

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PAGE

"Let no man despise thy youth"—I. Timothy 4:12

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THE BETRAYER

A true incident from the life of
Leonardo da Vinci
By Russel M. Butts

The prisoner stepped out of the dungeon, rubbing a filthy hand across his eyes, blinking owlishly in the unaccustomed light. He stood there for a moment, swaying unsteadily, then groped blindly for the wall to hold himself erect. As he looked dazedly around him, the jailer seized his arm.

"Come," he ordered impatiently, "you are free, my man! Free through the grace of Leonardo da Vinci. Make haste; he is waiting outside for you." Still holding the man's arm, the jailer pushed him roughly along the stone corridor to the outside door.

The man stepped out into the quiet street. A hand fell upon his wasted shoulder. "I am Leonardo da Vinci," a voice said. "Come with me, my friend. There is work to be done."

The voice was soothing, the words softly spoken. They fell upon the man's ears like a benediction. Those harsher voices faded from his memory like an evil dream. He was free again! The man turned about and stared earnestly at his benefactor.

Leonardo started. He had seen the prisoner's face none too clearly the day before. But distinctly he saw it now. The sight caused a sudden wave of exultation to flow through him. He had not been mistaken. Here was Judas Iscariot reincarnated! Leonardo smiled faintly as he thought of his unfinished fresco in the Church of Maria delle Grazie. There would be no more delay, he thought. At last he had found a suitable model for his Judas. If ever a man's face seemed corrupted by evil living it was the face of this man he had lifted out of the dungeon in Milan.

The man dropped his gaze as though the clear eyes of the Florentine were probing the depths of his scarred soul. He said to Leonardo, "What is it that you wish of me, Master? Why have I been removed so suddenly from a living purgatory?"

"You were granted your freedom to serve me," Leonardo da Vinci said quietly. "But come, we must hasten directly to the monastery of the Church of Maria delle Grazie. It is still morning, with plenty of hours left for labor."

They walked in silence up the narrow road, away from the dark walls of the prison. The Florentine moved with long, graceful strides, his head thrown back slightly, a rapt, serious look upon his handsome face. The man who had been a prisoner was taxed somewhat to keep pace with him. His shoulders sagged wearily and he was puffing from the unaccustomed exertion.

Leonardo heard the wheezy breathing of his companion and slowed his stride. He looked at the man and said kindly, "I am sorry, my good fellow. I did not realize how tired you must be—both tired and hungry. But there will be food and refreshment for you at the monastery."

The man made no reply. But the mention of food made him quicken his lagging steps. Presently they came in sight of the church.

"At last!" breathed Leonardo softly. "Now I can start work on my Judas."

The man beside him appeared startled. He stared hard at the Florentine for a moment. Then he said huskily, "Judas?"

"Of course," replied Leonardo. He glanced at his companion curiously, noting the incredulous look on his evil face. "Come, come," he said, a trifle impatiently. "Surely they told you at the prison. My fresco of The Last Supper is all but finished. You, my good fellow are to be the model for Judas."

"They told me nothing," the man muttered as he followed Leonardo into the refectory hall. "I had rather rot in jail!"

Leonardo halted in front of a scaffolding that had been erected close to the white-washed wall. He secured some chalk and paper and bade his companion sit down. The man sank wearily upon a bench and sat there with drooping head. Leonardo laid down the chalk and paper and left the hall. He returned presently, bearing food.

"I had almost forgotten," the Florentine said kindly. "Refresh yourself, my friend. Then we shall begin our work."

The man took the food from Leonardo's hands and ate avidly and in silence. When he had finished his meal, Leonardo picked up the chalk and paper and began to sketch feverishly. For upwards of an hour his hand moved over the paper with the deft, sure strokes of a genius.

At last he laid aside the sketch he had made and selected a fresh sheet of paper. A sob broke suddenly from the man on the bench. Leonardo glanced up quickly from his work.

Leonardo walked over to the bench. He said kindly, "Why do you grieve, my good man? Here in the refectory of Maria delle Grazie is peace and strength. Your release from prison is assured."

With an effort the man pulled himself together. But his voice trembled with emotion as he said to the Florentine, "Master, who posed for your Christ?"

Leonardo da Vinci shook his head. "I do not know, my good friend," he said slowly. "Names mean nothing to me. For days I searched the streets of Milan for a suitable model. He had to be a man who had lived a Christlike life, whose purity and goodness shone out from his face like a star. Four years ago I found such a man. But I never learned his name. Why do you ask?"

The man wiped away his tears. He looked at the Florentine earnestly and said, "I knew him well, Master. His name was Guido Petroni. He came to visit me often during my darkest hours in prison."

A look of unbelief crept over Leonardo's handsome face. "It could not be true," he said slowly. "How could you two have anything in common? Thou wert dreaming, my good fellow."

The man's grief overpowered him completely. Fierce sobs shook his gaunt frame. He clutched Leonardo's arm with a bony hand and pulled himself heavily to his feet. His pleading eyes searched the Florentine's face.

"Master!" he cried brokenly. "Oh, Master, tell me that in this evil face there is still something you remember."

Again Leonardo studied the man's grief-stricken countenance. Then he sighed thoughtfully. "I am sorry, my friend," he said kindly.

"It may be that my memory is failing. But I do not seem to remember."

The man recoiled suddenly from Leonardo and sank back hopelessly upon the bench. He buried his face in his grimy hands.

"I am that man, Master!" he sobbed. "Guido Petroni, the man who posed for your Christ!"
—Christian Advocate.

A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our Helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work his woe;
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He!
Lord Sabaoth is His name,
From age to age the same;
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear; for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever. —Martin Luther

PUT IT IN YOUR BIBLE

Here is a handy table, which it would be well to cut out or copy for reference in your Bible studies:

- A day's journey was about twenty-three and one-fifth miles.
- A Sabbath Day's journey was about an English mile.
- A cubit was nearly twenty-two inches.
- A hand's breadth is equal to three and five-eighths inches.
- A finger's-breadth is equal to one inch.
- A shekel of silver was about fifty cents.
- A shekel of gold was \$8.00.
- A talent of silver was \$538.30.
- A talent of gold was \$13,809.
- A piece of silver, or a penny, was thirteen cents.
- A farthing was three cents.
- A mite was less than a quarter of a cent.
- A gerah was one cent.
- An ephah, or bath, contained seven gallons and five pints.
- A bin was a gallon and two pints.
- An omer was six pints.—Selected.

There are men who pride themselves on their candor, and it degenerates into brutality. One such man said to John Wesley once, "Mr. Wesley, I pride myself on speaking my mind; that is my talent." Well," said John Wesley, "the Lord wouldn't mind if you buried that!"
—W. H. Griffith Thomas.