

cost and sacrifice than any other of his day and generation, to introduce the spirit of law and order, was chained up within those walls, as a menace to the peace and prosperity of the kingdom of Rome; but it is sadder and stranger still to stand upon the stone of the Pauline Basilica and to think that, according to tradition, Paul stood there before Nero, was called to question by a youth so brutalized in lust and crime that he is said to have exhausted the list of all known evil; but the servant is not above his master, and as Christ stood before Pilate, so Paul stood before Nero, and listened whilst he tried to fasten the responsibility of his disgrace and crime upon him, although Paul had been far away from Rome at the time of the conflagration. We cannot tell exactly what the character of the charge was, but we can tell that the shadow of impending evil hung so heavily upon him that he was utterly alone when the time came for pleading his cause, for there was not one who dared to accompany him before the judgment seat of Nero. This sense of loneliness would weigh very heavily upon a man of as affectionate and sensitive a nature as St. Paul, and however bravely he might confront the splendour and majesty of Rome and the power of the world, as it were, arrayed against him, his heart must have been very heavy within him, until on a sudden the scene changed and Paul became conscious that he was no longer alone, and that the responsibility of pleading his case and witnessing for the Gospel of Christ no longer rested upon him, but had passed into the hand of One who stood beside him, that is to say, even into the hand of the King of Kings. "At my first answer no man stood with me; notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me."

How marvellous must the pleading of that day have been, how marvellous the inspiration of the advocacy of Jesus! The words themselves have passed away, but we know that the mystery of Christianity was fully declared, and Paul was, for the moment at any rate, delivered out of the mouth of the lion (Nero) (2 Tim. iv. 17). But though delivered and led back to prison Paul's instinct warned him that the