

SACRED LEGENDS.

SIXTH PAPER.

LEGENDS OF THE PASSION.

By the Jewish law any one condemned to death was obliged to carry his cross to the place of execution. Some think this was the origin of the saying to bear one's cross. Our Lord Himself makes use of the expression where He says, that unless we take up our cross and follow Him, we shall not be worthy of Him. After He was scourged and crowned with thorns the cross was laid on His shoulders, and He was obliged to carry it to the hill of Calvary. This is the Sorrowful Way—the *Via Dolorosa*. There is some difference of opinion whether or not Cyron the Cyrenean assisted our Lord, or made the cross more difficult for Him to carry. In art, the latter impression is left in the mind when it appeared that our Lord was still bearing nearly the whole weight of the cross, a part of which the Cyrenean raises from the ground. It is pretty constantly maintained that our Lord never was totally relieved from the cross in that journey. The Jews may well have supposed His strength would not endure much more than the scourging and the crowning with thorns.—He was to be reserved for the crucifixion.

Cyron the Cyrenean was a stranger and a foreigner—a man excluded from the Old Covenant: and one interpretation is, that this single act of kindness done our Lord was done by a Gentile—by one of that nation that supplanted the Jewish people. The compassionate woman, who gave her veil or handkerchief to wipe our Lord's blood-stained face, is identified in legend with the woman healed by touching the hem of His garment. At other times this person is simply one of the daughters of Jerusalem, whose house was on the way of the procession. The name, Veronica, is a hybrid Greek and Latin word for "a true image," and it is a common opinion that she got the name from the circumstance that a true impression of our Lord's face remained on the veil when He gave it back to her. In the same way it will be remembered that the person who pierced our Lord's side with a spear is named Longinus, and this name is nothing more than the English form of the Greek word for a spear.

The legend above all others that attained the greatest celebrity in the events on the Sorrowful Way, is that of the Jewish shoemaker, Cartaphilus, who refused to suffer the cross-laden Saviour to rest for a moment on his doorstep. This is the wild story of the Wandering Jew, rendered familiar to early English readers by the Chronicles of Matthew Paris, and to the moderns by a great French writer, Eugene Sue, and a much greater French artist, Gustave Doré. "I am going," are the words ascribed to our Lord, "and you shall wait till I return." The inhuman Jew was then thirty years old, and when he attains the age of one hundred he always returns to the same age he was when our Lord suffered. Sometimes these words are ascribed as delivered by our Lord to a porter in the service of Pilate, who impiously struck our Lord as He was going out the door, and told Him to go quicker. And so, as our Lord said, this Cartaphilus is still awaiting His return. He wanders up and down the earth, appearing at various places, seeking the repose of death, which is ever denied him. He relates the events of our Lord's passion as an eye-witness—tells of the Resurrection—the Creed of the Apostles—their separation and teaching. He refuses all gifts, being content with necessary food and clothing. The first known record of his appearance is in the year 1228, in Armenia; then he appeared in Bohemia in 1505; in Schleswig in 1547; in Spain in 1575; in Paris in 1604, and in Munich a little over a hundred years ago. He was in Rome when Nero set it on fire. He knew the father of Mahomet, and was familiar with the particulars of the Crusades. Such is a fair outline of the most extraordinary myth of the middle ages. Mr. Baring-Gould admits he is unable to discover the substantial truth underlying the vast superstructure of the legend in the Wandering Jew. The general impression he leaves on the reader is, that he believes it to be true. There is a legend that St. John the Evangelist never

died, and the undoubted words of our Lord to St. Peter are an authority to that effect. This will be referred to later.

It is said that our Lord was crucified with His back to Jerusalem and His face towards Rome. The two thieves crucified with Him are variously named—the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus says Dimas on the right hand and Gestas on the left. In the gospel of the Holy Infancy they are called Titus and Dumachus, and in other places various names are given. The one on the right hand was to go to Paradise with our Lord. It will be remembered that in a former paper these persons were said to be two robbers among whom the Holy Family fell in the flight into Egypt. A very poetical legend traces the conversion of the good thief to the shadow of our Lord as they hung on Calvary. The centurion Longinus, whose spear pierced our Lord's side, was said to be converted by a sign or look of the crucified One. From the former circumstance a very noteworthy legend has been preserved—that of the St. Greal, or Holy Graal—

the Holy Cup
That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury.

It is narrated that when the soldier pierced our Lord's side blood and water issued therefrom. Joseph of Arimathea collected the blood in a vessel—the same vessel, it is said, used by our Lord at the Last Supper—and he kept it with religious fervour. The Jews cast Joseph into prison, and for forty two years he was nourished by having the Holy Vessel in his possession. He was subsequently liberated, baptized Titus, and set out for Britain. The search for the Holy Graal is the most fertile source of adventures to the British King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Merlin, when he made the table, left a place for the Holy Graal. Sir Galahad discovered it and died, but all the 150 Knights of King Arthur were privileged to see it. The discovery was accorded to a holy nun and to a knight of pure life.*

The day on which our Lord suffered—Friday—is the day traditionally given on which Adam ate the forbidden fruit. The same day is also referred to as the day of the Annunciation. Our Lord suffered from the sixth to the ninth hour, from twelve to three o'clock, in the most inclement season of the year. When He died all the trees in the world died with Him; even the stones wept. At Hebron, in Judea, there was a celebrated tree that had been green and flourishing from the beginning of the world. Since our Lord's death it is called the dry tree. Among those dead who returned to life were the two sons of Simeon, the High Priest. They remained for three days giving an account of what took place in the other world, and "then were changed into exceeding white forms, and were seen no more."

FIRESIDE.

(To be continued.)

MGR. DE SEGUR.

(From the 7th edition of "Lettres de Mgr. De Segur." For THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY REVIEW.)

*Letters to Madame De * * on the occasion of the death of her child.—*

III.

DEAR MADAM,—I have delayed my answer to your kind letter purposely, in order that this little remembrance may reach you on the day on which I should so heartily have desired to be with you all. A day of sadness and of thanksgiving and tears for the mother, and of joy for that Christian mother's heart. If in eternity there were still, as on earth, days, years and epochs succeeding one to another, it would be a year since your little one entered upon the possession of that unspeakable happiness, that perfect and absolute good towards which we ourselves are struggling on, and which eye hath not seen, ear hath not

* Tennyson has a poem on the Holy Greal. This word is immediately from the old French—*grasal*—the sacramental cup. It is a corruption of *Sanguis-Realis*, which was contracted into *Sangrasal*, *Sangraal*, *St. Greal*.