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PONTIUS PILATE AT VIENNE.

Vienne in Dauphiny, a province of France, the ancient capital of transalpine Gaul under the Romans is situated on the river Rhone. There, on the left bank of that beautiful stream, is seen a tomb of ancient architecture, which, according to tradition, is the tomb of Pontius Pilate—Pilate, under whose government Jesus Christ suffered. The most reliable records say it was in Vienne also that the Wandering Jew revealed himself in 1777—a most remarkable occurrence, the spot that contained the ashes of the judge of the Righteous, was to be trodden upon by a descendant of his accuser.

The following chronicle was extracted from an old Latin manuscript found in a monastery near Vienne.

It was under the reign of Caligula, when C. Marcian was praetor at Vienne, that an old man, bent with age, yet of a tall stature, was seen to descend from his litter and enter a house of modest appearance near the temple of Mars. Over the door of his house was written, in red letters, the name of M. Albinus. He was an old acquaintance of Pilate's. After mutual salutations, Albinus observed to him, that many years had elapsed since their separation. "Yes," replied Pilate, "many years—years of misfortune and affliction. Accused by the day on which I succeeded Valerius Gratus in the government of Judea! My name is ominous; it has been fatal to whomever has borne it. One of my ancestors imprinted an indelible mark of infamy on the fair front of Imperial Rome, when the Romans passed under the *Caudine Forks* in the Samnite war. Another perished by the hands of the Parthians in the war against Artabanus. And I—miserable me!

"You miserable?" asked Albinus. "What have you done to entail misery on you? True the injustice of Caligula has exiled you to Vienne, but for what crime, I have examined your affair at the *Tabularium*. You are denounced by Vitellius, praetor of Syria, your enemy, for having chastised the rebellious Hebrews, who had slain the most noble of the Samaritans, and who afterwards withdrew themselves on Mount Garizim. You are also accused of acting thus out of hatred to the Jews."

"No!" replied Pilate, "No! by all the gods, Albinus, it is not the injustice of Caesar that afflicts me."
"What, then, is the cause of your affliction?" continued Albinus. "Long have I known you, sensible, just, humane. I see it—you are the victim of Vitellius."
"Say not so, Albinus. Say not that I am the victim of Vitellius. No! I am the victim of a higher power! The Romans regard me as an object of Caesar's disgrace; the Jews as the severe Procurator; the Christians, as the executioner of their God!"

"Of their God, did you say, Pilate? impious wretches! adore a God born in a manger, and put to death on a cross!"
"Beware Albinus, beware!" continued Pilate. "If the Christ had been born under the purple, he would have been adored. Listen. To your friendship I will submit the events of my life; you will afterwards judge whether I am worthy of your hospitality."
On my arrival at Jerusalem, I took possession of the *Pretorium*, and ordered a splendid feast to be prepared, to which I invited the Tetrarch of Judea, with the High Priest, and his officers. At the appointed hour, no guests appeared. This was an insult offered to my dignity. A few days afterwards the Tetrarch deigned to pay me a visit. His deportment was grave and deceitful. He pretended that his religion forbade him and his attendants to sit down at the table of the Gentiles, and to offer up libations with them. I thought it expedient to accept his excuse; but from that moment I was convinced that the conquered had declared themselves the enemies of their conquerors.

At that time Jerusalem was, of all conquered cities, the most difficult to govern. So turbulent were the people that I lived in momentary dread of an insurrection. To repress it, I had but a single centurion and a handful of soldiers. I requested a reinforcement from the Prefect of Syria, who informed me that he had scarcely troops sufficient to defend his own province. Insatiate thirst of empire—to extend our conquests beyond the means of defending them!

Among the various rumors which came to my ears, there was one that attracted my attention. A young man, it was said, had appeared in Galilee,

preaching, with a noble unction, a new law in the name of the God who had sent him. At first, I was apprehensive that his design was to stir up the people against the Romans; but soon were my fears dispelled. Jesus of Nazareth spoke rather as a friend of the Romans than of the Jews.

One day, in passing by the place of *Siloe*, where there was a great concourse of people, I observed, in the midst of the group, a young man leaning against a tree, who was calmly addressing the multitude. I was told that it was Jesus. This I could easily have suspected, so great was the difference between him and those who listened to him. He appeared to be about thirty years of age. His golden colored hair and beard gave to his appearance a celestial aspect. Never have I seen a sweeter or more serene countenance. What a contrast between him and his hearers, with their black beards and tawny complexions! Unwilling to interrupt him by my presence, I continued my walk, but signified to my secretary to join the group and listen.

My Secretary's name was Manlius. He was the grandson of the chief of the conspirators, who encompassed in Etruria, waiting for Catalina. Manlius was an ancient inhabitant of Judea, and well acquainted with the Hebrew language. He was devoted to me, and was worthy of my confidence.

On returning to the *Pretorium*, I found Manlius who related to me the words that Jesus had pronounced at *Siloe*. Never have I heard at *Portico*, or read in the works of the philosophers, anything that can be compared to the maxims of Jesus. One of the rebellious Jews, so numerous in Jerusalem, having asked him if it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not, Jesus replied: *Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.*

It was on account of the wisdom of his sayings that I granted so much liberty to the Nazarene; for it was in my power to have had him arrested and exiled to Pontus; but this would have been contrary to that Justice which has characterized the Romans. This man was neither seditious nor rebellious. I extended to him my protection, unknown perhaps to himself. He was at liberty to act, to speak, to assemble, and address the people, to choose disciples, unrestrained by any previous mandate.

Should it ever happen may the Gods avert the omen!—should it ever happen, I say, that the religion of our forefathers should be supplanted by the religion of Jesus, it will be to his noble toleration that Rome shall owe her premature obsequies—whilst I, miserable, miserable wretch—I shall have been the instrument of what the Christians call Providence, and we—Destiny.

But this unlimited freedom granted to Jesus, revolted the Jews—not the poor, but the rich and powerful! It is true, Jesus was severe on the latter; and this was a political reason, in my opinion, not to control the liberty of the Nazarene. "Scribes and Pharisees!" he would say to them, "you are a race of vipers!—you resemble painted sepulchres!" At other times he would sneer at the proud sime of the Pharisees telling him that the sime of the widow was more precious in the sight of God.

New complaints were daily made at the *Pretorium* against the insolence of Jesus. I was even informed that some misfortune would befall him; that it would not be the first time that Jerusalem had stoned those who called themselves prophets; and that, if the *Pretorium* refused justice, an appeal would be made to Caesar.

This I had prevented, by informing Caesar of all that happened. My conduct was approved of by the Senate, and I was promised a reinforcement of troops after the termination of the Parthian war.

Being too weak to suppress a sedition, I resolved upon adopting a measure that promised to re-establish tranquility in the city, without subjecting the *Pretorium* to humiliating concessions. I wrote to Jesus, requesting an interview with him at the *Pretorium*. He came.

and my feet seemed fastened with an iron hand to the marble pavement. He was calm, the Nazarene; calm as innocence. When he came up to me, he stopped, and, by a simple gesture, seemed to say to me: *here I am.*

For some time I contemplated, with admiration and awe, this extraordinary type of a man; a type unknown to our numerous sculptors; who have given from an indistinct figure to all the gods and all the heroes.

"Jesus," said I, to him, at last, and my tongue faltered. "Jesus of Nazareth, I have granted you, for the last three years, ample freedom of speech; nor do I regret it. Your words are those of a sage. I know not whether you have read Socrates and Plato; but this I know, that there is in your discourses a majestic simplicity that elevates you far above those great philosophers. The Emperor is informed of it, and I, his humble representative in this country, am glad of having allowed you that liberty of which you are so worthy. However, I must not conceal from you that your discourses have raised up against you powerful and inveterate enemies. Neither is this surprising. Socrates had his enemies, and he fell a victim to their hatred. Yours are doubly incensed against you, on account of the liberty extended towards you. They even accuse me indirectly of being leagued with you, for the purpose of depriving the Hebrews of the little civil power which Rome has left to them. My request—I do not say my order—is that you be more circumspect for the future, and more tender in rousing the pride of your enemies; least they raise up against you the stupid populace, and compel me to employ the instruments of justice."

The Nazarene calmly replied, "Prince of the earth, your words proceed not from true wisdom. Say to the torrent to stay in the midst of the mountain because it will uproot the trees of the valley; the torrent will answer you, that it obeys the laws of the Creator. God alone knows whither flow the waters of the torrent.—Verily, I say unto you, before the rose of Sharon blossoms, the blood of the just will be spilt."

"Your blood shall not be spilt," replied I, with emotion. "You are more precious in my estimation, on account of your wisdom, than all these turbulent and proud Pharisees, who abuse the freedom granted them by the Romans, conspire against Caesar, and construe our bounty into fear. Insolent wretches! They are not aware that the wolf of the Tiber sometimes clothes himself with the skin of the sheep. I will protect you against them. My *Pretorium* is open to you as a place of refuge; it is a sacred asylum."

Jesus carelessly shook his head, and said with a divine smile: "When the day shall have come, there will be no asylum for the Son of Man, neither on earth nor under the earth. The asylum of the just is there, (pointing to the heavens.) That which is written in the books of the prophets must be accomplished."

"Young man," answered I mildly, "you oblige me to convert my request into an order. The safety of the province which has been confided to my care, requires it. You must observe more moderation in your discourses. Do not infringe my orders; you know them. May happiness attend you.—Farewell."

"Prince of the earth," replied Jesus, "I come not to bring war into the world, but peace, love, and charity. I was born the same day on which Caesar Augustus gave peace to the Roman world. Persecution proceeds not from me. I expect it from others, and will meet it in obedience to the will of my Father, who has shown me the way. Restrain, therefore your worldly prudence. It is not in your power to arrest the victim at the foot of the tabernacle of expiation."

So saying he disappeared like a bright shadow behind the curtains of the basilica.

Herod, called on me one day at the *Pretorium*, and on rising to take leave after some insignificant conversation, he asked me what was my opinion concerning the Nazarene.

I replied that Jesus appeared to me to be one of those grave philosophers that great nations sometimes produce; that his doctrine was by no means dangerous; and that the intention of Rome was to leave him that freedom of speech which was justified by his actions. Herod smiled maliciously, and saluting me with ironical respect, he departed.

The great feast of the Jews was approaching; and their intention was to avail themselves of the popular exaltation, which a ways manifests itself at the solemnities of the passover. The city was overflowing with a tumultuous populace, clamoring for the death of the Nazarene. My emissaries informed me that the treasure of the temple had been employed in bribing the people. The danger was pressing. A Roman centurion had been insulted.

I wrote to the prefect of Syria, requesting a hundred foot soldiers and the same number of cavalry. He declined. I saw myself alone with a handful of veterans in the midst of a rebellious city, too weak to suppress disorder, and having no other choice left than to tolerate it.

They had seized upon Jesus; and the seditious rabble, although they knew they had nothing to fear from the *Pretorium*, believing, on the faith of their leaders, that I winked at their sedition, continued vociferating, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

Three powerful parties at that time had combined together against Jesus. First, the Herodians, and Sadducees, whose seditious conduct appeared to have proceeded from a double motive; they hated the Nazarene, and were impatient of the Roman yoke. They could never forgive me for having entered their holy city with banners that bore the image of the Roman Emperor; and although, in this instance, I had committed a fatal error, yet the sacrilege did not appear less heinous in their eyes. Another grievance also rankled in their bosoms. I had proposed to employ a part of the treasure of the Temple in erecting edifices of public utility. My proposal was scouted at. The Pharisees were the avowed enemies of Jesus. They cared not for the Governor; but they bore with bitterness the severe reprimands which the Nazarene had, during three years, been continually throwing out against them wherever he went. Too weak and too pusillanimous to act by themselves, they had eagerly embraced the quarrel of the Herodians and Sadducees. Besides these three parties, I had to contend against the reckless and profligate populace, always ready to join in a sedition, and to profit by the disorder and confusion that result therefrom.

Jesus was dragged before the Council of the Priests and condemned to death. It was then that the High Priest, Caiaphas, performed a derisory act of submission. He sent his prisoner to me to pronounce his condemnation and secure his execution. I answered him that, as Jesus was a Galilean, the affair came within Herod's jurisdiction, and ordered Jesus to be sent thither. The wily Tetrarch professed humility, and protesting his deference to the lieutenant of Caesar, he committed the fate of the man into my hands.

My palace assumed the aspect of a besieged citadel; every moment increased the number of the seditious. Jerusalem was inundated with crowds from the mountains of Nazareth, the towns of Galilee, and the plains of Esdreloth. All Judea appeared to be pouring into that devoted city.

I had taken to wife a girl from among the Galileans, who pretended to see into the future. Weeping and throwing herself at my feet, "Beware," she said to me, "beware, and touch not that man for he is holy. Last night I saw him in a vision. He was walking on the water—he was flying on the wings of the wind. He spake to the tempests, to the palm trees, to the fishes of the lake, all were obedient to him. Behold! the torrent of Mount Cedron flows with blood, the statues of Caesar are sold with the filth of the gemoniae; the columns of the *Pretorium* have given way, and the sun is veiled in mourning like a vestal in the tomb! O, Pilate! evil awaits thee. If thou wilt not listen to the words of thy wife, dread the curses of a Roman Senate, and dread the frowns of Caesar!"

By this time my marble stairs groaned

under the weight of the multitude. The Nazarene was brought back to me. I proceeded to the Hall of Justice, followed by my guards, and asked the people in a severe tone what they demanded?

"The death of the Nazarene," was their reply. For what crime? "He has blasphemed; he prophesies the ruin of the temple; he calls himself the Son of God, the Messiah, the King of the Jews." Roman Justice, said I, punishes not such offences with death. "Crucify him, Crucify him!" shouted the relentless rabble.

The vociferations of the infuriated multitude shook the palace to its foundations.—One man alone appeared calm in the midst of the tumult. He was the Statue of Innocence placed in the temples of the Eumunides. It was the Nazarene.

After many fruitless attempts to protect him from the fury of his persecutors, I had the baseness to adopt a measure which at that moment appeared to be the only one that could save his life. I ordered him to be scourged, then, calling for a soldier, I placed my hands in the presence of the clamorous multitude; but nothing could ever be compared to what I beheld in the present instance. It might have been truly said that on this occasion, all the phantoms of the infernal regions had assembled together at Jerusalem. The crowd appeared not to walk; they were borne off and whirled as a vortex, rolling along like living waves, from the portico of the *Pretorium* even unto Mount Zion, with howlings, screams, shrieks, and vociferations, such as were never heard either in the seditions of *Parthia*, or in the tumults of the Forum.

By degrees the day darkened like a winter twilight, such as had been seen at the death of the great Julius Caesar. It was likewise towards the ideas of March. I, the continued Governor of a rebellious province, was looking against a column of my basilica, upon the templating, atwart the dreary gloom of this Theory of Tartarus dragging down execution the innocent Nazarene. I had around me a desert. Jerusalem had vomited forth her indignant through the funeral gates that lead to the Germanica. An air of desolation and sadness enveloped me. My guard had joined the cavalry, and the Governor, to display a show of power, was endeavoring to maintain an order. I was left alone, and my breaking heart admonished me, that what was passing, that moment appeared rather to be the history of the gods than that of man. Loud clamors were heard proceeding from Golgotha, when borne on the winds appeared to announce an agony such as never had been heard by mortal ear.—Dark clouds lowered over the pinnacle of the Temple, and there they settled over the city and over it as with a veil. So dreadful were the signs that were manifested, both in the heavens and on the earth, that Dionysius, the Areopagite, is reported to have exclaimed: "Either the Author of Nature is suffering, or the Universe is falling apart."

Towards the first hour of the night I threw my mantle around me, and went down into the city towards the gate of Golgotha. The sacrifice that had been consummated, the crowd were returning home; still agitated, true, but gloomy, sad, taciturn, and desperate. What they had witnessed had struck them with terror and remorse. I also saw my little cohort pass by mournfully, the standard bearer having veiled his eagle in tokens of grief, and I overheard some of the soldiers murmuring strange words, which I did not comprehend. Others were recounting prodigies almost equal to those which had so often smitten the Romans with dismay by the will of the gods. Sometimes groups of men and women would halt; then, looking back towards Mount Calvary, would remain motionless, in the expectation of witnessing some new prodigy.

I returned to the *Pretorium* sad and pensive. On ascending the stairs, the steps of which were still stained with the blood of the Nazarene, I perceived an old man in a suppliant posture, behind him several women in deep mourning. He threw himself at my feet and wept bitterly. It is painful to see a man weep. "Father," said I to him mildly, "who are you, and what is your request?" "I am Joseph, of Arimathea," replied he, "and I am come to beg of you, on my knees, the permission to bury Jesus of Nazareth." "Your prayer is granted," said I to him faintly.

(Continued on fifth page.)