

PONTIUS PILATE.

The Personal Character of the Roman Tribune.

BOLD, AMBITIOUS, DARING.

In his description of the Trial of Jesus, in the second volume of his Life of Christ, Pere Didon, discussing the motives which influenced Pilate, says: "It was no question of a popular revolt, but of the hatred, jealousy, and intrigue of the Jewish authorities, who demanded from him the blood of Jesus. It was easy for him to suppress this sacerdotal authority, accustomed as it was to every complaisance, and to all forms of servility. . . . He had, besides, no interest in condemning Jesus."

Farther on in the course of the same chapter he writes:

"Then Pilate, seeing that he did not succeed, and that the tumult only grew the greater, was afraid. He had raised the storm, and now the storm, terrified him. . . . He knew that this excitable people was capable of anything when their Law was in question. . . . He showed himself weak, pusillanimous, cowardly, cruel."

Pilate was neither saint nor coward, but a bold, ambitious, daring Roman politician, caring little for truth and righteousness, an imperious and oppressive, though able and, on the whole, successful ruler, during a decade of one of the most turbulent provinces of the Empire.

According to the best authorities, Pilate was Governor of Judea in the interval between the years 26 and 37 of the Christian era. His appointment during the ascendancy of Sejanus, and the harmony of his whole course of conduct in Judea with the known sentiments of Sejanus, make it appear probable that that crafty minister, who was a bitter enemy of the Jews, was responsible for his selection. His first act as Governor was the act of a bold and audacious man, and an attentive consideration of its significance, in the light of the circumstances, should have absolved his character forever from the charge of timidity and cowardice.

Josephus relates the incident thus. On the standard of each Roman cohort there was an image of the Emperor reigning. The Romans knew well the abhorrence of the Jews for iconism, and former procurators, in entering Jerusalem, had been magnanimous or prudent enough to enter with imageless ensigns. Not so, however, with Pilate. Of the 3000 soldiers at his command, he sent a large detachment to re-enforce the cohort in Jerusalem, forbidding, at the same time, the customary removal of the images from their banners. Whether by accident or design, the entrance was made by night, and the innovation at the time unperceived. But the next day the event became known, and filled the citizens with anger and dismay. An excited multitude rushed off to Cæsarea, the seat of the provincial government, and during six whole days, according to the historian, stormed round the procurator's palace. On the sixth day, Pilate concealed armed bands about the entrance, and when the Jews gathered as usual, gave the signal to the soldiers to surround them, and threatened them with instant death in the event of their refusal to depart. But they, far from giving away, cast themselves on the ground, bared their throats, and declared their willingness to die rather than to permit a violation of their laws. Amazed by so much stubbornness, Pilate permitted himself, apparently, to be conquered, and ordered the offensive images to be removed from the Holy City.

The second event of his administration was one which stirred even more profoundly the depths of Jewish fanaticism, and which, but for the promptness and vigor of his action, might have seriously disturbed the peace of

the province. It seems that Pilate built an aqueduct, to supply Jerusalem with a better and more abundant supply of water. The source of the stream was a considerable distance away and the work involved a large and perhaps unexpected expense. To meet this, he seized upon the Corbana, or sacred money contributed by the Jews the world over for the service of the Temple. Crassus had done the same before him; but Crassus, at the head of a powerful army, was in a different position from Pilate's, he being in command of only a few cohorts. The deed evoked a furious storm of popular feeling. An insurrectionary multitude of "many ten thousands" surrounded the Governor's place, in Jerusalem, and angrily demanded the cessation of the sacrilegious attempt. Far from being terrified by the tumult, Pilate conceived and carried out a measure that was as decisive as it was brilliant and daring. Arming his soldiers with clubs, and causing them to conceal, under the dress of private citizens, their more formidable weapons, he scattered them through the multitude with orders, at a given signal, to disperse the rebellious by blows. The sequel may be best narrated in the words of Josephus himself:

"So he himself bid the Jews go away; but they, boldly casting reproaches upon him, he gave the soldiers that signal which had been before agreed upon; who laid upon them much greater blows than Pilate had commanded them, and equally punished those that were tumultuous and those that were not; nor did they spare them in the least; and since the people were unarmed, and were caught by men prepared for what they were about, there were a great number of them slain by this means, and others of them ran away wounded. And thus an end was put to this sedition."

Mt. Gerizim, the Mt. Sion of the Samaritans, was situated in the heart of Samaria, some thirty miles north of Jerusalem. Popular tradition had it that the ark and other sacred vessels had once been venerated by the Samaritans as the "most holy of mountains." Sometime in the year 36 or 37, a prophet appeared who promised, on a fixed day, to uncover these sacred relics. The curiosity and superstition of the nation were aroused, and on the day set an immense concourse of people, of every class, gathered at the mountain. Who this impostor was, or what his real intentions may have been, Josephus has not told us; but, in view of the issue, his statement that the multitude came armed is significant. It is quite possible that the pretext of a religious assembly may have been employed by some daring patriot, impatient of the Roman yoke, to mask deep and rebellious designs. Whatever its ultimate purpose, time was not given the movement to develop. Pilate's dispositions were prompt, bloody and decisive. A strong body of troops was posted upon the mountain, and another, in the rear of the multitude encamped at its base. The Samaritans were surrounded, were attacked and cut to pieces. The news of the affair aroused intense excitement in Samaria, and the event proved fatal to the fortunes of Pilate. An embassy was dispatched at once to Vitellius, then President of Syria. The gathering at the mountain was represented as a purely religious one, and Pilate was charged with cruel and wanton massacre. Vitellius sent a friend to take charge of Judea, and ordered the Governor to prepare to answer his accusers in Rome.

When he arrived in Rome, Tiberius was no more, and Caius reigned in his stead. Nevertheless, Pilate was tried, condemned, and according to Eusebius, banished to Tienne in Gaul. His banishment closed the last act in his public career, and with it he disappeared forever from the theater of historical events—Donahoe's.

The Dog of Aughrim.

The battle of Aughrim was fought at the pass of Urrachroe on Sunday, July 12, 1014. The Williamite army, under Ginckle, consisted of 1,000 horse and foot; the Irish force, under St. Ruth, was about 15,000, and had only one field piece. The Williamites were three driven with great slaughter from their positions, when St. Ruth was killed by a musket ball. To reap all the glory, he had kept the plan of battle to himself, and when he fell the Irish were without a leader. Throughout the battle the gallant Sarsfield, with half the troops, was compelled to remain idle and ignorant of all. Many Irish regiments, according to the story, were slaughtered like a man, and their dead bodies stripped of everything by the Williamites, were left on the field. There is a true and remarkable story of a wolf dog belonging to an Irish officer killed in the battle, whose body the dog gnawed, night and day, and would not allow an body to disturb the remains. He would go in the night to the adjacent villages for food, and return to the place where his master lay to rest his watch. Thus he continued for months, when one of the Foulke's soldiers, going that way by chance, snatched his piece and shot the faithful sentinel dead upon the bones of his master.

"The day is ours, my gallant men," cried brave but vain St. Ruth.
"We win a deathless victory for liberty and truth;
This land we'll wrest from William's grasp,
though we're but one to three,
And make his crew remember long the pass of Urrachroe.

"All day, with myriad cannon, have they poured the fierce attack;
With valor and the naked sword, thrice have we flung them back.
They're beaten, boys! they're beaten. Still, unsheath your sword again
And on them like an avalanche, and sweep them from the plain."

Lake thunderbolt upon the foe, the Irish column sped
Athlone's deep stain to wash away: St. Ruth is at the head.
On, onward rolls that wave of death. O God! what means that cry?
St. Ruth, the brave, upon his steed sits headless 'neath the sky.

"Oh! where's the gallant Sarsfield now?
Is victory defeat?
O God! in mercy, strike us dead, 'twere better than retreat.
Where! where is Limerick's hero brave?"
the chieftain soldiers cry.
And scornful flight, they wait the dawn to give them light to die.

"No quarter" was the slogan of the Williamites that day,
And graveless lay the murdered brave, to dogs and thieves a prey.
But even dogs more sacred held the dying and the slain,
Than Ginckle and his hireling hordes on Aughrim's bloody plain.

When Saxon fiend, the scene of death and robbery had fled,
An Irish wolf dog sought his lord 'mid heaps of pilfered dead,
And strove, with more than human love, to rob death of his prize,
Then moaned a dirge above his breast, and kissed his lips and eyes.

The July sun shone fiercely down upon the corpse strewn plain,
Where birds and beast of air and field devoured the naked slain.
But faithful still, the Wolf dog stood, 'mid savage growls and groans,
To guard alike, from man and beast, his well loved master's bones.

And Autumn pencilled Summer's bloom in tints of gold and red,
And Winter, over hill and dale, a ghostly mantle spread;
The weird wind wailed across the moor and moaned adown the dell;
Yet guarded well that noble dog his master where he fell.

Spring timidly was glancing down upon that spreading plain
Where, seven months, death's sentinel, the faithful dog had lain,
When carelessly across the fields a British soldier trod
And halted near the only bones remaining on the sod.

Up sprang the faithful wolf dog then—he knew a foe was near,
And feared that foe would desecrate the bones he loved so dear.
Fierce, defiant there he stood; the soldier, seized with dread,
Took aim and fired—the noble dog fell on his master—dead.
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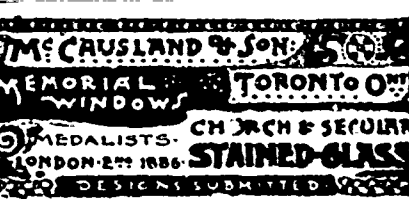
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