

ing upon their upturned faces, they looked like so many angels come to compassionate our sorrowful Redeemer, who had said: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to Me: for the Kingdom of Heaven is for such" (St. Matthew, XIX. 14.); and without a doubt, their innocent souls were the sweetest offering there.

After my companions and I had finished our devotions (others of our reverend co-pilgrims were continually arriving meanwhile and celebrating Mass in turn), we went to the guest-room, not far from the grotto, where a modest refection awaited us. When the entire party was finally assembled at that point, one of the Franciscan Fathers in charge conducted us to the "Garden of Gethsemani," but a few rods distant, whilst the dear old lay-brother who has been entrusted with this sacred office for years, and under whose loving care the ground which Jesus moistened with His precious Blood has become a paradise of delights, beautiful to the eye and redolent with the perfume of an endless variety of plants and flowers, unlocked the gate and stood guard as we entered the sacred precincts. We were allowed to visit every part of the garden, and we lingered long beneath the several gnarled and twisted olive trees of great age and massive girth, which are believed to have sprung from those under which our Saviour was communing with His Heavenly Father when the mystic chalice of suffering was presented Him by the angel. They certainly show every sign of having stood for many centuries, and may well be the offshoots of those which, in common with all the trees that grew within a certain radius of Mount Olivet, were cut down by the order of Titus during

the siege of Jerusalem. †† When finally we left the sacred enclosure, we found a Franciscan Father awaiting us with a basket full of twigs which in part had fallen and in part been pruned from the trees just mentioned. Each of us took a few of these as a priceless souvenir of our visit. We were next shown a group of rocks about a stone's throw from the Garden, where it is said that the Apostles, Peter, James and John, were left by our Saviour when He entered it on the eve of His Passion, where they slept while He was in an agony, and whither He went three times to awaken them. Next, the route was pointed out to us by which the traitor

†† NOTE—According to Frère Livien, these trees are not offshoots, but the originals themselves. As his opinion is of great weight, I shall give it you in full. Here are his words: "These trees are the most venerable which exist, after the Wood of the true Cross. According to tradition, it was under their branches that our Lord was wont to gather His Apostles together in order to instruct them in the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven and to pray. How often were they the silent witnesses of the sighs and loving ejaculations which He sent up to His Eternal Father! In a word, they were nourished in a soil watered by the tears and by the blood of the Man-God on that most sorrowful night which preceded His death. Behold, eighteen hundred years have passed since that memorable, that precious night, and yet these last witnesses of the agony of the Saviour on earth are still erect, bearing in their trunks and on their branches the traces of as many centuries. Some authors, it is true, have attempted to rob them of the veneration by which they have been so justly surrounded, and for this purpose have cited a wrongly interpreted passage of Flavius Josephus (Wars of the Jews, I. VI. 1). This history relates that Titus, wishing to put a speedy termination to the stubborn resistance of the Jews, caused all the trees to be cut down within an area of ninety stadia (a four and a half hours' march) around Jerusalem, in order to construct platforms, towers, and other engines of destruction. But this quotation, instead of weakening the tradition, only serves to confirm it. For, indeed, whoever has visited Jerusalem and knows the position of the site in question, will readily understand how it must have been impossible for the soldiers of Titus to approach within so trifling a distance of the besieged, as is the Garden of Gethsemani, for the object specified is the valley (of Josaphat), which separated the garden from the Holy City, and not one of them would have regained the camp. Besides, who knows but that at the time of our Lord these trees were too young to serve the purpose indicated above, even though they were sufficiently vigorous to afford a dense shade? It is a well-known fact that in its youth, never has more abundant foliage than in its youth, never has more abundant foliage than in its youth, notwithstanding the lack of proportion between its trunk and its branches. Moreover, the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the besieged) kept constant watch by day and by night on that side of the city, to prevent the enemy from approaching the walls. The hypothesis of the destruction of the olive trees of Gethsemani is consequently untenable. On the contrary, it tends to prove their preservation. But even supposing that they shared the fate of those cut down by the order of Titus, their roots, which were, in this case, left in the ground, must have sprouted up anew; for, according to Pliny, the olive tree never dies.—Frère Livien, *Guide Indicateur*, etc., French edition, pages 329 and 330.]