

"We will keep Him," they cried "till you hand over your treasures."

"Alas ! we have nothing . . . . . see, our hands are empty, we are destitute."

Gemas shook his head incredulously.

"What about the kings who came to Bethlehem with camels laden with presents ? Did they not lavish on you royal gifts : gold, incense and myrrh ?"

"Everything was given immediately to the poor of Judea."

"Or rather jealously buried in some underground hiding place . . . . . Show it to us . . . . ."

"I assure you we have nothing . . . . . We are fleeing from persecution. Liberate us and God will bless you."

Gemas answered Mary's appeal by sneers and coarse laughter. During this scene, the Child in Dismas' hands awoke with a start. He did not however show any fear. His fair head leaned confidently against the rough, hairy chest, and His eyes rose calmly to the brigand's ferocious countenance. He smiled. The divinely tender smile of those innocent lips, so much confidence united to so much weakness overcame the soul of Dismas. An incomprehensible emotion seized him, softening his hitherto stony heart and sending tears to those eyes which never wept over misfortune.

"Gemas," said he in a stifled voice, while the Infant's uncertain hands passed gently over his bristly beard and bronzed face, "what do you want for his ransom ?"

The other laughed.

"Will you pay it, you who avariciously conceal your gains so as not to be compelled to divide with me ?"

"Yes, I will. I want to restore the gentle Babe to whom the miserable Dismas owes his first caress . . . . . Speak. How much do you exact ?"

"A good penny ! . . . . Thirty pieces of gold."

Dismas fumbled at his belt and soon thirty pieces of gold fell, glittering, on the earthen floor.

"Take it . . . . let them go."

Gemas sprang greedily for the gold which had rolled on all sides and, shrugging his shoulders, went and threw himself on a pile of skins which served as his bed.