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My great revelation

How I wish I could speak to all the youngsters of our kind who do not yet know themselves and keep struggling against invincible odds for ... nothing. We can all swim against the current for a while but not forever. If we do not realize this truth, it will be hard not to feel unhappy all the time. A young friend of mine confessed in a letter that he «was born miserable and would have to live as such until death.» I was so sad to read such a sentence. It is now for the sake of those who feel downcast and forlorn that we want to try to help them out of their agonizing moral pains.

The first revelation of my love for a friend came as a great shock to me. I was 18 years of age, pure in mind and body, deeply religious, and I dreamt of a future similar to that of my companions: marriage and a happy family life. Fate had something else in store for me, though. I was an active member of the YMCA and happy to attend the weekly meetings, where I usually had a special talk with my elder pal Max. During the winter, we all went ski-ing together, and it was great fun to spend the night in the windy barn of a mountain chalet. We planned to celebrate Christmas up there and we thought that in the silence of the weird forests we would feel inwardly more at ease and more receptive to the Bible's beautiful words on Christ's birth at Bethlehem. I can still remember how impressive the Christmas tree was. We had cut it down in the near-by forest, and its branches were covered by a slight layer of snow which lasted the whole evening, for it was so cold in the kitchen that the light of the candles could not thaw it. We were a group of jolly good fellows, cheerful and congenial. We did not want to be considered better because we were members of the YMCA, but we had however realized that life with the help of the Bible had indeed a deeper value, perhaps not externally but inwardly. We could thus discuss together any problems, and it was especially uplifting for us youngsters to be taught the meaning of certain passages of the Scriptures. I myself had always been struck by the beauty of Christ's words when he said, »You must not be afraid, you are worth more than a great many sparrows« (Luke 12, 7) or by the story of the woman who felt she should touch the Master's garment in order to get well (Luke 8: 46/47), or by the description of John, «the disciple whom Jesus especially loved and who lay on the Master's breast» (John 13: 24/25). The latter sentence could never be analyzed together, we just read it as was written and made no comments. I, however, found it beautiful and would have liked to know whether I could also one day lay my head on a friend's breast ...

The answer came on that Christmas evening. After much singing, we retired to our windy barn, and my blood stirred when I heard Max saying: «Look here, Reno, I have arranged a cozy corner for you in the hay next to me». It was pleasant to lie near him, to be allowed to rest my head against his strong chest, to feel his arm around my shoulder and gradually to fall asleep in bliss and happiness. I remembered, before dozing off, the story of that woman who had been cured after having touched Him.

From that time on I was a different human being. Oh, how I suffered from not being able to see Max every day. I had to be satisfied with a few words during our weekly gathering, and three months later he left for another town. I wrote to him, sent him small presents, tried to remind him of our happy Christmas evening in the mountains and, finally, could not help using the word «love» to explain my feelings toward him. The answer came. It was as if the sun would never shine for me again: Max did not like my kind of feelings, thought it his duty to warn me against taking a wrong path, and ended up his message by explaining to me what love really should be --- as if I had not already measured it with all its divine wealth... ---

No one at home or among my acquaintances realized afterwards why I grew thinner, why I was always sad and why I could no longer smile. For me, it was torture to think that I was now facing a problem that could not possibly be discussed with anybody else. I tried to change my profession, leaving Europe for the bleak plains of Western Canada, then studying in England and working in Spain and Algeria. There all my friends talked about women only. Things went so far that I earnestly believed that I was the only one of my kind. So I decided to fight back my natural inclination toward young men. I outdid myself when dancing with girls, holding them consciously tight against me, fixing dates with them and even kissing them in the dark. When my feelings did not change in the least, I thought marriage would one day solve the problem. But my Creator prevented me from carrying out such a foolish scheme. It was in Algeria. Summer arrives early down there, and a sultry heat persists from May to October. It was therefore natural that I should keep my shutters closed. In the morning, however, I liked to enjoy the coolness of the early hours by breathing the morning breeze behind my shutters while watching what was going on in the street. One day, however, I did notice something unusual: a young European in pyjamas looking out from his balcony. He seemed to be nervous, and came out every now and then to look to the left of the street. I was wondering what this all meant when I finally saw another young man in the street beckon to him. He went into the house and soon stepped into his friend's room. And then I beheld a sight I had never seen before in my life: two friends falling into each other's arms, kissing profusely and showing many signs of affections. Finally they went to rest on the friend's bed. It was too much for me. Blood was swelling my head so that I thought it would burst. I did not swoon however. Instead, I fell on my bed, sobbing with all my heart: only then did I fully realize what had made my life so empty and miserable: the lack of a beloved friend whom I could crush against me and love with body and soul.

After this great revelation I knew the path I would have to follow. It was a hard but beautiful one. I have now experienced with grateful feelings what it means to touch another human being and to be healed by the power that comes from him.

Reno.

