

MYSTIC LIGHT

The Other Disciple

WE ARE FAMILIAR with the choosing of the twelve disciples by Christ, but the tale of one of those chosen who at first came not but who finally answered the call is not written on paper or parchment, is not found in the histories of the world, nor portrayed in the gospels, yet the record exists in the higher realms, and is now set before you. If it brings comfort to some of the weary, refreshes the tired, heals a wound, or strengthens the weak, then we are amply repaid for the time and labor it has taken to bring it from its obscurity.

This story came on the "Breath of the Morning," while in that wonderful valley of San Fernando, the Valley of Gardens, in camp beneath the pepper trees, as the sky in the east assumed the color of a bright red rose, shading away into the south to a light magenta, and finally shading into a lilac hue, while to the northeast arose the foothills bathed in a beautiful ethereal blue, their distinct outlines showing clear against a background of saffron, which as it changed to a lighter shade heralded the coming of the magnificent Day Star in all its glory.

Noon

In the days of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod tetrarch of Galilee, the fame of John, the son of Zacharias, the rabbi, extended from the coast to the Jordan, from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, and from the courts of Herod to Jerusalem. To him had come the multitudes saying, "Art thou the Christ?" and his reply was, "I am not He, for I baptize you with water, but He shall baptize you with fire." This sent a great many away, some in disappointment, others in ridicule.

The news of John's teachings had spread to the little town of Nazareth away in the hills of Galilee, and from thence came Jesus, the son of Mary and of Joseph, the carpenter, in search of John, his kinsman, and there at the little town of Bethany to the west of the river Jordan, close to the brook Kedron, he found him baptizing many.

Among those present was one Matthias who sought Jesus and inquired of him saying, "What must one do to be saved?" and the answer was, "Leave all and follow me." Matthias replied, "My lands and wealth I would gladly leave for thee, but I have promised to take a bride, the sweetest maid in all Judea, and thou knowest the great law that one's first duty is to replenish the earth, for the seed of Abraham must be as the sands of the seashore. Therefore which command shall I follow? Surely thou wouldst not have me break my vow to Miriam and the law."

The reply, "If thou wouldst be my disciple, thou must choose between me and thy earthly love," caused the young man to prostrate himself while he still pleaded his cause: "Forgive me, Rabbi, but surely her love was given to me by God for some great purpose, and if so then how can I neglect it and follow thee, for it is the purest and sweetest thing on earth? And what are all teachings, knowledge, and wisdom compared to love? I cannot forsake her."

The tender tone, the sweet and compassionate voice in answer to this last question filled the very atmosphere around them with a mystic softness: "Go to thy earthly love, for thy flower is about to blossom, and later thou shalt know and understand the GREATER LOVE, a love that is not measured by earthly standards, for it is the gift of Him who was before all."

This is the story of one who was chosen but who came not at first, for we see him taking the road to Arimathea, leaving Christ Jesus at Bethany, alone and sad.

The country approaching Arimathea from the southeast has extensive groves of olive and fig trees, also numerous vineyards well watered by clear cool springs, and it is here that we find the home of Matthias, the “other disciple.” The marriage feast is at its height, with a large assembly of guests and a bountiful spread. Joy and happiness are everywhere, for it is a true wedding and not merely a giving in marriage. Miriam, the bride, a pure Jewish maiden, has the grace of the lily in form, the cream of the rose in color, the beauty of the blue hyacinth in her eyes, and the sweetness of the violet in her heart. The high forehead, prominent nose, clear grey eyes,

and thin sensitive lips of the bridegroom proclaim him at once to be a scholar and student of truth, a seeker of light. Truly both are well-favored of God, and as he glances at her he feels that his desire is accomplished, his end gained, yet how little he realizes that this is the last event of the old life and the forerunner of the new, the transition point, the emerging from one class into another.

Certainly Miriam is a queen of queens; his heart is full, he is satisfied with his choice, and yet what is that strange feeling? He must be alone, and so he seeks the solitude of the gardens with their fountains of silvery spray as the moon sheds the reflected rays of the sun upon them from above. Here he wrestles with this “something” that has come from out the stillness of the night to mock him in his hour of joy. What is this sense of something missing, something evasive that mars his perfect happiness, a yearning for the unknown, that which he had once but has lost? As he tries to solve this new problem that has come to him he sees Miriam watching her new lord and master. The maid has



Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

Christ Jesus with His first-called disciples, addressing a wondering Nathanael: “Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man”— John 1:51.

suddenly become a woman fighting for her own, as she intuitively knows that something greater than herself has come into his life, and so she goes to him, beseeching him to tell her that which has arisen in his heart that tends to mar the perfect happiness between them. Then he tells her of his meeting and words with the Christ.

Only those who have experienced these things, they that have suffered, can understand the rumble of the storm approaching in the heart of the young bride. The serpent of jealousy enters this Garden of Eden darting forth its tongue like lightning in its venom and fury. We can in a measure realize the conflict, but her guardian angel is with her, and we see the serpent shrinking back, overcome, as it contacts the radiant light of love in her husband’s eyes. Then her countenance becomes lighted up with the brilliancy of an answering love. The pureness of the blue shines forth from her eyes as she desires also to see this great Prophet, and this is the manner in which Miriam wins her first victory in the new life.

We see them present as man and wife in loving harmony on the Mount, listening with rapture to the beautiful truths taught by the Savior of Mankind, for He taught as one having authority. We witness with them the healing of the leper, and that of the centurion's servant, and the amazement of Miriam, when the blind see and the lame walk. Truly this must be the Messiah. But there comes a time when Miriam is tired, so they return home for rest, to the refreshing slopes where peace and plenty abound.

Night

Hardly had they arrived home when Miriam became sick with a fever, and the physicians failing to give relief, the "other disciple," his anxiety increasing, goes in search of the Divine Healer. He finds the disciples at Capernaum, but loses faith in them as he witnesses their failure to heal, and the Master is in the hills alone. What suffering, agony, and torture he undergoes at the thought of his beloved without aid. Why did the Master go? Why does He tarry? Where is God that He permits these things to be? And then what rapture and earnestness come into his face, what thankfulness, as he sees the Prophet of Nazareth approaching. Now all will be well, Miriam will be saved, so great is his faith. Wildly he rushes forward throwing himself at the Master's feet pleading as one on the brink of collapse: "O Lord, forgive my sin, save Miriam, but spare not me. I will repay, for I cannot bear to see her so."

"Arise, friend, and be strong in the Lord, for our Father which is in Heaven hath need of her, and she is now journeying to a better land. Rejoice and weep not for His ways are always best." As the Savior uttered these words what a wealth of compassion and love went with them, how well He understood this little child before Him! With the gentlest of actions He raised the stricken man to his feet.

"Your Father and my Father has another work for you to do, for that love that was formally centered on one person is now to be given to the hungry world, it is to become universal for you are to scatter it abroad, to expand it to include all people, and through it raise the fallen, strengthen the weak, comfort the sorrowful, and heal the sick. It is the

only power or force that can do these things. Therefore, O son, thank the Father for giving you this special privilege, and go thy way rejoicing."

Again we see the "other disciple" journeying from Arimathea to the southeast. He has buried his beloved, and from out of his sorrow and grief, his loneliness and emptiness, is born a new love. From the womb of trouble has been born the Child of Light, for he has dedicated himself to the "service of others."

Next we see him crossing the desert until he arrives at the fortress of Macharus, where the Baptist is a prisoner of Herod. After an interview with his old Teacher we see him in the rich gardens and secret orchards of the tetrarch of Galilee, on the Mountain of the Little Paradise, the pleasure home of Herod, where the nobles of Rome consort with the High Priests and their sons in secret at night. Now he stands before Herod, the King of the Jews, who reclines on his ivory couch. The effects of the latter's sins are plainly stamped upon him, for his hair and beard are dyed, his flesh is loathsome, and in direct contrast to their surroundings is a wreath of roses upon his head, wilted and dying, for the pure cannot exist with the vile. But the eyes are still fiery and he still has the ways of the fox. Before this gruesome spectacle the "other disciple" pleads his cause.

"O great king and ruler of Galilee, all my lands and possessions will I give thee that lay close to Arimathea, if thou in return will grant the freedom of him who is called the Baptist, who desires no kingship in thy country, hath done no wrong worthy of imprisonment, and only desires to teach the people to live better lives." Herod was about to answer when Herodias whispered to him, and then with a sickly smile he bade the "other disciple" come again on the morrow and he would hear him further on this matter, but now he had other business.

All that night Herodias lay awake planning that the Baptist should not escape, and so on the morrow, when Herod granted her daughter Salome any request she might make, the head of John was demanded, and Herod complied with the request. The disciple had failed to save his Teacher.

Next we see the "other disciple" seeking the hospitality of the desert dwellers, for it took him

back to the home of her whom he had loved; but now no sorrow or pain is there, only the recollection of that pure earthly love.

At the sheepfold with the shepherds we see him partaking of their humble fare and listening to their tales of the atrocities practiced by the soldiers of Herod.

We see him travelling along the valley of the Jordan, shut in by the hills of Judea and Galilee and the mountains of Moab and Gilead. As he views the stream, with the Jordan reeds

along its banks standing twelve to fifteen feet in height waving their immense plumes, which lie flat under gusts of wind only to arise in their beauty after the wind has passed, we can understand how he loves this region, for it was the chosen home of his first Teacher,

he whom he had failed to save. Here it was he had learned the first great truths of life. What memories of joy mingled with sadness come to him!

Now he comes to the “amha-arets,” the people of the land, the farmers and peasants, and later we see him among the olive plantations, for the olive is the chief product of Palestine; it is the butter and meat of the humble folk. The olive trees give the beauty to the land with their green foliage, which has a silvery sheen on the under side and tiny silver blossoms covering the entire tree.

Finally he reaches the Sea of Galilee. One must go there to really appreciate the beauty of this sea of Tiberias, surrounded with mountains and subject to sudden fierce storms. As he arrives at its north end where the Jordan with its cool fresh waters enters it, he finds the Son of Man, and

becomes an eye witness of His doings.

Dawn

He is present at the feeding of the five thousand and the healing of the lunatic. He it is who provides the colt, the foal of an ass, for the transportation of the Master. With what joy and understanding he listens to the parable of the “Wedding Garment.” We see him busy furnishing the upper chamber for the Passover, and later on he is with those at the Mount of Olives.

He is shoulder to shoulder with Nicodemus in their fight for Jesus of Nazareth before the Sanhedrin, Chief Priests, and Elders, and later enlists the help of Pilot’s wife, in behalf of his Lord, but all to no avail, for the Law must be fulfilled.



Opaque watercolor over graphite on gray wove paper, 1895. J. James Tissot, 1836-1902. Brooklyn Museum

Jesus Discourses with His Disciples

After the crucifixion he cares for the body of Jesus with Joseph of Arimathea, his kinsman, as he did for the body of John, and is present with Cleopas when Christ appears to them on the road to Emmaus.

We find him numbered with the few that remained faithful, and so, when the choosing of the apostle to take the place of Judas occurred, then for the first time do we hear of him. He it was who was again chosen by the Lord, for the lots they cast fell on him, and this time the chosen accepted the call. The earthly love which had been his stumbling block had changed into a universal love, and THE CALL WAS ANSWERED. The disciple had found the way home to his Father. □

—R. T. Oakley