

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN – GALILEE

*Clear silver water in a cup of gold,  
Under the sunlit steeps of Gadara,  
It shines—His Lake—the Sea of Chinnereth—  
The waves He loved, the waves that kissed His feet  
So many blessed days. Oh, happy waves!  
Oh, little silver, happy Sea, far-famed,  
Under the sunlit steeps of Gadara !*

And now they were in Galilee, our Lord and His five disciples, six if we count Nathaniel. Let us try to see the place where the greater part of the Public Life was spent, which was the home of those who after Peter were to be the foundation stones of the Church. It must be dear to us for their sake, and much more for His who is our Master as well as theirs.

The Sea of Galilee, or of Tiberias, or the Lake of Gennesareth, is a pear-shaped sheet of water, fourteen miles long and six broad in its widest part. In our Lord's time it was a scene of wonderful beauty. Its deep blue waters were crossed and recrossed by boats of many shapes and sizes. There were heavily laden barges bearing the costly merchandise of the East to the custom-house on the shore; there were pleasure skiffs darting here and there with gay parties bound for one or other of the handsome Roman villas by the Lakeside; and there were fishing smacks in hundreds, some with nets lowered for a draught, others bringing home the fruits of the night's haul. The white beach showed boats being unladen, children looking on as the silvery load was landed and sorted, men and boys mending their nets on the strand or stretching them out to dry.

Dotted all about were the cottages of the fishermen, and, coming down almost to the water's edge, glowed rich, waving cornfields and flowers of every hue. In the Jordan valley, where, sheltered from the winds, the vegetation was tropical, the sugarcane flourished, and palm trees with their feathery foliage. Higher up grew figs, almonds, olives. Higher still, walnut, oaks, apple trees, each of these needing its own kind of soil and temperature, yet all at home here. Here, too, were the richest and busiest cities of Galilee—Tiberias, Magdala, Bethsaida, Capharnaum, Chorazin. Behind them soared the solemn mountains framing the beautiful picture.

Very different was the country to the east of the Lake. The mountains rise steeply from the shore, and it was difficult to land except in a few places. Owing to the winds that rush between them from the colder heights beyond, the Lake was subject to sudden and dangerous storms. All around lay a wild and desolate region, desert or grassy plain, or rocky highland, with none of the life and stir and busy population of the district to the west.

Dear Sea of Galilee! We love it for His sake who crossed it in Peter's boat, and spoke to its

angry waves, and walked upon them to come to the help of His disciples. Here He sat with them on the shingly beach; here He taught and healed and comforted all who came to Him. Up yonder are the bleak mountains to the east which He so often climbed with weary feet, there to spend the night alone in prayer.

How glad Mary must have been to welcome her Divine Son back to Galilee! She was waiting for Him at Carta, a little town five miles north-east of Nazareth, for there was to be a marriage there and they were both invited. It seems likely that the bridegroom and the bride were her relations and that she had something to do with the arrangements for the feast.

Jewish weddings took place in the evening, and it was often dark when the bridal procession, the grandest part of the ceremony, started. Attired in a white and gold-embroidered robe, veiled from head to foot, and with a crown of myrtle on her head, the bride awaited at the door of her father's house the coming of the bridegroom. Waiting and watching with her were ten virgins, her companions carrying lamps. At last a cry was heard: "Behold the bridegroom cometh!" He came with ten youths, his friends, and taking his bride by the hand led her forth. The whole family then formed in procession, and by the light of the torches, with the music of flute and tambourine, and with joyous shouts and song, the bridal pair were escorted to their home, where a great feast was prepared.

These two at Cana were of humble rank and poor. And our Lord had brought His disciples with Him. Perhaps this was the reason why the wine ran short. Mary's quick eye saw the mishap at once, and her motherly heart felt for the confusion of the young couple. Accustomed to take every trouble to her Son, and to be granted all she asked, she went to Him and whispered:

"They have no wine."

"Woman," He answered, " what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come."

To our ears these words sound strange, but to Eastern ears they would not. "Woman" was a title of reverence, and "what is it to Me and to thee?" meant: "It is no concern of ours that the wine has failed ; the time for Me to work miracles has not yet come." There are some who think that our Lord was displeased with His Blessed Mother for telling Him of the need. They do not consider what Jesus and Mary were to each other; how for thirty years they had lived together under the same roof, she using her authority over Him as His Mother, though always with the profoundest reverence, He showing her the honour and giving her the obedience of a Son. Did she not know Him better than any other has ever done, and know what pleased and what displeased Him? And who understand best the meaning of words? Is it not those who saw the speaker, heard the tones, noticed the actions? Nothing that Jesus said or did was lost on Mary. Did she think He was displeased? On the contrary, as if He had told her beforehand what she was to do, she turned to the

waiters and said:

"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."

Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews. They were very particular to wash their hands before and after eating, and wherever a meal was provided there was always plenty of water for washing. The water-pots contained two or three measures, or about seven and a half gallons apiece. Jesus said to the waiters:

"Fill the water-pots with water." And they filled them to the brim. Then He said: "Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast."

This was usually a friend of the bridegroom's appointed to preside and give directions to the servants. He had to taste the wine before it was served to the guests. The waiters said nothing to the steward, but watched him as he raised the cup to his lips. When he had tasted he put the cup down, and, surprised that poor people could afford to have such wine, and that they should have kept it to the end of the feast, he called the bridegroom and said playfully: "Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine till now." But the faces of the servants showed that something extraordinary had taken place. They were questioned and told their tale again and again, and what had happened under that humble roof was soon spread far and wide.

About a hundred and twenty gallons of water had been changed into the purest wine. Why? Because Mary had asked? ~No, she had asked nothing. And the time for working signs and miracles had not yet come. Our Lord expressly said so. Why then did He work this wonderful miracle? Because He wanted us to know that whatever His Mother desires He will grant, and that for her dear sake He is ready to hasten His hours of mercy to us. He knew the wine had failed. He meant to give more, but He waited for her to speak that the gift might be hers as well as His. He wanted to teach us also by His Blessed Mother's example not to be discouraged if He seems to be displeased with us, and to show us that our little troubles are no concern of His. It is only seeming. Everything that touches us interests Him and His holy Mother. They think for us before we think for ourselves. They feel for us, not in big troubles only, but in the least little annoyances and inconveniences. And they are always ready to help.

Our Lord went to this feast, then, on purpose to show honour to His Mother. He went also to bless that marriage union which He was soon to raise to the dignity of a Sacrament, and to bless all innocent joy and merrymaking. He was pleased to see the brightness all round Him at Cana, and He likes to see us, too, happy and gay.

There was still another reason for the miracle. St. John, who was present and gives us the account, says:

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."

Day by day the disciples were growing in the knowledge of their Divine Master. From His words to Peter and to Nathaniel they had seen that He could read the future and the secrets of hearts. This splendid miracle at Cana showed that He had power over Nature. Their reverence as well as their love was deepening continually. St. John speaks particularly of the way in which this miracle increased their faith—as well it might. The other Evangelists tell us later of another and still greater miracle than this of Cana, a more stupendous change, and one that was to be wrought not once only, but thousands of times daily, all the world over, wherever Holy Mass is said by a Catholic priest.

The thought of Cana helped the disciples when our Lord first spoke to them at Capharnaum of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, and when at the Last Supper He changed the bread and wine into His most sacred Body and Blood. And it helps us too who live so long after Him, but believe in Him as firmly as did His first disciples, and cry out to Him with Nathaniel:

"Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God!"