

Evenly, peacefully, eventlessly, time went on, year following year, while Desiree grew up into a shy, silent, pure-hearted, solitude-loving maiden. The sorrow of separation from Reine had long ago healed, but that early friendship had left its mark upon her for all time; that intimate association with a creature so fine of soul, so spiritual of mind, so beautiful of body, and so high-bred and gracious of manner had spoiled her for the society of the village girls who would have been glad to bear her company, and of the village youths who were eager to tell her that at eighteen she was as pretty and charming as any maid need be.

She was a child still, with no thought beyond her prayers, her household tasks, her memories and dreams of Reine. She had no ambition but to keep her heart clean, so that each day her Lord might enter there and leave it a little sweeter than He had found it, no desire unfulfilled but that of meeting Reine again.

And at last the news reached her that Reine was coming, her education completed, to visit her father and stepmother and her little half-brother, now three years old, at Ashwood Manor.

Desiree caught at the word "visit." She was not going to remain there. That meant she had carried her point, and obtained permission to enter religion. Desiree's delight knew no bounds. She lived in ecstatic expectation of Reine's arrival.

She came late one September afternoon, but Desiree did not see her until the following morning, when, unable to wait any longer, she went round to the Manor on her way home from Mass, and finding that Reine was not yet down, wrote a tremulous little note which she begged one of the maids to take up to Miss Ashwood's room.

Her heart beat high with joy when the answer came, and she was bidden to go upstairs. She knocked softly at Reine's door, and thrilled as though at the sound of a sweet strain of a dimly-remembered song when a clear voice cried, "Entrez!"

For a moment the sunny room swam mistily before her eyes; then she saw, half reclining on a couch before the fire, the fair child Reine transformed into a vision of enchanting womanhood. Reine had not long risen and wore a negligee of white silk embroidered with cornflowers the color of her eyes, and her lovely hair hung over her shoulders in a mass of golden curls.

Desiree gave a little cry, and, forgetting in the warmth of her affection to be shy of this elegant young lady, she sprang forward and clasped her childhood friend in her arms.

"Oh, Mademoiselle Reine! What joy to see you again! How beautiful you are! How tall! How charming!"

Reine smiled graciously, and motioned Desiree to a seat beside her.

"You are glad I have come back, then?" she said, and, if her manner was tinged with a condescension which had been absent from it in the old days, Desiree was too happy to notice.

"Yes, oh, yes! And you are glad to be at home again?"

"Well, it's pleasant enough to see England once more, but I'm afraid I am very much more French than English. However, I shall not be here long."

"No," agreed Desiree, with a tender smile. "I suppose not. You are going to enter in France, then, mademoiselle? Which Order do you mean to join?"

Reine stared at the eager, flushed face in astonishment, then broke into a laugh.

"What are you talking about, you silly child? I am not going to be a nun. What an idea! I am going back to my aunt for the winter, and after Easter I shall most probably be married. I am even now practically betrothed to Comte Michel de Valmont de la Rochemartel."

A low cry of horror left Desiree's lips.

"You cannot mean it!—oh, surely you cannot mean it! You belong to God!"

Desiree gazed at her long and piercingly, and learnt beyond a doubt what the years of separation had done to the girl she had revered as the destined virgin-spouse of Christ; learnt it from the jewel-bright eyes which had lost their old visionary look and mirrored now the soul of a vain and shallow coquette; from the slight mocking smile on the red lips, which had been moulded in lines of grave and tender sweetness, learnt that the world had won her for its own. Reine had been faithful to the radiant promise of her childhood only so long as temptation had not come her way. That early piety of hers, bright-hued and fragrant flower though it was, had sprung from a feeble root.

Desolation swept over Desiree's spirit like a bitter sea. The fair pattern of virtue she had tried so hard to copy was blurred beyond recognition; the light of the bright star on which her eyes had ever been fixed was gone out; the beloved ideal which had kept her heart and mind so close to heavenly things was shattered.

Reine shrank a little and colored under the wistful reproach of Desiree's glance. Lightly though she valued now the religion she had once loved dearly, the days of her fervor were not quite forgotten. Now and again she knew a passing regret at the thought of the innocence and piety she had not been strong enough to retain, upon which the forces of the world had encroached by almost imperceptible degrees.

"What are you looking so solemn about?" she demanded haughtily, resentment swiftly succeeding her momentary feeling of shame.

Desiree broke down. "God wanted you. God called you," she sobbed heartbrokenly, "but you wouldn't listen. You love the world best, its pleasures, its admiration—you whom He made for Himself alone. You are going to sell yourself in a mercenary marriage—you who were meant to be the bride of Christ. Oh, it was no fancy! In your heart you know it well. But God tried you so that you might prove yourself worthy of the joy to which He called you, and you have shown that you are not. And all these years I have thought you a saint!"

"That will do, Desiree!" said Reine sharply. "You forget yourself. Let me hear no more of this. If you are so enamoured of the religious life, you had better become a nun yourself and recompense the good God for the loss you imagine He has sustained. There, run away now. I have my toilet to make."

She rang for her maid and seated herself before a mirror with a novel—of the kind she did not understand very well once, instinct told Desiree, who caught sight of the title and the illustration on the cover as she fled from the room.

When she reached the open air again, she sought out a solitary rock among the trees in the coppice below the gardens, and there shed the bitterest tears of her life.

It seemed to her that God was robbed, that there was a new wound in the Sacred Heart, the pain of which she longed to ease, only she did not know how.

"You had better become a nun yourself, and recompense the good God."

Reine's mocking speech echoed in her ear. An eager flush flamed in her cheek; her brain seemed suddenly on fire. Could she do it that day? Would the King of Virgins accept her in Reine's stead? Never, in her humility, had she imagined herself raised so high.

Trembling, she knelt down on the mossy ground and recited the Veni Creator, as was her custom in times of doubt, and scarcely was her prayer ended before she knew that the peerless gift Reine had rejected had been bestowed upon herself, and that it had brought her boundless joy.—(Catholic Fireside.)

**THE STORY OF CHRIST**

BY GIOVANNI PAPINI  
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**THE MAN WITH THE PITCHER**

The bargain was struck, the price paid, the buyers were impatient to finish the transaction. They had said "before the Feast day." The great feast day of the Passover fell on a Saturday and this was Thursday.

Jesus had but one more day of freedom, the last day. Before leaving His friends, those who were to abandon Him that night, He wished, once more to dip His bread in the same platter with them. Before the Syrian soldiery should have spit upon Him, before He should be defiled by the Jewish filth, He wished to kneel down and wash the feet of those who until the day of their death were to travel all the roads of the earth to tell the story of His death. Before the blood dropped from His hands, His feet, His chest, He wished to give the first fruits to those who were to be one soul with Him until the end. Before suffering thirst, nailed upon the cross, He wished to drink a cup of wine with His companions. This last evening before His death he wanted to be like an anticipation of the banquet of the Kingdom.

On the evening of Thursday, the first day of unleavened bread, the Disciples asked Him, "Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?"

The Son of Man, poorer than the foxes, had no home of His own. He had left His home in Nazareth forever. The home of Simon of Capernaum, which had been in the early days like His own, was far away; and the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany, where He was almost Master, was too far outside the city.

He had only enemies in Jerusalem or shame-faced friends: Joseph of Arimathea was to receive Him as his guest only the next evening, in the dark cave, the banquet-hall of worms.

But a condemned man on his last day has a right to any favor he may ask. All the houses of Jerusalem were rightfully His. The Father would give Him the house, best suited to shelter His last joy. And He sent two Disciples with this mysterious command, "Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him. And whosoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, the Master saith, My time is at hand; where is the guest chamber, where I should eat the passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us."

It has been believed that the master of that house was a friend of Jesus and that they had arranged this beforehand. But that cannot be. Jesus would have sent the two Disciples straight to him, giving his name, and would not have had recourse to the following of the man with the pitcher.

There were many men on the morning of that feast day who should have been coming up from Shiloah with pitchers of water. The two Disciples were to follow the first one whom they saw before them. They did not know why they were not to stop him instead of going after him to see where he went in.

His master, since he had a servant, certainly was not a poor man. He was in his house, as in all those of prosperous people, there would certainly be a room suitable for serving a supper, and he would know at least by hearsay who "the Master" was. In those days at Jerusalem there was little talk of anything else. The request was one which could not be refused. "The Master saith, My time is at hand." The time which was "His" was the hour of death. No one could shut out from his house a man at the point of death, who wished to satisfy his hunger for the last time. The Disciples set out, found the man with the pitcher, entered the house, talked with the master, prepared there what was necessary for the supper: lamb cooked on the spit, round loaves without leaven, bitter herbs, red sauce, the wine of thanksgiving, and warm water. They set the couches and pillows about the table and spread over it the white cloth. On the cloth they set the few dishes, the candelabra, the pitcher full of wine, and one cup, one cup only to which all were to set their lips. They forgot nothing; both were experienced in this preparation. From childhood they had watched wide-eyed the preparations for the most heart-warming feast of the year. And it was not the first time since they had been with Him whom they loved, that they had thus eaten all together of the feast of the Passover. But for that last day—and perhaps their dull minds had at last understood the dreadful truth that it was really the last—for this last supper which all the Disciples were to have together, for this Passover which was the last for Jesus and the last valid Passover for old Judaism because a new covenant was about to begin for all countries and all nations: for this festal banquet which was a memorial of life, and a warning of death, the Disciples performed those humble mental tasks with a new tenderness, with that pensive joy that almost brings tears.

With the setting of the sun, the other ten came with Jesus and placed themselves around the table, now in readiness. All were silent as if heavy-hearted with a presentiment which they were afraid to see reflected in their companion's eyes. They remembered the supper in Simon's house, almost funeral, the odor of the nard, the woman and her endless weeping, and Christ's words on that evening, and His words of those last days; the repeated warnings of ignominy and of the end; the signs of hatred increasing about them, and the indications, now very plain, of the conspiracy, which with all its torches was about to come out from the darkness.

But two of them—for opposite reasons—were more oppressed, more moved than the others: the two for whom this was the last of their lives, the two who were about to die: Christ and Judas, the sold and the seller; the Son of God and the abortion of Satan.

Judas had finished his bargain, he had the thirty pieces of silver on his person wrapped tightly so that they would not clink. But he knew no peace. The Enemy had entered into him, but perhaps the friend of Christ was not yet dead—in the midst of His friends, calm but with the pensive expression of the man who is the only one who knows a secret, who is aware of a crime, a betrayal; to see Him, still at liberty in the company of those who loved Him, still alive, all the blood still in His veins under the delicate protection of the skin—and yet

those bargainers who had paid the price refused to wait any longer, the affair was arranged for that very night!—and they were only waiting for Judas to act. But suppose Jesus, who must know all, had denounced him to the eleven? And suppose they, to save their Master, had thrown themselves on Judas to bind him, perhaps to kill him? Judas began to feel that to betray Christ to His death was perhaps not enough to save himself from the death, which he so greatly feared and yet which was near upon him.

All these thoughts darkened his somber face, more and more blackly, and at times terrified him. While the more active ones busied themselves with the last arrangements for serving the supper, he looked furtively at the eyes of Jesus—clear eyes scarcely veiled with the loving sadness of parting—as if to read there the revocation of his fate, so close at hand. Jesus broke the silence: "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Such great love had not up to that moment been expressed by any words of Christ to His friends: such a longing for the day of perfect union, for the feast, so ancient and destined to so great a sublimation. They knew that He loved them; but until this evening their poor bruised hearts had not felt how poignant His love was. He knew that this evening was the last respite of rest and cheer before His death, and yet He had desired it ardently as though it were a boon, with that fervor which is the mark of passionate souls, souls on fire, loving souls, those who battle for the love of victory, who endure all things for a high price. He had ardently desired to eat this Passover with them. He had eaten others: He had eaten with thousands of other times, seated in boats, in their friends' houses, in strangers' houses, in rich men's houses, or seated beside the road, in mountain pastures, in the shadow of bushes on the shore; and yet for so long He had ardently desired to eat with them this supper which was the last! The blue skies of happy Galilee, the soft winds of the spring, just passed, the sun of the last Passover, the waving branches of His triumphant entry, did He think of them now? Now he saw only His first friends, and his last friends, the little group destined to be diminished by treachery, and dispersed by cowardice. Still, for a time they were there about Him in the same room, at the same table, sharing with Him the same overwhelming grief, but sharing also the light of a supernatural certainty.

Up to that day He had suffered, but not for Himself; He had suffered because of His ardent desire for this nocturnal hour, when the air was already heavy with the tragedy of farewells. And, when He had thus told them how great was His love, Christ's face, soon to be buffeted, shone with that noble sadness which is so strangely like joy.

**THE WASHING OF THE FEET**

Now that He was on the point of being snatched from those whom He loved, He wished to give them a supreme proof of this love. From the time they had begun to share His life, He had always loved them, all of them, even Judas: He always loved them with a love surpassing all other affections, a love so bountiful that their narrow hearts could not always contain it; but now about to leave them, knowing that He was to be with them again only when transfigured after death, all His hitherto unexpressed affection adumbrated in a great wave of tender sadness.

Before beginning the supper where He was the head of the family, He wished to be kinder than a father, humbler than a servant. He was their King, and He would humble Himself to the service performed by slaves: He was their Master and He would put Himself below the level of His disciples; He was the Son of God and He would accept a position despised of men: He was the first and He would kneel before His inferiors as if He had been the last. So many times, to rebuke their pride and jealousy, He had told them that the Master must serve his servants, that the Son of Man was come to serve, that the first must be last. But His words had not yet been assimilated by those souls, since even up to the last, they continued to quarrel for priority and precedence.

For raw, untrained minds, action has more meaning than words. Jesus prepared Himself to repeat, with the symbolic aspect of a humiliating service, one of His most important instructions. John tells us, "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

Only a mother or a slave would have done what Jesus did that evening. The mother would have done it for her little children, but for no one else; the slave for his masters, but for no others. The mother would have served joyfully because of her love, the slave would have been resigned through obedience. But the Twelve were neither Christ's children nor His

masters. Son of man and of God, His love was above that of all earthly mothers.—King of a kingdom existing in the future, but more legitimate than all existing monarchies, He was the unrecognized Master of all masters.

And yet He was willing to wash and wipe those twenty-four callous and sweaty feet, in order to engrave on those unwilling hearts, still swollen with vanity, the truth which His lips had so long vainly pronounced: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

So after He had washed their feet and taken His garments and was set down again He said unto them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Jesus had not only given them a memory of complete humility, but an example of perfect love. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

But this action, with its deep meaning hidden under the appearance of menial service, signifies purification as well as love. "He that is washed needeth not say to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all."

The eleven, although not of lofty character, had some right to this cleansing service from Jesus. For many months those feet had trodden the dusty, muddy, filthy roads of Judea to follow Him who brought life; and after His death, year by year, they were to tread longer and harder roads in countries the very names of which they then did not know; and foreign clay would soil the sandaled feet of those who were to go as pilgrims and strangers to repeat the call of the Crucified One.

TO BE CONTINUED

**MASONS PRESENT PIN TO CATHOLIC PRIEST**

Champaign, Ill., April 9.—Members of Acacia, Masonic fraternity at the University of Illinois, presented a gold Knives of Columbus emblem to the Rev. John A. O'Brien, Ph. D., chaplain of Catholic students at the University, at the chapter house Friday evening.

The presentation was made by John Wendell, a senior in the University and president of the fraternity. Among the Acacia members participating in the ceremony was Rev. J. C. Baker, a Methodist minister.

In presenting the emblem to Dr. O'Brien, Mr. Wendell said: "In these days of racial prejudice and religious rancor, we deem it an event of unusual and far-reaching significance when an organization composed entirely of Masons bestows a K. of C. emblem upon a Catholic priest in recognition of the great services he has rendered in breaking down the barriers reared upon misunderstanding and fostering the splendid spirit of harmony and good will between Catholics and Protestants.

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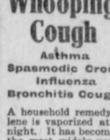
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