



by Zelia M. Walters

HOLY BREAD

Zelia M. Walters



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I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: ye and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.

Jesus . . . took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me.

THE WORLD
CANNOT BEAT THE MAN
WHO HAS EATEN
HOLY BREAD

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A STORY BASED ON A TRUE INCIDENT

When you pour the Christ Spirit into the simplest act, that act cannot end with you. It goes on and on, in an ever widening stream, touching lives of which you know nothing



DONLEY had spent half an hour resolving to speak to the next man who stopped at the door. He had never begged before; begging came hard.

“But I might as well get used to it,” he reflected grimly. “Looks like the only way for me now.”

A man came to the door fum-

bling for a key. He'd be a rich man, belonging as he did to this exclusive club and having a key to enter by the side door. The woman who had got out of the car with him waited at the bottom of the steps.

Donley came close, muttering in a shamed voice:

"Could you stake me to the price of a meal, sir? I've not eaten today."

"Sorry, fellow, but I've no change with me," the man said crisply.

Donley shrank back and hung over the railing with his back turned, until they should go.

"I didn't bring the right key," said the man to his companion.

"We must go to the other door."

"What did he want?" the woman asked, nodding toward Donley as they turned to the street.

"Price of a meal. Said he was hungry."

"O Larry! We can't go in and eat a meal we don't need, and leave a hungry man out here."

"There's one of them begging on every corner now. Likely he wants the money for booze. Anyway, I have nothing less than ten dollars, and I don't see myself handing that to a bum."

"He looks hungry. I couldn't eat for thinking of him. You know what Christ says to the unrighteous

in the day of judgment: 'I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat.' I don't want Him to say that to me. I'll have to give food to Christ. Wait a minute; I have something in my purse."

Donley, with his back turned in shame, could hear it all. An electric shock passed through him. She was talking about Christ, just as his mother used to do back home. His mother had read that very same verse to him more than once. He could almost hear her voice saying it now. He had supposed vaguely that rich people didn't think about Christ, didn't need Him with all the other things

that they had. But here was this woman, beautiful and gentle, dressed in luxurious clothes, talking about Christ as if He were a real person, to be met any moment.

She touched his arm, and he turned around. She was standing before him, looking up into his face.

"Here is a dollar; buy yourself some food. And don't lose courage, even if things look hard. There's a job somewhere for you. I hope you'll find it soon."

He could only stammer pitifully:

"Thanks, lady, thanks. I'll sure buy food, not booze. You've given me a fresh start, lady. I'll never forget your kindness."

“You’ll be eating Christ’s bread. Pass it on,” she said, and smiled at him in friendly fashion, as if he were a man, not a bum. Then she was gone to join her escort who waited at the steps. She left a faint breath of sweetness behind.

DONLEY started toward the region of cheap eating houses. His head was up. A good meal would enable him to try again. He could get a meal for fifty cents. There would be half of his dollar left over for food tomorrow. He would be eating Christ’s bread these two days. Again, that feeling as of an electric shock passed

over him. Christ’s bread! But, look here! One could not save up Christ’s bread just for oneself!

An old man was shuffling along just ahead of him. Donley had seen him before at two places where he had asked for work. Poor old chap! It was hard lines, looking for work when one got to that age. Maybe the old duffer was hungry too. Christ’s bread must be shared. Suddenly Donley felt a great uplifting of the heart. He, too, could give. A dollar was enough for both of them. Tomorrow? Well, Christ was never short of bread. Donley felt an amazing sureness about that.

“Hey, buddy, what do you say to

going in and getting us a good meal?"

The old man turned, his watery eyes blinking up at Donley.

"You wouldn't fool me?" he quavered.

But he couldn't believe it until he was seated at the oilcloth-covered table with a bowl of hot stew before him. Donley ordered grandly. They ate with concentration. Presently Donley noticed that the old man was wrapping up his buttered bread in a paper napkin.

"Saving some for tomorrow, hey?" he asked genially.

"N-no. There's a kid down here. Old man out on a drunk. Nice kid.

Had tough luck. He was crying a little when I passed; hungry. I aim to give him the bread."

Christ's bread! Donley was shaken as by a mystic presence, a third Guest, at that oilcloth-covered table.

"Let's both take him our bread. We've got plenty without it. I'll wrap up my pie too."

They wrapped the food and carried it out with them. The old man led the way to where the boy stood with a few papers that he was trying to sell.

"Here, kid, eat this," said the old man, proudly.

The boy began to eat greedily.

Then he stopped, and called a dog that hung back in the alley; a frightened, lost dog, as one could see at a glance.

"Here, Jack, you can have half," he said.

Christ's bread! Ah, Yes! It would go to the four-footed brother too.

The kid stood up gamely now, and began to cry his papers. He sold three while they watched him.

"Good-by," said Donley to the old man. "There's a job for you somewhere. You'll find it soon; just hang on. You know"—his voice sank to a whisper—"this what we've eaten is Christ's bread. A lady told me so when she gave me the

dollar. We're just naturally bound to have good luck."

"Yes, sir," agreed the old man. "I've thought of a new place where maybe they need a night watchman. I wouldn't ask much pay. It would be a warm place to stay, though, and I'd earn enough to buy my eats. Yes, sir, we're just naturally bound to have good luck."

DONLEY parted with his pensioners and went his way. He, too, had thought of a new place to ask for a job. He was turned down, but somehow it didn't hurt so much this time, and as he was going out the man said:

"Come back next week. Maybe things will open up a little by that time."

As he turned away from the shop he noticed that the lost dog was following him.

"Did you know I furnished the grub, old fellow? I haven't got any more. But don't worry; we'll have more tomorrow."

In fondling the dog he felt a narrow strap around his neck, and found a license tag and an address.

"You're in luck," he said to the dog. "Someone wants you. Guess you'll eat tomorrow, all right. Come along, I'll take you home."

It was a long walk uptown, but

after a while the dog was barking madly at a door, which was opened by a starched, disapproving maid.

"Come in," she said coldly to Donley. "The master will see you. He told me to bring in the person who brought the dog home."

A keen-eyed man, while caressing the leaping dog, looked Donley over.

"Why did you bring him home?"

Donley hesitated. He could hardly say to this stranger that he had had to do it because he had eaten Christ's bread.

"He followed me from down in the market district. I stopped to pat him, and I found the tag. I like

dogs. I wanted to bring him back to his own folks."

The keen-eyed man had meant to say sharply. "Didn't you steal him for the sake of the reward?" But he didn't say it. There was something of dignity about Donley that day. Instead, the man found himself saying:

"I advertised in last night's paper. Ten dollars reward."

"I didn't know—I didn't see the paper. It wasn't for the reward——"

"I can see that. I'm glad it came to you. Thanks, and good luck to you."

Donley looked at the bill in his

hand, in a half-dazed manner.

"I don't like to take it. I just wanted to do the dog a good turn."

"Take it along. What you did is worth more than that to me. And—do you want a job? Come to my office tomorrow. I may have something for you."

DONLEY was walking down the avenue, the bill clutched in his hand.

A miracle! Had he been down and out—hopeless? There was Christ's bread. It had multiplied like the loaves and fishes that he had read about in the country Sunday school, long, long ago. Once

one had eaten it, one didn't need to be afraid of going hungry any more. There was enough of that bread for all. Here were courage, and a job, and a new chance, and always something to pass on to the other hungry ones. Oh, something more than the bread that one could see!

And the world could not beat the man who had eaten holy bread!

Break Thou the Bread of Life

Break Thou the bread of life, dear
Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves beside
the sea.
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee,
Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee, O living
Word!

Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord, to me,
to me.
As Thou didst bless the bread by
Galilee;
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters
fall,
And I shall find my peace, my All in
All!

—*Mary A. Lathbury*

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