

face; and the levity and mirth was loud and boisterous, and the jest was terse and biting. They mocked Him, they tortured Him, till they were weary with their rude and cruel sport, and then they stripped off the mock regalia, dethroning, despoiling and uncovering Him again.

And when sentence had been passed upon Him, and they hurried Him away to Calvary—all weak, weary, and ready to faint as He was—they laid His own cross on His shoulders that He might carry it Himself. None, not even the meanest and most degraded amongst them, was mean enough to carry it for Him. But when they saw Him faint with His load, they feared lest their victim might expire in their hands, ere they reached the place of crucifixion, and they seized upon some passer by from the country and made him follow close behind Jesus bearing His cross. And when they had hung Him there to die that horrid death, that slow, lingering, racking death, they placed Him between two thieves, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. They might have allowed Him to hang there in peace, to die in quiet; there might have been some magnanimity shown Him now, some slight forbearance. They need not have persecuted Him to the very death, to the very last breath, with their mockery and insult; but their hate was deep, their wrath was cruel. Oh! how cruel they were, how full of bitter hatred! In His agony, at each quiver of the straining muscles, at each drooping of the heavy head, at each heaving of the laboring chest, at each sighing of the fainting broken heart, at each groan with racking pain, they gave forth their loud laughter. They wagged their heads in scorn; "If thou be such an one—the Christ,—come down from the cross," "He saved others; He cannot save Himself." "This is He that would destroy the temple and build it in three days." Was not their hate dire and fierce, was not their wrath relentless and cruel! Nor did they cease to mock Him till His life had ebbed, and His spirit fled.

Why were they thus angry? What had He done to them? Why all this wrath, and why all this cruelty,—this wild fierce wrath, this insatiable cruelty? What provoked them so? What was it that brought out all this malignity and wickedness, and savage fury? What had He done to offend them so deeply? What cause had He given for this constant persecution and torture? His death even would not have satisfied them. Had He been removed from their sight; or had He been taken from the earth in some other way; or had He died in their hands when they first apprehended him, their grief and disappointment would have been great; for their hearts were full of wrath and wickedness; and noight would content them but to wreak their cruel wrath and vengeance to the full on His Head.

And why was this, what stirred them, what provoked them? If I apprehend the matter aright, it was because he had deeply *offended their pride*.

They had spent many years in the acquisition of learning. They