

CHAPTER VII

THE END

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144. At length the third year of His ministry verged towards its close and the revolving seasons brought round the great annual feast of the Passover. It is said that as many as two or three millions of strangers were gathered in Jerusalem on such an occasion. They not only flocked from every part of Palestine, but came over sea and land from all the countries in which the seed of Abraham were dispersed, in order to celebrate the event in which their national history began. They were brought together by very various motives. Some came with the solemn thoughts and deep religious joy of minds responsive to the memories of the venerable occasion. Some looked forward chiefly to reunion with relatives and friends who had been long parted from them by residence in distant places. Not a few of the baser sort brought with them the darling passions of their race, and were chiefly intent on achieving in so great a concourse some important stroke of business. But this year the minds of tens of thousands were full of an unusual excitement, and they came up to the capital expecting to see something more remarkable than they had ever witnessed there before. They hoped to see Jesus at the feast, and entertained many vague forebodings as to what might happen in connection with Him. His name was the word oftenest passing from mouth to mouth among the pilgrim bands that crowded along the highways, and among the Jewish groups that talked together on the decks of the ships coming from Asia Minor and Egypt. Nearly

all His own disciples no doubt were there, and were ardently cherishing the hope that at last in this concourse of the nation He would throw off the guise of humility which concealed His glory, and in some irresistible way demonstrate His Messiahship. There must have been thousands from the southern portions of the country, in which He had recently been spending His time, who came full of the same enthusiastic views about Him as were entertained in Galilee at the close of His first year there; and no doubt there were multitudes of the Galileans themselves who were favorably disposed toward Him and ready to take the deepest interest in any new development of His affairs. Tens of thousands from more distant parts, who had heard of Him, but never seen Him, arrived in the capital in the hope that He might be there, and that they might enjoy the opportunity of seeing a miracle or listening to the words of the new prophet. The authorities in Jerusalem, too, awaited His coming with very mingled feelings. They hoped that some turn of events might give them the chance of at last suppressing Him; but they could not help fearing that He might appear at the head of a provincial following which would place them at His mercy.

145. The Final Breach with the Nation.—Six days before the Passover began, He arrived in Bethany, the village of His friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, which lay half-an-hour from the city on the other side of the summit of the Mount of Olives. It was a convenient place to lodge during the feast, and He took up His quarters with His friends. The solemnities were to begin on a Thursday, so that it was on the previous Friday He arrived there. He had been accompanied the last twenty miles of His journey by an immense multitude of the pilgrims, to whom He was the center of interest. They had seen Him healing blind Bartimæus at Jericho, and the miracle had produced among

them extraordinary excitement. When they reached Bethany, the village was ringing with the recent resurrection of Lazarus, and they carried on the news to the crowds who had already arrived from all quarters in Jerusalem, that Jesus had come.

146. Accordingly, when, after resting over the Sabbath in Bethany, He came forth on the Sunday morning to proceed to the city, He found the streets of the village and the neighboring roads thronged with a vast crowd, consisting partly of those who had accompanied Him on the Friday, partly of other companies who had come up behind Him from Jericho and heard of the miracles as they came along, and partly of those who, having heard that He was at hand, had flocked out from Jerusalem to see Him. They welcomed Him with enthusiasm, and began to shout "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" It was a Messianic demonstration such as He had formerly avoided. But now He yielded to it. Probably He was satisfied with the sincerity of the homage paid to Him; and the hour had come when no considerations could permit Him any longer to conceal from the nation the character in which He presented Himself and the claim He made on its faith. But, in yielding to the desires of the multitude that He should assume the style of a king, He made it unmistakable in what sense He accepted the honor. He sent for an ass-colt, and, His disciples having spread their garments on it, rode at the head of the crowd. Not armed to the teeth or bestriding a war-horse did He come, but as the King of simplicity and peace. The procession swept over the brow of Olivet and down the mountain-side; it crossed the Kedron, and, mounting the slope which led to the gate of the city, passed on through the streets to the temple. It swelled as it went, great numbers hurrying from every quarter to join it; the shouts rang louder and more loud; the processionists broke off twigs from the

palms and olives, as they passed, and waved them in triumph. The citizens of Jerusalem ran to their doors and bent over their balconies to look, and asked, "Who is this?" to which the processionists replied with provincial pride, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth." It was, in fact, an entirely provincial demonstration. The Jerusalemites took no part in it, but held coldly aloof. The authorities knew only too well what it meant, and beheld it with rage and dread. They came to Jesus, and ordered Him to bid His followers hold their peace, hinting no doubt that, if He did not do so, the Roman garrison, which was stationed in the immediate vicinity, would pounce on Him and them, and punish the city for an act of treason to Cæsar.

147. There is no point in the life of Jesus at which we are more urged to ask, What would have happened if His claim had been conceded—if the citizens of Jerusalem had been carried away with the enthusiasm of the provincials, and the prejudices of priests and scribes had been borne down before the torrent of public approval? Would Jesus have put Himself at the head of the nation and inaugurated an era of the world's history totally different from that which followed? These questions very soon carry us beyond our depth, yet no intelligent reader of the Gospels can help asking them.

148. Jesus had formally made offer of Himself to the capital and the authorities of the nation, but met with no response. The provincial recognition of His claims was insufficient to carry a national assent. He accepted the decision as final. The multitude expected a signal from Him, and in their excited mood would have obeyed it, whatever it might have been. But He gave them none, and, after looking round about Him for a little in the temple, left them and returned to Bethany.

149. Doubtless the disappointment of the multitude was extreme, and an opportunity was offered to the authorities

which they did not fail to make use of. The Pharisees needed no stimulus; but even the Sadducees, those cold and haughty friends of order, espied danger to the public peace in the state of the popular mind, and leagued themselves with their bitter enemies in the resolution to suppress Him.

150. On Monday and Tuesday He appeared again in the city and engaged in His old work of healing and teaching. But on the second of these days the authorities interposed. Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, high priests, priests, and scribes were for once combined in a common cause. They came to Him, as He taught in the temple, and demanded by what authority He did such things. In all the pomp of official costume, of social pride and popular renown, they set themselves against the simple Galilean, while the multitudes looked on. They entered into a keen and prolonged controversy with Him on points selected beforehand, putting forward their champions of debate to entangle Him in His talk, their distinct object being, either to discredit Him with the audience or to elicit something from His lips in the heat of argument which might form a ground of accusation against Him before the civil authority. Thus, for example, they asked Him if it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar. If He answered Yes, they knew that His popularity would perish on the instant, for it would be a complete contradiction of the popular Messianic ideas. If, on the contrary, He answered No, they would accuse Him of treason before the Roman governor. But Jesus was far more than a match for them. Hour by hour He steadfastly met the attack. His straightforwardness put their duplicity to shame, and His skill in argument turned every spear which they directed at Him round to their own breasts. At last He carried the war into their own territory, and convicted them of such ignorance or lack of candor as completely put them to shame before the onlookers. Then, when He had silenced them, He let loose the storm of His indigna-

tion, and delivered against them the philippic which is recorded in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. Giving unrestrained expression to the pent-up criticism of a lifetime, He exposed their hypocritical practices in sentences that fell like strokes of lightning and made them a scorn and laughing-stock, not only to the hearers then, but to all the world since.

151. It was the final breach between Him and them. They had been utterly humiliated before the whole people, over whom they were set in authority and honor. They felt it to be intolerable, and resolved not to lose an hour in seeking their revenge. That very evening the Sanhedrim met in passionate mood to devise a plan for making away with Him. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea may have raised a solitary protest against their precipitate proceedings; but they indignantly silenced them, and were unanimously of opinion that He should forthwith be put to death. But circumstances checked their cruel haste. At least the forms of justice would have to be gone through; and besides, Jesus evidently enjoyed an immense popularity among the strangers who filled the city. What might not the idle crowd do if He were arrested before their eyes? It was necessary to wait till the mass of the pilgrims had left the city. They had just, with great reluctance, arrived at this conclusion, when they received a most unexpected and gratifying surprise. One of His own disciples appeared, and offered to betray Him for a price.

152. Judas Iscariot is the byword of the human race. In his *Vision of Hell*, Dante has placed him in the lowest of the circles of the damned, as the sole sharer with Satan himself of the very uttermost punishment; and the poet's verdict is that of mankind. Yet he was not such a monster of iniquity as to be utterly beyond comprehension or even sympathy. The history of his base and appalling lapse is perfectly intelligible. He had joined the discipleship of Jesus, as the other apostles did, in the hope of taking part

in a political revolution and occupying a distinguished place in an earthly kingdom. It is inconceivable that Jesus would have made him an apostle if there had not at one time been some noble enthusiasm in him, and some attachment to Himself. That he was a man of superior energy and administrative ability may be inferred from the fact that he was made the purse-bearer of the apostolic company. But there was a canker at the root of his character, which gradually absorbed all that was excellent in him, and became a tyrannical passion. This was the love of money. He fed it by the petty peculations which he practised on the small sums which Jesus received from His friends for the necessities of His company and for distribution among the poor with whom He was daily mingling. He hoped to give it unrestrained gratification when He became chancellor of the exchequer in the new kingdom. The views of the other apostles were perhaps as worldly to begin with as his. But the history of their intercourse with their Master was totally different. They became ever more spiritual, he ever more worldly. They never, indeed, as long as Jesus lived, rose to the idea of a spiritual kingdom apart from an earthly one; but the spiritual elements which their Master had taught them to add to their material conception grew more and more prominent, till the earthly heart was eaten out of it, and merely the empty shell was left, to be in due time crushed and blown away. But Judas' earthly views became more and more engrossing, and were more and more divested of every spiritual adjunct. He grew impatient for their realization. Preaching and healing seemed to him waste of time; the purity and unworldliness of Jesus irritated him; why did He not bring on the kingdom at once, and then preach as much as He chose afterwards! At last he began to suspect that there was to be no kingdom such as he had hoped for at all. He felt that he had been deceived, and began not only to despise but even

hate his Master. The failure of Jesus to take advantage of the disposition of the people on Palm Sunday finally convinced him that it was useless to hold on to the cause any longer. He saw that the ship was sinking and resolved to get out of it. He carried out his resolution in such a way as both to gratify his master-passion and secure the favor of the authorities. His offer came to them just at the right moment. They closed with it greedily, and, having arranged the price with the miserable man, sent him away to find a convenient opportunity for the betrayal. He found it sooner than they expected—on the next night but one after the dastardly bargain had been concluded.

153. **Jesus in the Prospect of Death.**—Christianity has no more precious possession than the memory of Jesus during the week when He stood face to face with death. Unspeakably great as He always was, it may be reverently said that He was never so great as during those days of direst calamity. All that was grandest and all that was most tender, the most human and the most divine aspects of His character, were brought out as they had never been before.

154. He came to Jerusalem well aware that He was about to die. For a whole year the fact had been staring Him constantly in the face, and the long-looked-for had come at last. He knew it was His Father's will, and, when the hour arrived, He bent His steps with sublime fortitude to the fatal spot. It was not, however, without a terrible conflict of feelings; the ebb and flow of the most diverse emotions—anguish and ecstasy, the most prolonged and crushing depression, the most triumphant joy and the most majestic peace—swayed hither and thither within Him like the moods of a vast ocean.

155. Some have hesitated to attribute to Him aught of that shrinking from death which is natural to man; but

surely without good reason. It is an instinct perfectly innocent; and perhaps the very fact that His bodily organism was pure and perfect may have made it stronger in Him than it is in us. Remember how young He was—only three-and-thirty—the currents of life were powerful in Him; He was full of the instincts of action. To have these strong currents rolled back and the light and warmth of life quenched in the cold waters of death must have been utterly repugnant to Him. An incident which happened on the Monday caused Him a great shock of this instinctive pain. Some Greeks who had come to the feast expressed through two of the apostles their desire for an interview with Him. There were many heathens in different parts of the Greek-speaking world who at this period had found refuge from the atheism and disgusting immorality of the times in the religion of the Jews settled in their midst, and had accordingly become proselytes of the worship of Jehovah. To this class these inquirers belonged. But their application shook Him with thoughts which they little dreamt of. Only two or three times in the course of His ministry does He seem to have been brought into contact with representatives of the world lying outside the limits of His own people, His mission being exclusively to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But on every such occasion He met with a faith, a courtesy and nobility, which He Himself contrasted with the unbelief, rudeness, and pettiness of the Jews. How could He help longing to pass beyond the narrow bounds of Palestine and visit nations of such simple and generous disposition? He must often have seen visions of a career like that afterwards achieved by Paul, when He bore the glad tidings from land to land, and evangelized Athens, Rome, and the other great centers of the West. What joy such a career would have been to Jesus, who felt within Himself the energy and overflowing benevolence which it would have exactly suited! But death was at hand to extinguish all. The

visit of the Greeks caused a great wave of such thoughts to break over Him. Instead of responding to their request, He became abstracted, His face darkened, and His frame was shaken with the tremor of an inward conflict. But He soon recovered Himself, and gave expression to the thoughts on which in those days He was steadying up His soul: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." He could see beyond death, terrible and absorbing as the prospect of it was, and assure Himself that the effect of His self-sacrifice would be infinitely grander and more extensive than that of a personal mission to the heathen world could ever have been. Besides, death was what His Father had appointed for Him. This was the last and deepest consolation with which He soothed His humble and trustful soul on this as on every similar occasion: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thyself."

156. Death approached Him with every terrible accompaniment. He was to fall a victim to the treachery of a follower of His own, whom He had chosen and loved. His life was to be taken by the hands of His own nation, in the city of His heart. He had come to exalt His nation to heaven, and had loved her with a devotion nourished by the most intelligent and sympathetic acquaintance with her past history and with the great men who had loved her before Him, as well as by the sense of all which He Himself was able to do for her. But His death would bring down the blight of a thousand curses on Palestine and Jerusalem. How clearly He foresaw what was coming was shown by the memorable prophetic discourse of the twenty-fourth of Matthew, which He spoke on Tuesday afternoon to His disciples, sitting on the side of Mount

Olivet, with the doomed city at His feet. How bitter was the anguish it caused Him was shown on the Sunday, when, even in His hour of triumph, as the joyful multitude bore Him down the mountain road, He stopped at the point where the city burst upon the view, and with tears and lamentations predicted its fate. It ought to have been the fair city's bridal day, when she should have been married to the Son of God; but the pallor of death was on her face. He who would have taken her to His heart, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, saw the eagles already in the air, flying fast to rend her in pieces.

157. In the evenings of this week He went out to Bethany; but in all probability He spent most of the nights alone in the open air. He wandered about in the solitude of the hill-top and among the olive-groves and gardens with which the sides of the mount were covered; many a time, perhaps, going along the same road down which the procession had passed, and, as He looked across the valley from the point where He had stopped before, at the city sleeping in the moonlight, startling the night with cries more bitter than the lamentation which overawed the multitude; many a time repeating to His lonely heart the great truths He had uttered in the presence of the Greeks.

158. He was terribly alone. The whole world was against Him—Jerusalem panting for His life with passionate hate, the tens of thousands from the provinces turned from Him in disappointment. Not one even of His apostles, not even John, was in the least aware of the real situation, or able to be the confidant of His thoughts. This was one of the bitterest drops in His cup. He felt, as no other person has ever felt, the necessity of living on in the world after death. The cause He had inaugurated must not die. It was for the whole world, and was to endure through all generations and visit every part of the globe. But after His departure it would be left in the hands of His apostles, who were now showing themselves so

weak, unsympathetic, and ignorant. Were they fit for the task? Had not one of them turned out a traitor? Would not the cause, when He was gone,—so perhaps the tempter whispered,—go to wreck, and all His far-reaching plans for the regeneration of the world vanish like the baseless fabric of a vision?

159. Yet He was not alone. Among the deep shadows of the gardens and upon the summits of Olivet, He sought the unfailing resource of other and less troubled days, and found it still in His dire need. His Father was with Him; and, pouring out supplications with strong crying and tears, He was heard in that He feared. He hushed His spirit with the sense that His Father's perfect love and wisdom were appointing all that was happening to Him, and that He was glorifying His Father and fulfilling the work given Him to do. This could banish every fear, and fill Him with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

160. At last the end drew very near. The Thursday evening arrived, when in every house in Jerusalem the Passover was eaten. Jesus also with the Twelve sat down to eat it. He knew that it was His last night on earth, and that this was His farewell meeting with His own. Happily there has been preserved to us a full account of it, with which every Christian mind is familiar. It was the greatest evening in His life. His soul overflowed in indescribable tenderness and grandeur. Some shadows indeed fell across His spirit in the earlier hours of the evening; but they soon passed; and throughout the scenes of the washing of the disciples' feet, the eating of the Passover, the institution of the Lord's Supper, the farewell address, and the great high-priestly prayer, the whole glory of His character shone out. He completely resigned Himself to the genial impulses of friendship, His love to His own flowing forth without limit; and, as if He had forgotten all their imperfections, He rejoiced in the anticipation of their future successes and the triumph of

His cause. Not a shadow intercepted His view of the face of His Father or dimmed the satisfaction with which He looked on His own work just about to be completed. It was as if the Passion were already past, and the glory of His Exaltation were already breaking around Him.

161. But the reaction came very soon. Rising from the table at midnight, they passed through the streets and out of the town by the eastern gate of the city, and, crossing the Kedron, reached a well-known haunt of His at the foot of Olivet, the garden of Gethsemane. Here ensued the awful and memorable Agony. It was the final access of the mood of depression which had been struggling all the week with the mood of joy and trust whose culmination had been reached at the supper table. It was the final onset of temptation, from which His life had never been free. But we fear to analyze the elements of the scene. We know that any conception of ours must be utterly unable to exhaust its meaning. How, above all, can we estimate in the faintest degree the chief element in it—the crushing, scorching pressure of the sin of the world, which He was then expiating?

162. But the struggle ended in a complete victory. While the poor disciples were sleeping away the hours of preparation for the crisis which was at hand, He had thoroughly equipped Himself for it; He had fought down the last remnants of temptation; the bitterness of death was past; and He was able to go through the scenes which followed with a calmness which nothing could ruffle, and a majesty which converted His trial and crucifixion into the pride and glory of humanity.

163. **The Trial.**—He had just overcome in this struggle when through the branches of the olives He saw, moving in the moonlight down the opposite slope, the mass of His enemies coming to arrest Him. The traitor was at their head. He was well acquainted with his Master's haunt

and probably hoped to find Him there asleep. For this reason he had chosen the midnight hour for his dark deed. It suited his employers well too, for they were afraid to lay hands on Jesus in the day-time, dreading the temper of the Galilean strangers who filled the city. But they knew how it would overawe His friends, if, getting His trial over during the night, they could show Him in the morning, when the populace awoke, already a condemned criminal in the hands of the executors of the law. They had brought lanterns and torches with them, thinking they might find their victim crouching in some cave, or that they might have to pursue Him through the wood. But He came forth to meet them at the entrance to the garden, and they quailed like cravens before His majestic looks and withering words. He freely surrendered Himself into their hands, and they led Him back to the city. It was probably about midnight; and the remaining hours of the night and the early hours of the morning were occupied with the legal proceedings which had to be gone through, before they could gratify their thirst for His life.

164. There were two trials, an ecclesiastical one and a civil one, in each of which there were three stages. The former took place, first before Annas, then before Caiaphas and an informal committee of the Sanhedrim, and, lastly, before a regular meeting of this court; the latter took place, first before Pilate, then before Herod, and, lastly, before Pilate again.

165. The reason of this double legal process was the political situation of the country. Judæa, as has been already explained, was directly subject to the Roman empire, forming a part of the province of Syria, and being governed by a Roman officer, who resided at Cæsarea. But it was not the practice of Rome to strip those countries which she had subdued of all the forms of native government. Though she ruled with an iron hand, collecting her taxes with severity, suppressing every sign of rebellion

with promptitude, and asserting her paramount authority on great occasions, yet she conceded to the conquered as many of the insignia as possible of their ancient power. She was especially tolerant in matters of religion. Thus the Sanhedrim, the supreme ecclesiastical court of the Jews, was still permitted to try all religious causes. Only, if the sentence passed was a capital one, its execution could not take place without the case being tried over again before the governor. So that, when a prisoner was convicted by the Jewish ecclesiastical tribunal of a capital crime, he had to be sent down to Cæsarea and prosecuted before the civil court, unless the governor happened to be at the time in Jerusalem. The crime of which Jesus was accused was one which naturally came before the ecclesiastical court. This court passed on Him a death sentence. But it had not the power to carry it out. It had to hand Him on to the tribunal of the governor, who happened at the time to be in the capital, which he generally visited at the Passover.

166. Jesus was conducted first to the palace of Annas. He was an old man of seventy, who had been high priest a score of years before, and still retained the title, as did also five of his sons who had succeeded him, though his son-in-law Caiaphas was the actual high priest. His age, ability, and family influence gave him immense social weight, and he was the virtual, though not formal, head of the Sanhedrim. He did not try Jesus, but merely wished to see Him and ask a few questions; so that He was very soon led away from the palace of Annas to that of Caiaphas, which probably formed part of the same group of official buildings.

167. Caiaphas, as ruling high priest, was president of the Sanhedrim, before which Jesus was tried. A legal meeting of this court could not be held before sunrise, perhaps about six o'clock. But there were many of its

members already on the spot, who had been drawn together by their interest in the case. They were eager to get to work, both to gratify their own dislike to Him and to prevent the interference of the populace with their proceedings. Accordingly they resolved to hold an informal meeting at once, at which the accusation, evidence, and so forth might be put into shape, so that, when the legal hour for opening their doors arrived, there might be nothing to do but to repeat the necessary formalities and carry Him off to the governor. This was done; and, while Jerusalem slept, these eager judges hurried forward their dark designs.

168. They did not begin, as might have been expected, with a clear statement of the crime with which He was charged. Indeed, it would have been difficult for them to do so, for they were divided among themselves. Many things in His life which the Pharisees regarded as criminal were treated by the Sadducees with indifference; and other acts of His, like the cleansing of the temple, which had enraged the Sadducees, afforded gratification to the Pharisees.

169. The high priest began with questioning Him as to His disciples and doctrine, evidently with the view of discovering whether He had taught any revolutionary tenets, which might form a ground of accusation before the governor. But Jesus repelled the insinuation, indignantly asserting that He had ever spoken openly before the world, and demanded a statement and proof of any evil He had done. This unusual reply induced one of the minions of the court to smite Him on the mouth with His fist—an act which the court apparently did not rebuke, and which showed what amount of justice He had to expect at the hands of His judges. An attempt was then made to bring proof against Him, a number of witnesses repeating various statements they had heard Him make, out of which it was hoped an accusation might be constructed. But it turned

out a total failure. The witnesses could not agree among themselves; and when at last two were got to unite in a distorted report of a saying of His early ministry, which appeared to have some color of criminality, it turned out to be a thing so paltry that it would have been absurd to appear with it before the governor as the ground of a serious charge.

170. They were resolved on His death, but the prey seemed slipping out of their hands. Jesus looked on in absolute silence, while contradictory testimonies of the witnesses demolished each other. He quietly took His natural position far above His judges. They felt it; and at last the president, in a transport of rage and irritation, started up and commanded Him to speak. Why was He so loud and shrill? The humiliating spectacle going on in the witness-box and the silent dignity of Jesus were beginning to trouble even these consciences, assembled in the dead of night.

171. The case had completely broken down, when Caiaphas rose from his seat, and, with theatrical solemnity, asked the question: "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ the Son of God." It was a question asked merely in order to induce Jesus to criminate Himself. Yet He who had kept silence when He might have spoken now spoke when He might have been silent. With great solemnity He answered in the affirmative, that He was the Messiah and the Son of God. Nothing more was needed by His judges. They unanimously pronounced Him guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death.

172. The whole trial had been conducted with precipitancy and total disregard of the formalities proper to a court of law. Everything was dictated by the desire to arrive at guilt, not justice. The same persons were both prosecutors and judges. No witnesses for the defence were thought of. Though the judges were doubtless per-

fectly conscientious in their sentence, it was the decision of minds long ago shut against the truth and possessed with the most bitter and revengeful passions.

173. The trial was now looked upon as past, the legal proceedings after sunrise being a mere formality, which would be got over in a few minutes. Accordingly, Jesus was given up as a condemned man to the cruelty of the jailors and the mob. Then ensued a scene over which one would gladly draw a veil. There broke forth on Him an Oriental brutality of abuse which makes the blood run cold. Apparently the Sanhedrists themselves took part in it. This Man, who had baffled them, impaired their authority and exposed their hypocrisy, was very hateful to them. Sadducean coldness could boil up into heat enough when it was really roused. Pharisaic fanaticism was inventive in its cruelty. They smote Him with their fists, they spat on Him, they blindfolded Him, and, in derision of His prophetic claims, bade Him prophesy who struck Him, as they took their turn of smiting Him. But we will not dwell on a scene so disgraceful to human nature.

174. It was probably between six and seven in the morning when they conducted Jesus, bound with chains, to the residence of the governor. What a spectacle that was! The priests, teachers, and judges of the Jewish nation leading their Messiah to ask the Gentile to put Him to death! It was the hour of the nation's suicide. This was all that had come of God's choosing them, bearing them on eagles' wings and carrying them all the days of old, sending them His prophets and deliverers, redeeming them from Egypt and Babylon, and causing His glory for so many centuries to pass before their eyes! Surely it was the very mockery of Providence. Yet God was not mocked. His designs march down through history with resistless tread, waiting not on the will of man; and even this tragic hour, when the Jewish nation was turning His dealings

into derision, was destined to demonstrate the depths of His wisdom and love.

175. The man before whose judgment-seat Jesus was about to appear was Pontius Pilate, who had been governor of Judæa for six years. He was a typical Roman, not of the antique, simple stamp, but of the imperial period; a man not without some remains of the ancient Roman justice in his soul, yet pleasure-loving, imperious, and corrupt. He hated the Jews whom he ruled, and, in times of irritation, freely shed their blood. They returned his hatred with cordiality, and accused him of every crime, maladministration, cruelty, and robbery. He visited Jerusalem as seldom as possible; for, indeed, to one accustomed to the pleasures of Rome, with its theaters, baths, games, and gay society, Jerusalem, with its religiousness and ever-smouldering revolt, was a dreary residence. When he did visit it, he stayed in the magnificent palace of Herod the Great; it being common for the officers sent by Rome into conquered countries to occupy the palaces of the displaced sovereigns.

176. Up the broad avenue, which led through a fine park, laid out with walks, ponds, and trees of various kinds, to the front of the building, the Sanhedrists and the crowd which had joined the procession, as it moved on through the streets, conducted Jesus. The court was held in the open air, on a mosaic pavement in front of that portion of the palace which united its two colossal wings.

177. The Jewish authorities had hoped that Pilate would accept their decision as his own, and without going into the merits of the case, pass the sentence they desired. This was frequently done by provincial governors, especially in matters of religion, which, as foreigners, they could not be expected to understand. Accordingly, when he asked what the crime of Jesus was, they replied, "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee." But he was not in the mood of concession,