* A great joy had birth in their souls as they, in eager tones, repeated the words of the young Prophet.

Yonder, walking on the shore, was One whose grace and majesty of motion were not to be mistaken. It was the famous young Teacher. He approached the brothers, Simon and Andrew, and stood with an easy poise that suggested both the agility of youth and the strength of vigorous manhood. When He spoke, the cadence of His voice was as the sound of far-off music falling with rare sweetness on the ear.

“Be my disciples, and you shall catch men.” The sound of His voice was sweet, but the power of His presence was irresistible. His words came to the hearer with that conviction which was afterwards to conquer the world. There seemed only one thing to be done. It followed as the morning follows the night. The brothers left their nets on the shore, and went with the Master.

They came to where Zebedee's sons were mending their nets. Again the lofty call: “Be my disciples,” and the sons of thunder became fishers of men.

Joy billows beat over Simon's soul, and a great wonder stirred his heart. He felt that he was walking on air as he followed this young Rabbi with the heavenly voice, whose lips spoke eternal things, and whose eyes

On the Shore of Lake Galilee

made one feel that God was looking through them, and nothing was hidden from His gaze. The great, far splendors of the sun's farewell, all the glories of expiring day, the azure, the emerald, the pale rose deepening to crimson over the fields of Galilee, were a fitting symbol of the new glory that now irradiated his soul. Thus Simon became a disciple of the Nazarene.

SIMON and his comrades did not yet altogether cease to mend their nets and to drag them in the little sea. They began at once, however, to mend their tempers. Before them, daily, was a marvel of inspiration and self-control, and many an evening hour was spent with Him on the shore, or in the fields, and sometimes they sailed together on the lake. Once they all went to a wedding in a distant village, and later, to Passover in Jerusalem, ninety miles away.

Love found root in the soil of wonder and admiration as they listened to His words or saw His works, for He spake as no other could, with effects on soul and body that astonished all.

A new light began to dawn in the soul of Simon. The drudgery of the fisher-life was forgotten in the joy of a new inspiration. He saw everything, as yet, in the light of his Jewish training, but he began to discern more clearly the rare beauty of that splendid manhood which walked and talked with him daily, in real, bodily form.

One night in Jerusalem, when a ruler of the Jews came for an interview, Jesus told the learned Sanhedrist of the birth from above. Simon had heard the lesson, and glimpses of its meaning came to him from his own experience. Something was calling

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to him from within, urging him to lead a better life. A great peace began to make him strong, and keep him free, as he, more and more fully, determined to obey that voice.

When he went back to the nets, however, the petty annoyances of the day, awkward situations in business, the stupidity of some who worked with him as hirelings—almost any disturbance, indeed, was sufficient to drive the peace out of his soul.

One day, after many months of companionship with Jesus, Simon and his friends went to hear the Teacher address a great multitude of people who had come together, for His fame had spread throughout Galilee. So many were present, it was necessary that He should speak to them from the top of a hill, that all might both see and hear. His words of wisdom and tenderness were freighted with a divine magnetism as He spoke of the poor, the lowly, the outcast, with a sympathy quite impossible to withstand. His utterances needed no oaths for bulwarks. His peace was safe without a sword to guard it. The light He kindled could never more fade in the hearts of the fishermen.

Simon knew that on this occasion the Teacher would call twelve whom He would train to carry on the work of the kingdom of which He told them. Who would these twelve be? Who had the gifts needed to perform so great a function? Was he—

The Call of the Christ

Simon the fisher—to be a herald of the King? Sometimes he hoped so, but when he remembered his hasty temper and the disorders of his wayward life, he had misgivings.

Hark! The Master is about to call the Twelve. Whom will He name first? There is a great silence as the clear, sonorous voice rings out the names:

“Simon! Andrew! James! John!”

WHEN alone, Simon sometimes doubted the wisdom of his new course of life. Was it wise to go about the country with a preacher who had no charge, no stipend, and no prestige, not even the sanction of the elders? Lately, too, he had been more and more neglecting his business, and leaving the nets to the care of others. His conscience was not always easy on this matter. Once he talked it over with the others, who, like himself, had given up their old vocations, and were devoting their whole time to the new cause. As a result of this conference, they determined to ask the Master plainly about it. Simon, as spokesman, enquired of Jesus whether or not their fidelity was likely to have a suitable reward.

“Lo, we have left all and followed Thee. What shall we have, therefore?”

The answer was somewhat like this: “Whosoever shall forsake any lesser interest for the sake of the Great Kingdom, shall have all good things more truly his, and a deeper, intenser life forever.”

They probably did not know exactly what He meant, but they felt glad, and remained faithful.

One day the Master asked: “Whom do men say that I am?”

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The answer was not assuring. Some, they said, believed Him to be a great prophet, such as Elijah or Jeremiah, but not the Desire of the nations, not the Emancipator of Israel.

Disappointing as this answer seemed, there was a question even more vital, which now he quickly asked:

“Whom say ye that I am?”

If only the Twelve themselves understood, if they saw the great purpose and quality of His life and mission, all would see it some day, and the kingdom of the unselfish would be secure. Everything depended upon the answer. What should it be? Again Simon speaks for all, in his bold, incisive way:

“Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.” Then came words at which they wondered, and none more than Simon, for he remembered with remorse many a wrong for which he was responsible. Said the Master:

“Happy art thou, Simon, man hath not told thee this, but God, and I perceive that thou shalt have power to open the kingdom of heaven to the souls of men.”

But one day the Master said: “The chief priests are sure to slay me.” This was a severe blow to the hopes, and a sad thought to the hearts of the Twelve. Simon responded with eager, impatient protest: “Be it far from thee, Lord.” But the Master answered and

said: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou dost not speak God's mind, but thine own."

Patiently, with much discourse, the Master sought to make clear to Simon what He meant by the kingdom, for they still thought of Him as the Messiah who was to rule the world from Mount Zion, while *He* thought of the kingdom as being supreme harmony in every soul under the sway of divine love.

That the Messiah was to die as a criminal upon a Roman cross, Simon could not believe. Reverently, the Master had named him a discloser of heaven to men, then, because he protested that Jesus should not die as a criminal, he was denounced as an adversary. At least, Simon so understood the matter. Hopes, alternately broken and revived, brought amazement and confusion to the soul of this tempest-tossed disciple and apostle. The lessons he was learning in the school of Jesus were increasingly difficult. What did the Master mean? Simon could not discover. All was dark to this man of facts and fish-nets.

THE wonderful Teacher ceased not trying to reveal to Simon the true nature of the kingdom, knowing, as He did, that until a man sees the great vision, it is impossible for him to live the great life. Ever He kept on trying to make the matter clear.

“The kings of the earth exercise authority, but let your great ones serve. I am among you as one that serveth.”

Jerusalem began now to be the centre of interest for Simon and his Master. They were there at the harvest home festival. They went again in the winter to the Feast of the Dedication. The Prophet of Nazareth visited the Temple daily. He showed His power and wisdom in every word and in many kindly acts. He rebuked the money-changers, withstood the Sadducees and Herodians, and confounded the Pharisees and Scribes. He entered the capital of David in triumph, as foretold of the Christ, but in all these things there was the undertone of a great oncoming sorrow.

Passover was taken earlier than usual, for He said: “I must take the Passover with my disciples before I suffer.” So they gathered on Thursday night in a room belonging to a friend. The Master girded Himself with a towel, and washed their feet by way of

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preparation. Again Simon protested, again he was overborne, and the supper proceeded.

After supper Jesus said:

“Ye all shall be offended because of me this night.”

Simon responded: “Though all should be offended yet will not I.”

Jesus answered: “Before the cock-crowing thou shalt deny that thou knowest me.”

This offended Peter once more, but the power of the Master’s wonderful presence and the music of His tones soothed and mollified the proud apostle, for awe and solemn grace were in that heavenly voice, and a deep mystery of meaning was in His words.

After a tender and simple memorial, and a solemn prayer, they sang a hymn, and went out of the city to the Mount of Olives, and there, on the mountain slope, in the darkness of the garden, beneath the whispering olives and the quiet stars, Jesus knelt alone and prayed. While He endured the foreshadowed agony of the cross even unto sweat of blood, the disciples, wearied with many watches, fell asleep.

When the Master returned, refreshed and inspired, He said:

“Only one hour, and ye slept! Arise. Let us go. The betrayer is at hand.”

It was even so. Simon’s quick ear caught the echoing sounds of voices, footsteps and the clanking of swords and other weapons.

The Shadow of Death

The gleam of lights was seen and soon the servants of the Sanhedrin emerged from the darkness, followed by the rabble, all led on by—the Apostle Judas! The traitor then stepped up to Jesus, and kissed Him.

From some source, unknown to us, and probably also unknown to Jesus, Simon, impressed by the many intimations of danger to the person of his Master, had procured a sword, and now held it ready for use. Awed by the kingly bearing of the Prophet, the column at first fell back hesitant. When they rallied and came on, Simon struck the nearest man with a sword, severely wounding him. The gleam of the torch fell on Simon's face even as his sword fell. At the same moment, a woman, unobserved, looked keenly where the torch's light fell. She was a kinswoman of the stricken man.

And now, once more—alas, how many times was this?—Jesus rebuked Simon. "Put up thy sword." He asked the forbearance of the mob on behalf of the apostle, and was arrested before further words were possible.

The throng now returned along the path through the valley, up the temple hill to where the gleaming lights had so recently flung their lurid glare into the faces that drifted and surged through the narrow streets on that evening before the great feast.

What more was there to do? He, whom

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now likely to die upon the cross. What was the use of trying to follow a self-effacing King? Simon fell far behind. Jesus seemed such an impossible person to him. Painful, sickening despair mingled in his soul with bitter memories and rebellious feelings, among which sorrow, though it had a real place, was now, amid other more vivid emotions, scarcely recognizable.

Simon had loved and obeyed Jesus as far as he could, but he had never understood Him. Now, it seemed that the final word of Jesus to His friend was to be—a condemnation! Was the only one who raised a weapon in defence of Jesus to be denounced for it? Rebuke and correction seemed to have been always his portion. Was it fair? Thus the bitter current of resentment made an ever-deepening channel in his soul, and anger filled his spirit.

The kindly remonstrances of the Master had been exaggerated into rebuke, and rebuke into denunciation, till at last Simon almost wished to regard himself as disowned, that he might make the sum of his injuries more complete. Such are the dangers of a self-centred life.

In the outer court of the High Priest's house stood Simon, brooding over his wrongs, while the fire crackled on the hearth, and the people of the night moved restlessly in its fitful glare.

The Hall of Caiaphas

A SINGLE hour is sometimes more significant than the burden of ages. It was so with Simon in the hall of Caiaphas.

Idle groups gathered around the fire and spoke in awed whispers, others with ribald jests provoked unseemly laughter. Simon kept his moody self aloof. Cut off from all hope of helpfulness to Jesus, he felt, though absurdly and unjustly, that even his wish to help would be spurned. Yet his hungry heart would not consent to leave the place, though his pride dictated such a course. To whom should he go? For many months he had associated all his dreams for the future with the aspirations of yonder prisoner, and now that his barque was adrift there seemed to be no other course but to let it drive whithersoever the fitful winds might blow. Resentment and self-pity brought back the old temper, and even the rude speech of the fish-market became easy to him.

Dawn's increasing light brought recognition. The maid who had seen Simon's face in the lurid glare of the torchlight knew him and charged him with being a disciple of Jesus. He denied it. When the charge was reiterated he swore angrily and with tempestuous bravado that he did not even know the man. The tragedy of the situation lay in the fact that, in his present state of mind, he was not a

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disciple. He had always failed to understand Jesus, hence the oath was lamentably true. He did not know the man.

His frightful renunciation was heard in the next room where Jesus was. When Simon came to himself it occurred to him that Jesus must have heard his words, and turning his face towards the inner room, he caught the glance of the Master's eye, which revealed a tender sympathy mingled with a deep sorrow. The soldiers had crowned Him with a wreath of thorns, and blood was seen on His forehead, but the scornful emblem seemed to increase the charm of His majesty and heighten the effect of that gaze, so full of love and yearning for the rebellious disciple.

Into Simon's soul rushed a flood of tender memories, new visions of old truths, and kindly meanings of words, till now misunderstood. All the power of that great soul that had moved thousands to high impulse, and had borne peace and joy to so many an outcast, came like a storm of emotion that broke the heart of Simon and melted him to tears. The people of the palace saw now that his sympathies were with the prisoner, but of this Simon was glad, though a few moments earlier he had resented it. Remorse had banished self-pity from his heart, replacing it with the courage of a hero.

He recalled the words: "I have prayed for thee," and had faith in the Master's prayer,

The Hall of Caiaphas

but how terrible if the last words his great Friend should ever hear from his lips should be that fearful imprecation and traitorous denial! He forgot the hope of Israel, forgot the failure of Jesus to be *his* particular ideal of the Messiah. The requirements of his creed were relinquished in the presence of a deeper and more elemental power—a great personal love. Simon felt, for the first time, that the splendors of a character such as that of Jesus were worthy of the toils and trials of a lifetime.

The soul of the apostle was already growing stronger. He had the assurance that henceforth he should be able to strengthen his brethren as the Master had commanded. He would henceforth be Peter, the man of rock, a tireless apostle, to proclaim whatever of truth was in his soul. He would, at least, tell of the beauty and grace of the Perfect Man. It was the nearest approach to a correct appreciation of the Gospel of Christ that he had ever had.

Blackness of darkness had blotted from his soul the last gleam of light, but now that his spirit was contrite there was hope that he might yet understand the message and mission of Jesus.

The Call of the Ages

SIMON had, almost unconsciously, regarded Jesus as being one who needed the direction of a man of affairs. He thought Him too idealistic in His methods. The present disaster might have been averted, he thought, had it not been for the visionary idea that force would not be needed. He was ever ready to give advice and direction, somewhat as Richelieu guided King Louis in later days, but he had no adequate knowledge of the might of the Tiberian legions, who, in case of an insurrection, would have laid Jerusalem in ashes as ruthlessly as Titus did forty years later. Simon had probably trusted in supernatural agencies that never appeared.

Two days of agony and darkness dragged on their dreary hours. Every moment of the time was full of tragedy to the soul of Simon, but at length, when the Sabbath was past, the risen Master re-established the confidence of His apostles. A mystical light of gladness and power clothed Jesus with an atmosphere of wonder, and awed the disciples into an attitude of worship. His word of peace brought comfort to their hearts. The few brief sentences He uttered now had more effect than the discourses of many months. Simon began to learn the lesson of humility, without which discipleship is impossible.

The apostles saw Jesus at rare intervals, and then only for a few moments. They began to find the time tedious, so they

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resolved to go back to their nets. But when the forward call of the ages is sounding in a soul, it cannot go back.

One night they tried their nets in Galilee. The air was quiet and the waters still. The slow hours dragged wearily, for they caught no fish. They sat patiently in the boats and watched their nets till the waning moon sank low in the west, trailing its light in a long, white stream, stretching far away to the shores of Magdala. The first faint fringes of the dawn appeared in the east, and the dark shores of the lake slowly emerged from impenetrable night. Spectral, in the grey dawn, a human figure was seen upon the shore. At first no one recognized it, but John's eyes, keen with youth and clear with love, perceived it to be that of Jesus.

When all were on shore, the Master showed them that they must leave their nets and take up the permanent work of the apostolate. To Peter He put the question: "Simon, do you love me?" and when Peter assured and reassured the Master of his unwavering attachment, Jesus commanded him to feed His flock. He was, henceforth, to fish for men.

The old disposition to manage affairs comprehensively, reappeared for a moment when Simon asked what John should do, to which Jesus gave the reply:

"What is that to thee? Follow thou me."
And Peter followed even unto death.

IN the upper room, on the sea shore, among the hills of Galilee, and on the mountain height, Jesus appeared at intervals and commissioned the apostles to extend the work He had begun till its influence of love and light should circle the world. They were to be the bearers of the Good News, the exponents of the new thought of God, the wings and voice of the message of Jesus in every land.

Peter saw the Master many times during this period and, with his fellow-apostles, heard the command of Jesus. These fugitive interviews were brief, but the theme of every discourse was the work which He now intrusted to His disciples, for though the apostles were to give their time exclusively to the extension of the cause, the other disciples were also to give their energies, as far as possible, to the same task.

They were promised that before the world-evangel began they should receive such a flood of power as would make the work a delight and a passion. To this end they were to await, at an appointed place in the city, the fulfilment of the promise which Jesus had given.

After forty days, Peter and other disciples stood with Jesus on the Mount of Olives and heard the last words of the Master before He finally disappeared from their mortal sight. It is significant that Bethany was chosen as the scene of this last interview. We may be

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sure that Lazarus was there, and Martha, and Mary, and many a soul into whose life Jesus had poured love and truth and healing.

It was a June day, as we name months. Birds were twittering in the olives, the mountain was resonant with song, and the air fragrant with the odors of flowers blooming in the fertile valleys of Judah.

In this last meeting, Jesus was as tender as a lover, yet as authoritative as a king. His words were commanding and uncompromising, yet they were sweet to the hearts of those who listened, for strength gives love and sympathy higher value and richer meaning.

“Go ye into all the world and tell the good news to all. To receive it is salvation, to reject it is condemnation. But remember, I am with you always.”

He spoke other words and all were full of the strength and tenderness of God. His eyes beamed with the light and joy of a richer life, His tones, though penetrating in their power, were memorably low and sweet. Many eyes were dimmed with tears while He spoke His farewell, and sobs broke from more than one loving disciple.

He ceased, and the veil which had concealed the soul of the Great Teacher began to lose its definition. It became cloudy—wavered—floated—soared, then trembled into light.

Peter stood gazing wistfully into the space where Jesus had vanished. When there was

no hope of further sight of the Master he turned his face towards the city, gleaming with the glory of its gilded temple. As he passed down the mountain side to Kedron, and entered the city of David, a great courage was in his soul, for the image and voice and words of the Son of Man were ineradicably homed in his heart.

WHEN a soul has become a medium of the divine life it has found its right vocation. At Pentecost, Peter became an instrument of the Spirit, and thus showed himself truly great. He ceased to consider self, ceased to count the cost of doing right. By making all his powers instruments of the Spirit he became the most effective preacher of his times.

The fact that Jesus was no longer visibly present threw Peter into greater prominence, and laid on him new responsibilities. He was equal to them, only because he forgot self-interest in his zeal for the great work which he had been commissioned to do.

What we know of Simon before the passing of Jesus we have learned at close range by a study of particulars. Such knowledge is minute and accurate but, as it is personal, it is no help to the understanding of the real Peter, for he is now changed. His work is different. Hitherto he has been self-conscious, now he is God-conscious. Henceforth we can know him only by the study of his inspirations, by the sources of his ideals. Commonplace and self-conscious persons are known by the microscopic method, but great souls are never understood by living in the same house with them. Inspired and inspiring souls are understood only by feeling the drift and direction of their life-currents as they flow to and from

Three Comrades of Jesus

the great ocean of Spirit. Inventories of activities, including unpleasant episodes and personal gossip, are not essential biography.

Pentecost! We think of it in the singular. The fires of God have made the world forget that there was a feast of Pentecost every year. The phenomena seen on that memorable day were volcanic, inasmuch as their causes were unseen. They were for this reason incalculable. To those who have known similar phenomena—tongues both of speech and fire—it requires no strain of credence to accept the story.

Charged with dissipation, the disciples seemed to need a defender. It was like Simon to defend, but it was Peter who did the preaching. There could be no doubt of the exact meaning of his words. He forgot self, forgot the power of the Sanhedrin, forgot the wealth of the Sadducees, forgot his personal interest. He was charged with the delivery of a great message, and that message he never forgot. His words were like a flame.

How different was Peter since his Christing! He was no longer the halting Simon, blundering, stumbling, staggering, falling. He was now the sure-footed, clear-sighted, flame-hearted, Christ-conquered Peter, and that day three thousand persons owned his Christ.

Such was the effect, in those days, of the anointing, the Christing, of a soul. The effects are similar to-day.

FIERCE fires soon raged around the cross. Nevertheless, the band of the Twelve was not broken for fourteen years after the resurrection. John became a constant companion of Peter. They walked and talked and toiled together. John knew Peter's weaknesses. He also knew his strength, and the genuineness of his heart. John's serenity gave poise to the impetuosity of Peter's energy, and steadied his rugged spirit.

In the midst of those days of fear and darkness one came to visit Peter in Jerusalem. It was that fierce zealot, Saul of Tarsus. A great change had come over him. He, too, had heard the call of the Christ, and received the new life. Though still intense and purposeful, his sternness had softened, for love had banished vengeance from those clear, youthful eyes. Already serenity had taken the place of severity in that strong, deeply chiselled countenance.

For two weeks Saul was guest with Peter, who told him the wonderful facts about Jesus. We shall never know whether it did Paul more good to hear the story, or Peter more to tell it. These two unparalleled apostles met, were friends, and parted, but few have ever realized all that the visit meant, and how much the two owed to each other.

The new life was to Peter a perpetual call to work, a clear voice which held him, with

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his associates, firm in the midst of the fire. It was the same voice and the same vision which drove the paganism out of Paganism and kept its classical and Christian elements for the illustrative uses of the ages.

James the greater was slain, and James the younger was soon recognized as the chief apostle in Jerusalem. About this time Peter began his work in the great Syrian capital, Antioch. The remainder of his life consisted of thirty years of toil, storm and persecution. We know little of its details. He was so forceful that he was soon recognized as the head of the early Church in the West, and has had the honor and love of the whole Church in all the ages.

A tradition, too generally accepted to be ignored, connects Peter with the church in Rome. There is little doubt that here, where religion, literature, architecture and art have vied with each other to give immortality to the great fisher-apostle, on the banks of the Tiber, at the heart of that empire he had so often been impatient to subdue, Peter's career ended. Far from the glorious temple of his fathers; far from the towers of Capernaum and the home of his childhood on the shores of Lake Galilee; far from all the dear old haunts where long ago he had spent so many delightful hours with Jesus, where he had been so often rebuked and forgiven; far from all that was dear to his memory and tender

to his heart, Peter, the man of truth and rock-built valor, died. On a Roman cross, like his Master, but with head downwards, he passed through the blood-linteled gate into the joy eternal, the perfect realization of the Christ, with Whom he had walked and talked in the dear old days in Galilee.

JAMES

THE distinctive quality of James was his superlative common sense. He had that well-balanced judgment which makes its possessor a tower of strength to those who enjoy his friendship or receive his counsel.

Without conspicuous qualities of startling force or attractiveness, and constantly overshadowed by his friend Simon and his brother John, James, nevertheless, attained a chief place in the counsels of the early Church, and was regarded as a man of earnestness and ability, a worthy and energetic leader of the Christian cause.

James shared, with his partners, all the influences of the sea. Often, when Galilee foamed along its white coastlines, he felt the solemn pathos of its monotonous moaning. The sweep and energy of the waters, the depth and silence of the blue heavens all helped to make him patient, resourceful and strong. He was built on nature's plan, he knew the forces of the sea and braved their wild fury.

Besides the strength derived from his conflict with nature, James acquired an intimate acquaintance with the human. He lived in a large city. Capernaum was the great emporium of the north. The caravans of Syria and the West passed it on their way to Egypt. The merchants of Damascus dealt

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here, and, indeed, the Galilean city was probably a busier trade centre than the Syrian capital.

James was a business man. His firm consisted of five active partners, and hired an unknown number of employees. Someone had to be much in the market, and who was better fitted to attend to the commercial interests of the firm than the astute and careful man whose very presence inspired confidence and strength?

With ever-widening experience James increased in ability, a joint product of the city and the sea.

The First Christian Committee

WHEN the young Galilean Rabbi left His bench and tools in the workshop at Nazareth, the fish-merchant received, along with his brother John, the call to the school of Jesus and, a few months later, to the more responsible apostolate.

James was, at first, unable to receive the more spiritual view of the kingdom. This failure was common to all the apostles, and was remarkably persistent, for, after Jesus' death, a belief that He would return in person in a few months or, at most, in a few years, to guide and rule, still colored all the teachings and writings of the early Church. We need not wonder. Even to-day these scriptures are received in the letter. The sidelights of history are rejected. The interpretation which thought and culture and sweet reasonableness bring to these questions is not accepted by many. Few see even yet that the only true kingliness is that of the soul, that the supremacy of the true heart is the only real kingdom of Christ, that the empire of Love, Wisdom and Service is the only worthy imperial idea.

Because of John's clearer vision, his more intense nature and his closer association with Jesus, the world has given him a higher place in its regard than that accorded to James. But may not John's reputation for deeper intuition be due, in some measure, to the fact

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that he lived fifty years after James was dead, and wrote those books to which we are indebted, almost entirely, for our exceptionally high estimate of their author? We should add, however, that it is no discredit to John that he took liberal opportunity to give us, unobtrusively, many incidents from his own life, of which we should not otherwise have known. Who can say how it would have been, however, had James written the books and not John?

One of the earliest disciples, James was also one of the chief apostles. Inferior to Simon in initiative, and to John in vision, James was, in judgment, superior to both. He was no figure-head in that notable group of three who so constantly surrounded Jesus, and saw His transfiguration and His agony.

When the evangelist, in these days, calls to his side the most devoted of his people, forming a spiritual battery, an atmosphere of strength, an aura of divine influence, he is following the example of Jesus, who, when He wished to strengthen faith and conquer unbelief, took with Him Peter, James and John. The elements of any force are wasted unless they be accumulated into a centre of power. This was the earliest example, as it is the highest sanction, of the Christian committee of modern times. The proximity of faithful and loyal persons is a stronghold to any hero.

UNFORTUNATELY, there is not recorded of James, prior to the crucifixion of Jesus, a single detail that can be considered unique. He shared John's immeasurable ambition, and had also his lightning temper, which may have been the reason that both were named "the sons of thunder."

From the day when James left his nets on the shore of Galilee's sea till that night of the betrayal, when the iron hand of Rome separated the Master from him, the apostle remained faithful to the call and courage of the Christ. Though he looked for a position of power in the kingdom, he, nevertheless, cherished motives far worthier. He loved Jesus, and that love was firm enough to hold him, under all ordinary circumstances, faithful to the cause.

We do not forget that James fled from the menace of the Sanhedrin and forsook the Master in His most critical hour. Nor do we seek to palliate the crime, the cowardice or the treachery of the act. The truth is sometimes frightful. James turned away, leaving his best Friend to the inhuman cruelties of His torturers. The act was base and cowardly.

We can understand the defection of the apostle only when we possess that higher consciousness which knows what is in man. How otherwise can we know the powers and passions that sway another's heart? How

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sound the deeps of another's life? With the stupor of sleep still heavy upon him, the weariness of long hours, deep attention and constant watching, the sudden surprise and alarm caused by the intruding mob, the reproof of Simon, the conviction that the dream of Israel's restoration by this man was vain, the fading of all his hope into darkness, what was more natural or more human than to flee, and how could such a succession of disasters have ended save in utter despair? It was an early example of that awfullest of human tragedies, "a good man gone wrong," but Jesus did not hold it against him, then why should we?

ON came the storm, the darkness, the tragedy. One awful night Jesus told them all that He had overcome the world, but before the next sunset His lifeless body was hanging dead upon a malefactor's cross. All the bright hopes of years were buried with that pallid form in the Arimathean's tomb. In the soul of James was enacted that tragedy which is repeated whenever an optimism based on a material foundation goes crashing down before the forces of a materialism longer established. The soul needs the supreme vision, else in such a case it will be almost overwhelmed with despair. Without a divine faith in those things which cannot be shaken, James could not see, through that cloud of despair, the dawn of that eternal morning, whose fuller day has not yet reached its high noon. Even now, few conceive of the glory that is to be in the day of the consummation. Few have ever seen the splendid vision of the perfect Kingdom of the Christ.

The first day of the week brought to James the initial gleams of that fair vision. He saw the Lord that day as he had never seen Him before. It was "life struck sharp on death" after a new fashion.

Few can imagine the rapture of a reunion after a supposed life-long separation has dealt its stunning blow. The message that

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Jesus was alive brought to the soul of James a thrill of wonder, gladness and inspiration. He came, at the startling news, straightway out of the abyss. To see the Christ was only a matter of moments, but he never after lost for one moment all the deep splendors of that experience. So it is with every soul that once greatly desires. It will not, cannot, long fail of achievement, and that which the soul once rises into, it can never wholly lose.

Had the dead Cæsar appeared to Brutus and committed to him the establishment on a firm basis of the foundations of imperial Rome, it would have been a notable event, but Jesus appeared to James, no one else being present, and committed to His apostle a glorious service of humanity in comparison with which the first place in an earthly political regime was to be cast aside as a despicable bauble. Peter and Paul seem to have been the only other apostles who enjoyed a similar interview. It was a clear evidence of the spiritual vision and noble zeal of all three.

James had been communing with Jesus in his heart, desiring, with a great longing, to see that loved face again when the glorious spirit took shape before his eyes, and lo, the Christ! How the mystic beauty and radiant presence of Jesus awed the penitent apostle! His heart bounded with unutterable love. With humble penitence and bitter shame, James was about to deplore his cowardly flight

The Great Commission

from the garden, and to beg the Master to believe that he would never more, if he were trusted, betray so great a Friend; but love and joy and sorrow were so mingled in his appealing eyes that Jesus tenderly waived the matter with expressions of personal regard, and passed on to the consideration of the great cause for which He had lived and died, and for which James also was soon to die. Then that magnanimous spirit committed to James those responsibilities whose burden of toil and promise almost staggered the great apostle, yet filled his deeply-moved soul with humility and joy.

AFTER Pentecost James became at once conspicuously zealous as a prominent leader in the early Church. Persecutions could not drive him from his place. Faithful and firm, his devotion to the Kingdom of Christ was not abated with the passing years.

Mutterings of storm were heard from time to time. Scarcely had the events of Pentecost transpired before the Sanhedrin sought to suppress the teaching of the apostles. The death of the leader had not quenched, as they had hoped it would, the zeal of His followers. Threats were unavailing. There arose one at this time among the Pharisees, whose very name became a terror. Saul, the Tarsan, was so fierce in his opposition to the Christian cause that all his words were fire and his acts slaughter. The good deacon Stephen was put to death, and many were thrown into prison. The lives of the whole Christian community were threatened.

With Saul the storm passed out of Jerusalem like a pestilence into the desert. Rumors came that he had been smitten with blindness, had been changed, that he had even been pursued as a follower of the Christ that he might be put to death. It was reported that he had been let down by his friends through a high window in the wall of Damascus, and had escaped by flight into the desert, where he had changed his name and been lost sight of.

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So the Church had rest, and three years were added to the life of the cause. One day a messenger came hurriedly to James as he sat in his house in Jerusalem, and bade him come at once to the home of Peter. The matter was urgent. This was all the messenger knew. James hastened immediately to Peter's house, and there, much to his astonishment, met the great Cilician, the Pharisee of Tarsus, the same Saul, now called by another name, who had once made such havoc of the Church, the former dreaded persecutor of the saints. He was no longer Saul but Paulus, the little one, a humble disciple of Christ, but one before whose burning zeal and utter self-sacrifice the pagan gods trembled and fell down.

The three talked long and earnestly concerning Jesus and the kingdom. Day after day James came to Peter's home, for he felt that wondrous power of a magnetic soul which, in after years, attracted so many thousands throughout Europe and Asia to the standard of the Christ, uplifted in the hands of this amazing personality.

James increased in influence among the saints in Jerusalem, and was soon regarded as the most eminent apostle of the Christian Church. His business tact and poise, together with his great spiritual energy made him at once the chief pillar in Jerusalem.

ONE morning in the year A.D. 44, as we now count the years, like a bolt out of the blue, news came to the Christians in Jerusalem that James was dead. Herod Agrippa had slain him with the sword.

The ecclesia gathered in consternation and sorrow, and talked of the great virtues and conspicuous services, the deep piety and the noble life of their dead leader. It seemed strange that, under such tragic circumstances, the sun should still shine on the villas of Olivet as if oblivious to their grief. With prayer and solemn discourse all were strengthened and exhorted to be firm in the faith and testimony of Jesus.

Herod cared little for the life of an apostle, and finding that his murderous act pleased the priests, he took Peter also a prisoner, intending, in all probability, to slay him too. The disciples saw, in the events which followed, a divine interposition of a most miraculous character. Peter was released from prison, his life was spared, and Herod in a most loathsome manner lost his life that year. The precise nature of these events is little understood, but the central facts are unquestionable.

How great a gap in the group of the fisher-apostles the death of James made is difficult to realize. The shock to the disciples must have been intense, not only because he was their chieftain, but also because of the

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imminent danger to Peter and others. But Love cannot be quenched with blood. Great causes thrive on persecutions. The star of the kingdom still shone through the night of tears, and the flight of ages has not dimmed its glorious light.

James' martyrdom was a tribute to his eminence, and a testimony to his zeal and faithfulness. He stood, a hero, in places of exposure. He was conspicuous in service, consequently, he was the first apostle to die a martyr to the cross.

Spiritual freedom is always bought with sacrifice. James was one of those heroes who have purchased our human liberties. He could die, but would not be untrue to humanity and to God.

We are too ready to pity the martyrs. Immortality is a poor recompense for the loss of a life, but to die for a worthy cause is the greatest service, next to living for it. The early Christians, in many cases, coveted the honor of giving faithful service, even to the extent of life-sacrifice, for the love of Christ.

The death of James was a refining furnace that tested the pure gold of the Church as nothing less than fire could do.

In life James was sometimes overshadowed by the outstanding genius of Peter and John, but in his death he was lifted up, and became in life and death a lode-star to draw men to Christ.

JOHN

WE have thought of John erroneously as a quietist, philosopher, a religious recluse, with gentle spirit, soft hands, pale face and tender heart. He who wanted to call down fire on his foes, and desired to be prime minister or other high officer in the Kingdom of Christ, who designated the canting hypocrite a shameless liar, and, from his youth, had lived on the wave, making the wind a servant to drive his ship up and down the sea, was neither effeminate nor a mere pietist.

John was a sturdy, strong and resourceful man. His occupation had hardened his hands, and the sun and wind had bronzed his face. He was a comrade of the sail and the sea, a companion of the night and the storm. The darkness and the sunshine, the tempest and the calm, had drifted into his soul. Like the sea, he was sometimes serene, and at others fierce with tempestuous emotions.

We know so little of the details of John's life that any account of him is, like that of his companions, necessarily a sketch rather than a story. What we do know, however, is wonderfully significant. He understood Jesus better than did any other disciple. Mary of Bethany was probably the only other who understood Him nearly as well.

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The Master seemed to rest in John's companionship as in a retreat, and John, who reclined next to Jesus at meals, regarded Him with a love that was nothing short of worship.

Though probably the youngest of the Twelve, John was ever in that group of three who were constantly nearest to Jesus; indeed, of the immortal three, he was probably most deferred to by the other two, for he was always most intimately associated with the Master. When the others feared to ask Jesus who the traitor was, John did not hesitate to inquire, for he had long been known as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

The statement of the evangelists, "They all forsook him and fled," is generally interpreted too comprehensively. John and Peter are otherwise accounted for. John secured for Peter admission to the high priest's house, and they were both there with Jesus. We claim for John, and surely not unfairly, that he at this time, as always, was true to Jesus.

Most significant of all, perhaps, is the fact that John was asked by Jesus to care for His mother when He should be no longer with her.

We know from the fathers that by an edict of Domitian, John was exiled to Patmos, and that, when very old, he was again an honored saint in Ephesus.

Companion of the Sea

We must reproduce the character of John out of these materials. They seem few, but they are enough. He had a deep nature, and could love and serve with tremendous intensity. He learned to know Jesus earlier and better than did any other apostle. The soul that truly loves cannot long fail to understand.

THE fact that James and John were candidates for prominent offices in the kingdom that Jesus was expected to establish shows that neither of them understood fully the nature of that kingdom.

We must not, however, let this fact prove too much. John was not oblivious to the spiritual nature of the work of Jesus. He had conceived an immediate visible organization, with Jesus as its king, and His apostles as its ministers. Indeed, Jesus had said, "Ye also shall sit on thrones," and this probably led to misunderstanding, and to the petition of the brothers.

We know that John's heart understood the heart of Jesus. Many a night, when the white moon was shining on the waters, Jesus and His loved comrade strolled together and dreamed of the triumph of love in the lives of the people, or, rocking on the waves, they talked of the kingdom of the unselfish, the empire of the true-hearted, the government of God, till both felt the great peace and presence of the Father in their souls. Their hearts were one—one with each other, one with the Soul of All.

The light of God came permanently into John's life, and shone there till the glow of Love was at home in his heart, and the calm light of God's peace appeared in his young

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face. Love, wonder and worship found a place in his soul, and when the storm burst and swept in fury around the soul of Jesus, his dearest disciple was not confounded. His heart was alert, and, fortified with love and the Christ-consciousness, he saw with perfect vision the great future of the Christ-kingdom.

Nothing shows more clearly the confidence of the Master in His affectionate friend than the fact that Jesus committed the care of His mother to John when He himself was on the cross. Mary was henceforth a member of John's household. If we could imagine their thoughts and words and quiet inspirations, and reproduce their beautiful conversations and tender allusions to Jesus how rich we should be! Never was it truer that where two who love Him are met the Christ is present. Often while they talked of Him they felt the pulsings of His Spirit upon their consciousness and realized His mysterious presence.

We love those who love our loved ones. John and Mary were, for this reason, peculiarly fitted to find delight in communion with each other. A never-failing store of memories—incidents, phrases, illustrations, was ever at their command to make the wonderful life their daily meat. John's devotion to Jesus called out to the full the affection of Mary, and attached her devotedly to him who had enjoyed so completely the love and confidence of her Son.

In the Home of John

When the art of literature is perfected, when, at last, words can tell with fine and nice effect the deep and tender yearnings of the soul, some strong and subtle author will picture these scenes in the home of John, writing imaginary conversations whose beauty, strength and spirituality shall stand unrivalled among the literary productions of the world.

ONE by one the years passed and John's friends disappeared. His brother James fell a victim to Herod's sword. Zebedee and Salome laid down their burdens and went home. Mary reached the joy of her Son's presence. The Twelve gave their lives as martyrs of the cross, and all passed through gates of fire into the eternal land. Paul had put off his Roman chains, and Barnabas had received his crown, but John still lingered. The Jewish kingdom was no more, Rome was swept down in fire, and Jerusalem lay desolate in the dust, but the disciple whom Jesus loved lived on, homesick for heaven, eager for God's call.

Late in the century John was exiled to Patmos, a barren mount, sea-girt and bare, situated near Miletus, and not very far from Ephesus. Here dwelt the lonely exile through the quiet years, with the great, sweet memories of Jesus in his soul. The eloquent silence seemed almost bursting into music inspired by the unseen presence of the Christ.

When sunrise came like a golden dream over the Asian mountains, gilding the towers of Miletus and flinging its splendid mantle of light far over the sea, John felt it all and the feeling was heaven. When the sun in the glowing meridian poured its flood of light and heat over the ocean he still thought and dreamed, and wrote his dream and thought.

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but could never embody in words the great love that made the world of nature like the smile of God.

We almost envy John his views of the fire-painted sunsets. How their splendors must have thrilled his imagination! Perchance, he wrote the Apocalypse while an exile here, we may be sure its vivid pictures were in some degree inspired by the splendid panorama spread before him in this temple of sea and sky.

John had long ago lost the crude conception of a visible throne and kingdom. He knew how futile is the sovereignty that subjugates with the sword. The might of those love-chains that held him to Christ could not be measured. Their bond could not be broken. The joy of his union with the heart of his King was so great there seemed no reason why that joy should not spread till it should encompass the world and fill it with heaven.

Thus the years sped on like a mighty river moving placidly into the silent sea.

AT last the exile was ended. We are told that John came to the great Ephesian capital, and became a mountain of strength to the people of that Christian centre. He may have written (dictated or narrated) the Fourth Gospel while a resident of that place.

It is said that when John was very old they carried him to where he could speak to the people before he should sail beyond earth's harbor bar into God's silent sea, the infinite presence of Christ.

We can imagine what an atmosphere of expectancy pervaded the Christian community of Ephesus. What words would the great apostle give them before his passing? Doubtless many looked for a profound discourse, an authoritative dissertation, or some clearer interpretation of the Apostles' Creed.

In awed silence the congregation await the coming of the aged saint. An occasional whisper breaks the stillness of the expectant throng. At last a movement is heard, and John, unique in all the world as the only living disciple who had seen the face of Jesus, is brought in. His eyes of joy, ever young, are framed with hair of silver light. Love's smile is glowing in his glorious face. They carry him forward to the dais and turn his face to the people. Hush! He is about to speak. The solemn air grows still as eternity.

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A firm, sweet voice chisels the silence into sculptured music, and all hear with clearness the last public utterance of the great comrade of Jesus.

“ My little children, it is the last time. We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

“ God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

“ He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?

“ He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now.

“ He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light.

“ My little children, love one another.”

When that long life, so strong and perfect, was quite turned into memories and hopes, and the three bright years of companionship with Jesus seemed like a sweet picture of a far-off shore, with storms and sorrows and lonely voyaging between, one day when the light was receding beyond the western waters, John's ship sailed out into the wide sea. Those with open vision, who remained on the shore and saw the ship with its lifted sails pass into the open, could clearly descry a companion with the apostle, “And lo, his form was like the Son of Man.” Each of the noble

Love
One Another

voyagers was gazing with speechless joy into the love-illuminated eyes of his friend.

The clear-eyed watchers waited till, through their tears, they saw the stately ship pass out of sight. Then they took up the earth-robe of John and laid it in an Ephesian tomb.





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