

The Transmutation

EASTER IS THE TIME when the glorification of transmutation is at its sublimest. It is the season when Nature proves conclusively that “there is no death,” for life is prevalent everywhere; as the light appears to come forth from the darkness, so life emerges from the apparent dead. That which is within is transmuted, proceeding upward and outward to express itself. The ascension of the life force manifests as creation: thus we see myriads of new forms coming into existence at the season of spring.

Christ arises to the Father at Easter, the time of resurrection or transmutation, and we, too, may come in touch with the Father through the Son by changing our vibrations, transmuting our life force, responding to the Divine call, placing ourselves in harmony with that wonderful tone. Thus we will experience in a small measure the power of love that irresistibly draws the child to the Father, the part to the whole, the spark to the flame.

We have heard much of the transformation of the apostles from weaklings to spiritual warriors, from slaves of fear to masters of courage, but of the story of the woman who accomplished this great charge alone through her great love, untiring zeal, and magnificent courage, little has been written or appears in the histories of the world.

As the coming age will be the age of woman, this story of one who arose from the depths of degradation to the spiritual heights may perhaps help some in their hours of darkness, and others who would climb higher, even as the flower lifts itself to the light. The present is the outcome of the past, therefore greater things can be done now than were previously accomplished. To achieve and maintain correct balance of head and heart—flooding the men-

tality with the radiance of the heart’s love, the great transmuter—becomes our goal.

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In the days of the distant past, when the empire of Parthia alone remained in its splendor, unconquered by the armies of Caesar, stretching from the valley of the Indus to the Euphrates, from Iberia in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south, when Vonones was king of that wonderful nation of horsemen who rode to battle without saddles, clad in their scaled armor, striking terror into the hearts of the soldiers of Rome, there came to the new city of Hatra, Balthazar, the Magian.

This new city of Hatra which lay in the upper part of the land between Two Rivers, was built in the form of a circle whose diameter extended over three miles, and had four entrance gates and two detached forts on hills, commanding the approach to the city from the east and north. It was the beginning of a large, fortified city that was to be, and which later played a prominent part when the wars with Rome were renewed. Here the palace of the Parthian emperor was being constructed, and there not far away stood the Temple of the Sun, famous and celebrated for the value of its accumulated offerings.

It was with some difficulty that Balthazar found the home of his old friend, Pacorus, in the new city, after his long and tiresome journey. However, the warmth and hospitality with which he was received swept away his fatigue. After he had washed and refreshed himself, and partaken of the evening meal, he turned to Pacorus, who was eagerly waiting to hear the result of his travels in the west.

The tale of his journey to Bethlehem of Judea, the finding of the Prince of the World, the Deliverer of Mankind, was told in a soft voice with reverence and love, as the evening twilight stole gently across

this Land of Magic. To Pacorus, listening, came a newborn love of sweetness and admiration as he pictured the finding of the Babe whose coming the stars had so clearly foretold.

Pacorus, the stately scholar, was clad in a long, flowing robe of silk, the dress of the Medes, under which was his white tunic of pure linen. Around his neck was a wonderfully designed collar of gold over which fell his black hair in straight locks. It was the dress of a Parthian noble, yet, the winged circle of gold on his breast proclaimed him a follower of Zoroaster, a worshipper of the God of Purity and Light.

“I am glad thy search hath given thee such a rich reward,” said he, “and am pleased to share thy happiness, but sorrow hath fallen upon my house since last we were together. My wife, Vasda, died while giving birth to a child whom you shall now see—a strange and unusual child!”

He led the way to a room that overlooked the Temple of the Sun, a room having walls decorated with silk of different hues of yellow, while tiles of amber composed the ceiling which was studded with stones of an orange hue. There asleep upon a little bed lay the babe of Pacorus.

A tone of sadness crept into his voice as he continued: “My little girl will be a child of sorrow and suffering, for when she was born, the sign of the Serpent was rising, and at the highest point of the heavens I saw the new red star draw to a conjunction with our blue one in the sign of the Lion. With no mother to love and care for her, she is indeed unfortunate, and oftentimes into the babe’s eyes seems to come the look of the Evil One, Ahriman. Therefore my heart is heavy.”

“Stay, my friend,” said Balthazar. “Thou knowest how hard it is for us to read the thoughts of the Eternal, yet I tell thee that some day thy child shall be foremost among women. She will break this spell and become a child of the King. She shall indeed have the wisdom of the Serpent, but not before she has felt its sting.”

As if in gratitude for this prophecy, the little one opened her dark eyes and stretched her arms out to him. With great tenderness the Wise Man took her up, and she who seemed to understand, clasped her chubby arms around his neck and hid her face upon his shoulder. This token of love warmed the heart of

the traveler, for had he not seen the same sight at Bethlehem with mother and Child? The thought of what this motherless babe would be denied caused a look of pain to pass over his face. Truly, she must be a child of sorrow!

Time passed and the love between the Wise Man and the child grew. Often she would hear the story of the Babe of Bethlehem and his mother, never tiring of asking questions. She demanded that she, too, be called Mary.

Then came the time when Balthazar took his departure for Borsippa in Babylonia, and with it came the beginning of the little maid’s knowledge of sorrow. She had only her father left now, but he continued to instruct her in the wisdom of the Magi, which was the greatest teaching of the ancient world.

This great religious science was composed of three branches: divination, incantation and astrology. The first class of Wise Men who practiced divination were called soothsayers; those who belonged to the second class were the magicians or sorcerers; while the third class was represented by the astrologers. Thus as this child grew up she became well versed in the arts of magic, but ever with her at certain times was the evil influence that directed her to use magic in the wrong way. The knowledge of the secrets of Nature, the healing power of fire, air, earth, and water, the beneficial strength of herbs, possessed by Pacorus seemed of no avail against the unknown force that at times took possession of his child and caused him much grief.

As the years passed, Vonones, the Emperor, displeased his nobles by trying to introduce into Parthia the western civilization, which he had learned at the court of Rome, and so he was dethroned by Artabanus and Arsacid. In fleeing to Armenia, he attempted to carry off part of the treasure from the Temple of the Sun at Hatra. It was then that Pacorus lost his life, but saved the treasure of the Temple. Now his child, grown to a woman, was left all alone. The additional pain and suffering hardened her heart, but her great pride hid this from her neighbors. Always, those she loved were taken from her! Where now was the God of Love and Purity? Of what use was this magic she had learned, if she must suffer all her life? Then she remembered

the Prince of Salvation, the Babe of Bethlehem. Could He save her? She would see this King of the Jews! Selling all her possessions, she started for that country to which Balthazar had traveled years before.

She journeyed with the merchants that traveled from Parthia to Rome, laden with silks and carpets, spices of bedillium, and the sweet-scented bulrush, but when they reached Damascus she was forced to rest a while in those beautiful gardens and orchards amid the thickets of myrrh and roses, and the cool, refreshing waters that made it the Garden of the Wilderness. Then as she set forth again, she saw the snowy ridges of Hermon in the distance, and passing the Blue Waters of Merom, crossed the Jordan and came to the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida and Capernaum had no interest for her, but the plain of Gennesaret with its fruitfulness and beauty, its vineyards and orchards, caused her to linger for a while. Then at the southern extremity of this plain she came to the little village of Magdala.

She knew not why, but something compelled her to stay, to forget her mission, to build her home here. She appeared to yield to the grip of the dark spirit that brooded over the region. To her, it seemed as if something deep and dark within responded to this external power, this spirit that ruled over the district, which forced her to abide here.

It was indeed an evil and wicked place, for, said the Jews: "How could it be otherwise with the heathenism of the north and the Samaritanism of the south?"

Under these conditions, she changed rapidly, the unseen force taking complete charge of her as she became one with it. Soon the inhabitants told of her wonderful house which became a little palace: of the coffer filled with rarest stuffs and sparkling gems, of vases of gold and silver, of the purple and silk which adorned her walls, of her numerous attendants, and how she was in league with the evil spirits, working miracles through her incantations and sorceries. The realization of her fascinating powers over all who came in contact with her added to her womanly beauty, gave her a dangerous power, indeed. No wonder the Romans looked upon her as a divine person, a favorite of the gods.

Her attendants who saw her in moments of sadness, catching a gleam of a sudden, wild flash of her tearless eyes, said she was "possessed"; some said

her eyes became those of a serpent; yet others who had seen those eyes assume a soft, mellow luster of sweetness, worshipped her. She was a person of moods. At times her voice was rich and sweet as the tones of a lute, but when passion was aroused, it became more like the scream of a panther, striking terror in the hearts of all who heard it. Thus she was alternately loved and hated.

To her came the story of the miracle worker who cast out a legion of devils into the sea. If He was able to do this, she reasoned, then He had a knowledge which surpassed hers, for she was not able to eject demons. She decided to see this stranger.

Coming to Tabor, she saw His disciples fail to cast out a demon from a young man, but immediately when He appeared, the spirit was rebuked and fled. In answer to their question as to why they failed, He replied, "If ye have faith, nothing is impossible."

"Faith in whom," asked the woman from Magdala. "Would that I had this faith, for it is a power over the Prince of Darkness himself."

"Faith in the living God," replied the Master, as he bent His piercing gaze upon her, from which she withdrew.

From the people round about she learned that this teacher was the Messiah, the King of the Jews, and the Babe of Bethlehem that Balthazar had traveled so far to see, the chosen of God, the King of Israel. Where was His court, His army, princes and nobles? No! It could not be. And she went away in sorrow and disappointment.

Yet there was no more peace in her palace, for she had contacted that which irresistibly drew her back again to Him. It was at Nain she again saw the power of this man in restoring life to the apparent dead. Then she became aware of some mystical power that gave her happiness only when she was in the presence of this Teacher; His very voice was music to her.

It was in the house of a Pharisee that, in order to be near Him, she performed the duties of a servant. Here in a long robe of white Tyrian silk, bordered with gold and embroidered with pearls, around which was fastened at the waist a flowing scarf covered with gems of various colors, while jewels adorned her ears and arms, and a wonderful necklace of sapphires rested on her breast, she placed

herself at the Master's feet. Throwing off her rich turban of white silk edged with gold, causing her luxuriant hair to fall over her shoulders and shapely neck, she took the sandals from off His feet.

Then a strange thing happened. Suddenly, like the breaking of an immense dam and the pouring forth of powerful waters upon the countryside, so came a great torrent of tears which shook her whole body. The hardness of her heart had been smitten, and the redeeming waters gushed forth in a sweeping flood. That tremendous pressure that had been increasing all her life was now released, and her dark, fascinating eyes became fountains of tears which rolled down her cheeks in sparkling splendor, bathing her Saviour's feet.

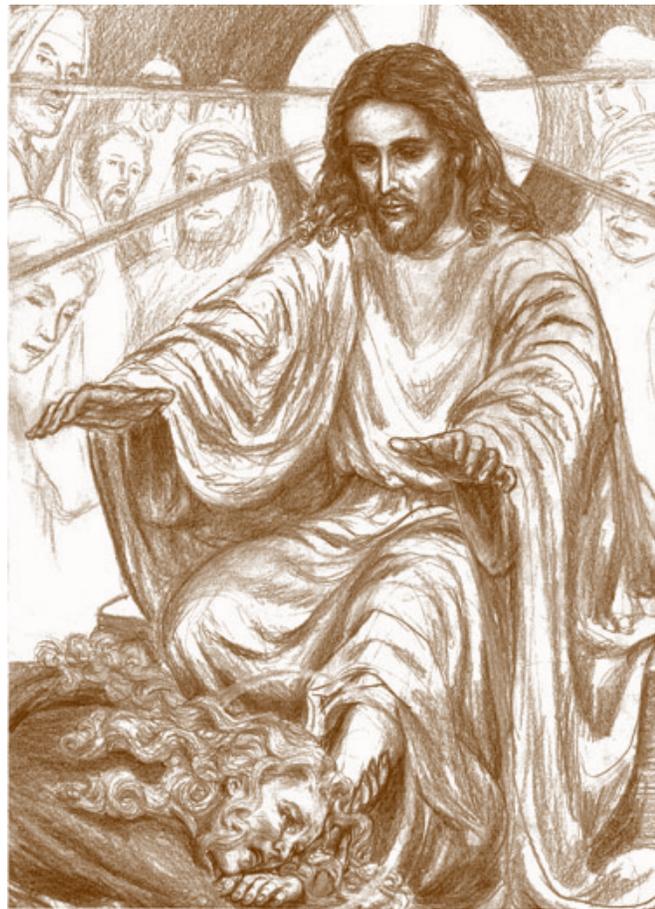
With her rich, glossy tresses she wiped his feet, kissing them in thankfulness for her freedom. Taking from her bosom a costly and highly perfumed ointment, she bathed His feet with this fluid.

The words of the Master, "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace," were more than she could understand, but, the dark spirits that had reigned in her breast were gone; a peace and calm came over her troubled soul, like the soft and soothing rays of the moon on a midsummer's night. Gone were the wild fiery flashes of her demonized eyes; in them now rested the soft and gentle glance of heavenly love. From a child of darkness she had become a child of light; the serpent had become the angel; the follower of Lucifer had become the disciple of Christ.

Mary returned to Magdala, but now how different was her life! She now understood the transmutation of her inner power when put to right use. No danger could terrify her, no trial or sacrifice could dishearten her. From that time on the true devotion, lofty bearing, and inflexible integrity which she possessed became an inspiration to others. The extent and purity of her love was so great that it is no wonder she received the marks of honor from the Lord.

Her palace was sold and her attendants invited to come with her as she followed in the steps of the Master.

Though witnessing His suffering and humiliation, though present at His trials, and scourging, and mockings, yet never for one moment did she falter in her attachment. Alone she stood when all the apostles fled in the Garden; with John she stood at



Calvary, and there again her tears washed His feet, while the blood that fell from His pierced side sprinkled her person. In the darkness and earthquake she was still by His side, standing fearless as an angel of Light to watch her crucified Lord. With Joseph and Nicodemus she laid His body to rest. Is it to be wondered at that, as a reward for her faithfulness in love, the Risen Lord appeared first to her?

Mary of Magdala was present at Pentecost, and later comforted the Virgin Mother. She accompanied the beloved disciple to Ephesus, where under Domitian persecution he was banish Patmos and she was sent to the stake.

With a firm and undaunted step, she moved through the crowd to her death and in accents soft and sweet we hear her voice: "For Thee, dear Christ!"

A woman burned at the stake was seen,
A child of love and light;
Behold! Mary the Magdalene,
A red rose turned to white.

—Reginald Oakley