

Harbnet pulled himself together with an effort. He did not know whether he was feeling hungry or not. The music of a violin filtered into the room and he sank back into his chair.

"Who's that playing, Mary?" he asked, after a short silence. "It must be old Danny, sir," the woman answered. "The poor old man is blind, and he gets his living by playing from door to door."

"Let Danny have the lunch. When he's finished I'd like to see—I'd like to have a chat with him."

After the housekeeper had withdrawn he got up and started to grope his way about the room. Darker goggles! That meant he was going blind! Perhaps he had looked his last upon God's green earth, upon the faces of friends and acquaintances. He tried to accustom himself to the thought, but his mind refused to dwell upon it.

As he sank into a chair the housekeeper led old Danny into the room. "Sit down, Danny," the young man called out. "There's a seat just—there you are. I've got to remain here always now. I'm going blind."

"I'm sorry to hear it, Master," the old fiddler assured him. "And you a brave young man too, judging by your voice. Darkness is a great affliction, but God is good."

"I want you to tell me how you get about, Danny. How do you find your way from place to place?"

"That's easy. God never takes anything from us without giving us something else in return. Instinct guides me. I have no trouble at all. The sound of any footsteps on the road, the voices of the people I meet, the wind blowing through the trees—you'd be surprised at the number of things a dark man can fall back upon."

"And is it possible for a blind man to enjoy life?"

"Well, Master, I'm happy in my own fashion. The vagrant life appeals to the vagabond in me. You see, I have the music, and it's a source of much happiness. Often when I'm tired I sit down by the roadside and tune up the old fiddle. The blackbirds and the thrushes sing around me, and I try to beat them down. 'Tis a great match of music we have at times, the birds and myself. I've learned more from them than all the music teachers in the world know. And all the time I'm hoping, Master, hoping and praying."

"Hoping and praying for what, Danny?"

"That God may restore my sight before He calls me home."

"And you visit the blessed wells, I think you said?"

"There isn't one between here and Dublin I don't visit regularly. 'Tis a grand one entirely, that one I met you at this morning. I'll go down there this evening when all is quiet."

"And what do you do when you visit a blessed well?"

"I kneel down and say a round of my beads, sometimes two or three rounds, maybe. Then I bathe my eyes with the water and say a few more prayers."

"I'm not a Catholic, Danny. In fact, I have no religion at all. When you're ready to go down to the spring by and by I want you to call for me and teach me to pray."

"Indeed, I will, Master, with a heart and a half. And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll be on my way to the convent to play a few tunes for the Sisters."

Danny had his faith and his fiddle, but Harbnet had neither. The old man played from door to door for a living, while the other had everything that money could buy. But when Harbnet found himself alone again he felt that the fiddler was the richer and happier man of the two.

It was still early afternoon when Drummond returned from the brook.

"Has the oculist been to see you, Tom?" he inquired as he stretched himself on the settee.

"Yes, I found him waiting when I got back," Harbnet answered.

"How long does he expect it will be before you are able to go about without the goggles?"

"I've got to get darker ones, Dick. And I must not go out when the sun is shining. You know what that means."

"Yes, of course I do. He wants you to rest up a bit."

"You're wrong, old fellow. It's the end of all things. I'm going blind. When you get back to London, Dick, give my regards to my friends, and ask them not to write. Tell them, if they should ask, that I'm not dead but buried alive. That's as near as I can—"

He cleared his throat and buried his face in his hands. After a while Drummond crossed over and patted his friend on the back. Then the housekeeper knocked and he went out to lunch.

The meal over, a feeling of restlessness held him. For a while he struggled against it, but finally he got up and walked out of the house. He wanted to think out a course of action for Harbnet and himself. Surely there was something that could be done to lighten the burden his friend was suddenly called upon to bear. He walked on and on, racking his brain the while, but never an idea occurred to him.

When he got back it was pitch dark. The housekeeper came out of the kitchen as he turned into the library.

"Where's Mr. Harbnet, Sir?" she inquired.

"I dunno, Mary," he replied. "Isn't he in his room?"

"No, Sir." "Oh, he must be in the house. He could never find his way about outside."

"He's not in the house, Sir," I've searched everywhere for him."

Drummond's heart seemed to skip a beat, and he felt a cold shiver run through him.

"Do—do you think anything's happened, Mary?" he asked. "The oculist was here today, as you know. I came in some time after he left and found Mr. Harbnet in very low spirits. It seems that his sight is much worse than he had believed. The shock may have affected his reason and—"

"Oh don't, don't say that, Sir. Let's go out and see if we can find him."

They searched about the grounds but no trace of Harbnet could be found. Then an idea occurred to Mary.

"I'll run down to the village for assistance, Sir," she suggested.

"You continue to search. We mustn't lose hope. God is good."

"Do, Mary," Drummond urged. "The more help you can get, the better."

The woman gathered her shawl about her, and ran down the path as she had never run since her girlhood days. As she drew near the blessed well the deep booming voice of old Danny reciting the Rosary came to her. The responses were uttered in a more subdued tone, and urged by curiosity, the housekeeper advanced nearer to the spring.

Then a sigh of relief broke from her. The second voice was that of her master.

THE STORY OF CHRIST

BY GIOVANNI PAPINI Copyright, 1923, by Harcourt, Brace & Company Inc. Published by arrangement with The McClure Newspaper Syndicate

SELL EVERYTHING The tragic paradox implied in wealth justifies the advice given by Jesus to those who wish to follow Him.

They all should give whatever they have beyond their needs to those in want. But the rich man should give everything. To the young man who comes up to ask Him what he ought to do to be among His followers, Jesus answers: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

Giving away wealth is not a loss or a sacrifice. Instead of this, Jesus knows and all those know who understand mankind and wealth that it is a magnificently profitable transaction, an incomparable gain.

Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow from thee, turn not thou away, for it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Men must give and give without sparing, light heartedly and without calculation. He who gives in order to get something back is not perfect. He who gives in order to exchange with others, or for other material things, acquires nothing. The recompense is elsewhere, it is in us. Things are not to be given away that they may be paid for by other things, but by purity and contentment alone.

When thou makest a dinner or a supper call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Even before Jesus' time men had been advised to renounce wealth. Jesus was not the first to find in poverty one of the steps to perfection. The great Vaddhamana, the Jain, or triumpher, added to the commandments of Parava, founder of the Freed, the doctrine of the renunciation of all possessions. Buddha, his contemporary, exhorted his disciples to a similar renunciation. The Cynics stripped themselves of all material goods to be independent of work and of men, and to be able to consecrate their freed souls to truth. Crates, the Theban nobleman, disciple of Diogenes, distributed his wealth to his fellow citizens and turned beggar. Plato wished the warriors in his Republic to have no possessions. Dressed in purple and seated at tables inlaid with rare stones, the Stoics pronounced eloquent eulogies on poverty. Aristophanes puts blind Pluto on the stage distributing wealth to rascals alone, almost as though wealth were a punishment.

But in Jesus the love of poverty is not an ascetic rule, nor a proud disguise for ostentation. Timon of Athens, who was reduced to poverty after having fed a crowd of parasites with indiscriminate generosity, was not a poor man as Christ would have men poor. Timon was poor through the fault of his vainglory, to feed his own desire to be called magnanimous and liberal. He gave to everybody, even to those who were not needy. Crates, who stripped himself of all his property to imitate Diogenes, was the slave of pride; he wished to do something different from others, to acquire the name of philosopher and sage. The professional beggary of the

Cynics is a picturesque form of pride. The poverty of Plato's warriors is a measure of political prudence. The first republics conquered and flourished as long as the citizens contented themselves, as in old Sparta and old Rome, with strict poverty, and they fell as soon as they valued gold more than sober and modest living. But men of antiquity did not despise wealth in itself. They held it dangerous when it accumulated in the hands of the few, they considered it unjust when it was not spent with judicious liberality. But Plato, who desires for his citizens a condition half-way between need and abundance, puts riches among the good things of human life. He puts it last of all, but he does not forget it. And Aristophanes would kneel before Pluto if the blind God should acquire his eight again and give riches to worthy people.

In the Gospel, poverty is not a philosophical ornament nor a mystic mode. To be poor is not enough to entitle one to citizenship in the Kingdom. Poverty of the body is a preliminary requisite, like humility of the spirit. He who is not convinced that his estate is low never thinks of climbing high; no one can feel a zest for true treasures if he is not freed from all material property,—from that winding-sheet which blinds the eyes and binds down the wings.

When he does not suffer from his poverty, when he glories in his poverty instead of tormenting himself to convert it into wealth, the poor man is certainly much nearer to moral perfection than the rich man. But the rich man who has despoiled himself in favor of the poor and has chosen to live side by side with his new brothers is still nearer perfection than the man who was born and reared in poverty. That he has been touched by a grace so rare and prodigious gives him the right to hope for the greatest blessedness. To renounce what you have never had may be perilous, because imagination magnifies absent things; but it is the sign of supreme perfectibility to renounce everything that you actually did possess, possessions that were envied by every one.

The poor man who is sober, chaste, simple and contented because he lacks means and occasions for anything else, is inclined to look for a recompense in pleasures which do not cost money, and as it were for a revenge in a spiritual superiority where poorer men cannot compete with him. But often his virtues come from his impotence or from his ignorance; he does not turn from the right course—he cannot afford to do so—he does not pile up treasure because he possesses only the strictly necessary; he is not drunken and licentious because wine-sellers and women of the streets give no credit. His life, often hard, servile, dark, redeems his faults. And his suffering forces him to lift his eyes towards Heaven in search of consolation. We do so little for the poor that we have no right to judge them. As they are, abandoned by their brothers, kept far from those who could speak to their hearts, avoided by those who shrink from the proximity of their sweaty bodies, excluded from those worlds of intelligence and the arts which might make their poverty more endurable, the poor are, in the universal wretchedness of mankind, the least impure. If they were more loved, they would be better men. How can those who have left them alone in their poverty have the heart to condemn them?

Jesus loved the poor; He loved them for the compassion which He felt for them; He loved them because He felt them nearer to His soul, more prepared to understand Him than other men. He loved them because they constantly gave Him the happiness of service, of giving bread to the hungry, strength to the weak, hope to the unhappy. Jesus loved the poor because He saw that if they were justly treated they would be the most legitimate inhabitants of the Kingdom. He loved the poor because they rendered the renunciation of the rich easier by the stimulus of charity; but most of all He loved the poor men who had been rich and who for the love of the Kingdom had become poor. Their renunciation was the greatest act of faith in His promise. They had given that which considered absolutely is nothing, but in the eyes of the world is everything, for the certainty of sharing in a more perfect life. They had been obliged to conquer in themselves one of the most profoundly rooted instincts of man. Jesus, born a poor man among the poor, for the poor, never left his brothers. He gave to them the fruiting abundance of His divine property. But in His heart He sought the poor man who had not always been poor, the rich man ready to strip himself for His love. He sought him, perhaps He never found him. But He felt this longed-for, unknown brother man tenderly nearer to His heart than all the docile seekers who crowded about Him.

THE DEVIL'S DUNG Note well, you men who are yet to be born! Jesus was never willing to touch a coin with His hand. Those hands of His which moulded the clay of the earth as a cure for blind eyes, those hands which touched the contaminated flesh of lepers and of the dead, those hands which clasped the body of Judas, so much more contaminated than clay,

than leprosy, than putrefaction, those white, pure healing hands, which nothing could sully, never suffered themselves to be touched by one of those metal disks which carry in relief the profiles of the proprietors of the world. Jesus could mention money in His parables; He could see it in the hands of others, but touch it—no! To Him who scorned nothing, money was disgusting. It was repugnant to Him with a repugnance that was like horror. All His nature was in revolt at the thought of a contact with those filthy symbols of wealth.

But one day even Jesus was constrained to look at a piece of money. They asked Him if it was permitted to the true Israelite to pay the tribute, and He answered at once, "Show me the tribute money."

They showed it to Him, but He would not take it. It was a Roman coin stamped with the hypocritical face of Augustus. But He wished to seem not to know whose face it was. He asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They answered, "Caesar's." Then He threw into the faces of the wily interrogators the answer which silenced them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."

Give back that which is not yours, money does not belong to us. It is manufactured by the powerful for the needs of power. It is the property of kings and of the kingdom, of that other kingdom which is not ours. The king represents force and is the protector of wealth; but we have nothing to do with violence and reject riches. Our Kingdom has no potentates and has no rich men; the King of our Heaven does not coin money. Money is a means for the exchange of earthly goods, but we do not seek for earthly goods. What little is necessary for us, a little sunshine, a little air, a little water, a piece of bread, a cloak, will be given freely to us by God and by God's friends. Tire yourselves out, you other people, all your lives to gather together a great pile of those round minted tokens. We have no use for them. For us they are definitely superfluous. Therefore we give them back; we give them back to him who has had them coined, to him who has had his portrait put on them, so that all should know that they are his.

Jesus never needed to give back any money because He never possessed any. He gave the order to His disciples not to carry bags for offerings on their journeys. He made one single exception, and that a fearful one. The Gospel tells us that one apostle kept the common purse. This disciple was Judas, and even Judas felt himself forced to give back the payment for his betrayal before disappearing in death. Judas is the mysterious victim sacrificed to the curse of money. Money carries with it, together with the filth of the hands which have clutched and handled it, the inexorable contagion of crime. Among the unclean things which men have manufactured to defile the earth and defile themselves, money is perhaps the most unclean. These counters of coined metal which pass and repass every day among hands still soiled with sweat or blood, worn by the rapacious fingers of thieves, of merchants, of misers; this round and viscid sputum of the Mint, desired by all, sought for, stolen, envied, loved more than love and often more than life; these ugly pieces of stamped matter, which the assassin gives to the cut-throat, the usurer to the hungry, the enemy to the traitor, the swindler to his partner, the simonist to the bartender in religious offices, the lustful to the woman bought and sold, these foul vehicles of evil which persuade the son to kill his father, the wife to betray her husband, the brother to defraud his brother, the wicked poor man to stab the wicked rich man, the servant to cheat his master, the highwayman to despoil the traveler; this money, these material emblems of matter, are the most terrifying objects manufactured by man. Money which has been the death of so many bodies is every day the death of thousands of souls. More contagious than the rags of a man with the pest, than the pus of an ulcer, than the filth of a sewer, it enters into every house, shines on the counters of the money-changers, settles down in money-chests, proffers the pillow of sleep, hides itself in the fetid darkness of squalid back-rooms, sullies the innocent hands of children, tempts virgins, pays the hangman for his work, goes about on the face of the earth to stir up hatred, to set cupidity on fire, to hasten corruption and death.

Bread, already holy on the family board, becomes on the table of the Church the everlasting body of Christ. Money too is the visible sign of a transubstantiation. It is the infamous Host of the Demon. He who loves money and receives it with joy is in visible communion with the Demon. He who touches money with pleasure touches without knowing it the filth of the Demon. The pure cannot touch it, the holy man cannot endure it. They know with unshakable certainty its ugly essence, and they have for money the same horror that the rich man has for poverty.

THE KINGS OF THE NATIONS "Whose is this image?" asks Jesus when they put the Roman money before his eyes. He knows that face, He knows, as they all do,

that Octavius by a sequence of extraordinary good luck, became the monarch of the world with the adulatory surname of Augustus. He knows that falsely youthful profile, that head of clustering curls, the great nose that juts forward as if to hide the cruelty of the small mouth, the lips rigorously closed. It is a head, like those of all kings, cut off from the body, cut off below the neck; sinister image of a voluntary and eternal decapitation. Caesar is the king of the past, the head of the armies, the coiner of silver and gold, fallible administrator of insufficient justice. Jesus is the King of the future, the liberator of servants, the abdicator of wealth, the master of love. There is nothing in common between them. Jesus has come to overthrow the domination of Caesar, to undo the Roman Empire and every earthly Empire, but not to put Himself in Caesar's place. If men will listen to Him there will never be any Caesar again. Jesus is not the heir who conspires against the sovereign to take his place. He has come peacefully to remove all rulers. Caesar is the strongest and most famous of His rivals, but also the most remote, because his force lies in the slothfulness of men, in the weakness of peoples. But One has come who will awaken the sleeping, open the eyes of the blind, give back strength to the weak. When everything is fulfilled and the Kingdom is founded—a Kingdom which needs no soldiers nor judges nor slaves nor money, but only renewed and living souls—Caesar's empire will vanish like a pile of ashes under the victorious breath of the wind.

As long as Caesar is there, we can give back to him what is his. For the new man, money is nothing. We give back to Caesar, vowed to eternal nothingness, that silver nothingness which is none of ours. Jesus is always looking forward with passionate longing to the arrival of the second earthly Paradise and He takes no heed of governors because the new land which He announces will not need governors. A people of holy men who love each other would have no use for Kings, law-courts and armies. On one occasion only does He speak of kings, and then only to overturn the common established idea. "The Kings of the Gentiles," He says to His disciples, "exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so, but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." It is the theory of perfect equality in human relationship. The great is small, the master is servant, the King is slave. Since, according to Christ's teachings, he who governs must become like him who serves, the opposite is true, and he who serves has the same rights and honors as he who governs. Among the righteous, there may be some more ardent than others; there may be saints who were sinners up to the last day; there may be other innocent ones who were citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven from their birth. Different planes of spiritual greatness may exist as variations of the perfection common to all; but to the end of time every category of superior and inferior, of master and subordinate, shall be abolished. Authority presupposes, even if it is badly wielded, a flock to lead, a minority to punish, bestiality to shackle; but when all men are holy, there will be no more need for commands and obedience, for laws and punishments. The Kingdom of Heaven can dispense with the commands of Force.

In the Kingdom of Heaven men will not hate each other and will no longer desire riches. Every reason and need for government will disappear immediately after these two great changes. The name of the path which conducts to perfect liberty is not Destruction but Holiness. And it is not found in the sophistries of Godwin, or of Stirner, or Proudhon, or of Kropotkin, but only in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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