

ciples that with them he might eat the Passover, and once more counsel and bless them before he died. Then followed the quiet midnight walk over the Kedron, the mysterious agony in Gethsemane, the base betrayal, the cowardly flight of the disciples, the arraignment before Pilate, and the unjust condemnation;—upon these points we will not dwell, but hasten to the final scene.

It was yet early in the morning when the Roman soldiers proceeded to execute Pilate's sentence. The meek sufferer is led forth "as a lamb to the slaughter," but not one of all his chosen followers stands beside him to nerve his soul for the final struggle. He must tread "the wine-press alone, and of the people there" must be "none to help." A few of the "daughters of Jerusalem" weep tears of womanly sympathy as the Saviour bows beneath the heavy burden of the cross; but behind and around him swells and surges a fierce multitude in whose breasts dwells no pity. Among them, perchance, are many who, only a few days before, cried "Hosannah to the Son of David!" but who now, with a mob's wonted fickleness, clamor fiercely for his blood. Passing out of the city, probably through the Damascus gate, they reach at last the place of execution. Here the terrible preliminaries are soon arranged, and between two thieves Jesus is "lifted up" a spectacle to heaven, earth, and hell.

Slowly and sadly the hours pass by, and still the multitude, as though held by some terrible fascination, linger around Calvary. The Roman soldiers, familiar with scenes of cruelty and blood, keep their watch, unmoved either by anger or by pity, and, while the meek sufferer hangs bleeding in mortal pain, proceed to part his garments among themselves. A few faithful women, with the beloved disciple, drawn thither by the love that is stronger than death, weep in bitter anguish at the cross; but the multitude still fling their cruel taunts at the uncomplaining sufferer, while the priests who have compassed his death mockingly exclaim: "He saved others, himself he cannot save!" But "the triumphing of the wicked is short." Even while the taunt is being uttered the words die upon their lips; for suddenly the orb of day withdraws his light, and a darkness, terrible as the frown of Jehovah, settles down upon the scene. The taunts are silent now, and the boldest heart quails amid the supernatural gloom. No word is spoken,—every breath is hushed, and ten thousand hearts have almost ceased to beat. Three hours pass, and still the multitude stand motionless, while every eye is fixed, as by a spell, where the dim outline of the central cross can be faintly traced through the darkness. Perhaps on witnessing this prodigy the hopes of the disciples (some of whom beheld the scene afar off) revived, regarding it as the first of a series of wonders which would end in the triumphant descent of Jesus from the cross. If such were their hopes they were doomed to disappointment, for Jesus gives no sign, and the hours pass silently and heavily as before. But, just as the ninth hour is reached, suddenly the body of the sufferer is seen to move; the languid head is raised in conscious majesty; the voice, which all supposed was hushed in the silence of death, rings out,—clear, loud, triumphant,—startling the spell-bound multitude like the tramp of doom:—

"IT IS FINISHED!"