

puzzle it was to their brains! Oh, what a sore trial it was to their faith! Was not this *the* Prophet of God? Had He not made displays of power that were credentials of His divine mission? And would God send out so spotless a man to die ignominiously?

For we must strive to recollect what the cross was. We have wrought it in gold and wreathed it in flowers, and worn it as an ornament, and placed it at the head of all human symbolisms, until we have transfigured it. It had none of these associations originally. It was the meanest of all the engines of torture. The guillotine had something respectable in it, as it was for the decapitation of princes as well as robbers. The gallows is not so mean as the cross; for when there was slavery among us, and a master and his slave were convicted of a capital crime, they perished on the same scaffold. But the cross was reserved for the lowest and vilest malefactors. It added deepest ignominy to death. Tacitus called crucifixion the torture of slaves.

Now, when they saw their Master hanging there, it was indescribably puzzling as well as painful. He had been so good, so sweet, so pure, so what all men's ideal of the perfect man has ever been! He had shown such power, stilling the winds, multiplying bread, opening deaf ears and blind eyes, cleansing lepers, and raising the dead, doing all those things that they had been taught to believe belonged only unto God to do. How could He let Himself be crucified? How could the great eternal God allow this model of goodness and beauty to be crushed out of the world? The cross gave them a disappointment sadder than ever had fallen on men before, sadder than any since. It was the bitterest blighting of hopes recorded in the history of humanity.

But Jesus—how did it all seem to Him? He knew what was in Pilate's mind, and what in the minds of the chief priests and the Jewish rabble, and the Roman centurion and the brutal soldiery, and His fainting mother, and His disheartened, disappointed friends. He knew that they felt that they were parting from Him forever. He heard the gibes and jeers of the mocking crowd, the roar of the unfeeling mob, the groans and cries of the blessed Virgin, and the frightful noise wherewith the earthquake burst open the tombs and ripped the Temple's veil from top to bottom. He saw the darkness coming on Temple and Tower