

The Quiet Hour

The Tribute of Love.*

Written for Dominion Presbyterian

This is one of the most touching stories in the Gospels; it tells of a woman's tribute of love and we feel that it is fitting that, just before He reached the Cross, He who came to minister to others should be ministered to in this delicate fashion. There is a similar story told in Luke vii., but while some hold that Mary and the "woman who was a sinner" are one and the same, that view is very improbable. It is more likely that a similar thing happened twice; in the one case a token of penitence, in the other an offering of friendship. We are distinctly told that this incident happened after the raising of Lazarus, and at the beginning of Our Lord's last Pass-over week. Thus, in a manner simple, yet full of pathetic meaning, He was anointed for His burial.

This took place at Bethany, in the home where he had so often been made welcome, and where He had rested in quietness after the toil and conflict of many a busy day. The two sisters were there—and Martha served, and Mary also served, but in a different way. Her service was an act of devotion, which has been an inspiration during many centuries. To some at that time it seemed forward and fantastic, but it has lived before the world and taught its modest lesson for many centuries. Here we have an Offering of Love. The gift that Mary brought was meant to express a love that was too deep for words. Love gives value to the gift, love gives a golden glory to even a small gift; but love will not choose to give a poor thing if it had any nobler thing within reach; it brings to its Lord the costliest treasure. This being an act of love, it was spontaneous; it was not arranged for by a committee or brought in response to an external command. It sprang from the impulse of a woman's love. Hence it was individual, it was a gift that was all Mary's own, was saturated with her personal feeling, and expressed her character. It is good for us to join in "the common prayer," and take part with others in social worship; but it is good for the soul to have its own gift, its solitary service. The offering was timely. Love, by its delicate insight, discerned the right time and way to make this gift. The woman knew that the Master was lonely, and

persecuted; she felt by her sensitive sympathy the heavy cloud that was gathering over Him; she had a presentiment of the terrible storm that was soon about to burst, and she felt about for some way in which to assure Him of the adoration and confidence of, at least, one honest heart. The offering was criticised. We need not be surprised at that; it is hard for anything to escape criticism in this cold world. But we ought not to use that noble word "criticism" for such mere fault-finding as this. To criticise this woman's act of devotion is to measure its motive fairly, and to interpret aright its spiritual significance. That was not done in this case; a cool, calculating man condemned her impulsive devotion as an act of reckless extravagance. In a sense it was impulsive and extravagant, but the impulse came after long loving thought, and the extravagance turned out to be true economy. The remarks that were made upon her action were plausible, and wear an air of benevolence. They are founded upon a great principle of utility and they manifest great care for the poor, but in reality they came from a little soul and reflected a small view of life. Selfishness could not see the real beauty of an act so utterly unselfish; he who "put a penny into the urn of charity and took a shilling out" was naturally unable to appreciate such holy recklessness.

The gift was, however, nobly defended by One Who was quick to catch the real meaning of a loving deed. He Who gave Himself could understand, better than any other, the gift of love. He explained its unconscious meaning. He gave clear expression to the feeling in the woman's heart "She hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying." Wonderful word; she, like every true devoted soul, builded better than she knew. Even nobler than embalming the dead body of the Christ was the lowly effort to minister comfort to Him in the day of His distress. There are many ways of serving the Christ. He Himself has indicated the ministry to the poor and helpless as one, and one of the highest. That opportunity is ever standing before us, but this woman's quick insight discerned an opportunity which could never come again, and which justified the strange form of her service. The Master showed its peculiar merit, she had done what she could; up to the full measure of her capacity she had manifested that spirit of love which is likeliest to the Spirit of God. And so a great reward was appointed; that her deed should stand on record linked to the life of the Christ as an inspiration for those who in after

time should dare to seem fantastic in their lonely service; of those who refuse to have Christian service stereotyped in dead forms, but who vindicate in the sight of a dull, selfish world the originality of love.

For Dominion Presbyterian.

Gethsemane.

BY MARGORIE.

Gethsemane! Gethsemane!
I shudder at the thought of thee;
For good and evil there array
Their forces for the deadly fray.
And heaven and earth and hell combine
To mould us, each to their design;
E'en angels tremble as they scan
The cries and tears and groans of man.

Gethsemane! Gethsemane!
Thou place of fearful agony;
Would it be strange if reason fled
In terror from thy precincts dread?
That heart and flesh and courage fail,
Or lips grow silent, cold and pale
When called to meet divinity,
And prostrate bow submissively,
To lose ourselves, our all, our life,
Ere we may triumph in the strife.

Gethsemane! Gethsemane!
Oh! how do mortals pass through thee,
Who cannot in the path they trod
Discern the footprints of a God;
Lean on His breast of love divine,
And to His wiser will resign;
Invoke His strength, implore His power
To help them in that evil hour?

Gethsemane! Gethsemane!
Thy darkness and thy mystery
Are wisely hidden from our gaze,
Till we approach Thy unseen maze.
Thy midnight silence none have known,
Since each must enter thee alone;
The friends who come to watch and pray
Soon fall asleep or steal away.
Each soul must battle with its woes,
None but its Maker cares or knows.

Gethsemane! Gethsemane!
When first, a child, I read of Thee,
I little dreamed that I should kneel,
Thy wild, despairing anguish feel.
I thought that no one but the Lord
Ere touched Thy plaintive minor chord.
The sun was high, the heavens fair,
No breath of Thy damp, chilly air.

Gethsemane! Gethsemane!
So near Thou art to Calvary,
Where pride and self are crucified,
And every wish and prayer denied.
What wonder that the orbs of day
Veiled their fair face and looked away,
When the eternal son of God
Expired beneath earth's heavy load?
How could the Father's pity see
His well-beloved's agony?

Gethsemane! Gethsemane!
Full many a grave is dug in thee,
And hearts are marked by deep-cut scar
That tells of conflict fiercer far.
Than those writ high on history's page,
Proclaimed by prophet, bard or sage.
Life's plans and love's ambitions lie
Beneath thy leaden, sullen sky.

Gethsemane! Gethsemane!
No longer would I turn to thee,
But bless the hand so strong and true,
That led my faltering footsteps through;
For pain and darkness now are past,
The whirlwind's peace has come at last;
When from the world we take our flight,
And leave, for aye, its shadowy night.
Some purpose we shall surely see
In heaven's great plan of mystery.

The dev'l's dividends are paid in pain,
poverty and perdition.

*International S.S. Lesson for April 9th, 1890.—
—John xii., 1-11. Golden Text.—She hath done
what she could.—Mark xiv., 8.