

was given to the fisherman of the Lord to win two souls even in confinement. The soldiers, Processus and Martinianus, who guarded him in the Mamertine prison, received baptism. Then came the hour of torture. Nero was not in Rome at that time. Sentence was passed by Helius and Polythetes, two freedmen to whom Cæsar had confided the government of Rome during his absence.

On the aged Apostle had been inflicted the stripes prescribed by law; and next day he was led forth beyond the walls of the city, toward the Vatican hill, where he was to suffer the punishment of the cross assigned to him. Soldiers were astonished by the crowd which had gathered before the prison, for in their minds the death of a common man, and besides a foreigner, should not rouse such interest, they did not understand that that retinue was composed not of sightseers, but confessors, anxious to escort the great Apostle to the place of execution. In the afternoon the gates of the prison were thrown open at last, and Peter appeared in the midst of a detachment of pretorians. The sun had inclined somewhat toward Ostia already; the day was clear and calm. Because of his advanced age, Peter was not required to carry the cross; it was supposed that he could not carry it; they had not put the fork on his neck, either, so as not to retard his pace. He walked without hindrance, and the faithful could see him perfectly.

At moments when his white head showed itself among the iron helmets of the soldiers, weeping was heard in the crowd; but it was restrained immediately, for the face of the old man had in it so much calmness, and was so bright with joy, that all understood him to be not a victim going to destruction, but a victor celebrating his triumph.

And thus it was really. The fisherman, usually humble and stooping, walked now erect, taller than the soldiers, full of dignity. Never had men seen such majesty in his bearing. It might have seemed to him he was a monarch attended by people and military. From every side voices were raised:

"There is Peter, going to the Lord!"

All forgot, as it were, that torture and death were waiting for him. He walked with solemn attention, but with calmness, feeling that since the death on Golgotha nothing equally important had happened, and that as the first death had redeemed the whole world, this was to redeem the city.

Along the road people halted from wonder at sight of that old man; but believers, laying hands on their shoulders, said with calm voices.

"See how a just man goes to death—one who knew Christ and proclaimed love to the world."

These became thoughtful, and walked away, saying to themselves, "In truth, he cannot be an unjust man!"

Along the road noise was hushed, and the cries of the street. The retinue moved on before houses newly reared, before white columns of temples, over whose summits hung the deep sky, calm and blue. They went in quiet; only at

times the weapons of the soldiers clattered, or the murmur of prayer arose. Peter heard the last, and his face grew bright with increasing joy, for his glance could hardly take in those thousands of confessors. He felt that he had done his work, and he knew now that that truth which he had been declaring all his life would overwhelm everything, like a sea, and that nothing would have power to restrain it.

As he passed before temples, he said to them, "Ye will be temples of Christ." Looking at throngs of people moving before his eyes, he said to them, "Your children will be servants of Christ", and he advanced with the feeling of a conquest accomplished, conscious of his service, conscious of his strength, solaced,—great. The soldiers conducted him over the Pons Triumphalis, as if giving involuntary testimony to his triumph, and they led him farther toward the Naumachia and the Circus. The faithful from beyond the Tiber joined the procession; and such a throng of people was formed that the centurion commanding the pretorians understood at last that he was leading a high-priest surrounded by believers, and grew alarmed because of the small number of soldiers. But no cry of indignation or rage was given out in the throng. Men's faces were penetrated with the greatness of the moment, solemn and full of expectation. Some believers, remembering that when the Lord died the earth opened from fright and the dead rose from their graves, thought that now some evident signs would appear, after which the death of the Apostle would not be forgotten for ages. Others said to themselves, "Perhaps the Lord will select the hour of Peter's death to come from heaven as He promised, and judge the world." With this idea they recommended themselves to the mercy of the Redeemer.

But round about there was calm. The hills seemed to be warming themselves, and resting in the sun. The procession stopped at last between the Circus and the Vatican hill. Soldiers began now to dig a hole; others placed on the ground the cross, hammers and nails, waiting till all preparations were finished. The crowd, continuing quiet and attentive, knelt round about.

The Apostle, with his head in the sun rays and golden light, turned for the last time toward the city. At a distance lower down was seen the gleaming Tiber; beyond was the Campus Martius; higher up, the Mausoleum of Augustus; below that, the gigantic baths just begun by Nero; still lower, Pompey's theatre; and beyond them were evident in places, and in places hidden by other buildings, the Septa Julia, a multitude of porticos, temples, columns, great edifices; and, finally, far in the distance, the hills covered with houses, gigantic resorts of people, the summits of these vanishing in the blue haze,—an abode of crime, but of power; of madness, but of order,—which had become the head of the world, its oppressor, but its law and its peace, almighty, invincible, eternal.

The sun had sunk still more toward Ostia, and had become large and red. The whole western