

ГОВАРД ПАЙЛ

REJECTED OF
MEN

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Howard Pyle

Rejected of Men / A Story of Today

PROEM

THIS is the story of the scribes, pharisees, priests, and Levites, and of certain Romans. It is intended as a phase of that divine history already told to the world, but now told from another standpoint and translated from the ancient Hebrew habits of life into modern American, so that the reader may more readily understand the circumstances that directed our actions. If it has been told aright, he may see why it was that we crucified the Truth.

We—scribes and pharisees—have been vilified and abused for nineteen hundred years because we acted as the circumstances of our lives compelled us. The fact seems to be overlooked that we were not born publicans and sinners, but upright and virtuous citizens, and that it was out of the question for us to desert our own class and to ally ourselves with those whose only recommendation appeared to lie in the fact that they were poor and lowly, or else that they were social outcasts and sinners. We could hardly be held to have been more worthy of respect if we had violated our traditions of order and of virtue to accept an entirely new code of ethics supported by such advocates; which code, if carried out, meant the overthrow of all that we held most sacred and worthy of preservation.

The integrity of the very Church itself—the foundation of our entire system of social order—was threatened with destruction, and it was only in the extremity of our need and after all other courses of action were closed to us that we resorted to the last and sternest measure to save human society from destruction.

Surely the truth is so unanswerable as to be axiomatic, that it is better that one man should die rather than that the very laws that bind human society together should be annihilated.

Yet for nineteen hundred years we have borne the odium of having wantonly and callously performed a cruel and unjustifiable act.

Everything is in the view-point. The whole aspect of creation depends upon where the observer stands to look at it.

Heretofore these great events of sacred history have been looked upon from the point of view of that central and dominant Figure, and the great plain of the world of mankind has been seen revolving dimly and remotely around it. Our point of view—the point of view of the scribes and the pharisees, the priests and the Levites, and certain of the Romans—has never been considered and weighed in the balance.

This is intended as a history of those affairs as we saw them, and from that view-point the divine Figure that shaped a new system that was to dominate all other systems is beheld—when seen at all—not as the pivot upon which everything swings, but as a single integer of society at large—a centre of fermentation, very distant from us—disturbing and dangerous, but remote.

For while we now and then saw Him near by, for the more part He hardly entered our lives to disturb our daily affairs until towards the last of His career.

This story that follows is intended by way of a vindication, and we challenge all scribes and pharisees of this day who read it to say if they themselves would have acted differently under the same circumstances.

The world is the world and is a very mixed quantity, being composed of good and bad in such a manner as to maintain the perfect mundane balance that God has ordained. If Herod was an unscrupulous politician, Caiaphas was a good priest; if Pilate, sitting in a high place of authority, temporized to his own advantage, the young man of great possessions who sought salvation was an honest and sincere searcher for the truth—enthusiastic and impractical, perhaps, but sincere. Such as

these are a very few of the integers, good, bad, and indifferent, that go to make up the sum-total of earthly life. Such as that life is we do not make it—it is made for us; and we must obey its laws and fulfil the destiny that Providence has assigned to us. If we were made virtuous we must under normal conditions be virtuous; if we were made vicious we must be vicious; and there the matter ends.

The world looks very big to us, and any one who dares to interfere with the nice adjustment of its affairs him we always crucify, lest he bring destruction upon us by overturning the elaborate mechanism of our social order.

In this lies our exculpation. If we crucified the Truth, we did it to save the world in which we lived.

Bearing this in mind, the reader is invited to here follow our story, which has been translated into the conditions of modern American life, and then to decide how far he can blame us for fulfilling the destiny which God ordained for us.

I

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

WHEN John the Baptist began preaching none of us of the more intelligent classes believed him to be really a prophet forerunning the coming of the Messiah. Indeed, the better part of the world knew in the beginning nothing of his presence in its midst; nor until we began to be aware that great streams of ignorant people were pouring out of the cities and towns and descending to listen to his preaching and to receive his baptism, were we aware that such a man was in existence.

Then the public journals, those echoes of current thought and opinion, began to take the matter up, publishing longer and longer reports concerning him; commenting upon the growing excitement, the cause of which nobody seemed exactly to understand. People read what was printed and wondered what it all meant.

Just what those poor people who flocked to the baptism of John expected to see or to hear—just what they expected to gain through his ministrations, it was impossible to say. If they had any real thought in the matter they did not tell to the world what it was they thought.

For those of the lower class do not talk freely to those of the upper class about their ideas. With their intellectual superiors they are reserved, suspicious, and sometimes sullen. To the trained thinker the untrained mind appears remote, and its reasonings obscure.

When, for instance, Dr. Caiaphas's assistant gardener came to that good clergyman in the middle of the week to ask him if he might be absent from work till the Monday following, and when the rector of the Church of the Advent asked the man if he were not going down to see the Baptist and why he went, he found his question confronted by just such logical obtuseness and inconsequence.

"Why, you see, sir," said the man, "I did promise Molly I'd take her and her sister down to be baptized—that is, if you can spare me, sir—and there ain't much doing just now."

"But suppose I can't spare you, Thomas?"

"Oh, well, sir, it doesn't signify. I can stay, and Molly and her sister can go down themselves."

It was then that the rich, wise priest tried to get at the mind of the other man and failed.

"Why do you want to go down to the baptism, Thomas?" he said. "Don't you get enough of God's truth preached to you at home without having to go there to find it?"

"It's Molly wants to go more than me, sir."

"But I want you to tell me what you yourself think. Do you really believe that this man has any more power to forgive your sins than I have? Do you think that by baptizing you with a little water he can wash away in a few seconds all the sins you have committed for the thirty-six years of your life?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You don't know? Then, if you don't know, what is it you go for? I should think you would want to know all there is to know before you ran away from God's truth preached from His own holy word to hear what a madman in the wilderness has to say."

"It's more on Molly's account than mine, sir. The women do think a deal about them things, sir."

"But, I say, I want to know what you yourself think. You ask for three or four days of time to go away from your work, to hear this man preach. You must have some reason for doing so. Do you really believe the blasphemous assertions of this mad preacher that Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, is actually going to send His Messiah down into the midst of such a rabble as is gathered there?"

"I don't need to go if you can't spare me, sir," said the under-gardener.

Then Dr. Caiaphas gave up the unequal contest. There was no reasoning with such inconsequence. It was like fighting the wind, and he did not attempt it any further.

"You may go if you choose, Thomas," said he.

“Thank you, sir,” said Thomas.

It is probable that few who went to the baptism of John could assign a better reason. Dr. Caiaphas appeared to be right, and his gardener appeared to be entirely wrong. Men of to-day know that the Truth of John was true, and that the truth of Dr. Caiaphas was a mistake; but, to us, illuminated with the light of our superior intelligence, it appeared to be otherwise.

One of the journals of the day published a number of sun-pictures of the Baptist and of his disciples. Among these the world looked upon a picture of a baptism—the crowd gathered in a dense, motley mass upon the shore, the Baptist standing knee-deep in the water surrounded by penitents, upon the head of one of whom he was in the act of pouring water. Another such picture was a portrait of the Baptist himself. He was standing in full sunlight in front of a tent, and was surrounded by his immediate disciples. There was a background of the same motley crowd that characterized all the pictured groups. The central figure was the image of a singularly wild and curious figure—lean, haggard, unshaven. He was clad in loose trousers and shirt, over which he wore a rough blouse of some coarse, hairy material, strapped about his waist with a broad leather belt. His lean legs were bare, and on his feet he wore coarse, heavy brogans. His pale eyes looked out directly at you from under brows contracted in the glare of the sunlight. A tangled mop of hair was brushed back behind his ears, and a shaggy beard hung down upon his breast. One hand held a rough, crooked staff, and the other loosely grasped a shapeless hat. The pose, the expression of the face, the dress, all bespoke to the intelligent observer as clearly as the word itself could have done—madness—or else fanaticism.

The upper world looked upon this picture, commented upon it, even laughed at it; for there is something to the intelligent mind that is almost ludicrous in the irrational and superstitious religious rites of the ignorant and credulous lower world.

The printed words accompanying the group of pictures declared that you had only to look upon the portrait of John the Baptist to form your own conclusions as to what was the inspiration of all the excitement then fermenting among the lower masses. They said that the sun-picture spoke for itself without the need of comment, and that the Baptist either was insane and should be placed under restraint, or else that he was an incendiary of the most dangerous character, and should be imprisoned as such according to the law.

It gave the writer an excellent opportunity to deliver a blow at the political affairs of the day. “Herod,” he said, “was not our choice for subordinate governor, nor was he, we think, the choice of the better element of the community. He was placed in his position by a strange coalition of the classes and the masses, and he is now supported in power by just such a rabble as are at present gathered to hear this mad preacher’s eloquence. It is very possible that Governor Herod is afraid to enforce the law against this man, for fear he should lose the support of that ignorant and vicious class which itself is the mainstay of his political power. But it is a pity that all the more conservative part of the community should be endangered by the unlicensed preaching of this madman, simply because Herod desires to succeed himself in his present position.”

Such words as these voiced the entire thought of the law-abiding scribes and pharisees. The logic appeared to us to be very true and unanswerable. It is only now, in later days, that the world has come to know that we were wrong, and the motley multitudes that surrounded John the Baptist were right. But what thoughtful man can reasonably condemn us for holding a position so rational as that which we maintained?

II

HEROD THE TETRARCH

IT is one of the paradoxes of divine operation that dishonest and unworthy men should so often be set in the positions of rulers of other men. Yet it is so. Integrity and honesty are not necessarily a passport to political preferment.

Everybody knew Herod's character. His moral delinquencies were public to the gaze of all men—the unsavory property of the entire community. The shame of his marriage with the divorced wife of his own brother stank in the nostrils of all the decent world. He was a man seemingly without any principle or aim in life except to gratify himself. Yet for years he had occupied high public position and was supported, not only by the small, dominant class who found him useful, but by the masses as well.

But, though the rulers and those in authority had set Herod up as their representative in power, they were not fond of him. So, when John the Baptist began to fulminate against him and his moral obliquities, and when the public journals began to publish these fulminations for general reading, Herod's political friends rather enjoyed the situation. They laughed at him, and even jested with him about it. They knew that he was powerless to punish the preacher, for he did not dare to alienate the lower class that so largely helped to uphold him in power. His political friends knew that he must submit to whatever attacks were made against him, and they enjoyed his helplessness and his probable sufferings.

When he would drop into his club on his way home, he would perhaps be hailed with an inquiry as to whether he had seen the evening paper, and that there was lively reading in it. Another advised him to take the sheet home with him to his wife, and that she would be interested to see what was being said of her. A third opined the sauce would do instead of tobasco with her oysters. At these jocularities Herod would maybe laugh. Probably he did not much mind these attacks, nor the pseudo-witticisms with which he was favored, for he did not care a great deal about public opinion one way or the other.

But it was not so with the woman whom he called his wife. She writhed under the lash of the spoken words and the printed paragraphs with a feeling sometimes almost as of physical nausea.

She was writhing now, but silently, over the evening paper which she had brought in from the library and which she was just then reading. The butler came in and lit the lamp, but she did not look up from her paper; she was too intently absorbed with the pain she was inflicting upon herself to notice anything else.

Her daughter, Salome, sat at the window looking out into the dull twilight of the street. She sat with one foot on a hassock, her elbow upon her knee, and her chin resting upon the palm of her hand. She looked listless and bored as she sat staring out into the falling twilight. The two women were singularly alike, only that the dark, heavy beauty of the mother was merely brunette in the daughter; that the somewhat square face of the elder woman was oval in the younger; that the rouge of the woman's face was the dusky red of nature in the girl's cheeks.

The words Herodias was reading must have cut suddenly to a deeper nerve, for she drew a sharp breath that was almost articulate. Her white teeth clicked together. She made a sudden motion as though to crush the paper she held; then she went on reading again. The girl nodded and smiled recognition to some one passing along the gray twilight of the street. Then the smile slowly faded, and the listless look settled back upon her face again.

There was a sound of footsteps crossing the hall, and Herod himself came into the room. He was a rather stout, thick-set man of about forty or forty-five. He wore a long mustache, the beard beneath being closely clipped and trimmed to a point. The cut of the beard and hair gave his countenance an

air of quality that was belied by his puffy, mottled cheeks and the thick, red, sensual lips. Herodias looked up at him as he came within the circle of light. "Did you see this?" she said, hoarsely, holding the paper out towards him. She pointed to the column she had been reading, and her fingers trembled with the intensity of her self-repression. The paper rustled nervously as she held it out.

"See what?" said Herod. "Oh, that! Yes, I saw that down at the club. What do you read it for if you don't like it?"

"And do you mean to say you aren't going to do anything to this cursed Baptist? What are the laws good for, anyhow?"

Herod grinned. "They're good for nothing when an election's only six months off."

The woman tried to speak; she could not. "It's a damned shame," she cried out, at last, still in the same hoarse voice.

Salome turned her head. "Oh, mamma," she said, "how awfully vulgar."

The mother glared at the daughter. She looked as though she were about to speak, but she only said, "Pshaw!"

There was a minute or two of silence. Herod stood with his hands in his pockets. "Was Corry King here, do you know?" he said, at last.

Herodias shook her head. Then Herod turned away and walked across the room towards the library. Just as he was about to quit the room, Herodias spoke again. "Did you get that box for the opera to-night?"

He stopped at the door and turned. "Yes, I did," he said.

"Did you leave orders for the carriage?"

"Yes; I ordered it for eight o'clock, sharp." Then he went on out of the room.

III

THE PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES

MR. THEODORE CAIAPHAS was rector of the Church of the Advent. It was said of that church that when the congregation were all at the sanctuary and seated in their places the building contained a representation of capital equivalent to a billion dollars of wealth.

It is hardly necessary to describe the Church of the Advent, for nearly everybody knows of it; even those who do not live in the metropolis have seen pictures of it. It occupied, with the rectory, half a square of ground in one of the most valuable parts of the city. It was estimated that if the land on which it stood were covered all over with ten-dollar bills, an approximate value of the real estate would just about be represented. The church itself was an architectural triumph, within and without. It was built of white marble, carved elaborately and exquisitely; the four large windows cost it cannot be told how many thousands of dollars, and the interior decorations were all that art could make them. The church was connected with the rectory by a glazed cloister of exquisite proportions, and the rectory itself, retired well back from the street behind parti-colored beds of flowering plants, was in perfect keeping with the church. The great plate-glass windows looked out across the little lawn upon the busy street where the thunder of life was forever passing and repassing.

One time the Church of the Advent was in the upper part of the town; then the flood of business had risen to it, and finally overwhelmed it and its surroundings. At the time of this story the church looked down upon a tumult of passing life and the bells clashed out their chimes almost unheard in the roar that rose up from the stony streets below. At first the ceaseless, roaring thunder had been very disturbing to Dr. Caiaphas, but he became used to it so that he never noticed it, except to miss it in the stifled, leaden silence of the country during his vacation. The rectory was a very pleasant home, and almost any bright day one could see children playing on the lawn in front of the house (for Dr. Caiaphas had quite a large family), and occasionally the rector himself might have been seen pacing up and down the gravelled driveway—especially on a Saturday afternoon, when he was in the throes of composing his addresses for the morrow.

Dr. Caiaphas was a very notable man. He was a liberal and advanced reformer, not only in religious matters, but in political and social matters as well. Not only had he written a number of pamphlets attacking those lingering superstitions that had so long operated as a clog to check the church in its advance abreast of the progress of civilization, but he had, besides, written hundreds of open letters and papers and several magazine articles upon the social problems of the age—the labor question, the question of social vice, the pauper question, and other similar topics. His passion for attacking and reforming abuses led him even into politics. It was largely through his instrumentality that the committee had been appointed to investigate into the affairs of the police department, and great things had been looked for as the outcome.

When it is taken into consideration that besides all these wide outside works, his was one of the largest parishes in the metropolis, it may be seen that Dr. Caiaphas was an extremely busy man and an extremely useful man.

The income of Dr. Caiaphas as rector of the Church of the Advent was forty thousand dollars per annum; added to this was a beautiful home, rent free.

There was a time when the excess of wealth had been a very sharp thorn in the side of the doctor's conscience, but at the time of this story he had been rector of the Church of the Advent for nearly twenty years, and he had become reconciled to the burden of good-fortune that the Divine Wisdom had seen fit to lay upon him to bear. He lived soft and warm; he was fond of works of art and of beautiful things, and he was a great collector of rare and handsome books—of which he had a magnificent library. He raised his family with all the surroundings of luxury due to his and

their position in the world; both of his sons had attended college and were then abroad—the younger finishing his education at a foreign university; the elder being an attaché to the embassy at the court of another foreign power.

It was a matter of conscience with Dr. Caiaphas thus to spend his money lavishly upon his children and himself, and he poured out his wealth without stint. He used to say, “I will not hoard what has been given me to-day for the sake of a possible to-morrow. I will trust to my Heavenly Father to supply my needs as they arise.”

When Dr. Caiaphas had first been asked to assume the rectorship of the Church of the Advent, he had accepted, not without reluctance. At that time he had very high and very exalted ideas as to his mission in life, and it seemed to him that, should he accept this magnificent call, he would, in a certain sense, be in danger of sacrificing his high birthright in the kingdom of heaven for a mess—however rich—of very worldly pottage. So at first he had been inclined to refuse; then, in thinking the matter over, it occurred to him that maybe Providence had laid this chance in his path that he might take it up and so exercise his usefulness in the wider field of metropolitan life.

He sometimes wondered with misgivings whether his conscience had not tallied almost too patly with his inclination in the matter. Indeed, he would have been more than human had he not appreciated what a thing it was to be rector of the Church of the Advent. It is probable that if he had been asked to leave his church in the country, and its salary of five thousand dollars a year, and to take up an obscure church in the metropolis, say, at a salary of twenty-five hundred a year, he would not have done so, even though, in accepting it, he might have widened his field of usefulness ever so much. But, to change at once from the old Church of the Messiah to the foremost church of his denomination in the country—he would have been, indeed, more than human if he had not appreciated the significance of such an advance in his life.

In his former work Dr. Caiaphas had seen much of poverty in a provincial town, and it was with him as it was with other people in the smaller cities and communities—he did not know what it meant to be poor in a great city such as the metropolis. To be poor in a small city is altogether a different thing from the dreadful poverty of the great congested communities where rents are expensive and living dear. A man may be poor in a provincial town and yet have a comfortable home. Oftentimes his home becomes squalid and barren—it becomes bare and naked and stripped of comforts as he sinks lower and lower into the quag of poverty; but he still has room in which to move about and to live, and he still has the out-of-doors close at hand in which he may walk about and breathe the pure air. But in a great city, even those who are not really of the pauper class—even those who have work to do, and make what is called a comfortable living—live crowded together and congested in black and dismal tenement houses that fairly reek with the stench of humanity packed within their walls. This is a poverty from which there is no escape, and to which there is no out-of-doors except the noisy and dirty street with its ash-barrels, its garbage, and its refuse. This is a poverty whose recreation is to sit out upon the doorstep that leads into the dirty street or upon the fire-escape, or, in hot weather, maybe upon the roofs among the chimney-stacks and a net-work of electric wires. This is a poverty that breeds harlots and criminals as corruption breeds maggots.

For all this misery Dr. Caiaphas was in nowise to blame, but, nevertheless, when he first entered into the parish, coming, as he did, fresh from a wholesome provincial community, he felt that the condition was a crime to which he himself was somehow indirectly a party. He did not see wherein the fault lay, nor yet just how he was responsible for it, but it was clear to him that it was cruelly unjust that he, who had never produced anything, who had never created anything, who spent his life in preaching to rich people who had no need for divine consolation, and who listened to his sermons for the sake of their splendid oratorical periods—interested rather in the novelty of his ideas than in their humanitarian import—it seemed to him to be cruelly unjust that he, doing such barren work as this, should enjoy forty thousand dollars a year and live so luxuriously while these poor men and women, who did actually create the real uses of the world, who were actually now adding to the wealth and

the prosperity of mankind—should be packed together in greasy and stinking tenement houses like vermin in so many boxes.

Early in his life, as rector of the church, he had made one futile attempt to rectify this wrong to which he felt that he was himself helplessly party. “I cannot, gentlemen,” he said, concluding a speech to the vestry—“I cannot feel free to accept a fee of forty thousand dollars a year, besides my house, rent free, and to live in luxury under such circumstances. It is an injustice which I did not create, but in accepting such munificent rewards I make myself accessory to it. These men are equally human beings with myself, and betwixt them and myself, in the eyes of God, there is not one iota of fundamental difference. Not only have they the same desires as myself, but they, in the light of truth, are God’s children just as I am one of God’s children, and each and every one of them is the inheritor of a heavenly immortality equal to mine—a heavenly glory that shall, perhaps, exceed mine to come. Feeling this as strongly as I do, I cannot consent to be the instrument of such injustice and such inequality. I cannot consent to accept for the few trivial years of this life such great luxury and ease of living, simply for the pleasure it affords my bodily senses, while these other human beings have not even sufficient food to eat or sufficient clothes to wear. Therefore it is that I cannot accept any such fee as it is your pleasure to offer me.”

The chairman of the vestry was Mr. James Dorman-Webster, probably one of the richest men in the world. He smiled kindly as the minister concluded his address, and then he laughed. “I cannot see the force of your reasoning, doctor,” he said. “If you could strip yourself down to the barest necessities of life, and live upon a dollar and a half a day, I do not see in what way you would benefit these people whose poverty is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the result of their own improvidence. The truth is that you work as hard as the head of the nation, and I am sure you are as intelligent as he, and earn your money quite as well as he does. Why should you not have a salary equal to his, instead of less than his? The fact is, *labor given and wages received have no relation whatever with each other, but are merely arbitrary quantities.*” He thrust his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat as he spoke and drew out a pocket-book. Then he filled out a check and handed it to the doctor. It was for ten thousand dollars. “There, doctor,” he said, “take that and distribute it among your poor as you choose. When you find that you need more, appeal to your vestry, and if they ever refuse to give it to you, then it will be time to talk of giving up your own salary.”

It was pathetic—almost tragic—the inability of this well-meaning priest, of Levitical cast and Roman associations, to escape from under the weight of forty thousand dollars of yearly wealth that God had seen fit to lay upon his shoulders. There was no answer to be made to the practical logic of Mr. Dorman-Webster, and there was nothing to be gained by any sacrifice the rich priest could make. There was the check just donated, and there was the promise of as much more as he should ask for in reason. Dr. Caiaphas might just as well have walked down to the river and have thrown his salary into the water as to refuse to take it now. His poor would gain nothing by the refusal, and he would lose everything—even his influence over the needy of his parish—for poor people, though they resent riches, have no respect for poverty in the upper classes.

Such was Dr. Caiaphas. His was a mind of that logical, well-balanced sort to which anything like religious fanaticism or excess is, of all things, most repugnant. There was nothing so displeasing to him as religious hysteria. He was wont to say, “Does any man think that God Almighty is deaf that He needs to have prayers shouted into His ears?”

All the religious ferment attending the preaching of John the Baptist was not only distasteful to him—it was positively repulsive. It distressed him beyond measure to think that it was possible for one man like this John to so stir the nether depths of humanity that all the purity and lucidity of true faith should become turbid. It was incredible to the wise and even-minded priest that any man—be he never so poor, or ignorant, or credulous—could, in that age of light, listen to the blasphemous assertions of an insane fanatic, that God was really about to send a Son into the midst of such a turbulent and disorderly tumult. How was it possible for any human creature to conceive that the Messiah would

appear in the midst of such a rabble as that gathered in the wilderness to a mad baptism? Of what use were the teachings of his twenty years of rational religion if, in a moment, his poor parishioners could so rush away from him and the pure and lucid truths of faith, trampling those truths beneath their feet like a herd of swine, in their rush to hear something that stirred their emotions and was new and startling? He had thought that the poor people in his parish were fond of him, and loved to listen to the words of wisdom he was commissioned to speak. Now he felt that they cared nothing for him, and that all the words he had spoken to them had fallen upon their minds as water falls upon the sand, leaving it as parched and barren as before.

Then one day he sent out addresses to all the prominent clergymen of the different denominations of the city, inviting them to a conference at the rectory of the Church of the Advent to consider what was to be done to counteract the growing disorder.

Some few of those to whom these addresses were sent did not respond, but nearly all who received invitations to the meeting were present. Dr. Caiaphas was a very notable, even a famous man, and the invitation was a compliment to every divine who received it.

Nearly all who were present were strangers to the place, and it was an interesting study of human nature to see the different ways in which the different men bore themselves. Those who were not strangers perhaps assumed an air of intimate acquaintance with their surroundings. One young man, for instance, a fashionable clergyman of the day, who had not been in the house a half-dozen times, stood with his back to the fire smoking a cigar with an air of perfect and authoritative ease. "What did you do with the little Rembrandt that used to hang yonder, doctor?" he called across the room.

The doctor laughed. He understood the workings of the young clergyman's mind. "Oh, that hangs in the upper hall now," he said.

Others who were strangers to the place gazed about them, at the cases of beautifully bound books, at the walls covered with paintings and water-colors, some with a sort of half-furtive curiosity, others assuming a studied and obvious air of indifference to the richness and exquisite taste of everything, others evidently honestly impressed with the superabundance of beautiful things, one or two ill at ease—some few even overawed at the magnificence of their surroundings.

The meeting resulted in a rather rambling sort of talk; there were other things spoken of besides John the Baptist—mostly general topics of the same sort—discursive discussions of various heresies. The relation of the classes was talked about, and even politics. But still Dr. Caiaphas held the discussion pretty steadily to the topic in hand. Some who were present regarded the matter as serious enough; others were inclined to permit themselves a sort of clerical jocularly concerning it; he himself tried to throw into the talk the weight he felt it deserved. Maybe a series of addresses from the pulpit would be the better way of reaching the attention of the people, he said. Such a series of addresses might be delivered simultaneously in all the churches. "Oh, if it's a matter of preaching a sermon," said Mr. Munjoy, a minister of another denomination—"if it's a matter of preaching a sermon, why I'm right there. To tell you the honest truth"—here he whispered broadly—"I'm sometimes so close pushed for a theme to preach about that I'm only too glad to have one suggested to me."

Some of those present laughed. Dr. Caiaphas smiled faintly. "I don't think that we are exactly in search of a theme to preach about," he said. "I take it we are rather called together here to consider some mutual effort in defence of God's truth."

Mr. Munjoy laughed and helped himself to another cigar.

"What impresses me," said Mr. Bold, a young clergyman with strong revolutionary tendencies, "is that we shall never be able to treat this subject as we should treat it unless we see with our own eyes what is being done at these baptisms, and hear with our own ears what the man has to say. I don't believe in sitting in a room and imagining how a thing might be, and then combating the notion. For instance, I was reading your sermon reported in the *Aurora* this morning," he said, addressing himself directly to Mr. Lovejoy, a mild-mannered, fashionable clergyman, "about the lost woman, you know. It impressed me you were talking about something you imagined rather than about something you

had really seen. Now, did you ever happen to study intimately the life of a real harlot?" Mr. Lovejoy looked ineffably shocked, and a sudden silence fell upon all, while Mr. Bold, in spite of his self-assurance, felt uncomfortably that he had expressed himself unfortunately, and that he had not been understood. "What I mean," he said, "is that unless you really know something about what you attack from the pulpit, I fail to see how your attack is going to amount to anything. Now, I wonder how many of us have heard this man preach."

"I'm sure I've not," said Mr. Munjoy. And there was not one of all of them who had thought it worth while to go to John the Baptist to hear what he really had to say.

"Then," said Mr. Bold, "how are you going to attack what he has to say if you don't know what he does say?"

"There's a good deal of truth in what our friend says," said Dr. Caiaphas, after a moment or two of thoughtful silence.

"And how would you propose to approach the matter so as to deal with it knowledgeably?" asked Dr. Kimberly, a minister of still another denomination.

"I don't know," said Dr. Caiaphas. "I'm sure the conference is open to suggestions."

"How would it do to send down a committee of five to interview him, and to ask him what he has to say for himself?" said Mr. Munjoy, jocularly. And then there was a murmur of laughter.

"Really, though," said Mr. Bold, after the laugh had subsided, "I don't know that that is a half bad suggestion."

"Bad!" said Mr. Munjoy. "I should hope not. I hope you don't think that a minister of my denomination would suggest anything that was bad." And then there was another laugh.

The idea of the committee had been proposed in jest, but before the meeting closed it was considered seriously, and was finally adopted. There was still a general feeling of half-repressed jocularly about it all, but, nevertheless, the committee was duly appointed. Mr. Munjoy, as the proposer of the committee, was nominated for chairman, but he declined in a very witty and amusing speech, proposing Dr. Caiaphas in his stead. Dr. Caiaphas was not at all pleased with the sense of levity that pervaded the meeting. It seemed to him that the subject was very serious, and he replied to what Mr. Munjoy had said in a very serious manner. He wished, he said, that some younger man had been chosen. Without at all desiring to shift the burden from his own shoulders, he must say that he really felt that his time was so much taken up with the work of the investigation committee appointed to examine into the police department that it would be almost impossible for him to give to this matter that consideration which it seemed to him to deserve. Nevertheless, if it was the will of those present that he should act as chairman, he would so act to the best of his poor powers.

IV

WHAT WENT YE DOWN FOR TO SEE?

IT was a lovely, balmy day—that upon which our priests and Levites went down to the baptisms of John. It was yet early in March, but the day was as soft and as warm as a day in May.

When the clergymen descended from the train they found the platform crowded with those who had come over from the camp to meet arriving friends, and everywhere arose a confused and inarticulate hubbub of voices. The committee almost forced its way across the platform to where the hacks and carriages of all sorts and kinds stood drawn up in a row, and whence the voices of hackmen dominated loudly all the bustle and noise, adding their quota to the bewildering confusion. The crowd struggled and pushed, and through the ceaseless noise and hubbub there sounded the thin, keen wail of a crying baby.

Mr. Bold chose a 'bus, the committee filled it almost more than full, and it was driven off immediately, among the first to quit the station. A cloud of dust surrounded them as they rattled along the level road, leaving farther and farther behind them the still ceaseless tumult of the crowded platform, above which loomed the locomotive, smoking and hissing gigantically.

The owner of the 'bus stood on the steps behind clinging to the door-frame. "Be you ministers?" said he.

"Yes," said one of the party.

"Come to the baptism?"

The minister laughed. "No, not exactly."

"But, talking of baptism," said Mr. Munjoy, "I wish very much we could find a basin of water and a cake of soap somewhere; it was very dusty coming down."

The hackman leaned to one side and spat into the dusty road that sped away behind. "Yes," he assented; "you see, we 'ain't had no rain now for above two weeks."

"Pretty bad look-out for salvation, I should say, if the dry weather holds," observed Mr. Munjoy.

Dr. Caiaphas sat quiet and impassive. The uncomfortable feeling had been growing upon him ever since he left home that he was upon a grotesque fool's errand.

The road over which they were now passing was heavy and sandy. The sun shone down upon it warmly, and, early as was the season, the fresh grass had begun to show itself in irregular patches of light and dark-green. The sky overhead was blue. In the sunshine it was warm, but those on the shady side of the coach drew their overcoats closer about them. Every now and then the hack would pass little groups or single figures, all plodding along in the direction of the camp. Sometimes there were larger groups of men and women and some children or half-grown girls. Some of the men carried their overcoats over one arm. One group which they passed consisted of three women, one man, and three children. One of the women—thin and frail-looking—carried a young baby, and the two other tired children dragged themselves along, holding each by a hand of another of the women. All these people were of the commoner sort. Some appeared to be working-men with their wives, others appeared not even to be laboring men, but of that great, underlying, nameless class that is still lower in the scale of social existence than the class of producers. Most of these people were evidently dressed in their best clothes, as though for a holiday.

After riding for maybe a mile, the hack turned a bend in the road, and from the summit of a little sandy rise of ground the committee came within sudden sight of the camp.

Every one of them was surprised at the extent of the encampment. As they looked down upon it, it stretched away like a great town of tents and huts. In some places the tents and frame sheds were clustered in a confused mass, in other places they were separated into streets and avenues. Upon the outskirts—the suburbs of this nondescript town—were everywhere clustering groups of carts and

wagons and restless crowds of people which grew thicker and thicker in the camp, becoming here and there congested into restless, moving ganglia of humanity. These disconnected groups of people gathered most thickly along the banks of the stream, and far away in the distance was a greater crowd surrounding some central point of interest. The visitors surmised that John the Baptist was the centre of that crowd. Beyond the stream were a few scattered huts, and beyond that a level, green marsh. An inlet from the sea made in part a broken, sandy headland. Beyond that, in the distance, was a wide, sparkling stretch of water with the far, blue line of the farther shore. Above all was the windy arch of sky looking down peacefully and calmly upon the clustered, restless masses of human beings below. There was an indefinable odor of salt in the air, and the wind came across from over the marsh, fresh and cool.

The hack rattled down the road and into the camp in a cloud of dust. It was about noon and many of the people were eating their mid-day meal. Everywhere there were clusters of men and women, sitting in farm wagons or carts munching their food and talking among themselves.

The driver drove for some little distance into the camp, checking his horses every now and then and hallooing to the men and women in his road, who scattered right and left to make way for the rather headlong rate at which he drove. At last he stopped in front of a big frame shed with a rude sign above the doorway, informing the passers that there refreshment was to be had at a cheap and popular price. The shed was open at one end, and within you could see rows of benches and long deal tables. Here the committee got out, one by one, and stood looking about them.

Along the wide, street-like space there fronted a long, disjointed line of huts and tents of all sorts and kinds. The air was full of an indescribable odor as of raw boards and crushed grass. The street was full of a restless, passing stream of men and women and boys, and everywhere was the ceaseless buzz of talking, now and then dominated by the call of some one hallooing to a distant comrade.

The visiting clergymen had no doubt whither to bend their steps. All the crowd seemed to drift and centre in one direction, and they knew that thither they would find him whom they sought. As they passed down along the front of the different tents and huts and shanties, they heard everywhere the clatter of dishes and smelt the odor of cooking. Here and there a hut bore a sign indicating that there lodging was to be had. At one place they passed by where a man, evidently stupefied with drink, lay in the sun by the side of a little frame hut with a canvas cover. A thin, bony woman was cooking a meal of food at a stove behind the hut, and the combined smell of the smoke and frying food filled the air. Two little children came around the side of the hut and stood looking at the committee as it passed.

The motley, restless crowd grew thicker and thicker as the committee approached the spot where they knew John must be found, and at last they had some difficulty in pushing their way through the congested groups. As they elbowed their way, the crowd would look at them and then, seeing they were ministers, would make way for them. Suddenly they came upon the Baptist, almost before they had expected to find him. He was eating a meal of indescribable food, sitting upon the ground, holding the plate upon his knees. He was, indeed, a shaggy, wild-looking figure, thin-faced, sallow, with filmy, restless eyes and a black, coarse mat of hair and beard. He wore the same dress of hairy cloth that the picture in the public journal had represented. The heavy brogans were wet and soaked with water, his legs, showing above the shoe-tops, were lean and hairy. A little cluster of his disciples, or attendants, surrounded him; some of them were eating their food, others, who had finished, were lying stretched upon the ground talking in an undertone. They were all rough, common-looking men, several of them apparently fishermen. Surrounding this group, and at a little distance, the people stood in a crowd looking intently at the Baptist. The committee also stood for a while looking at him; then Dr. Caiaphas came forward.

As the priest approached, the Baptist looked towards him with vacant, lustreless eyes. The sun suddenly came out from behind a passing cloud and shone full upon his face, but he did not wink his eyes nor shade them from the glare.

“My friend,” said the rector of the Church of the Advent, “my name is Theodore Caiaphas. I do not know whether you have heard of me or not, but I have heard of you. I am, as you see, an ordained priest. I and my friends”—here he indicated the others of the committee—“have come down to learn just what it is you preach, just what your opinions are, and just what you advocate. Will you tell me, first of all, who you are?”

John sat looking intently but vacantly at him. He did not speak for a little while. Then he said, in a sudden, loud voice, “I am not the Christ.”

“So I understand,” said Dr. Caiaphas. “But are you a prophet—such a one, for instance, as Elijah?”

“I am not,” said the fanatic, still in the same loud voice.

“Ah! Then you are not even a prophet?” said Dr. Caiaphas.

“No.”

“Who are you, then?” said Dr. Caiaphas; “and what are you? Tell us who you are, that we may give an answer to them that sent us.” He tried not to feel the absurdity of the situation, but some of the other clergymen laughed.

John turned up his face and looked almost directly into the dazzling light of the sun above. He raised his lean arms, with his hands outspread and his fingers stretched wide open. “I am,” he cried, in a loud voice, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way, as said Isaiah, the prophet.”

Again two or three of the committee laughed. The disciples of John looked sullenly at them, but the Baptist himself paid no attention to them.

“Then, let me understand,” said Dr. Caiaphas, speaking also in a loud voice so that all might hear—“then, let me understand just what it is you have to say for yourself. Let me hear just what is your claim, for it is for that reason that we have come hither. What I want to understand, and what all these poor people here should clearly understand, is this: If you are not the Christ—and you yourself say you are not—nor such a one as Elijah, nor one having authority to preach, as the saints of the Church had authority—if you are only a voice preaching in the wilderness, by what right do you, then, baptize and grant remission of sins? By what authority do you, then, forgive men their sins?”

John, still with eyes uplifted and with hands outspread, cried out: “I baptize with water, but in the midst of you there stands one whom you know not, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.” Other words he uttered, as uncomprehendable to the clergymen as these. He still held his arm upraised and his hand outspread for a little. Then he ended suddenly, and as suddenly let his hand fall from his knee, and sat looking about him as though to see what effect his words had upon those who heard them. One of the committee laid his hand upon Dr. Caiaphas’s arm. “Do you not see that it is useless to waste time here?” said he. “What good can come of it, doctor? It is plain to me that the man is mad. Any one with eyes to see and ears to hear may see and hear that for himself. Mr. Hicks tells us that the up-train will be due in twenty-five minutes. We have just comfortable time to make it. If we miss it, we’ll have to wait till five o’clock, and not get into town till after dark. I am sure that I, for one, have seen enough to convince me of the man’s insanity without listening any further to what he has to say.”

Dr. Caiaphas looked at his watch. “Well,” he said, reluctantly, “I suppose we might as well return. I would like to have heard him preach to the multitude, though, and to see how he baptizes them. However, I quite agree with you that he is not right in his mind, and I suppose it would be only a mere matter of curiosity to remain longer.”

If Dr. Caiaphas had on his way down from New York feared that he was on a fool’s errand, he was, indeed, certain of it now. He did not say anything until the committee was on its way back to the station in the hack. Then he spoke.

“I am sorry, gentlemen, that I should have brought you all the way down here only for this. I am afraid”—with a smile—“that the committee did not get much satisfaction from the interview.”

Mr. Munjoy laughed. "I am sure," he said, "that we are all very glad to have suffered a little inconvenience to have satisfied Dr. Caiaphas."

The words were good-natured enough, but they made Dr. Caiaphas still more uncomfortable. "Indeed," he said, "I am glad to be satisfied, but that was not exactly my object in bringing you all down here. I am sorry that you have taken a journey that is uncomfortable to yourselves only to satisfy me."

"Oh, that's all right," said Mr. Munjoy, laughing. "This time to-morrow we'll have ceased to think anything about the inconveniences of to-day. I am sure many of us have squandered a half-day ever so much more uselessly than this."

Then there was nothing more said.

Thus I have endeavored to describe that incident as nearly as possible as it occurred. Since then a sentimental lustre has arisen to envelop it, and the world has come to accept it that those priests and Levites were blind in that they did not at once see the truth. But I think intelligent humanity will agree that it was impossible for the priests and Levites among us to accept the divine truth in such an astonishing guise as that which they then beheld.

It is entirely true that God moves ever in ways incomprehensible to the finite mind. His wisdom is not according to our wisdom, nor His order according to our order. But it cannot be possible that He expects us, scribes and pharisees, whom He has endowed with intelligence and reason, to accept that which was so unintelligent and so unreasonable. If He endows us with reason, He cannot expect us to accept that which is unreasonable. Who is there of our class to-day who would not have revolted against the baptism of John when it was first instituted?

AN INTERLUDE

IT is necessary here, and at another place, to introduce an interlude into the story. These interludes are designed as threads to connect the different parts of the narrative together. They are each a suggestion instead of a description; for even a description of things holy would too much shock the sense of propriety of us scribes and pharisees.

For the accepted religion of the civilized world has become so enveloped with wrappings of spiritual ideality that it is impossible to strip away those investments and to show the reality in all its nakedness. Such an exposure would too much violate our accepted religious ideas. It would not do for any man to tell just how it was that Christ actually did appear in the midst of that motley multitude; nor would it do for any pharisee among us to listen to the story.

Either the truth would sound blasphemous, or else, if it were accepted and received, then we scribes and pharisees, priests and Levites of to-day would rise up and stone it and crucify it exactly as we did of old.

Since those times we have grown accustomed to say that we believe in Christ—even though we do not really believe. Expressed belief and real belief are very different matters. What we think we believe in is not the living Christ as He was in the flesh, but a Christ we have created for ourselves—a white-robed, visionary figure that passes through the world of humanity like a spirit rather than like a man of flesh and blood.

For the story of Christ is surrounded by the narrative of such incredibly miraculous happenings that it is necessary for us to create such a spiritual image, or else we cannot believe those narratives at all. It is with us now as it was in those ages past—we cannot bear to have the spiritual image of truth blasphemed by the living fact. In our souls we disbelieve that which seems to us to be unbelievable. We endeavor to stimulate faith, first by saying that we believe, and then by creating for ourselves an imaginary image of Christ who might have performed the miracles if He had really lived.

Nearly all intelligent and thoughtful men really do believe in the existence of an infinitely intelligent and infinitely powerful deity.

For a man has but to gaze about him and he beholds, with the eyes of his flesh, infinity itself—infinity of what is great; infinity of what is minute; infinity of time; infinity of space.

These are actual entities, for we know that there never was and never can be a time in which there was no created thing—not even vacuum—and we know that there can be no limit to space in which everything—even space itself—ceases to exist. The very material universe exists infinitely, and we behold with the eyes of the flesh. We do not comprehend it, yet we know that it really is.

In the hollow vault of night we behold countless myriads of huge and flaming suns, scattered like dust through the sky, or sparkling in points of radiance, and we know that that created stellar system extends, without limit, into the emptiness of limitless space. We know that each incredibly gigantic sun—flaming with light and heat—follows a perfect and well-assigned orbit. We know that about each of these glorious suns there must revolve scores of planets, like this earth upon which we stand.

Seeing this fact with our eyes, it is not possible for the reason to suppose that all this well-ordered and perfect system of enormous stellar and planetary system was created, is governed, is sustained by blind and chaotic chance. Chance never built even so much as a brick wall. How could it, then, create a living sun whose heat and light give life to the planets that revolve about it?

There must be a Creator for these things—a Creator infinitely potent, infinitely intelligent—or else those things could not have been created.

On the other hand, man looks about him upon the earth, and there he beholds an equally and infinitely perfect creation. For every one of the myriad blades of grass, and every one of the myriad leaves of the trees, and every one of the myriad flowers of the field, is, in itself, as tremendously perfect in its every minutest particular as is the greatest sun that flames in the empty heavens. Not only does it live in a minute and orderly sequence of progressive existence, but it possesses an infinitely vital power of procreation, so that each tiny seed, under proper circumstances, has the power of filling the entire universe with its progeny.

Every bird, beast, and fish is not only exactly fitted into its surroundings—not only is each perfect even unto every hair, feather, and scale—not only is each endowed with a vitality that enables it upon an instant to adapt itself to the circumstances of its existence; but each in itself is endowed with the same potentiality of indefinitely procreating its kind with equal bodily perfection.

These things can neither be created nor sustained excepting by an intelligent Creator who makes and sustains them; for it is impossible for any reasoning man to suppose that vacuity and death has created that which is a fact and is alive—that nothingness can have created that which is not only perfect in itself, but which is endowed with such infinite potentiality.

And at the apex of all creation stands man himself, so nicely and perfectly adjusted to the conditions that surround him that it takes only a few degrees in the variation of so small a thing as the temperature of the air to destroy him or to sustain his life. And each man possesses not only volition, but thought and reason to such particularity that each tiny idea may be continued to infinity; or, when applied to the things of nature, may evolve a physical phenomenon that can affect or transform the entire economy of the world in which he lives.

Whence comes this perfect and intelligent life? Man does not cause himself to think, nor does he cause himself to live. He may shape and direct his thoughts, but intelligence comes to him without his own volition. He receives these things, but he does not cause either the one or the other to be created.

That which causes life and intelligence to exist and to inflow into man is and must be infinite vitality and infinite intelligence—an omniscient Creator—or else these things must spring from nothing.

Thus any man who thinks and reasons within himself must perceive that there actually is and does exist a divine and infinite Creator.

But that which we scribes and pharisees, priests and Levites, cannot really accept is the fact that this infinite Creator—this tremendous God, who sustains the universe and who flings blazing suns and

planets by the handful through the heavens—that this omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Divinity should actually have become finitely incarnate upon this earth. It is still more impossible for us to believe with our reason that the humble wife of a common carpenter should have given Him birth as a little, whimpering, helpless babe among the cattle of a stable in Palestine.

Our caste has been compelled by the force of circumstances to accept this as a dogma, but we cannot believe it in our hearts. Consequently we build for ourselves an ideal Christ who is so different from the actual Christ that, were the real Christ to appear to-day, we would crucify Him exactly as we did nineteen hundred years ago.

It is, indeed, the crowning truth of the ages that Jehovah did enter finitely into the flesh of a man; that He was miraculously conceived; that He was born in a stable in Bethlehem, and that His mother was the wife of a journeyman carpenter, who had a carpenter-shop in Nazareth. But that truth is not for us; consequently we either become sadducees and deny the resurrection of the soul, or else we are pharisees who, with a helpless hypocrisy, try to cause ourselves, by some *hocus-pocus* of inverted reasoning, to believe that which we do not believe.

We do not really believe that the actual laws of nature were ever so preposterously violated as the Scriptures tell us. No rational pharisee ever really believed that water, at a touch, can be actually transmuted into wine; or that dead and gangrenous flesh ever was, at a touch, actually transformed into healthy tissues; or that eyes organically imperfect ever were, at a touch, made to receive the light like healthy orbs.

Either we falsify ourselves by saying that we believe these things, or else we benumb our reasoning so as not to think about them at all. Many of us would fain expurgate those miraculous narratives from the divine word, retaining only such spiritual and intangible ideas as are believable because they have no foundation in fact. Others of us give up the task as hopeless, and declare frankly that we do not know whether they are true or not, but that we are willing to give them the benefit of the doubt.

These things of divine truth are so preposterous to the common sense that only the ignorant can believe them. Wherefore the Scriptures are given into the hands of the ignorant for preservation, lest we, intelligent pharisees, should alter and amend them to fit our own ideas—in the which case they would inevitably perish.

For it is to be remembered that, while the divine Scriptures have lasted in their entirety through the ages, nearly every system of human philosophy—whether physical or metaphysical—has perished after a generation or two, to give place to another system. So would the Scriptures perish if it were left to us to amend them so as to fit the rational and intelligent science of the age.

We were born to crucify the truth; it is our mission in life, and we must not be blamed when we fulfil our destiny.

Shortly after that visit of the priests and Levites to the baptisms of John, the promised Messiah suddenly appeared in the midst of the motley crowd gathered to hear the truth.

A poor woman, the mother of two ordinary fishermen, thus described the divine miracle that thereupon happened. She told it somewhat thus: “I saw it. There was a great many people around; some saw it and some did not see it. I can’t tell just how it was, but it was after He went down into the water with John. There was a light as if it was sunshine up this way; then something came. It looked like a dove—they all said it was a dove. It looked like it came down upon Him. I don’t know how long it lasted—I saw it for a little and then it was gone. He was standing in the water along with John; then He came out close to where I stood. The folk were calling out ‘Hallelujah!’ all about us. They were crying ‘Hallelujah! Hallelujah!’ They crowded so they pushed me into the water. I felt as though I were going crazy, and I, too, kept calling out ‘Hallelujah! Hallelujah!’”

Even in the recounting of such a reality it sounds shocking. How shocking, then, must it have been to those of us who were living when it really happened.

But with this, the mission of John came to an end. The crowds that had gathered about him departed hither and thither, and the earth was left bare and desolate where the growing things of the spring-time had been trampled into the dry and dusty soil by the treading of many feet—where the pure waters of the streams had been defiled by human contact.

V

THE BEGINNING OF THE WORKS

WITH the dispersion of the great crowd of poor ignorants who had gathered about John the Baptist, we thought that the agitation was ended.

We were mistaken.

For a time nothing more was heard of the Christ whom John had baptized. Then, suddenly, there came rumors, first from one side and then from another; fugitive words telling of a renewed excitement that had begun to ferment obscurely in that same nether class that had followed John to his baptism. Gradually these rumors became more and more dominant, and every day more people heard of and became interested in what was said. The interest was not very great with us, but it was sufficient to keep alive the observation of the daily papers.

The Messiah who had been baptized by John had reappeared, and many people of the poorer classes were gathering about Him in numbers to hear His teachings and to receive His word. These poor people asserted that He performed many miracles; that He could heal the sick and diseased by merely touching them with His hand; that He caused the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, and the blind to see. It was said that many miraculous cures had already been performed by Him.

It happened at this time that a party of men of the literary and artistic world had chartered a vessel and had fitted it up as a floating studio, adorning it with antique furniture, rugs, hangings, and bric-à-brac.

It was a very merry party—a party of sadducees who strenuously believed in no resurrection. There was Archibald Redfern, the writer-artist-man-about-town; Corry King, assistant editor and business manager of the *Aurora*; Marcey, the architect; Chillingham Norcott, the artist; Allington, of the publishing-house of Richard White & Co.; Dr. Ames, Pinwell, and others. During the cruise, Norcott, Pinwell, and Redfern had enriched the panels of the cabin with marines and landscapes and decorative pieces until the interior looked almost like a picture-gallery. Everything was as luxurious as possible. They had engaged Pierre Blanc to go with them and to cook for them, and they paid him six hundred dollars for the three or four weeks of the cruise. When it is said that Dr. Ames himself selected the wines and liquors, nothing more need be said concerning the provisioning of the expedition.

The cruise had been a complete success, and now they were about returning to the metropolis again. They had run short of ice, and had put in at a small coast town for a fresh supply.

Redfern, who had arrogated to himself the position of head-steward, had gone ashore in the boat with the steward *de facto*. There he heard strange and wonderful reports of miracles that were being performed in the neighborhood.

As the boat, returning from the shore, touched the side of the schooner, Redfern came scrambling aboard, and almost immediately his loud, brassy voice was heard from end to end of the vessel, telling of wonders performed and of miracles wrought.

Some of the party were mildly gambling at poker under the awning, waiting Redfern's return with the ice. Corry King lay stretched out upon a couch in his shirt-sleeves reading a magazine, a tall glass of brandy-and-soda at his elbow. Norcott was sketching listlessly; the others were talking together. They all looked up at the sound of Redfern's loud voice. There was nothing funny in what he said, but they all laughed.

"And you have returned cured of body and sound of soul, I suppose," said Ames.

"It isn't of myself I'm thinking," said Redfern, in his strident, insistent voice, a voice that almost stunned the hearer if he were near by and not used to it. "It's not of myself I'm thinking. I'm thinking of you. I tell you, boys, this is the chance of your life. I'm going to take you all ashore this afternoon.

Your souls have run down during this cruise, and what you want is to get a good brace of salvation before you get back home again.”

They all went ashore in the afternoon. The town appeared to be singularly deserted. A few guests hung about the third-class summer hotel porch, sitting uncomfortably on the hard, wooden chairs in the shade. An occasional inhabitant appeared here and there on the hot, sandy stretch of street, but everywhere there was a feeling of dull and silent depletion. The party inquired at the hotel office and found that He whom they sought was then supposed to be at a certain place about six miles below the town where there was a high and rocky hill. They found that they could obtain a conveyance, and, after a good deal of jocular chaffing with the fat and grinning hackman, the vehicle was ordered, and a team of four horses. It was a dusty, rattletrap affair, and the party piled in with much noisy confusion, struggling for seats, and sitting in one another's laps. The hotel guests sat looking on with a sort of outside interest and amusement. Then the hack drove away with a volley of cheers and a chorus of mimic coach-horns.

“Look here, boys,” called out Corry King, “what I want to know is whether Redfern's taking us down here for our sakes or for his own? Either he has got to take this thing seriously or else we have.”

“It's all for your sake, my boy! For your sake!” cried out Redfern's brazen, dominant voice. “I made up my mind last night when I saw the way you bucked up against Marcy's luck in that last jack-pot that you needed some sort of salvation to pull you through till we get you home again.”

It was three o'clock before they approached their destination. As they drew near they found that everywhere vehicles of all sorts were standing along the road, the horses hitched to the fence at the road-sides. They could see from a distance as they approached that the hill was covered with a restless, swaying mass of people, and then they saw that the crowd was moving voluminously all in one direction—away from the crest.

“I'm afraid you're too late to hear Him, gentlemen,” said the driver, and he urged the horses forward with greater speed.

It was true; they were just too late to hear that sermon which voiced the sublimest code of ethics the world has ever heard—sublime, but, in our opinion, impracticable.

Presently they were met, almost suddenly, by the broken, ragged outskirts of the moving crowd that was beginning to pour away from the hill. They had not, until then, any idea how great was the agitation centring around this strange being.

Then, almost in a moment, the crowd became so dense that the hack could make no further progress. “I reckon we'll have to pull out of the way,” said the driver.

“All right,” said Redfern; “pull away.”

And now the crowd was so thick about them that it was with some difficulty that the driver could edge his horses over to the side of the road. And every instant the mass of men and women grew more and more dense. “Look out where you're going! Look out there!” cried a chorus of voices, as the crowd melted and dissolved before the horses, closing again around the hack. And now the road was suddenly filling with a great press of people moving all in one direction; the air was made dense and darkened with clouds of dust. Then the party in the hack saw approaching along the road the nucleus of this denser crowd which so centred about a single point. “Yonder He is,” cried the driver, standing up and pointing with his whip. “That's Him, there.”

The men were all standing up in the hack.

“Where?” said Redfern.

“That's Him—that tall man,” said the driver.

The crowd were surging all about them, pushing against the wheels of the hack. The air was full of the tumult of many voices. The horses shrank to one side as the moving mass eddied around them. Then there came a little group of rough men, apparently fishermen. In the midst of them was a tall man. His face was wet with sweat, and drops of sweat ran down His cheeks. He gazed straight

before Him and seemed oblivious to everything about Him. The men in the hack all knew that that must be He, and they stood up looking at Him.

Then they saw a miracle.

Suddenly, almost alongside them, there was a commotion and an outcry of voices. The crowd parted, and as those in the hack looked down, they saw a man struggling out of it and panting and gasping. It was a dreadful sight. He was covered over with hideous, scrofulous sores. No wonder the crowd parted to make way for him. Through his panting he was shouting, hoarsely, "Make me clean! Make me clean!" The crowd surged and swayed with an echoing outcry of voices, and for a moment the man was shut out from the sight of those sadducees. Then they could see that the diseased man was kneeling in the road.

"I will," said a loud, clear voice that dominated the disturbance. "Be clean!" They could see that He upon whom they were looking had reached out His hand. They could not see what He did, but He appeared to touch the kneeling man. Instantly there was a great shout, and the crowd surged and swept and heaved more tumultuously than ever. They could not see what had happened.

"My God!" cried out the driver, "did you see that?"

"See what?" said Corry King, who stood next him. In spite of himself he felt thrilled with a sympathetic excitement.

"Didn't you see it? He cured him."

"Cured him?" said King. "Who? Where is he?"

"Now—don't you see him? There he is."

Had they really beheld a miracle? No; they had not. Archibald Redfern burst out laughing. "Didn't you see it, King?" he jeered. "Where are your eyes?"

That evening it was said that He would heal the sick who would come to Him. The boat party, interested in what they had already heard, went ashore again after dark. The town that had seemed to be dead and empty when they were there before, was now full of people. There were crowds everywhere. The night was hot and oppressive. The sadducees followed whither the crowd seemed to move, the press growing ever thicker and thicker, until, by-and-by, they reached a street densely packed with the throng.

It was a dark and narrow street in the suburbs. It was packed full of people, and it was only after much difficulty they were able to reach a point of vantage—a broad flight of wooden steps that led up to the door of a frame church. Thence they could see over the heads of the mob of men and women who filled the street beyond. They could see that the people were bringing the sick through the crowd. Near them was a man carrying a little child in his arms. Its poor little legs were twisted into a steel frame. A woman followed close behind the man. The child lay with its head upon the man's shoulder and appeared to be crying, though it was too dark to see clearly. The man moved, step by step, forward, and presently was swallowed into the dark mass of humanity beyond. In the distance was a doorway in which stood a figure of a man, black against the dull light of the lamp behind. There appeared to be a number of other figures crowded in the passageway behind Him. People were looking out of the windows of the neighboring houses. They could not see from the church-steps where they stood what He was doing, but He was constantly moving and stooping forward. The tumult and din were dreadful. It appeared a pandemonium of wild, unmeaning excitement. As in the afternoon, it was an excitement that was contagious. "Do you suppose He really is curing them?" said Norcott, and again Archibald Redfern burst out laughing.

"Why, of course He is," said he.

He had seen no miracle and could see none. How was it possible for a sadducee, who believed in no resurrection, to see a miracle? The wisest sadducee that ever lived, had he seen a miracle, would not have believed it. Had the Almighty blotted out the sun and the moon and written the sign of His Truth in letters of fire all across the blackened canopy of the heavens, Redfern or Corry King would not have believed—they would have misdoubted their own eyesight.

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