



HOLY WEEK



PREFACE



WE have now reached an especially anxious period of the life of Jesus. It is not yet that of the grand dramas of the Passion, but it is their Prelude, and they are ushered in by an inquietude baffling description, such as is felt in the oppressive stillness heralding some grand convulsion of nature.

A vague murmur gradually begins to make itself heard, increasing as it gathers about the person of the Master. The very triumph of *Palm Sunday*, with which *Holy Week* opens, is not free from terror, for from the feverish fickleness of the crowd one cannot but feel that their enthusiasm has no real foundation; and, moreover, one foresees how this hour of triumph will weigh against Him in the balance with the enemies of the Lord, for it will be looked upon by them as a defiance.

When we recalled certain hours of the *Holy Childhood*, they presented, in spite of an occasional prophetic gloom, a series of quietly attractive scenes taking place in well-beloved, congenial surroundings, and combining all the poetry of ancient legend whilst retaining the stamp of truth.

Then, again, when we passed on to the *Ministry*, the subjects treated were set in a framework of Jewish life in which Jesus moved as a reformer, and which I felt bound to describe with considerable fulness. The active life led by Jesus gave me, moreover, an opportunity for traversing the whole of the deeply interesting and picturesque country which was the scene of His public career, and the characteristics of which are so well reflected in all their ideal simplicity in His discourses, interspersed as they are with parables and life-like metaphors.

Now, however, when the hour of the last scene is approaching, it is about the Temple, the centre of a confused and menacing agitation, that the events of the Saviour's life are to group themselves.

In fact, to consummate His mission, Jesus had to approach the unique focus whence radiates, for the people of Israel, the whole of their religious life. There were to be struck the last grand blows; there was to be prepared the supreme catastrophe. A divine reformer, Jesus came to attack that jealous aristocracy which arrogated to its own profit a monopoly of all doctrinal influence. He would apparently be beaten in the conflict, but this defeat of a day would be the starting-point of a final victory, and the glory shed on His last hours by His presence in Jerusalem would mightily aid in the diffusion of the truth.