

LESSON THIRTY**CHAPTER LIX.****THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE TRIALS.**

AND this was how the Jews at last received their promised Messiah—longed for with passionate hopes during two thousand years; since then regretted in bitter agony for well-nigh two thousand more! From this moment He was regarded by all the apparitors of the Jewish Court as a heretic, liable to death by stoning; and was only remanded into custody to be kept till break of day, because by daylight only, and in the *Lishcat Haggazzith*, the Hall of Judgment, and only by a full session of the entire Sanhedrin, could He be legally condemned. And since now they looked upon Him as a fit person to be insulted with impunity, He was haled through the court-yard to the guard-room with blows and curses, in which it may be that not only the attendant menials, but even the cold but now infuriated Sadducees took their share. It was now long past midnight, and the spring air was then most chilly. In the centre of the court the servants of the priests were warming themselves under the frosty starlight as they stood round a fire of coals. And as He was led past that fire He heard—what was to Him a more deadly bitterness than any which His brutal persecutors could pour into His cup of anguish—He heard His boldest Apostle denying Him with oaths.

For during these two sad hours of His commencing tragedy, as He stood in the Halls of Annas and of Caiaphas, another moral tragedy, which He had already prophesied, had been taking place in the outer court.

As far as we can infer from the various narratives, the palace in Jerusalem, conjointly occupied by Annas the real, and Caiaphas the titular High Priest, seems to have been built round a square court, and entered by an arched passage or vestibule; and on the farther side of it, probably up a short flight of steps, was the hall in which the committee of the Sanhedrin had met. Timidly, and at a distance, two only of the Apostles had so far recovered from their first panic as to follow far in the rear of the melancholy procession. One of these—the beloved disciple—known perhaps to the High Priest's household as a young fisherman of the Lake of Galilee—had found ready admittance, with no attempt to conceal his sympathies or his identity. Not so the other. Unknown, and a Galilæan, he had been stopped at the

door by the youthful portress. Better, far better, had his exclusion been final. For it was a night of tumult, of terror, of suspicion; and Peter was weak, and his intense love was mixed with fear, and yet he was venturing into the very thick of his most dangerous enemies. But John, regretting that he should be debarred from entrance, and judging perhaps of his friend's firmness by his own, exerted his influence to obtain admission for him. With bold imprudence, and concealing the better motives which had brought him thither, Peter, warned though he had been, but warned in vain, walked into the court-yard, and sat down in the very middle of the servants of the very men before whom at that moment his Lord was being arraigned on a charge of death. The portress, after the admission of those concerned in the capture, seems to have been relieved (as was only natural at that late hour) by another maid, and advancing to the group of her fellow-servants, she fixed a curious and earnest gaze on the dubious stranger as he sat full in the red glare of the firelight, and then, with a flash of recognition, she exclaimed, "Why, *you*, as well as the other, were with Jesus of Galilee." Peter was off his guard. At this period of life his easy impressionable nature was ever liable to be moulded by the influence of the moment, and he passed readily into passionate extremes. Long, long afterwards, we find a wholly unexpected confirmation of the probability of this sad episode of his life, in the readiness with which he lent himself to the views of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the equal facility with which a false shame, and a fear of "them which were of the circumcision, made him swerve into the wrong and narrow proprieties of "certain which came from James." And thus it was that the curious question of an inquisitive young girl startled him by its very suddenness into a quick denial of his Lord. Doubtless, at the moment, it presented itself to him as a mere prudent evasion of needless danger. But did he hope to stop there? Alas, "once denied" is always "thrice denied;" and the sudden "manslaughter upon truth" always, and rapidly, develops into its utter and deliberate murder; and a lie is like a stone set rolling upon a mountain-side, which is instantly beyond its utterer's control.

For a moment, perhaps, his denial was accepted, for it had been very public, and very emphatic. But it warned him of his danger. Guiltily he slinks away again from the glowing brazier to the arched entrance of the court, as the crowing of a cock smote, not quite unheeded, on his guilty ear. His respite was very short. The portress—part of whose duty it was to draw attention to dubious strangers—

had evidently gossiped about him to the servant who had relieved her in charge of the door. Some other idlers were standing about, and this second maid pointed him out to them as having certainly been with Jesus of Nazareth. A lie seemed more than ever necessary now, and to secure himself from all further molestation he even confirmed it with an oath. But now flight seemed impossible, for it would only confirm suspicion; so with desperate, gloomy resolution he once more—with feelings which can barely be imagined—joined the unfriendly and suspicious group who were standing round the fire.

A whole hour passed: for him it must have been a fearful hour, and one never to be forgotten. The temperament of Peter was far too nervous and vehement to suffer him to feel at ease under this new complication of ingratitude and falsehood. If he remain silent among these priestly servitors, he is betrayed by the restless self-consciousness of an evil secret which tries in vain to simulate indifference; if he brazen it out with careless talk, he is fatally betrayed by his Galilæan burr. It is evident that, in spite of denial and of oath, they wholly distrust and despise him; and at last one of the High Priest's servants—a kinsman of the wounded Malchus—once more strongly and confidently charged him with having been with Jesus in the garden, taunting him, in proof of it, with the misplaced gutturals of his provincial dialect. The others joined in the accusation. Unless he persisted, all was lost which might seem to have been gained. Perhaps one more effort would set him quite free from these troublesome charges, and enable him to wait and see the end. Pressed closer and closer by the sneering, threatening band of idle servitors—sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of faithlessness and fear—"then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man." And at that fatal moment of guilt, which might well have been for him the moment of an apostasy as fatal and final as had been that of his brother Apostle—at that fatal moment, while those shameless curses still quivered on the air—first the cock crew in the cold grey dusk, and at the same moment, catching the last accents of those perjured oaths, either through the open portal of the judgment-hall, or as He was led past the group at the fireside through the open court, with rude pushing and ribald jeers, and blows and spitting—the Lord—the Lord in the agony of His humiliation, in the majesty of His silence—"the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Blessed are those on whom, when He looks in sorrow, the Lord looks also with love! It was enough. Like an arrow through his inmost soul shot the mute

eloquent anguish of that reproachful glance. As the sunbeam smites the last hold of snow upon the rock, ere it rushes in an avalanche down the tormented hill, so the false self of the fallen Apostle slipped away. It was enough: "he saw no more enemies, he knew no more danger, he feared no more death." Flinging the fold of his mantle over his head, he too, like Judas, rushed forth into the night. Into the night, but not as Judas; into the unsunned outer darkness of miserable self-condemnation, but not into the midnight of remorse and of despair; into the night, but, as has been beautifully said, it was "to meet the morning dawn." If the angel of Innocence had left him, the angel of Repentance took him gently by the hand. Sternly, yet tenderly, the spirit of grace led up this broken-hearted penitent before the tribunal of his own conscience, and there his old life, his old shame, his old weakness, his old self was doomed to that death of godly sorrow which was to issue in a new and a nobler birth.

And it was this crime, committed against Him by the man who had first proclaimed Him as the Christ—who had come to Him over the stormy water—who had drawn the sword for Him in Gethsemane—who had affirmed so indignantly that he would die with Him rather than deny Him—it was this denial, confirmed by curses, that Jesus heard immediately after He had been condemned to death, and at the very commencement of His first terrible derision. For, in the guard-room to which He was remanded to await the break of day, all the ignorant malice of religious hatred, all the narrow vulgarity of brutal spite, all the cold innate cruelty which lurks under the abjectness of Oriental servility, was let loose against Him. His very meekness, His very silence, His very majesty—the very stainlessness of His innocence, the very grandeur of His fame—every divine circumstance and quality which raised Him to a height so infinitely immeasurable above His persecutors—all these made Him an all the more welcome victim for their low and devilish ferocity. They spat in His face; they smote Him with rods; they struck Him with their closed fists and with their open palms. In the fertility of their furious and hateful insolence, they invented against Him a sort of game. Blind-folding His eyes, they hit Him again and again, with the repeated question, "Prophecy to us, O Messiah, who it is that smote thee." So they wiled away the dark cold hours till the morning, revenging themselves upon His impassive innocence for their own present vileness and previous terror; and there, in the midst of that savage and wanton varletry, the Son of God, bound and blindfold, stood in

His long and silent agony, defenceless and alone. It was His first derision—His derision as the Christ, the Judge attainted, the Holy One a criminal, the Deliverer in bonds.

iii. At last the miserable lingering hours were over, and the grey dawn shuddered, and the morning blushed upon that memorable day. And with the earliest dawn—for so the Oral Law ordained, and they who could trample on all justice and all mercy were yet scrupulous about all the infinitely little—Jesus was led into the *Lishcat Haggazzith*, or Paved Hall at the south-east of the Temple, or perhaps into the *Chanujôth*, or “Shops,” which owed their very existence to Hanan and his family, where the Sanhedrin had been summoned, for His third trial, but His first formal and legal trial (Luke xxii. 66—71). It was now probably about six o’clock in the morning, and a full session met. Well-nigh all—for there were the noble exceptions at least of Nicodemus and of Joseph of Arimathea, and we may hope also of Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel—were inexorably bent upon His death. The Priests were there, whose greed and selfishness He had reproved; the Elders, whose hypocrisy He had branded; the Scribes, whose ignorance He had exposed; and, worse than all, the worldly, sceptical, would-be philosophic Sadducees, always the most cruel and dangerous of opponents, whose empty sapience He had so grievously confuted. All these were bent upon His death; all filled with repulsion at that infinite goodness; all burning with hatred against a nobler nature than any which they could even conceive in their loftiest dreams. And yet their task in trying to achieve His destruction was not easy. The Jewish fables of His death in the Talmud, which are shamelessly false from beginning to end, say that for forty days, though summoned daily by heraldic proclamation, not one person came forward, according to custom, to maintain His innocence, and that consequently He was first stoned as a seducer of the people (*mesîth*), and then hung on the accursed tree. The fact was that the Sanhedrists had not the power of inflicting death, and even if the Pharisees would have ventured to usurp it in a tumultuary sedition, as they afterwards did in the case of Stephen, the less fanatic and more cosmopolitan Sadducees would be less likely to do so. Not content, therefore, with the *cherem*, or ban of greater excommunication, their only way to compass His death was to hand Him over to the secular arm. At present they had only against Him a charge of constructive blasphemy, founded on an admission forced from Him by the High Priest, when even their own suborned witnesses had failed

to perjure themselves to their satisfaction. There were many old accusations against Him on which they could not rely. His violations of the Sabbath, as they called them, were mostly connected with miracles, and brought them, therefore, upon dangerous ground. His rejection of oral tradition involved a question on which Sadducees and Pharisees were at deadly feud. His authoritative cleansing of the Temple might be regarded with favour both by the Rabbis and the people. The charge of esoteric evil doctrines had been refuted by the utter publicity of his life. The charge of open heresies had broken down, from the total absence of supporting testimony. The problem before them was to convert the ecclesiastical charge of constructive blasphemy into a civil charge of constructive treason. But how could this be done? Not half the members of the Sanhedrin had been present at the hurried, nocturnal, and therefore illegal, session in the house of Caiaphas; yet if they were all to condemn Him by a formal sentence, they must all hear something on which to found their vote. In answer to the adjuration of Caiaphas, He had solemnly admitted that He was the Messiah and the Son of God. The latter declaration would have been meaningless as a charge against Him before the tribunal of the Romans; but if He would repeat the former, they might twist it into something politically seditious. But He would not repeat it in spite of their insistence, because He knew that it was open to their wilful misinterpretation, and because they were evidently acting in flagrant violation of their own express rules and traditions, which demanded that every arraigned criminal should be regarded and treated as innocent until his guilt was actually proved.

Perhaps, as they sat there with their King, bound and helpless before them, standing silent amid their clamorous voices, one or two of their most venerable members may have recalled the very different scene when Shemaia (Sameas) alone had broken the deep silence of their own cowardly terror upon their being convened to pass judgment on Herod for his murders. On that occasion, as Sameas had pointed out, Herod had stood before them, not "in a submissive manner, with his hair dishevelled, and in a black and mourning garment," but "clothed in purple, and with the hair of his head finely trimmed, and with his armed men about him." And since no one dared for very fear, even to mention the charges against him, Shemaia had prophesied that the day of vengeance should come, and that the very Herod before whom they and their prince Hyrcanus were trembling, would one day be the minister of God's anger against both him and them.

What a contrast was the present scene with that former one of half a century before? Now *they* were clamorous, their King was silent; they were powerful, their King defenceless; they guilty, their King divinely innocent; they the ministers of earthly wrath, their King the arbiter of Divine retribution.

But at last, to end a scene at once miserable and disgraceful, Jesus spoke. "If I tell you," He said, "ye will not believe; and if I ask you a question, you will not answer me." Still, lest they should have any excuse for failing to understand who He was, He added in tones of solemn warning, "But henceforth shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God." "Art thou then," they all exclaimed, "the Son of God?" "Ye say that I am," He answered, in a formula with which they were familiar, and of which they understood the full significance. And then they too cried out, as Caiaphas had done before, "What further need have we of witness? for we ourselves heard from His own mouth." And so in this third condemnation by Jewish authority—a condemnation which they thought that Pilate would simply ratify, and so appease their burning hate—ended the third stage of the trial of our Lord. And this sentence also seems to have been followed by a *second* derision resembling the first, but even more full of insult, and worse to bear than the former, inasmuch as the derision of Priests and Elders, and Sadducees is even more repulsively odious than that of menials and knaves.

Terribly soon did the Nemesis fall on the main actor in the lower stages of this iniquity. Doubtless through all those hours Judas had been a secure spectator of all that had occurred, and when the morning dawned upon that chilly night, and he knew the decision of the Priests and of the Sanhedrin, and saw that Jesus was now given over for crucifixion to the Roman Governor, then he began fully to realise all that he had done. There is in a great crime an awfully illuminating power. It lights up the theatre of the conscience with an unnatural glare, and, expelling the twilight glamour of self-interest, shows the actions and motives in their full and true aspect. In Judas, as in so many thousands before and since, this opening of the eyes which follows the consummation of an awful sin to which many other sins have led, drove him from remorse to despair, from despair to madness, from madness to suicide. Had he, even then, but gone to his Lord and Saviour, and prostrated himself at His feet to implore forgiveness, all might have been well. But, alas! he went

instead to the patrons and associates and tempters of his crime. From them he met with no pity, no counsel. He was a despised and broken instrument, and now he was tossed aside. They met his maddening remorse with chilly indifference and callous contempt. "I have sinned," he shrieked to them, "in that I have betrayed innocent blood." Did he expect them to console his remorseful agony, to share the blame of his guilt, to excuse and console him with their lofty dignity? "*What is that to us? See thou to that,*" was the sole and heartless reply they deigned to the poor traitor whom they had encouraged, welcomed, incited to his deed of infamy. He felt that he was of no importance any longer; that in guilt there is no possibility for mutual respect, no basis for any feeling but mutual abhorrence. His paltry thirty pieces of silver were all that he would get. For these he had sold his soul; and these he should no more enjoy than Achan enjoyed the gold he buried, or Ahab the garden he had seized. Flinging them wildly down upon the pavement into the holy place where the priests sat, and into which he might not enter, he hurried into the despairing solitude from which he would never emerge alive. In that solitude, we may never know what "unclean wings" were flapping about his head. Accounts differed as to the wretch's death. The probability is that the details were never accurately made public. According to one account, he hung himself, and tradition still points in Jerusalem to a ragged, ghastly, wind-swept tree, which is called the "tree of Judas." According to another version—not irreconcilable with the first, if we suppose that a rope or a branch broke under his weight—he fell headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out (Acts i. 18). According to a third—current among the early Christians—his body swelled to a huge size, under some hideous attack of elephantiasis, and he was crushed by a passing wagon. The arch-conspirators, in their sanctimonious scrupulosity, would not put the blood-money which he had returned into the "Corban," or sacred treasury, but, after taking counsel, bought with it the potter's field to bury strangers in—a plot of ground which perhaps Judas had intended to purchase, and in which he met his end. That field was long known and shuddered at as the Aceldama, or "field of blood," a place foul, haunted, and horrible.

* Another possibility is that Judas hanged himself and purposely disemboweled himself at the same time. In various countries this was the preferred method of execution for individuals guilty of treason. Even as late as the 1700s. Given the plain statements of the Scriptures, this is a most likely and logical meaning.

CHAPTER LX.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

“SUFFERED under Pontius Pilate”—so, in every creed in Christendom, is the unhappy name of the Roman Procurator handed down to eternal execration. Yet the object of introducing that name was not to point a moral, but to fix an epoch; and, in point of fact, of all the civil and ecclesiastical rulers before whom Jesus was brought to judgment, Pilate was the least guilty of malice and hatred, the most anxious, if not to spare His agony, at least to save His life.

What manner of man was this in whose hands were placed, by power from above, the final destinies of the Saviour's life? Of his origin, and of his antecedents before A.D. 26, when he became the sixth Procurator of Judæa, but little is known. In rank he belonged to the *ordo equester*, and he owed his appointment to the influence of Sejanus. His name “Pontius” seems to point to a Samnite extraction; his cognomen “Pilatus” to a warlike ancestry. His *praenomen*, if he had one, has not been preserved. In Judæa he had acted with all the haughty violence and insolent cruelty of a typical Roman governor. Scarcely had he been well installed as Procurator, when, allowing his soldiers to bring with them by night the silver eagles and other insignia of the legions from Cæsarea to the Holy City, he excited a furious outburst of Jewish feeling against an act which they regarded as idolatrous profanation. For five days and nights—often lying prostrate on the bare ground—they surrounded and almost stormed his residence at Cæsarea with tumultuous and threatening entreaties, and could not be made to desist on the sixth, even by the peril of immediate and indiscriminate massacre at the hands of the soldiers whom he sent to surround them. He had then sullenly given way, and this foretaste of the undaunted and fanatical resolution of the people with whom he had to deal, went far to embitter his whole administration with a sense of overpowering disgust.

The outbreak of the Jews on a second occasion was perhaps less justifiable, but it might easily have been avoided, if Pilate would have studied their character a little more considerately, and paid more respect to their dominant superstition. Jerusalem seems to have always suffered, as it does very grievously to this day, from a bad and deficient supply of water. To remedy this inconvenience

Pilate undertook to build an aqueduct, by which water could be brought from the "Pools of Solomon." Regarding this as a matter of public benefit, he applied to the purpose some of the money from the "Corban," or sacred treasury, and the people rose in furious myriads to resent this secular appropriation of their sacred fund. Stung by their insults and reproaches, Pilate disguised a number of his soldiers in Jewish costume, and sent them among the mob, with staves and daggers concealed under their garments, to punish the ringleaders. Upon the refusal of the Jews to separate quietly, a signal was given, and the soldiers carried out their instructions with such hearty good-will, that they wounded and beat to death not a few both of the guilty and the innocent, and created so violent a tumult that many perished by being trodden to death under the feet of the terrified and surging mob. Thus, in a nation which produced the *sicarii*, Pilate had given a fatal precedent of sicarian conduct; the Assassins had received from their Procurator an example of the use of political assassination.

A third seditious tumult must still more have embittered the disgust of the Roman governor for his subjects, by showing him how impossible it was to live among such people—even in a conciliatory spirit—without outraging some of their sensitive prejudices. In the Herodian palace at Jerusalem, which he occupied during the festivals, he had hung some gilt shields dedicated to Tiberius. In the speech of Agrippa before the Emperor Gaius, as narrated by Philo, this act is attributed to wanton malice; but since, by the king's own admission, the shields were perfectly plain, and were merely decorated with a votive inscription, it is fair to suppose that the Jews had taken offence at what Pilate simply intended for a harmless private ornament; and one which, moreover, he could hardly remove without some danger of offending the gloomy and suspicious Emperor to whose honour they were dedicated. Since he would not give way, the chief men of the nation wrote a letter of complaint to Tiberius himself. It was a part of Tiberius's policy to keep the provinces contented, and his masculine intellect despised the obstinacy which would risk an insurrection rather than sacrifice a whim. He therefore reprimanded Pilate, and ordered the obnoxious shields to be transferred from Jerusalem to the Temple of Augustus at Cæsarea.

The latter incident is related by Philo only; and besides these three outbreaks, we hear in the Gospels of some wild tumult in which Pilate had mingled the blood of the Galilæans with their sacrifices. He was

finally expelled from his Procuratorship in consequence of an accusation preferred against him by the Samaritans, who complained to Lucius Vitellius, the Legate of Syria, that he had wantonly attacked, slain, and executed a number of them who had assembled on Mount Gerizim by the invitation of an impostor—possibly Simon Magus—who promised to show them the Ark and sacred vessels of the Temple, which, he said, had been concealed there by Moses. The conduct of Pilate seems on this occasion to have been needlessly prompt and violent; and although, when he arrived at Rome, he found that Tiberius was dead, yet even Gaius refused to reinstate him in his government, thinking it no doubt a bad sign that he should thus have become unpleasantly involved with the people of every single district in his narrow government. Sejanus had shown the most utter dislike against the Jews, and Pilate probably reflected his patron's antipathies.

Such was Pontius Pilate, whom the pomps and perils of the great yearly festival had summoned from his usual residence at Cæsarea Philippi to the capital of the nation which he detested, and the headquarters of a fanaticism which he despised. At Jerusalem he occupied one of the two gorgeous palaces which had been erected there by the lavish architectural extravagance of the first Herod. It was situated in the Upper City to the south-west of the Temple Hill, and like the similar building at Cæsarea, having passed from the use of the provincial king to that of the Roman governor, was called Herod's Prætorium (Acts xxiii. 35). It was one of those luxurious abodes, "surpassing all description," which were in accordance with the tendencies of the age, and on which Josephus dwells with ecstasies of admiration. Between its colossal wings of white marble—called respectively Cæsareum and Agrippeum, in the usual spirit of Herodian flattery to the Imperial house—was an open space commanding a noble view of Jerusalem, adorned with sculptured porticos and columns of many-coloured marble, paved with rich mosaics, varied with fountains and reservoirs, and green promenades which furnished a delightful asylum to flocks of doves. Externally it was a mass of lofty walls, and towers, and gleaming roofs, mingled in exquisite varieties of splendour; within, its superb rooms, large enough to accommodate a hundred guests, were adorned with gorgeous furniture and vessels of gold and silver. A magnificent abode for a mere Roman knight! and yet the furious fanaticism of the populace at Jerusalem made it a house so little desirable, that neither Pilate nor his predecessors seem to have cared to enjoy its luxuries for more than a few

weeks in the whole year. They were forced to be present in the Jewish capital during those crowded festivals which were always liable to be disturbed by some outburst of inflammable patriotism, and they soon discovered that even a gorgeous palace can furnish but a repulsive residence if it be built on the heaving lava of a volcano.

In that kingly palace—such as in His days of freedom He had never trod—began, in three distinct acts, the fourth stage of that agitating scene which preceded the final agonies of Christ. It was unlike the idle inquisition of Annas—the extorted confession of Caiaphas—the illegal decision of the Sanhedrin; for here His judge was in His favour, and with all the strength of a feeble pride, and all the daring of a guilty cowardice, and all the pity of which a blood-stained nature was capable, did strive to deliver Him. This last trial is full of passion and movement: it involves a threefold change of scene, a threefold accusation, a threefold acquittal by the Romans, a threefold rejection by the Jews, a threefold warning to Pilate, and a threefold effort on his part, made with ever-increasing energy and ever-deepening agitation, to baffle the accusers and to set the victim free.

1. It was probably about seven in the morning that, thinking to overawe the Procurator by their numbers and their dignity, the imposing procession of the Sanhedrists and Priests, headed, no doubt, by Caiaphas himself, conducted Jesus, with a cord round His neck, from their Hall of Meeting over the lofty bridge which spanned the Valley of the Tyropœon, in presence of all the city, with the bound hands of a sentenced criminal, a spectacle to angels and to men.

Disturbed at this early hour, and probably prepared for some Paschal disturbance more serious than usual, Pilate entered the Hall of Judgment, whither Jesus had been led, in company (as seems clear) with a certain number of His accusers and of those most deeply interested in His case. But the great Jewish heirarchs, shrinking from ceremonial pollution, though not from moral guilt—afraid of leaven, though not afraid of innocent blood—refused to enter the Gentile's hall, lest they should be polluted, and should consequently be unable that night to eat the Passover. In no good humour, but in haughty and half-necessary condescension to what he would regard as the despicable superstitions of an inferior race, Pilate goes out to them under the burning early sunlight of an Eastern spring. One haughty glance takes in the pompous assemblage of priestly notables, and the turbulent mob of this singular people, equally distasteful to him as a

Roman and as a ruler; and observing in that one glance the fierce passions of the accusers, as he had already noted the meek ineffable grandeur of their victim, his question is sternly brief: "What accusation bring ye against this man?" The question took them by surprise, and showed them that they must be prepared for an unconcealed antagonism to all their purposes. Pilate evidently intended a judicial inquiry; *they* had expected only a licence to kill, and to kill, not by a Jewish method of execution, but by one which they regarded as more horrible and accursed (Deut. xxi. 22, 23). "If He were not a malefactor," is their indefinite and surly answer, "we would not have delivered Him up unto thee." But Pilate's Roman knowledge of law, his Roman instinct of justice, His Roman contempt for their murderous fanaticism, made him not choose to act upon a charge so entirely vague, nor give the sanction of his tribunal to their dark disorderly decrees. He would not deign to be an executioner where he had not been a judge. "Very well," he answered, with a superb contempt, "take ye Him and judge Him according to your law." But now they are forced to the humiliating confession that, having been deprived of the *jus gladii*, they cannot inflict the death which alone will satisfy them; for indeed it stood written in the eternal councils that Christ was to die, not by Jewish stoning or strangulation, but by that Roman form of execution which inspired the Jews with a nameless horror, even by crucifixion; that He was to reign from His cross—to die by that most fearfully significant and typical of deaths—public, slow, conscious, accursed, agonising—worse even than burning—the worst type of all possible deaths, and the worst result of that curse which He was to remove for ever. Dropping, therefore, for the present, the charge of blasphemy, which did not suit their purpose, they burst into a storm of invectives against Him, in which are discernible the triple accusations, that He perverted the nation, that He forbade to give tribute, that He called Himself a king. All three charges were flagrantly false, and the third all the more so because it included a grain of truth. But since they had not confronted Jesus with any proofs or witnesses, Pilate, in whose whole bearing and language is manifest the disgust embittered by fear with which the Jews inspired him—deigns to notice the third charge alone, and proceeds to discover whether the confession of the prisoner—always held desirable by Roman institutions—would enable him to take any cognizance of it. Leaving the impatient Sanhedrin, and the raging crowd, he retired into the Judgment Hall. St. John alone preserves for us the memorable scene.

Jesus, though not "in soft clothing," though not a denizen of kings' houses, had been led up the noble flight of stairs, over the floors of agate and lazuli, under the gilded roofs, ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion, which adorned but one abandoned palace of a great king of the Jews. There, amid those voluptuous splendours, Pilate—already interested, already feeling in this prisoner before him some nobleness which touched his Roman nature—asked Him in pitying wonder, "Art *thou* the King of the Jews?"—thou poor, worn, tear-stained outcast in this hour of thy bitter need—oh, pale, lonely, friendless, wasted man, in thy poor peasant garments, with thy tied hands, and the foul traces of the insults of thine enemies on thy face, and on thy robes—thou, so unlike the fierce magnificent Herod, whom this multitude which thirsts for thy blood acknowledged as their sovereign—art *thou* the King of the Jews? There is a royalty which Pilate, and men like Pilate, cannot understand—a royalty of holiness, a supremacy of self-sacrifice. To say "No" would have been to belie the truth; to say "Yes" would have been to mislead the questioner. "Sayest thou this of thyself?" He answered with gentle dignity, "or did others tell it thee of Me?" "Am I a *Jew*?" is the disdainful answer. "Thy own nation and the chief priests delivered thee unto me. What hast thou *done*?" Done?—works of wonder, and mercy, and power, and innocence, and these alone. But Jesus reverts to the first question, now that He has prepared Pilate to understand the answer: Yes, He is a king; but not of this world; not from hence; not one for whom His servants would fight. "Thou *art* a king, then?" said Pilate to Him in astonishment. Yes! but a king not in this region of falsities and shadows, but one born to bear witness unto the truth, and one whom all who were of the truth should hear. "Truth," said Pilate impatiently, "what is *truth*?" What had he—a busy, practical Roman governor—to do with such dim abstractions? what bearing had they on the question of life and death? what unpractical hallucination, what fairyland of dreaming phantasy was this? Yet, though he contemptuously put the discussion aside, he was touched and moved. A judicial mind, a forensic training, familiarity with human nature which had given him some insight into the characters of men, showed him that Jesus was not only wholly innocent, but infinitely greater and better than His raving sanctimonious accusers. He wholly set aside the floating idea of an unearthly royalty; he saw in the prisoner before his tribunal an innocent and high-souled dreamer, nothing more. And so, leaving Jesus there, he

went out again to the Jews, and pronounced his first emphatic and unhesitating acquittal: "I FIND IN HIM NO FAULT AT ALL."

2. But this public decided acquittal only kindled the fury of His enemies into yet fiercer flame. After all that they had hazarded, after all that they had inflicted, after the sleepless night of their plots, adjurations, insults, was their purpose to be foiled after all by the intervention of the very Gentiles on whom they had relied for its bitter consummation? Should this victim whom they had thus clutched in their deadly grasp, be rescued from High Priests and rulers by the contempt or the pity of an insolent heathen? It was too intolerable! Their voices rose in wilder tumult. "He was a *mesîth*; He had upset the people with His teaching through the length and breadth of the land, beginning from Galilee, even as far as here."

Amid these confused and passionate exclamations the practised ear of Pilate caught the name of "Galilee," and he understood that Galilee had been the chief scene of the ministry of Jesus. Eager for a chance of dismissing a business of which he was best pleased to be free, he proposed, by a master-stroke of astute policy, to get rid of an embarrassing prisoner, to save himself from a disagreeable decision, and to do an unexpected complaisance to the unfriendly Galilaean tetrarch, who, as usual, had come to Jerusalem—nominally to keep the Passover, really to please his subjects, and to enjoy the sensations and festivities offered at that season by the densely crowded capital. Accordingly, Pilate, secretly glad to wash his hands of a detestable responsibility, sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who was probably occupying the old Asmonæan palace, which had been the royal residence at Jerusalem until it had been surpassed by the more splendid one which the prodigal tyrant, his father, had built. And so, through the thronged and narrow streets, amid the jeering, raging multitudes, the weary Sufferer was dragged once more.

We have caught glimpses of this Herod Antipas before, and I do not know that all History, in its gallery of portraits, contains a much more despicable figure than this wretched, dissolute Idumæan Sadducee—this petty princeling drowned in debauchery and blood. To him was addressed the sole purely contemptuous expression that Jesus is ever recorded to have used (Luke xiii. 32). Superstition and incredulity usually go together; avowed atheists have yet believed in augury, and men who do not believe in God will believe in ghosts. Antipas was rejoiced beyond all things to see Jesus. He had long been wanting to see Him because of the rumours he had heard; and

this murderer of the prophets hoped that Jesus would, in compliment to royalty, amuse by some miracle his gaping curiosity. He harangued and questioned Him in many words, but gained not so much as one syllable in reply. Our Lord confronted all his ribald questions with the majesty of silence. To such a man, who even changed scorn into a virtue, speech would clearly have been a profanation. Then all the savage vulgarity of the man came out through the thin veneer of a superficial cultivation. For the second time Jesus is derided—derided this time as Priest and Prophet. Herod and his corrupt and hybrid myrmidons “set Him at nought”—treated Him with the insolence of a studied contempt. Mocking His innocence and His misery in a festal and shining robe, the empty and wicked prince sent Him back to the Procurator, to whom He now became half-reconciled after a long-standing enmity. But he contented himself with these cruel insults. He resigned to the *forum apprehensionis* all further responsibility as to the issue of the trial. Though the Chief Priests and Scribes stood about his throne unanimously instigating him to a fresh and more heinous act of murder by their intense accusations, he practically showed that he thought their accusations frivolous, by treating them as a jest. It was the fifth trial of Jesus; it was His second public distinct acquittal.

3. And now, as He stood once more before the perplexed and wavering Governor, began the sixth, the last, the most agitating and agonising phase of this terrible inquisition. Now was the time for Pilate to have acted on a clear and right conviction, and saved himself for ever from the guilt of innocent blood. He came out once more, and seating himself on a stately *bema*—perhaps the golden throne of Archelaus, which was placed on the elevated pavement of many-coloured marble—summoned the Priests, the Sanhedrists, and the people before him, and seriously told them that they had brought Jesus to his tribunal as a leader of sedition and turbulence; that after full and fair inquiry he, their Roman governor, had found their prisoner absolutely guiltless of these charges; that he had then sent Him to Herod, their native king, and that *he* also had come to the conclusion that Jesus had committed no crime which deserved the punishment of death. And now came the golden opportunity for him to vindicate the grandeur of his country's imperial justice, and, as he had pronounced Him absolutely innocent, to set Him absolutely free. But exactly at that point he wavered and temporised. The dread of another insurrection haunted him like a nightmare. He was willing

to go half way to please these dangerous sectaries. To justify them, as it were, in their accusation, he would chastise Jesus—scourge Him publicly, as though to render His pretensions ridiculous—disgrace and ruin Him—“make Him seem vile in their eyes”—and *then* set Him free. And this notion of setting Him free suggested to him *another* resource of tortuous policy. Both he and the people almost simultaneously bethought themselves that it had always been a Paschal boon to liberate at the feast some condemned prisoner. He offered, therefore, to make the acquittal of Jesus an act not of imperious justice, but of artificial grace.

In making this suggestion—in thus flagrantly tampering with his innate sense of right, and resigning against his will the best prerogative of his authority—he was already acting in spite of a warning which he had received. That first warning consisted in the deep misgiving, the powerful presentiment, which overcame him as he looked on his bowed and silent prisoner. But, as though to strengthen him in his resolve to prevent an absolute failure of *all* justice, he now received a *second* solemn warning—and one which to an ordinary Roman, and a Roman who remembered Cæsar’s murder and Calpurnia’s dream, might well have seemed divinely sinister. His own wife—Claudia Procula—ventured to send him a public message, even as he sat there on his tribunal, that, in the morning hours, when dreams are true, she had had a troubled and painful dream about that Just Man; and, bolder than her husband, she bade him beware how he molested Him.

Gladly, most gladly, would Pilate have yielded to his own presentiments—have gratified his pity and his justice—have obeyed the prohibition conveyed by this mysterious omen. Gladly even would he have yielded to the worse and baser instinct of asserting his power, and thwarting these envious and hated fanatics, whom he knew to be ravening for innocent blood. That they—to many of whom sedition was as the breath of life—should be sincere in charging Jesus with sedition was, as he well knew, absurd. Their utterly transparent hypocrisy in this matter only added to his undisguised contempt. If he could have dared to show his real instincts, he would have driven them from his tribunal with all the haughty insouciance of a Gallo. But Pilate was guilty, and guilt is cowardice, and cowardice is weakness. His own past cruelties, recoiling in kind on his own head, forced him now to crush the impulse of pity, and to add to his many cruelties another more heinous still. He knew that serious complaints hung

over his head. Those Samaritans whom he had insulted and massacred—those Jews whom he had stabbed promiscuously in the crowd by the hands of his disguised and secret emissaries—those Galilæans whose blood he had mingled with their sacrifices—was not their blood crying for vengeance? Was not an embassy of complaint against him imminent even now? Would it not be dangerously precipitated if, in so dubious a matter as a charge of claiming a kingdom, he raised a tumult among a people in whose case it was the best interest of the Romans that they should hug their chains? Dare he stand the chance of stirring up a new and apparently terrible rebellion rather than condescend to a simple concession, which was rapidly assuming the aspect of a politic, and even necessary, compromise?

His tortuous policy recoiled on his own head, and rendered impossible his own wishes. The Nemesis of his past wrong-doing was that he could no longer do right. Hounded on by the Priests and Sanhedrists, the people impetuously claimed the Paschal boon of which he had reminded them; but in doing so they unmasked still more decidedly the sinister nature of their hatred against their Redeemer. For while they were professing to rage against the asserted seditiousness of One who was wholly obedient and peaceful, they shouted for the liberation of a man whose notorious sedition had been also stained by brigandage and murder. Loathing the innocent, they loved the guilty, and claimed the Procurator's grace on behalf, not of Jesus of Nazareth, but of a man who, in the fearful irony of circumstance, was also called Jesus—Jesus Bar-Abbas—who not only *was* what they falsely said of Christ, a leader of sedition, but also a robber and a murderer. It was fitting that *they*, who had preferred an abject Sadducee to their true priest, and an incestuous Idumæan to their Lord and King, should deliberately prefer a murderer to their Messiah.

It may be that Bar-Abbas had been brought forth, and that thus Jesus the scowling murderer and Jesus the innocent Redeemer stood together on that high tribunal side by side. The people, persuaded by their priests, clamoured for the liberation of the rebel and the robber. To him every hand was pointed; for him every voice was raised. For the Holy, the Harmless, the Undeiled—for Him whom a thousand Hosannas had greeted but five days before—no word of pity or of pleading found an utterance. “He was despised and rejected of men.”

Deliberately putting the question to them, Pilate heard with

scornful indignation their deliberate choice; and then, venting his bitter disdain and anger in taunts, which did but irritate them more, without serving any good purpose, "What then," he scornfully asked "do ye wish me to do with the King of the Jews?" Then first broke out the mad scream, "Crucify! crucify him!" In vain, again and again, in the pauses of the tumult, Pilate insisted, obstinately indeed, but with more and more feebleness of purpose—for none but a man more innocent than Pilate, even if he were a Roman governor, could have listened without quailing to the frantic ravings of an Oriental mob—"Why, what evil hath He done?" "I found *no* cause of death in Him." "I will chastise Him and let Him go." Such half-willed opposition was wholly unavailing. It only betrayed to the Jews the inward fears of their Procurator, and practically made them masters of the situation. Again and again, with wilder and wilder vehemence, they rent the air with those hideous yells—"Αἶρε τοῦτον. Ἀπόλυσον ἡμῖν Βαραββάν. Σταύρωσον σταύρωσον—" "Away with this man." "Loose unto us Bar-Abbas." "Crucify! crucify!"

For a moment Pilate seemed utterly to yield to the storm. He let Bar-Abbas free; he delivered Jesus over to be scourged. The word used for the scourging (*phragellosas*) implies that it was done, not with rods (*virgæ*), for Pilate had no lictors, but with what Horace calls the "horribile flagellum," of which the Russian knout is the only modern representative. This scourging was the ordinary preliminary to crucifixion and other forms of capital punishment. It was a punishment so truly horrible, that the mind revolts at it; and it has long been abolished by that compassion of mankind which has been so greatly intensified, and in some degree even created, by the gradual comprehension of Christian truth. The unhappy sufferer was publicly stripped, was tied by the hands in a bent position to a pillar, and then, on the tense quivering nerves of the naked back, the blows were inflicted with leathern thongs, weighted with jagged edges of bone and lead; sometimes even the blows fell by accident—sometimes, with terrible barbarity, were purposely struck—on the face and eyes. It was a punishment so hideous that, under its lacerating agony, the victim generally fainted, often died; still more frequently a man was sent away to perish under the mortification and nervous exhaustion which ensued. And this awful cruelty, on which we dare not dwell—this cruelty which makes the heart shudder and grow cold—was followed immediately by the third and bitterest derision—the derision of Christ as King.

In civilised nations all is done that can be done to spare every needless suffering to a man condemned to death ; but among the Romans insult and derision were the customary preliminaries to the last agony. The "*et pereuntibus addita ludibria*" of Tacitus might stand for their general practice. Such a custom furnished a specimen of that worst and lowest form of human wickedness which delights to inflict pain, which feels an inhuman pleasure in gloating over the agonies of another, even when he has done no wrong. The mere spectacle of agony is agreeable to the degraded soul. The low vile soldiery of the Prætorium—not Romans, who might have had more sense of the inborn dignity of the silent sufferer, but mostly the mere mercenary scum and dregs of the provinces—led Him into their barrack-room, and there mocked, in their savage hatred, the King whom they had tortured. It added keenness to their enjoyment to have in their power One who was of Jewish birth, of innocent life, of noblest bearing. The opportunity broke so agreeably the coarse monotony of their life, that they summoned all of the cohort who were disengaged to witness their brutal sport. In sight of these hardened ruffians they went through the whole heartless ceremony of a mock coronation, a mock investiture, a mock homage. Around the brows of Jesus, in wanton mimicry of the Emperor's laurel, they twisted a green wreath of thorny leaves : in His tied and trembling hands they placed a reed for sceptre ; from His torn and bleeding shoulders they stripped the white robe with which Herod had mocked Him—which must now have been all soaked with blood—and flung on Him an old scarlet paludament—some cast-off war cloak, with its purple laticlave, from the Prætorian wardrobe. This, with feigned solemnity, they buckled over His right shoulder, with its glittering fibula ; and then—each with his derisive homage of bended knee—each with his infamous spitting—each with the blow over the head from the reed sceptre, which His bound hands could not hold—they kept passing before Him with their mock salutation of "Hail, King of the Jews !"

Even now, even yet, Pilate wished, hoped, even strove to save Him. He might represent this frightful scourging, not as the preliminary to crucifixion, but as an inquiry by torture, which had failed to elicit any further confession. And as Jesus came forth—as He stood beside him with that martyr-form on the beautiful mosaic of the tribunal—the spots of blood upon his green wreath of torture, the mark of blows and spitting on His countenance, the weariness of His deathful agony upon the sleepless eyes, the *sagum* of faded scarlet,

darkened by the weals of His lacerated back, and dropping, it may be, its stains of crimson upon the tessellated floor—even then, even so, in that hour of His extremest humiliation—yet, as He stood in the grandeur of His holy calm on that lofty tribunal above the yelling crowd, there shone all over Him so Godlike a pre-eminence, so divine a nobleness, that Pilate broke forth with that involuntary exclamation which has thrilled with emotion so many million hearts—

“BEHOLD THE MAN!”

But his appeal only woke a fierce outbreak of the scream, “Crucify! crucify!” The mere sight of Him, even in this His unspeakable shame and sorrow, seemed to add fresh fuel to their hate. In vain the heathen soldier appeals for humanity to the Jewish priest; no heart throbbed with responsive pity; no voice of compassion broke that monotonous yell of “Crucify!”—the howling refrain of their wild “liturgy of death.” The Roman who had shed blood like water, on the field of battle, in open massacre, in secret assassination, might well be supposed to have an icy and a stony heart; but yet icier and stonier was the heart of those scrupulous hypocrites and worldly priests. “Take ye Him, and crucify Him,” said Pilate, in bitter disgust, “for I find no fault in Him.” What an admission from a Roman judge! “So far as I can see, He is wholly innocent; yet if you *must* crucify Him, take Him and crucify. I cannot approve of, but I will readily connive at, your violation of the law.” But even this wretched guilty subterfuge is not permitted him. Satan will have from his servants the full tale of their crimes, and the sign-manual of their own willing assent at last. What the Jews want—what the Jews *will* have—is *not* tacit connivance, but absolute sanction. They see their power. They see that this blood-stained Governor dares not hold out against them; they know that the Roman statecraft is tolerant of concessions to local superstition. Boldly, therefore, they fling to the winds all question of a political offence, and with all their hypocritical pretences calcined by the heat of their passion, they shout, “We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself a Son of God.”

A Son of God! The notion was far less strange and repulsive to a heathen than to a Jew; and this word, unheard before, startled Pilate with the third omen, which made him tremble at the crime into which he was being dragged by guilt and fear. Once more, leaving the yelling multitude without, he takes Jesus with him into the quiet Judgment Hall, and—“*jam pro suâ conscientiâ Christianus,*” as Tertullian so finely observes—asks Him in awe-struck accents, “Whence

art thou?" Alas! it was too late to answer now. Pilate was too deeply committed to his gross cruelty and injustice; for *him* Jesus had spoken enough already; for the wild beasts who raged without, He had no more to say. He did not answer. Then, almost angrily, Pilate broke out with the exclamation, "Dost Thou not speak even *to me*? Dost Thou not know that I have power to set Thee free, and have power to crucify Thee?" Power—how so? Was justice nothing, then? truth nothing? innocence nothing? conscience nothing? In the reality of things Pilate had *no* such power; even in the arbitrary sense of the tyrant it was an idle boast, for at this very moment he was letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would." And Jesus pitied the hopeless bewilderment of this man, whom guilt had changed from a ruler into a slave. Not taunting, not confuting him—nay, even extenuating rather than aggravating his sin—Jesus gently answered, "Thou hast no power against Me whatever, had it not been given thee from above; therefore he that betrayed me to thee hath the greater sin." Thou art indeed committing a great crime; but Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, these priests and Jews, are more to blame than thou. Thus, with infinite dignity, and yet with infinite tenderness, did Jesus judge His judge. In the very depths of his inmost soul Pilate felt the truth of the words—silently acknowledged the superiority of his bound and lacerated victim. All that remained in him of human and of noble—

"Felt how awful Goodness is, and Virtue,
In her shape how lovely; felt and mourned
His fall."

All of his soul that was not eaten away by pride and cruelty thrilled back an unwonted echo to these few calm words of the Son of God. Jesus had condemned his sin, and so far from being offended, the judgment only deepened his awe of this mysterious Being, whose utter impotence seemed grander and more awful than the loftiest power. From that time Pilate was even yet more anxious to save Him. With all his conscience in a tumult, for the third and last time he mounted his tribunal, and made one more desperate effort. He led Jesus forth, and looking at Him, as He stood silent and in agony, but calm, on that shining Gabbatha, above the brutal agitations of the multitude, he said to those frantic rioters, as with a flash of genuine conviction, "BEHOLD YOUR KING!" But to the Jews it sounded like shameful scorn to call that beaten insulted Sufferer their King. A darker stream mingled with the passions of the raging, swaying

crowd. Among the shouts of "Crucify," ominous threatenings began for the first time to be mingled. It was now nine o'clock, and for nearly three hours had they been raging and waiting there. The name of Cæsar began to be heard in wrathful murmurs. "Shall I crucify your King?" he had asked, venting the rage and soreness of his heart in taunts on *them*. "*We have no king but Cæsar,*" answered the Sadducees and Priests, flinging to the winds every national impulse and every Messianic hope. "If thou let this man go," shouted the mob again and again, "thou art not *Cæsar's* friend. Every one who tries to make himself a king speaketh against *Cæsar*. And at that dark terrible name of Cæsar, Pilate trembled. It was a name to conjure with. It mastered him. He thought of that terrible implement of tyranny, the accusation of *laesa majestas*, into which all other charges merged, which had made confiscation and torture so common, and had caused blood to flow like water in the streets of Rome. He thought of Tiberius, the aged gloomy Emperor, then hiding at Capreæ his ulcerous features, his poisonous suspicions, his sick infamies, his desperate revenge. At this very time he had been maddened into a yet more sanguinary and misanthropic ferocity by the detected falsity and treason of his only friend and minister, Sejanus, and it was to Sejanus himself that Pilate is said to have owed his position. There might be secret informers in that very mob. Panic-stricken, the unjust judge, in obedience to his own terrors, consciously betrayed the innocent victim to the anguish of death. He who had so often prostituted justice, was now unable achieve the one act of justice which he desired. He who had so often murdered pity, was now forbidden to taste the sweetness of a pity for which he longed. He who had so often abused authority, was now rendered impotent to exercise it, for once, on the side of right. Truly for him, sin had become its own Erinnys, and his pleasant vices had been converted into the instrument of his punishment! Did the solemn and noble words of the Law of the Twelve Tables—"The empty cries of the people are not to be listened to, when they require either the acquittal of the guilty, or the condemnation of the innocent"—come across his memory with accents of approach as he delivered Bar-Abbas and condemned Jesus? It may have been so. At any rate, his conscience did not leave him at ease. At this, or some early period of the trial, he went through the solemn farce of trying to absolve his conscience from the guilt. He sent for water; he washed his hands before the multitude! he said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it."

Did he think thus to wash away his guilt? He could wash his hands; could he wash his heart? Might he not far more truly have said with the murderous king in the splendid tragedy—

“ Can all old Ocean’s waters wash this blood
Clean from my hand? Nay, rather would this hand
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green—one red!”

It may be that, as he thus murdered his conscience, such a thought flashed for one moment across his miserable mind, in the words of his native poet—

“ Ah nimium faciles qui tristia crimina caedis
Flumineâ tolli posse putatis aquâ!” OVID, *Fast.* ii. 45.

But if so, the thought was instantly drowned in a yell, the most awful, the most hideous, the most memorable that History records. “*His blood be on us and on our children.*” Then Pilate finally gave way. The fatal “*Ibis ad crucem*” was uttered with reluctant wrath. He delivered Him unto them, *that He might be crucified.*

And now mark, for one moment, the revenges of History. Has not His blood been on them, and on their children? Has it not fallen most of all on those most nearly concerned in that deep tragedy? Before the dread sacrifice was consummated, Judas died in the horrors of a loathsome suicide. Caiaphas was deposed the year following. Herod died in infamy and exile. Stripped of his Procuratorship very shortly afterwards, on the very charges he had tried by a wicked concession to avoid, Pilate, wearied out with misfortunes, died in suicide and banishment, leaving behind him an execrated name. The house of Annas was destroyed a generation later by an infuriated mob, and his son was dragged through the streets, and scourged and beaten to his place of murder. Some of those who shared in and witnessed the scenes of that day—and thousands of their children—also shared in and witnessed the long horrors of that siege of Jerusalem which stands unparalleled in history for its unutterable fearfulness. “It seems,” says Renan, “as though the whole race had appointed a rendezvous for extermination.” They had shouted, “We have no king but Cæsar!” and they *had* no king but Cæsar; and leaving only for a time the fantastic shadow of a local and contemptible loyalty, Cæsar after Cæsar outraged, and tyrannised, and pillaged, and oppressed them, till at last they

rose in wild revolt against the Cæsar whom they had claimed, and a Cæsar slaked in the blood of its best defenders the red ashes of their burnt and desecrated Temple. They had forced the Romans to crucify their Christ, and though they regarded this punishment with especial horror, they and their children were themselves crucified in myriads by the Romans outside their own walls, till room was wanting and wood failed, and the soldiers had to ransack a fertile inventiveness of cruelty for fresh methods of inflicting this insulting form of death. They had given thirty pieces of silver for their Saviour's blood, and they were themselves sold in thousands for yet smaller sums. They had chosen Bar-Abbas in preference to their Messiah, and for them there has been no Messiah more, while a murderer's dagger swayed the last counsels of their dying nationality. They had accepted the guilt of blood, and the last pages of their history were glued together with the rivers of their blood, and that blood continued to be shed in wanton cruelties from age to age. They who will, may see in incidents like these the mere unmeaning *chances* of History; but there is in History nothing unmeaning to one who regards it as the Voice of God speaking among the destinies of men; and whether a man sees any significance or not in events like these, he must be blind indeed who does not see that when the murder of Christ was consummated, the axe was laid at the root of the barren tree of Jewish nationality. Since that day Jerusalem and its environs, with their "ever-extending miles of grave-stones and ever-lengthening pavement of tombs and sepulchres," have become little more than one vast cemetery—an Aeldama, a field of blood, a potter's field to bury strangers in. Like the mark of Cain upon the forehead of their race, the guilt of that blood has seemed to cling to them—as it ever must until that same blood effaceth it. For, by God's mercy, that blood was shed for them also who made it flow; the voice which they strove to quench in death was uplifted in its last prayer for pity on His murderers. May that blood be efficacious! may that prayer be heard!

In 1948, when Israel once again became a nation, did God's promise of redemption begin for those who descended from the shedder's of Innocent blood. As God promised, He would redeem them also by the very Blood they had shed.