

world. It uplifted Joel, and drew him, and drew him, till he seemed to catch a faint glimpse of the Father's face; to feel himself folded in boundless pardon, in pity so deep, and a love so unfathomed, that the lowest sinner could find a share. But while he gazed and gazed into the white face, so glorified in its marble stillness, Joseph of Arimathea stood between him and the cross, giving directions, in a low tone, for the removal of the body.

It seemed to waken Joel out of his trance; and when the blood-stained form was stretched gently on the ground, he forgot his glimpse of heavenly mysteries. He saw no longer the uplifted Christ. He saw instead, the tortured body of the man he loved; the friend for whom he would gladly have given his life.

Almost blinded by the rush of tears, he groped his way on his knees toward it. A mantle of fine white linen had been laid over the lifeless body; but one hand lay stretched out beside him with a great bloody nail-hole through the palm,—it was the hand that had healed him; the hand that had fed the hungry multitudes; the hand that had been laid in blessing on the heads of little children, waiting by the roadside! With the thought of all it had done for him, with the thought of all it had done for all the countless ones its warm, loving touch had comforted, came the remembrance of the torture it had just suffered. Joel lay down beside it with a heart-

Men came and lifted the body in its spotless covering. Joel did not look up to see who bore it away.

The lifeless hand still hung down uncovered at his side. With his eyes fixed on that, Joel followed, longing to press it to his lips with burning kisses; but he dared not so much as touch it with trembling fingers,—a sense of his unworthiness forbade.

As the silent procession went onward, Joel found himself walking beside Abigail. She had pushed her veil aside that she might better see the still form borne before them; she had stood near by through all those hours of suffering. Her wan face and swollen eyes showed how the force of her sympathy and grief had worn upon her.

Joel glanced around for Phineas. He was one of those who walked before with the motionless burden, his strong brown hands, tenderly supporting the Master's pierced feet; his face was as rigid as stone, and seemed to Joel to have grown years older since the night before.

Another swift rush of tears blinded Joel, as he looked at the set, despairing face, and then at what he carried.

O friend of Phineas! O feet that often ran to meet him on the grassy hillsides of Nazareth, that walked beside him at his daily toil, and led him to a nobler living!—thou hast climbed the mountain



"HE TOUCHED THE SIDE THE SPEAR HAD PIERCED."

of Beatitudes! Thou hast walked the wind-swept waters of the Galilee! But not of this is he thinking now. It is of thy life's unselfish pilgrimage; of the dust and travel stains of the feet he bears; of the many steps, taken never for self, always for others; of the cure and the comfort they have daily carried; of the great love that hath made their very passing by to be a benediction.

It seemed strange to Joel that, in the midst of such overpowering sorrow, trivial little things could claim his attention. Years afterwards he remembered just how the long streaks of yellow sunshine stole under the trees of the garden; he could hear the whirr of grasshoppers, jumping up in the path ahead of them; he could smell the heavy odour of lilies growing beside an old tomb.

The sorrowful little group wound its way to a part of the garden where a new tomb had been hewn out of the rock; here Joseph of Arimathea motioned them to stop. They laid the open bier gently on the ground, and Joel watched them with dry eyes, but trembling lips, as they noiselessly prepared the body for its hurried burial.

From time to time as they wound the bands of white linen, powdered with myrrh and aloes, they glanced up nervously at the sinking sun. The Sab-

bath eve was almost upon them, and the old slavish fear of the Law made them hasten. A low stifled moaning rose from the lips of the women, as the one they had followed so long was lifted up, and borne forever out of their sight, through the low doorway of the tomb.

Strong hands rolled the massive stone in place that barred the narrow opening. Then all was over; there was nothing more that could be done.

The desolate mourners sat down on the grass outside the tomb, to watch and weep and wait over a dead hope and a lost cause.

A deep silence settled over the garden as they lingered there in the gathering twilight. They grew calm after a while, and began to talk in low tones of the awful events of the day just dying.

Gradually, Joel learned all that had taken place. As he heard the story of the shame and abuse and torture that had been heaped upon the One he loved better than all the world, his face grew white with horror and indignation.

"Oh, wasn't there one to stand up for him?" he cried, with clasped hands and streaming eyes. "Wasn't there one to speak a word in his defence? O my Beloved!" he moaned. "Out of all the thousands thou didst heal, out of all the multitudes thou didst bless, not one to bear witness!"

He rocked himself to and fro on his knees, wringing his hands as if the thought brought him unspeakable anguish.

"Oh, if I had only been there!" he moaned. "If I could only have stood up beside him and told what he had done for me! O my God! My God! How can I bear it? To think he went to his death without a friend and without a follower, when I loved him so! All alone! Not one to speak for him, not one!"

Groping with tear-blinded eyes towards the tomb, the boy stretched his arms lovingly around the great stone that stopped his entrance; then suddenly realizing that he could never get any closer to the One inside, never see him again, he leaned his head hopelessly against the rock, and gave way to his feeling of utter loneliness and despair!

How long he stood there, he did not know. When he looked up again, the women had gone, and it was nearly dark. Phineas and several other men lingered in the black shadows of the trees, and Joel joined them.

Roman guards came presently. A stout cord was stretched across the stone, its ends firmly fastened, and sealed with the seal of Caesar. A watch-fire was kindled near by; then the Roman sentinels began their steady tramp! tramp! as they paced back and forth.

High overhead the stars began to set their countless watch-fires in the heavens; then the white full moon of the Passover looked down, and all night long kept its silent vigil over the forsaken tomb of the sleeping Christ.

Abigail had found shelter for the night with friends, in a tent just outside the city; but Joel and Phineas took their way back to Bethany.

Little was said as they trudged along in the moonlight. Joel thought only of one thing,—his great loss, the love of which he had been bereft. But to Phineas this death meant much more than the separation from the best of friends; it meant the death of a cause on which he had staked his all. He must go back to Galilee to be the laughing-stock of his old neighbours. He who they trusted would have saved Israel had been put to death as a felon,—crucified between two thieves! The cause was lost; he was left to face an utter failure.

When the moon went down that morning over the hills of Judea, there were many hearts that mourned the Man of Nazareth, but not a soul in all the universe believed on him as the Son of God.

Hope lay dead in the tomb of Joseph, with a great stone forever walling it in.

(To be continued.)



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