

His place at the table, expecting that, since no servant was present, one of the disciples would go round the company and wash their feet from the dust which clung to them as they walked in their sandals beneath a burning sun. But we learn from Luke 22 : 24 that, at this very time, they had been disputing as to which of them was the greatest. So, when supper was served, each was too proud and sulky to do a lowly service for the rest. What a heart-piercing rebuke, when Jesus rose to discharge the duty which none of them was willing to undertake! *Laid aside . . . garments*; the loose, flowing upper robe which covered his tunic. *Took a towel, . . . girded himself*. He wound the long linen towel round His waist. *After that . . . the bason* (Rev. Ver.); which was always provided in a dining-room. *Began to wash . . . and to wipe*. The disciples must have gazed speechless with shame and amazement, as Jesus quietly and deliberately went through each part of this lowly office, in turn.

Vs. 6, 7. *Simon Peter*; singled out because he was the first to break the overpowering silence. *Lord, dost thou wash, etc.?* He cannot tolerate the thought of Jesus stooping to perform such a task for him. *What I do thou knowest not now*. "I" and "thou" are emphasized, to remind Peter that his Master's plans are often too deep for him. *Thou shalt know hereafter*. "Hereafter" probably means "in a little", "when I have finished". It is safe to trust Jesus' love in events which we cannot understand.

Vs. 8, 9. *Never wash my feet*. No doubt it is a worthy motive—the sense of utter shame in the Master's presence—which prompts Peter to continue resisting. But, none the less, this resistance is sheer self-will, the same kind of self-will which refused to believe Jesus when He announced His death, Matt. 16 : 22. *No part with me*. "If you set up your own opinion against Me, you cannot be My disciple." "The first condition of discipleship is self-surrender." (Westcott.) *Also my hands and my head*. "If washing is any requirement for fellowship with Thee, wash me wholly." (Dods.) Again it is a noble motive which influences Peter, but he speaks as if he knew better than Jesus.

Vs. 10, 11. *Bathed needeth not* (Rev. Ver.),

etc. The disciples had already been in the bath of Christ's cleansing. That did not require to be done over again. But even the man who has been in the bath, cannot avoid soiling his feet as he walks. So, the Christian is always contracting stains. Progress in the new life means the removal of these. *Ye are clean, but not all*. As a group, the little band had been purified. Even this foolish exhibition of temper was only on the surface. At heart they were genuine disciples of Christ. Only Judas had really resisted the cleansing power of his Master. That resistance was soon to express itself in terrible form.

III. The Great Master, 12-15.

Vs. 12-15. *Know ye what I have done . . . ?* Peter will now get an explanation. Even while the action was proceeding, the feelings of the eleven had changed, from temper and pride, to shame and penitence. But Jesus wishes to stamp the lesson on their hearts. *Ye call me Master . . . so I am*. Jesus never hesitates to assert the lofty dignity of His position. That makes more impressive the service He has done. *If I . . . ye also*. Of course, He is not urging the literal foot-washing, but the spirit of mutual love and readiness to serve which was exemplified by His action. *An example*. "In this act, as in a mirror, Christ's whole earthly life is reflected in spirit and aim, and Christ's life is the believer's pattern." (Reith.)

Light from the East

TOWEL—Was the apron with which servants girded themselves for menial work. It was generally of colored cotton cloth, about the size and shape of a bath towel, and was worn by fishermen, potters, water-carriers, and sawyers, as a loin cloth; and by more respectable tradesmen, grocers, bakers and carpenters, as an apron to protect their clothes, and as a towel to wipe their stained and perspiring hands upon. Christ's act in girding Himself with it was deliberate, symbolic, and very impressive.

BASON—Was a well known household utensil, probably of bronze, the shape of a large cup, with a handle at one side. The ewer and the basin for the express purpose