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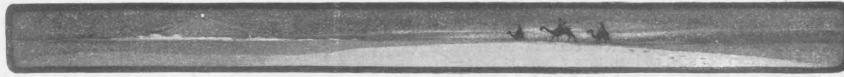
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WISE MAN



The Story of a Young Man

By CLIFFORD HOWARD

With Illustrations from Paintings by W. L. TAYLOR

A FOREWORD BY THE REV. AMORY H. BRADFORD, D. D.

Pastor of the First Congregational Church of Montclair, New Jersey

THIS Story of a Young Man fills an unoccupied place in current literature. The life of Jesus has been written from the point of view of the Jew and of the Gentile, of the scholar, the devotee and the theologian; it has been written to support some favorite doctrine; and again with the purpose of seeking the simple truth. For more than a thousand years it has been a subject of world-wide inquiry. So far as I know this differs from all other works of its kind. There has been one teacher in the sphere of ethics and religion whom all have agreed in recognizing as the most potent spiritual force which has ever appeared on this planet. Mr. Howard approaches this personage exactly as he would any other historic character, and asks, What were the incontestable facts in his career? Jesus of Nazareth, as he appeared when a child, a youth, a young man bending beneath the consciousness of a mighty mission, is the subject of this story.

As it concerns only the humanity of Christ the narrative rightly ends with his death. If any inquire why it does not go further, or why so little interpretation of act or teaching is offered, it is sufficient to answer that the author has endeavored to place the more conspicuous facts and characteristics of this life in such clear relief that they will speak their own message and be their own interpretation.

It has been my privilege to examine this story in manuscript, and I can assure those who may wish to read it that it is accurate in its statements, vivid and picturesque in its style, free from cant, and entirely reverent and earnest in spirit. This story brings back again the conditions in which Jesus dwelt, causes ancient events to be reacted before our eyes, and with vividness makes us see and love the young man as if he were living still, and in our time were going about doing good.

AMORY H. BRADFORD.



SHEPHERD

AN EXPLANATION: The Story of a Young Man is the story of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is not a life of Christ, in the usual meaning of that term. While it is founded solely upon Scriptural records, it makes no pretense of embodying all that is contained in the Gospels. The purpose of the story, as its title indicates, is to portray Jesus as the man; to view him in the light of his humanity; and, while never overlooking his divinity, to set forth his earthly career in the form of a narrative recording the growth, the struggles, the achievements of a fellow-being—the greatest ever on earth, yet a fellow-being.

Such of the events of his life as are introduced have been chosen with a view to illustrate his character from this standpoint; to emphasize his wondrous personality as a man, and at the same

time to carry forward the story in the progressive form of an unfolding narrative. To have recited all of the recorded miracles and all of the incidents connected with the life of the Saviour would have given to the story a comprehensiveness and a redundancy of illustration quite out of keeping with its purpose and plan. Yet, notwithstanding the necessary omission of many of the events related in the Gospels, it is not believed that any representative feature of the life of Christ has been overlooked.

To consistently carry out its design the story is brought to a close with the death of Jesus. The crucifixion marks the completion of the human part of his existence; the fulfillment of his life as a man. It has been deemed advisable to offer the foregoing explanation in order that all who read The Story of a Young Man may do so with a proper understanding of its purpose and its character.

THE AUTHOR

THE FIRST CHAPTER

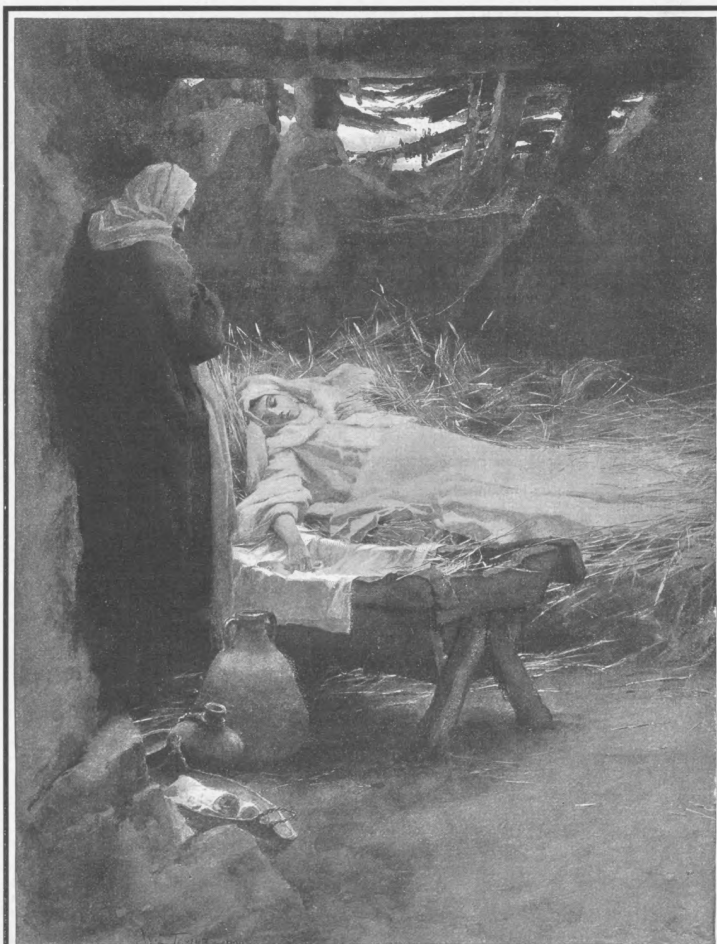
THE broad, open court of the village inn was a scene of noisy confusion. Men, women and children, preparing for their night's rest, moved hither and thither among the packs and bundles that lay strewn upon the ground. Belated travelers, some of them still seated upon their beasts, looked about anxiously for some possible means of accommodation at the already overcrowded inn. A babel of many sounds and voices rose upon the evening air. The yelps of dogs mingled with the grunting of camels and the braying of restless donkeys. Men were talking together in groups; others were loudly calling to one another or giving commands. Servants hurried back and forth, jostling and pushing, while impatient hostlers shouted at their tired animals as they drove them into the stalls that were ranged about the three sides of the courtyard.

A LITTLE apart from the throng, and half concealed in the shadow of a sheltering nook, was a young woman seated upon a donkey. She was dressed in the simple garb of a Jewish peasant. A robe of homespun material covered her girlish figure, while a light wimple encircled her head and neck, and served both as a cover and a veil.

She had chosen this secluded spot to await the return of her fellow-traveler, who had hurried forward in the hope of securing accommodations for the night.

She was evidently a stranger, for she spoke to no one, and those passing near went by without heeding her, except, perhaps, to notice that she leaned forward wearily on her pillion as one exhausted with a long journey, and that the beauty of her gentle face was softened with the touching sadness that comes of patient and silent suffering.

Close by three or four men were conversing in



PAINTED BY W. L. TAYLOR

"IN A MANGER CLOSE BY, AND WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES, LAY THE CHILD, ASLEEP"

tones. She appeared neither to hear them nor to be aware of their presence. Her soft blue eyes, filled with the tender light of purity, gazed off wistfully into the depths of heaven, where the first stars of night were already dimly twinkling. Her thoughts were not of the scenes nor of the people about her. Was she simply dreaming of her far-off home amid the hills of Galilee, or was her soul filled with thoughts of vaster and deeper import, thoughts that drew her near to God in solemn reverie?

SUDDENLY she became conscious of the words that were being spoken by one of the men in the little group near by:

"Nay, nay; speak not thus doubtfully, my son. The time of his coming is already fulfilled as spoken by the Prophets. Yet a little while and the Redeemer of Israel will appear and avenge the sufferings of his people."

"Let us bear patiently our tribulations, and let not your faith nor your courage fail you. Be strong, and fear not; for the day of salvation is at hand. Yea, from this very place, this town of Bethlehem, the city of David, will he come forth—the Prince, the Messiah; and his kingdom shall triumph over all the kingdoms of the world."

"Long and diligently have I studied the Prophets and the signs, and I say unto you that the hour is come when Israel may lift up her voice and cry with a joyous heart, 'Behold, the words of Isaiah are fulfilled; the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of the world, is born!'"

THE young woman clasped her hands in an ecstasy of silent emotion. Her lips moved as though repeating the words she had just heard. Then a faint flush mounted her pale cheeks, and with a smile of wondrous joy, illumining her countenance as with a radiance of divine glory, she lifted her eyes to heaven in soulful adoration and was

was aroused by the gentle touch of a hand and the voice of a man tenderly calling "Mary!"

With a smile of loving recognition she answered softly, "Joseph!"

"It is as they told us," said the man, speaking slowly; "there is no room. I have searched through the town. Every house is filled, and those of whom I asked a share of their lodgment turned upon me a deaf ear. I care not for myself; it is for you, Mary. The night is cold, and you are faint, for we have traveled far. But, God be praised! you shall not want for shelter. A stable on yonder side of the inn awaits us. It will serve till the morrow. It is better than the open night. See, the keeper approaches! He will show us the way."

With his strong arms he lifted her from her seat, and together they walked across the crowded courtyard, the keeper leading the way with the donkey.

THE stable proved to be no more than a cave—a natural recess in the side of a hill, roughly fitted up for the accommodation of cattle. The drowsy occupants of the place turned their large brown eyes inquiringly upon the intruders, who groped their way by the feeble light of a rude lantern to the farther end of the room.

To both husband and wife the journey from their home in Nazareth had been one of many trials and hardships. They had come not of their own accord, but in obedience to the mandates of a hated law that rankled deep in the hearts of an oppressed and downtrodden nation, requiring all Jews to be enrolled, that they might be taxed for the support of their Roman—heathen—masters. Mary and Joseph were both of the house of David, and were therefore obliged to register at Bethlehem, the home of their royal ancestor, in accordance with a provision of the law that each person must be enrolled at his family town.

They were poor and unaccustomed to traveling, and the bleak, chilling winds and frequent rains of the winter season added to the trials and discomforts of their slow-plodding journey of several days across the dreary plains and mountains. Joseph had traversed the entire distance on foot; while Mary, too, oftentimes obliged to dismount, because of dangerous or impassable roads, had walked many miles through rain-sodden valleys and over the steep and rugged passes of the Judean hills.

And now, arrived at their journey's end, faint, footsore and disheartened, they found themselves alone—without friends, strangers in a strange place. No kindly voice to greet them; no one to bid them welcome. No familiar face, no landing-place to cheer their drooping hearts, and nowhere to rest their weary bodies save with the beasts of the field upon the floor of a dark and cheerless stable.

What wonder that the young and gentle wife, yielding at last to fatigue and physical suffering, and overcome with a sense of her desolation in the hour of life's greatest trial, sank upon her meagre bed of straw, and, burying her face in her hands, sobbed as a child—with none to offer comfort save him who sat beside her in helpless sympathy.

GRADUALLY the courtyard became quiet. The uproar and commotion ceased. The weary travelers and wayfarers stretched themselves upon their pallets beneath the roof that extended along the northern end of the inclosure and formed the sleeping-quarters of the inn.

The stormful clouds that had hung low and threateningly over the hills drifted apart and melted slowly away into the deep cerulean of night; and out of the darkness came the stars, the immortelles of Hope, blossoming in the fields of heaven.

The wintry wind that all day long had swept in violent gusts across the mountain ridge now died away, and in its place there came a breath of gentle warmth, bringing with it the dreams of flowers and of music.

No sound disturbed the tranquil night save ever and anon a far-off shepherd's call across the hills. A solemn stillness, a spirit of celestial harmony, now breathed upon the dark immensity of night. Then over all there came a wondrous peace, a sense of infinite repose, filling the heavens as with a breath from Paradise. And, lo! the sorrowing and expectant world slept on and heeded not.

THE first faint traces of the coming dawn were softly stealing above the eastern hills when the voices of men were heard hurrying by and speaking in anxious tones: "Where is the cave? Show us the place! Aye, yonder it is! Come, let us hasten, that we may find him!"

Then they passed out of hearing, and those who were awakened from their slumbers fell back to sleep thinking that they had but dreamed.

But with the dawn of the day the voices came again—this time animated, exultant, as in the announcement of great and joyful news. They were the voices of shepherds, and the men and women who were now astray, preparing for travel or going about their daily occupations, beheld in their midst four or five of these lowly herdsmen—men of rude and unkempt appearance, armed with heavy crooks and clad in sheepskins that hung loosely from their shoulders and were girded at the waist with a broad belt, leaving the arms and legs unprotected.

But though crude of speech and manner, these men were of gentle heart, for their calling was one of tenderness and care, and their souls—knowing little of the world—were filled with the poetry of Nature; with the music and the sunshine of the fields, that drew them ever close to God in confident communion.

And now as they spoke, addressing the curious and inquisitive throng that gathered about them, their heartfelt emotion, their simple, trustful joy inspired their tongues with an eloquence that thrilled the hearts of their hearers with wondering awe.

Behold, as on the hills of Bethlehem we watched our flocks, suddenly there came a light as of the glory of the Lord; and, lo! an angel came and stood before us.

"Then were we sore afraid, and hid in terror, knowing not the portent of this marvel. But hark! the angel spoke to us and bade us have no fear; and, lo! his words, his tidings, were of wondrous joy—Behold, the Saviour, Christ the Lord, this day is born."

"And, lo! that we might have a sign whereby to seek the new-born King, the angel spoke again to us and said that we should find him wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger in the town of Bethlehem."

"Then, behold, the heavens opened and we saw the heavenly host, a multitude of angels; and all the firmament was filled with music and with voices praising God. Then quickly we made haste and came to Bethlehem."

And there, in yonder stable, we beheld the new-born child lying in a manger, as was spoken by the angel of the Lord. Then did we know of a certainty that Christ, the King, was born, and straightway did we worship him."

The marvelous story of the shepherds quickly spread. Men and women discussed it eagerly and earnestly. Some of the more curious visited the cave. It was true; a child had been born there during the night. But whose child was it? To what family of Israel did it belong? No one appeared to know. The mother was a stranger, a peasant, from Nazareth.

Then doubts arose. Many questioned the reality of the shepherds' vision upon the hills. "They are but dreamers. Why did not we hear and see these wondrous things? Is it thus a king is born—in a stable, in a manger? The child is as any other child! No, no; the Messiah, the King of Israel, will come as a Prince, in the splendor of the royal house of David, and in the might and the glory of the Lord!"

Then they smiled at the momentary credulity that had entered their hearts, and they mocked those who were still inclined to believe; and ere long the subject ceased to be discussed, and the story was dismissed as an idle tale.

Within the cave, now dimly lighted with the morning sun, the mother lay sleeping upon her pallet of straw. All trace of pain, all sign of suffering, was gone. A faint smile hovered about her gentle lips, imparting to her fair, young face a beauty that was more than mortal. Her bosom rose and fell in peaceful slumber. Her trials, her sorrows were forgotten. She slept the dreamless sleep of perfect joy—the joy of motherhood.

In a manger close by, and wrapped in swaddling clothes, lay the child, asleep.

The husband stood near. With an expression that spoke of mingled wonder and reverence he looked upon the slumbering infant; and then, letting his gaze rest upon her who lay sleeping at his feet, his eyes filled with tears—tears of sympathy and love—as he murmured, "Mary!"

IT WAS a bright morning in the early springtime. The fields were green with sprouting wheat and barley, and the verdant meadowlands sparkled with dew. Wild flowers hedged the paths and roadways, and the scent of blossoms filled the air. Upon the mountains the oak and the hawthorn were putting forth their tender leaves, and the silvery foliage of the olive mingled with the pink of the almond and the peach, while leafy vineyards spread their mantles of delicate green upon the terraced hills.

It was amid these scenes of awakened life—so different from those that had surrounded them on their way from Nazareth six weeks before—that Joseph and Mary journeyed slowly forward on the road that lay between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The way was short—not more than five or six miles—but they had started at sunrise, in order that they might reach the city and the Temple at an early hour.

To Mary the day was one of sacred import. Not only was she about to receive the holy rite of purification as a mother, but her child, her son, her first-born, was on this day to be presented to the Lord. According to the custom of her people she had been obliged to wait forty days after the birth of her child before undertaking this momentous errand. And now, the period of seclusion having expired, she and her loving companion were wending their way toward the Temple with proud and happy hearts.

She rode upon an ox, for it was the custom of women to travel thus when on their way to the Holy City to be purified. Joseph walked quietly by her side, now and again looking up with a loving smile, or pointing out to her some place of interest.

Pressed close to her bosom she carried her sleeping child in her arms.

"Jesus!"

She spoke the name to herself many times in the tender fervency of a mother's love. And now, as she repeated it and gazed down at the little face nestled so close to her own, a glorious vision rose in memory before her.

She is at her home, in Nazareth; and as she sits alone dreamily spinning, an angel appears before her, and in a voice sweet with the music of heaven tells her of the joy and of the glory that the Lord has ordained for her. She, above all women, has been chosen by the Most High for the fulfillment of His promise to the children of Israel. Yea, even she, a virgin, shall conceive through the power of the Holy Ghost, and shall bring into the world the Messiah, Christ, the Saviour of mankind—the Son of God. And his name shall be called Jesus, and he shall reign over the world, and his kingdom shall endure forever.

Of had she repeated the sacred and cherished words that had been spoken to her in this divine annunciation at Nazareth; and now again they rose to her lips as she gazed from the helpless infant at her breast to the shining walls of the Temple of Jerusalem looming up before her in the splendor of the morning sun.

Then a look of pensive wondering, a vague, half-conscious questioning, stole into the depths of her trustful eyes, and a momentary shadow dimmed the sunshine of her joyous countenance.

She thought of the shepherds. They had come; they knew it was he. But the others—the people of Bethlehem—why had not they recognized him? When would the world know? When would it welcome him?

ENTERING the city and passing through the narrow, winding streets, Joseph and Mary arrived ere long before the gates of the great Temple.

In company with other women who had come on a similar errand Mary tremblingly approached the sacred court of the Israelites, overawed by the grandeur and solemnity about her; and there, offering up her humble sacrifice of two doves, she was duly declared purified according to the law.

With the happy and unaffected pride of motherhood she now brought forward her child, the infant Jesus, and together she and Joseph devoutly presented him to the priests for redemption, in accordance with a religious ordinance requiring the payment of a sum of money and the performance of certain rites as a means of redeeming or releasing a first-born child from the service of the Lord, for according to an ancient law the first-born son of every mother belonged of right to God or the priesthood.

Their duties fulfilled, Mary and Joseph turned to go, that they might return to Bethlehem while the day was yet cool. It was still morning, and crowds of men and women were passing in and out of the Temple courts, going to and returning from their devotions.

In the devout and simple earnestness of her soul Mary felt that her child had been given to her anew, and as she prepared to pass out amid the throng she held him in close and affectionate embrace—her son, her Jesus!

Had any one noticed him? Did any one know? Alas! with quivering lips the innocent, sensitive mother told herself that no one had heeded his presence; that no one knew him. No, not even the priests, the servants of God, who had blessed him.

Suddenly she heard a voice calling her. It was that of an old man, who came forward with tottering steps, holding out his arms toward the child.

"PRAISE be to God!" he cried. "It is he; it is he! Lo! these many years have I waited that I might behold the consolation of Israel; for as it not revealed to me that I, Simeon, should not see death until I had seen the Lord's Christ!"

Then, taking the child in his trembling arms, he lifted up his voice in a fervent prayer of thanksgiving. The consolation of Israel had come. His eyes had beheld the Christ, the light to the Gentiles, and he who through faith had waited patiently all these weary years was ready now to die; to give up the burden of life and depart in peace.

His feeble voice trembled well known to her, faltered and broke. Tears filled his dim-lit eyes; and bowing his head upon his chest he stood for several moments silent—speechless; while into his aged face, now half concealed beneath the long white locks that clustered about it, there came a light of celestial happiness—the dawning light of the life to come.

Returning the infant to Mary he blessed her and her husband, and spoke with prophetic inspiration of her child and of herself, and to the wondering mother his words were filled with strange, half-fearful meaning. The child would be the cause of the rising and the falling of many in Israel, and many would be against him, and she, too, would suffer.

As he finished speaking a feeble, white-haired woman, bent and wrinkled with the burden of years, approached the little group. She seemed great with knowledge, for all who passed her addressed her reverently as "Anna." She had heard the words of Simeon and had come forward timidly that she might look upon the infant.

Earnestly she gazed upon the peaceful, innocent face, and then, as if a glorious revelation had burst upon her soul, she turned her eyes to heaven with a look of ineffable peace, and in simple, heartfelt words gave thanks to God that she had been spared to see this day.

THE evening shadows had fallen over the town of Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph were seated in their humble dwelling, with the infant Jesus sleeping peacefully on the mother's bosom. They were talking—and talking of him; rehearsing the words of Simeon and Anna; for they were greatly impressed with what had occurred in the Temple at Jerusalem, and their hearts deeply pondered the prophecies that were spoken by the old man.

As they talked they became aware of the sound of footsteps, and presently voices were heard at the door.

"See, is not this the place?"

"It is even so. Let us enter."

A moment later three men entered the room. They were strangers, foreigners, dressed in a fashion unknown to either Mary or Joseph. But by the richness of their apparel and their courtly bearing it was evident that they were persons of wealth and station.

But why had they come to this poor and lowly place? What had brought them here? The husband and wife drew back in consternation; but in a moment their doubts were set at rest by the kindly salutation of the visitors.

"Fear not. Peace and joy be unto you. We come seeking him who is born King of the Jews; for we have seen his star, the star of the Messiah, the Redeemer. It has risen in the East, as was spoken by the prophets of old, and, lo! it has been to us a sign and a guide."

Then perceiving the child as he lay in Mary's lap, they came forward reverently, and falling on their knees they worshipped him, and placed before him the offerings they had brought—caskets of gold, of frankincense, and myrrh—gifts such as men offered to princes, to kings.

Then rising and blessing the husband and wife, they took their departure as suddenly as they had come. Mary and Joseph looked at one another in bewilderment. Was it a vision? Had they but dreamed? No, the precious gifts were still there, and curious neighbors hastening in inquired eagerly concerning the strange visitors; for were they not Magi—wise men of the East—and had they not entered the town asking for an infant king?

Overwhelmed with the wonder of what had occurred, and unable at first to grasp its full import, it was not until she was again alone with her husband and her child that Mary awoke to a realization of its glorious significance.

THE angel of Nazareth seemed to speak again. The words of the annunciation filled her soul with their rapturous music.

Behold, was it not true? Why had her heart ever doubted, ever questioned? And as she fell asleep that night her soul was radiant with happiness and hope, and her dreams were filled with visions of glory and of joys without number.

Suddenly her dreams vanished. She was awake, and about her was the blackness of night. Joseph was calling her.

"Make haste!" he exclaimed. "Take the child, and let us fly; for Herod, the King, seeks to destroy him! Yea, the Lord has spoken to me in a dream. Come, let us depart at once lest it be too late. We must leave Bethlehem—aye, even Judea and the land of Palestine—and flee into Egypt, that we may be safe from the wrath of the King."

With fast-beating heart, and spurred with a wild terror of impending danger, Mary hastily prepared for their sudden departure; her dreams, her happiness, her hopes, all forgotten in this moment of peril. She thought only of her child, her Jesus.

The stars were still shining, and no sound disturbed the slumbering town as the fugitives passed through the gate of Bethlehem and out into the darkness of the world, alone, unheeded and unpitied save by the Father who watched over them and guided their trembling footsteps.

(THE SECOND CHAPTER OF "THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN" WILL BE GIVEN IN THE NEXT (THE NOVEMBER) ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL.)