

**DAWSON  
WILLIAM  
JAMES**

THE EMPIRE OF LOVE

**William Dawson**  
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*The Empire of Love:*

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# W. J. Dawson

## The Empire of Love

To

M. M. D.,

who, during the last two years of our residence in London, practiced the teachings of this book before I taught them:

proving daily in her compassionate toil for others the divine efficacy of simple love to redeem the lives, that were most estranged from virtue, and most lost to hope.

Love feels no burden, regards not labours, would willingly do more than it is able, pleads not impossibility, because it feels that it can and may do all things.

# THE GENIUS TO BE LOVED

## WHY THEY LOVED HIM

*So kindly was His love to us,  
(We had not heard of love before),  
That all our life grew glorious  
When He had halted at our door.*

*So meekly did He love us men,  
Though blind we were with shameful sin,  
He touched our eyes with tears, and then  
Led God's tall angels flaming in.*

*He dwelt with us a little space,  
As mothers do in childhood's years,  
And still we can discern His face  
Wherever Joy or Love appears.*

*He made our virtues all His own,  
And lent them grace we could not give,  
And now our world seems His alone,  
And while we live He seems to live.*

*He took our sorrows and our pain,*

*And hid their torture in His breast,  
Till we received them back again  
To find on each His grief impressed.*

*He clasped our children in His arms,  
And showed us where their beauty shone,  
He took from us our gray alarms,  
And put Death's icy armour on.*

*So gentle were His ways with us,  
That crippled souls had ceased to sigh,  
On them He laid His hands, and thus  
They gloried at His passing by.*

*Without reproof or word of blame,  
As mothers do in childhood's years,  
He kissed our lips in spite of shame,  
And stayed the passage of our tears.*

*So tender was His love to us,  
(We had not learned to love before),  
That we grew like to Him, and thus  
Men sought His grace in us once more.*

*CONINGSBY WILLIAM DAWSON.*

# I

## THE GENIUS TO BE LOVED

In the history of the last two thousand years there is but one Person who has been, and is supremely loved. Many have been loved by individuals, by groups of persons, or by communities; some have received the pliant idolatries of nations, such as heroes and national deliverers; but in every instance the sense of love thus excited has been intimately associated with some triumph of intellect, or some resounding achievement in the world of action. In this there is nothing unusual, for man is a natural worshipper of heroes. But in Jesus Christ we discover something very different; He possessed the genius to be loved in so transcendent a degree that it appears His sole genius.

Jesus is loved not for anything that He taught, nor yet wholly for anything that He did, although His actions culminate in the divine fascination of the Cross, but rather for what He was in Himself. His very name provokes in countless millions a reverent tenderness of emotion usually associated only with the most sacred and intimate of human relationships. He is loved with a certain purity and intensity of passion that transcends even the most intimate expressions of human emotion. The curious thing is that He Himself anticipated this kind of love as His

eternal heritage with men. He expected that men would love Him more than father or mother, wife or child, and even made such a love a condition of what He called discipleship. The greatest marvel of all human history is that this prognostication has been strictly verified in the event. He is the Supreme Lover, for whose love, unrealizable as it is by touch, or glance, or spoken word, or momentary presence, men and women are still willing to sacrifice themselves, and surrender all things. The pregnant words of Napoleon, uttered in his last lonely reveries in St. Helena, still express the strangest thing in universal history: "Caesar, Charlemagne, I, have founded empires. They were founded on force, and have perished. Jesus Christ has founded an empire on love, and to this day there are millions ready to die for Him."

Napoleon felt the wonder of it all, the baffling, inexplicable marvel. Were we able to detach ourselves enough from use and custom, to survey the movement of human thought from some lonely height above the floods of Time, as Napoleon in the high sea-silences of St. Helena, we also might feel the wonder of this most wonderful thing the world has ever known.

That the majority of men, and even Christian men, do not perceive that the whole meaning of the life of Christ is Love is a thing too obvious to demand evidence or invite contradiction. I say men, and Christian men, thus limiting my statement, because women and Christian women, frequently do perceive it, being themselves the creatures of affection, and finding in affection

the one sufficing symbol of life and of the universe. It is a St. Catherine who thinks of herself as the bride of Christ, and dreams the lovely vision of the changed hearts—the heart of Jesus placed by the hands that bled beneath her pure bosom, and her heart hidden in the side of Him who died for her. It is a St. Theresa who melts into ecstasy at the brooding presence of the heavenly Lover, and can only think of the Evil One himself with commiseration as one who cannot love. It is true that Francis of Assisi also thought and spoke of Christ with a lover's ecstasy, but then Francis in his exquisite tenderness of nature, was more woman than man. No such thought visited the stern heart of Dominic, nor any of those makers of theology who have built systems and disciplines upon the divine poetry of the divine Life.

Love, as the perfect symbol of life and the universe, does not content men, simply because for most men love is not the key to life, nor an end worth living for in itself, nor anything but a complex and often troublesome emotion, which must needs be subordinated to other faculties and qualities, such as greed, or pride, or the desire of power, or the dominant demands of intellect. Among men the poets alone have really understood Jesus: and in the category of the poets must be included the saints, whose religion has always been interpreted to them through the imagination. The poets have understood; the theologians rarely or never. Thus it happens that men, being the general and accepted interpreters of Christ, have all but wholly misinterpreted Him. The lyric passion of that life, and the lyric

love which it excites, has been to them a disregarded music. They have rarely achieved more than to tell us what Christ taught; they have wholly failed to make us feel what Christ was. But Mary Magdalene knew this, and it was what she said and felt in the Garden that has put Christ upon the throne of the world. Was not her vision after all the true one? Is not a Catherine a better guide to Jesus than a Dominic? When all the strident theologies fall silent, will not the world's whole worship still utter itself in the lyric cry,

Jesu, Lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly.

Is it then not within the competence of man to interpret Christ aright, simply because the masculine temperament is what it is? By no means, for such a statement would disqualify the evangelists themselves, who are the only biographers of Jesus. But in the degree that a temperament is only masculine, it will fail to understand Jesus. Napoleon could not understand; he was the child of force, the son of the sword, the very type of that hard efficiency of will and intellect which turns the heart to flint, and scorns the witness of the softer intuitions. Francis could understand because he was in part feminine—not weakly so, but nobly, as all poets and dreamers and visionaries are. Paul could understand for the same reason, and so could John and Peter; each, in varying degrees, belonging to the same type; but Pilate

could not understand, because he had been trained in the hard efficiency of Rome; nor Judas, because the masculine vice of ambition had overgrown his affections, and deflowered his heart. What is it then in Paul and John and Peter, what element or quality, which we do not find in Pilate, Judas, or Napoleon? Clearly there is no lack of force, for the personality of these three first apostles lifted a world out of its groove and changed the course of history. Was it not just this, that each had beneath his masculine strength a feminine tenderness, a power of loving and of begetting love in others? John lying on the bosom of Jesus in sheer abandonment of love and sorrow at the last Supper; Peter, plunging naked into the Galilean sea, and struggling to the shore at the mere suspicion that the strange figure outlined there upon the morning mist is the Lord; Paul praying not only to share the wounds of Jesus, but if there be any pang left over, any anguish unfulfilled, that this anguish may be his—these are not alone immortal pictures, but they are revelations of a temperament, the temperament that understands Jesus. He who could not melt into an abandonment of grief and love over one on whom the shadow of the last hour rested; he who would spring headlong into no estranging sea to reach one loved and lost and marvellously brought near again; he who can share the festal wine of life, but has no appetite for agony, no thirsting of the soul to bear another's pain—these can never understand Jesus. They cannot understand Him, simply because they cannot understand love.

# WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

## TOWARDS GALILEE

The great obdurate world I know no more,  
The clanging of the brazen wheels of greed,  
The taloned hands that build the miser's store,  
The stony streets where feeble feet must bleed.  
No more I walk beneath thy ashen skies,  
With pallid martyrs cruelly crucified  
Upon thy predetermined Calvaries:  
I, too, have suffered, yea, and I have died!  
Now, at the last, another road I take  
Thro' peaceful gardens, by a lilted way,  
To those low eaves beside the silver lake,  
Where Christ waits for me at the close of day.  
Farewell, proud world! In vain thou callest me.  
I go to meet my Lord in Galilee.

## II

### WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

Christianity, as it exists to-day, is in the main a misrepresentation and a misinterpretation of Christ; not consciously indeed—if it were so the remedy would be easy; but unconsciously, which makes the remedy difficult. One need not stop to define Christianity, for there is only one sincere meaning to the word; it implies a *kind of life whose spirit and method reproduce as accurately as possible the spirit and the method of the life of Jesus*. It would seem that if this interpretation of the term be correct there could be no difficulty in adjusting even unconscious misinterpretation of Christ to the true facts of the case: but here we are met by that perversity of vision which springs not from ignorance, but from thoughtlessness, and is in its nature much more obdurate than the worst perversity of ignorance. Ignorance can be enlightened; thoughtlessness, being usually associated with vanity, recognizes no need of enlightenment.

The life of Jesus, freshly introduced to a mind wholly ignorant of its existence may be trusted to convey its own impression; but the thoughtless mind will be either too proud, or too shallow, or too confident, to be sensitive to right impressions. Thus the

trouble with most people who call themselves Christians is not to educate them into right conceptions of the life of Christ, but to destroy the growth of wrong impressions. "Surely," they will say, "we know all about the life of Christ. We have read the biographies of Jesus ever since the days of infancy. We have heard the life of Jesus expounded through long years by multitudes of teachers. We have a church which claims to have extracted from the life of Jesus a whole code of laws for life and conduct; is not this enough?" But what if the teachers themselves have never found the true secret of Jesus? What if they have but repeated the error of the Pharisees in elaborating a code of laws in which the vital spirit of the truth they would impart is lost? And does not the whole history of man's mind teach us that one simple truth known at first-hand is worth more to us, and is of greater influence on our conduct, than all the second-hand instruction we may receive from the most competent of teachers? It is just this first-hand thought which we most need. We need to see for ourselves what Jesus was, and not through the eyes of another, whatever his authority.

Suppose that we should read the Gospels in this spirit, with an entirely unbiassed and receptive mind, capable of first-hand impressions, what would be the probable character of these impressions? The clearest and deepest of all, I think, would be that the Jesus therein depicted lived His life on principles so novel that we are able to discover no life entirely like His in the best lives round about us. We should probably be struck first of all

by certain outward dissimilarities. Thus He was not only poor, but He did not resent poverty—He beatified it. The things for which men naturally, and, as we think, laudably strive, such as a settled position in society and the consideration of others, He did not think worth seeking at all. He made no use of His abilities for private ends, which has been the common principle of social life since society began. He asked nothing of the world, being apparently convinced that nothing which the world could give Him was worth having. Strangest thing of all in one who must have been conscious of His own genius, and of the value of His teachings to mankind, He made not the least effort to perpetuate these teachings. He wrote no book, provided no biographer, did none of those things which the humblest man of genius does to ensure that distant generations shall comprehend and appreciate his character and message. He was content to speak His deepest truths to casual listeners. He spent all His wealth of intellect upon inferior persons, fishermen and the like, who did not comprehend one tithe of what He said. He was the friend of all who chose to seek His friendship. He discriminated so little that He even admitted a Judas to His intimacy, and allowed women tainted with dishonour and impurity to offer Him public tokens of affection. In all these things He differed absolutely from any other man who ever lived beneath the public eye. In all these things He still stands alone; for who, among the saintliest men we know, has not some innocent pride in his ability, or some preference in friendship, or some instinctive compliance

with social usage, or some worldly hopes and honourable aims which he shares in common with the mass of men?

But these outward dissimilarities of conduct disclose a dissimilarity of soul. Men live for something; for what did Jesus live? And the answer that leaps upon us like a great light from every page of the Gospels is plain; He lived for love. If He did not care for praise or honour; if He regarded even the preservation of His teachings with a divine carelessness, it was because He had a nobler end in view, the love of men. He could not live without love, and His supreme aim was to make Himself loved. And yet it was less a conscious aim, than the natural working out of His own character. Fishermen by the sea saw Him but once; instantly they left their boats and followed Him. A man sitting at the receipt of custom, a hard man we should suppose, little likely to be swayed by sudden emotions, also sees Him once, and finds his occupation gone. A beautiful courtesan, beholding Him pass by, breaks from her lovers, and follows Him into an alien house, where she bathes His feet with tears and wipes them with the hairs of her head. Mature women without a word spoken or a plea made, minister to Him of their substance, and count their lives His. When He sleeps wearied out upon a rude fishing-boat, there is a pillow for His head, placed there by some unknown adorer. The men He makes apostles, all but one, count His smile over-payment for the loss of home, of wife, of children. Countless throngs of ordinary men and women forget their hunger, and are content to camp in desert places only to listen to the music of His voice. Wild and outlawed

men, criminals and lepers and madmen, become as little children at His word, and all the wrongs and bruises inflicted on them by a cruel world are healed beneath His kindly glance. Does it matter greatly what He taught? This is how He lived. He lived in such a way that men saw that love was the only thing worth living for, that life had meaning only as it had love. And this is the imperishable tradition of Jesus:

This is His divinity,  
This His universal plea,  
Here is One that loveth thee.

What then is a true Christianity but the accurate reproduction of this spirit of love, the creation of loving and lovable men and women, who attract and uplift all around them by the subtle fascination of the love that animates them? What is a Christian Church but a confraternity of such men and women? What is a Christian society, but a society permeated by this spirit, and bringing all the affairs of life to its test? And what place have social superiorities and inferiorities; pride, scorn, or coldness; harsh theologies, breeding harsh tempers and infinite disputes; the egoism that wounds the humble, the strength that disregards the weak, the vanity that hurts the simple, in any company of men and women who dare to wear the name of such a Founder? It was as a Bridegroom Christ came, anointed with all the perfumes of a dedicated love, and until the last bitter hour of His rejection, He moved with such lyric joyousness across the earth, that life

became festive in His presence. It is as a Bride the church exists on earth, and if no festive smiles are awakened by its presence, and no gracious unsealing of the fountains of love in human hearts, then is it not Christ's Church, for He has passed elsewhere with another company to the marriage-feast, and His Church stands without, before a barred and darkened door.

# THE JUSTICE OF JESUS

## HOW HE CAME

When the golden evening gathered on the shore of Galilee,  
When the fishing boats lay quiet by the sea,  
Long ago the people wondered, tho' no sign was in the sky,  
For the glory of the Lord was passing by.

Not in robes of purple splendour, not in silken softness shod,  
But in raiment worn with travel came their God,  
And the people knew His presence by the heart that ceased  
to sigh  
When the glory of the Lord was passing by.

For He healed their sick at even, and He cured the leper's  
sore,  
And sinful men and women sinned no more,  
And the world grew mirthful hearted, and forgot its misery  
When the glory of the Lord was passing by.

Not in robes of purple splendour, but in lives that do His will,  
In patient acts of kindness He comes still;  
And the people cry with wonder, tho' no sign is in the sky,  
That the glory of the Lord is passing by.



# III

## THE JUSTICE OF JESUS

One strong peculiarity of the teaching of Jesus—we might even call it its outstanding feature—is that it is frequently disclosed in a series of incidents. Unlike most teachers He philosophizes little about life. A single chapter of the Gospels, or at most two, would contain all the maxims about life which He thought necessary for wise and lofty conduct. His method is rather to put Himself in relation to the crucial occurrences of life, and to reveal the true way of regarding them by His own attitude towards them. When He would teach the beauty of humility it is by putting a little child in the midst of His arrogant and vainglorious disciples, that the child may become the living and memorable parable of His sentiments. When He would teach humanity, He does so by His own conduct to lepers. When He would discredit and expose the barbarism of the Mosaic Sabbatarian laws as interpreted by scribes and Pharisees, He does so by healing the sick and blind upon the Sabbath day. He is all for the concrete, teaching not by theory, but by example. The method is novel, and its advantages are obvious. The best conceived discourses on humility, mercy, or sympathy, might be forgotten, but no one can forget the child among the disciples, nor

the raptured gaze of the blind man when his purged eyes open to behold the face of his miraculous Physician, nor the picture of Jesus touching without fear or disgust the leper whose unclean contagion made him an object of aversion even to the pitiful.

It is a wonderful method of instruction; it makes every other method seem trite and wearisome. Its effect is to make the Gospels a series of tableaux, which dwell in the memory as things actually seen. The groups upon the stage perpetually shift and rearrange themselves; each represents some phase of life, some problem, some combination of circumstance more or less common in the experience of men, something that is typical, for Jesus chooses only the typical and essential things of life for these occasions. The lesser things of life He passes over; it is the great and crucial matters which attract Him.

But what are the great things of life?

They all fall into one category, they all present problems in human relationship. No problems are so difficult. They are not speculative, but practical. A man who may be wise as the world counts wisdom, and able to pierce with acute analysis to the depth of the abstrusest philosophic problem, may nevertheless find himself hopelessly baffled by some quite common fact of life, such as how to treat a wayward son, or a sinful woman. I am not likely to lose a night's rest because I am unable to define the Trinity but with what sore travail of heart do I toss through midnight hours when I have to settle some course of action towards the friend who has betrayed me, the brother who

has brought me shame, the child who scoffs at my restraint, and hears the call of the far country in every swift pulsation of his passionate heart! And why cannot I settle my course of action? Because my mind is confused by something which I call justice, to which custom has given authority and consecration. Justice prescribes one course of action, affection another. The convention of the world insists that wrong-doing should be punished, which is manifestly right; but when it insists that I should be the punisher, I suspect something wrong. The more closely I study conventional justice the more I am conscious of something in myself that distrusts and revolts from it. The more I incline to the voice of affection the more I fear it, lest I should be guilty of weakness which would merit my own contempt. The struggle is one between convention and instinct, and I know not which side to take. But one thing I do know; it is that I have no certain clue to guide me, no clear determining principle that divides the darkness with a sword of light, no voice within myself that is authoritative.

Now the wonderful thing in Jesus is that He is always sure of Himself. Nothing takes Him by surprise, nothing produces the least hesitation in His judgment. Therefore He must have had an unfailing clue to which He trusted in the maze of life. Behind all consistency of judgment there must exist consistency of principle. The principle that governed all the thoughts of Jesus was *that love was the only real justice*. He came not to condemn, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. There was

no problem of human relationship that could not be solved by love; there was no other principle needed for the regulation of society; and no other could produce that general peace and goodwill which He called the Kingdom of God.

Thus, on one occasion Jesus tells a story which is so lifelike in every touch that we may accept it, without doubt, as less a parable than an incident. A father has two sons, one of whom is industrious and dutiful, the other wayward and rebellious. The wayward son finally casts off all pretense of filial obedience, goes into a far country, and wastes his substance in riotous living. Here we have one of the saddest of all problems in human relationship, for presently the disgraced son comes home a beggar. The elder brother who represents the average social view, has no doubt whatever as to what should be done. He is offended that the disgraced son should come home at all; he would have thought better of him if he had hidden his shame in the country that had witnessed it. Probably his sense of pride and respectability is offended more than his love of virtue, though he characteristically gives his jealous anger the illusion of morality. This, I say, is the average social view. There are few things more cruel than affronted respectability. The elder brother is an eminently respectable person, totally unacquainted with wayward passions, and his only feeling for his brother is disdain.

Jesus tells the story, however, in such a way as to discredit the average social view. He begins by making us feel that whatever

follies the prodigal had committed, he had already been punished for them in the miseries he had endured. It is not for man to punish with his whip of scorn one who has already been flaggellated with a whip of scorpions in the desert places of disgrace and shame. Jesus makes us feel also that whatever sins might be laid to the charge of the disgraced son, there is nevertheless in his heart a warmth of feeling of which the elder brother gives no sign. The boy loves his father, otherwise he would not have turned to him in his anguish of distress. The elder brother's attitude to his father is arrogant and harsh; the younger brother's is humble and tender. Lastly the father himself is revealed as the embodiment of love. He asks no questions, utters no reproaches, imposes no conditions; he simply takes his son back, in the rush of his affection cutting short the boy's pitiful confession, and calling for shoes and new robes and festal music, as though his son had returned in dignity and triumph. In the last scene of all, implied rather than described, the restored prodigal sits at the feast, leaning on his father's bosom, but the respectable son stands without in a darkness of his own creation—the darkness which a harsh spirit and an unlovely temper never fail to create in men of his unhappy temperament.

It is a very strange story, if we come to think of it; almost an immoral story, as no doubt it was considered by the Pharisees, and persons of their cold and mechanical type of virtue. But Jesus anticipates their criticism with one of the most startling statements that ever fell from inspired lips, "There is more

joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Heaven approves the story, if they do not. Thus God Himself would act, for God is love. Thus love must needs act, if it be the kind of love that "suffereth long and is kind, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." And if we ask what becomes of justice, Jesus assures us that love is the only real justice. For the main object of justice is not punishment but reclamation. A truly enlightened justice is less concerned with the punishment of wrong than its reparation.

The gravest question in the case of this unhappy boy is not what he has made of himself by sin and folly, but what can yet be made of him by wise and tender treatment. Had the father coldly dismissed the prodigal with some bitter verdict on his past folly, he himself would have been unjust to the boy's possibilities, and thus would have sinned against his son with a sin much less capable of excuse than the son's sin against him. The worst sinner in the story is not the son who went wrong, but the son who had never done anything but right, yet had done it in such a way that it had begotten in him a vile, censorious, loveless temper. No one can be just who does not love; and so, once more removing the story into that unseen world which Christ called in to redress the balance of this visible world, we sinful men and women build our hopes upon the great saying that God's forgiveness is God's

justice: if we confess our sins, He is not only faithful, but **JUST** in forgiving us our sins.

# LOVE IS JUSTICE

## THE WAY OF WOUNDS

He touched the leper tenderly,  
So in His hands there came to be  
Wide wounds that were not wrought with nails.  
Alas, my hands are smooth and fair,  
No wound is on them anywhere,  
Nor any scarlet scar of nails.

His lips lay on the mouth of death,  
God's healing dwelt within their breath,  
Wherefore his lips grew pale with pain,  
And no man shall that pain divine;  
Alas, my lips are red with wine,  
And they have scorned His draught of pain.

His feet were torn of stone and thorn,  
Full slow He moved on roads forlorn,  
But joyous hearts accompanied Him;  
Alas, my feet are softly shod,  
And on the road that leads to God,  
They have not sought to move with Him.

And so all wounded by the way,  
He came home at the close of day,  
    And angels met Him at the Gate.  
Alas, His way I have not known—  
The road forlorn, the wounding stone—  
    And no one waits me at the Gate.

## IV

### LOVE IS JUSTICE

Love is the only real justice—never was there a more revolutionary ethic! If Christianity is to be judged by its institutions, it must be reluctantly confessed that twenty centuries of Christian teaching have almost wholly failed to make this strange ethic acceptable to mankind. The elder brother still makes broad his phylacteries in the home, in the Church, and on the seat of justice. The elder brother's sense of offended respectability still masquerades as virtue. Who forgives as this father forgave, with such completeness that he who has wrought the wrong is encouraged to forget that the wrong was ever wrought? Where is the loving and tolerant spirit of the father less visible than in the Church, which crucifies men for a word, and makes a difference of opinion the ground for deadly enmity? Of what administration of law can we say that its chief object is not the punishment of the wrong-doer, but his reclamation? No existing society is organized on these principles, and the only defense the apologists of a bastard Christianity make is that it is totally impossible to apply the principles of Jesus to the administration of society. That is, at all events, an intelligible defense, but is it a legitimate one? Was Jesus merely a romantic

dreamer, with entirely romantic views of love and justice? Was He a moral anarchist, whose teachings, if interpreted in laws, would destroy the basis of society? A strange thing indeed in human history if One who has been loved as no other was ever loved by multitudes of men and women through the ages, should prove after all to be an impracticable dreamer or a moral anarchist!

But if Jesus was a dreamer, He dreamed true, and the very reason why He is loved with such wide and deep devotion is that men do dimly, but instinctively, perceive that His life presents the only perfect pattern of life as it should be. Life, as it exists, is clearly not ordered on a social system which any wise or good man can approve. Hence the wise and good man is perpetually urged to the enquiry whether Jesus may not after all have been right?

Jesus certainly acts as one who is right. He acts always with the assured air of one for whom all debate is closed and henceforth impossible. He knows His way, and the great moral dilemmas of life yield instantly to His touch. He penetrates to their roots and makes us feel that He has touched the essential element in them. The dreamer vindicates himself by making it manifest that he sees deeper into the problem than the moralist, and that his is after all the better morality because it is of higher social value, and makes more directly for social reconciliation.

Let us take, for example, the judgment of Jesus upon the woman who was a sinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee.

The social dilemma of the fallen woman is much more difficult of solution than that of the prodigal son. We expect a certain power of moral convalescence in youth which has been betrayed through folly. Sooner or later the manly nature kindles with resentment at its own weakness. Moreover, social law allows a certain opportunity of recuperation to man which it denies to woman. The sin of the woman seems less pardonable, not because it is worse in itself, but because it outrages a higher convention. Hence the strict moralist who might make some allowance for the hot blood of youth, makes none for woman when she is betrayed through the affections.

But this is the very point on which Jesus fixes as essential. "*The woman loved much, therefore let her many sins be forgiven,*" He says. And a true reading of the story would seem to show that in uttering this sublime verdict Jesus is not thinking of the woman's sudden and pure love for Him; He is rather reviewing the entire nature of her life. She had loved much—that is her history in a sentence. Cruelty and unkindness, malice and bitterness, had no part in her misdoing. She had been undone through the very sweetness of her nature, as multitudes of women are. That which was her noblest attribute—her power of affection—had been the minister of her ruin through lack of wisdom and restraint. By love she had fallen, by love also she shall be redeemed. Her sins were indeed many, but behind all her sins there was an essential though perverted magnanimity of nature, and for the sake of an essential good in her, which lay like a

shining pearl at the root of her debasement, she shall be forgiven.

Again a strange verdict, and one that must have seemed to the Pharisees entirely immoral. "What becomes of justice?" is their whispered comment. Jesus asserts His sense of justice by an exposition of the character of Simon. Simon is destitute of love, of magnanimity, even of courtesy. In his hard and formal nature there has been no room for emotion; passion of any kind and he are strangers. Which nature is radically the better, his or "this woman's"? Which presents the more hopeful field to the moralist? The soil of Simon's heart is thin and meagre; but in "this woman's" heart is a soil overgrown with weeds indeed, but delicately tempered, rich and deep, in which the roots of the fair tree of life may find abundant room and nourishment. Therefore she shall be forgiven for her possibilities, and such forgiveness is justice. To ignore these possibilities, to allow what she has been utterly to overshadow the lovely vision of what she may be, when once the soil is clear of weeds, and the real magnanimity of her temperament is directed into noble uses, would be the most odious form of injustice.

Such is the justice of Jesus, but, alas, after two thousand years we still stand astonished at it, more than half doubtful of its validity, and, if truth be told, secretly dismayed at its boldness. It is romantic justice, we say, but is it practicable justice? We might at least remember that what we call practicable justice has never yet attained the gracious results of Christ's romantic justice. Simon the Pharisee knows no more how to deal with

"this woman" than the elder brother knew how to deal with the prodigal. Such sense of justice as they possessed would have infallibly driven the penitent boy back to the comradeship of harlots, and have refused the penitent harlot the barest chance of reformation. Is not this enough to make the least discerning of us all suspect that Pharisees and elder brothers, for all their immaculate respectability of life, are by no means qualified to pass judgment on these tragedies of life with which they have no acquaintance, and cannot have an understanding sympathy? Does not the entire failure of legal justice with all its apparatus of punishment and repression, to give the sinner a vital impulse to withdraw from his sin, drive us to the conclusion, or at least to the hope, that there must be some better method of dealing with sinners than is sanctioned by conventional justice? There is another method—it is Christ's method. And the thing to be observed is that whereas conventional justice must certainly have failed in either of these crucial instances, the romantic justice of Jesus—if we must so call it—completely succeeded. The woman who was a sinner sinned no more, and the penitent son henceforth lived a new life of purity and obedience. In each case love is justified, and proves itself the highest justice.

# LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

## LOVE'S PROFIT

What profits all the hate that we have known  
The bitter words, not all unmerited?  
Have hearts e'er thriven beneath our angry frown?  
Have roses grown from thistles we have sown?  
Or lucid dawns flowered out of sunsets red?  
Lo, all in vain  
The violence that added pain to pain,  
And drove the sinner back to sin again.

We had been wiser had we walked Love's way  
We had been happier had we tenderer been,  
We had found sunlight in the cloudiest day  
Had we but loved the souls that went astray,  
And sought from shame their many faults to screen  
Lo, they and we  
Had thus escaped Life's worst Gethsemane,  
And found the Garden where the angels be.

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