

24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Mag-da-le-ne.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!

General Statement.

The supreme hour has come. The Saviour has trodden his sorrowful way from Gabbatha to Golgotha, bearing his cross until he sank beneath its weight, and Simon of Africa took it in his place. The accursed tree has been planted, laden with the torn but still living body of the world's Redeemer. As the brutal soldier fulfils their task, his prayer ascends for them: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Over his head is the inscription, written by Pilate's own hand, and proclaiming to all the world a truth greater than the spectators dreamed, that he who divides his garments, casting lots for his seamless tunic. Near by stands the faithful John, holding up the virgin mother, through whose soul the sword now pierces, and with them are a few women bolder even than the disciples in that awful hour. A few sentences break

And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

from the lips of the dying One at intervals during that day of agony; but they are not cries of sorrow or of suffering, nor yet prayers to heaven for vengeance; they are words of love for others, and words of communion with the Father. At noon a darkness gathers over the scene, as if the sun would not look upon such a deed of iniquity. At three o'clock, just when the afternoon worship is beginning in the temple, the priest lays the offering upon the altar, a cry rings forth from Calvary, and spirit and body part a cross. At the same moment an earthquake shock rends the earth, and exposes to sight the dead in their graves; and on the temple-mountain the great veil is torn, the holiest is torn asunder by unseen hands. Just before sunset, the dead form is gently taken down from the cross, and laid by loving hands in Joseph's tomb.

Practical Notes.

21, 22. The chief priests of the Jews. The clause "of the Jews" is suggestive. The priests of the Jews objected to Jesus being called "the King of the Jews." That he said, They were willing to have it understood that he was crucified because he was their king. What I have written. He refused to make the change, showing that a last Roman firmness in his character, and determined to let the Jews feel his authority.

23. Then the soldiers. These were Romans, ignorant of the truth, and not responsible for the act in crucifying Jesus. Took his garments. His sundials, his tunic, robe, and girdle. These were to be custom the perquisites of the executioners. His coat. This was the under vest, or tunic, reaching from the neck to the feet; in form a sleeveless shirt, fitting closely to the body. Woven from the top. Perhaps the gift of one of the women who ministered to Jesus.

24. Cast lots for it. Under the very shadow of the cross, these men sit down to gamble for the garment of the sufferer. (3) Even now gamblers will play their evil trade in the very presence of death. That the Scripture might be fulfilled. The beloved disciple, who witnessed the scene, remembered that this was a fulfillment of Gen. 32, 18, which has ever been regarded as a Messianic psalm. These things therefore. Because they were predicted in the Scriptures concerning Christ. The soldiers did. Men who knew nothing of the prophecies, yet unconsciously fulfilled them to the letter. (4) This even now men who know not God are proving the truth of his word, for example, irreligious scientists, and discoverers in Oriental lands.

25. Now. Just at this point should be inserted the prayer of the penitent thief (Luke 23, 42), and the second word from the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." This was a little before noon. His mother, and his mother's sister, etc. It is uncertain whether three or four women are referred to in this statement. As it is not likely that two sisters would both be named Mary, we think that four are meant. His mother's sister. This probably refers to John's mother, Salome, the wife of Zebedee. If this be correct John was first cousin to Jesus. Mary the wife of Cleophas. Not the same Cleopas as that named in Luke 24, 18; but almost certainly the man called Alphaeus in Matt. 10, 3. This Mary was the mother of the apostle James the Less. Mark 15, 40. Mary Magdalene. Not "the woman who was a sinner," who anointed the feet of Jesus (Luke 7, 37), nor Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus, but a woman from Magdala on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons. Luke 8, 2. She was the first one to see Jesus after his resurrection.

26. Jesus . . . saw his mother. The cross was not high, as represented in pictures, but elevated only a

Explanatory and

Verse 17. And he bearing his cross. The cross, though not so large as is generally represented, must have been a crushing burden, especially to one whose strength was reduced by years of sleep, by mental agony, and by physical suffering and loss of blood. When Jesus sank under its weight the soldiers seized upon a man from Africa, Simon the Cyrenian, and compelled him to carry it. Went forth. From the castle of Pilate to an open place outside of the wall of the city. The place of a skull. Probably from its shape, for the Jewish law would not allow skulls to be left unburied. The traditional location is now covered by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; but water, and other recent authorities prefer the spot north of the city now known as Jeremiah's Grotto, near the Damascus Gate. Golgotha. A Hebrew word meaning "skull." Calvary in English. Calvaria is its Latin equivalent.

18. They crucified him. It was the hour of the morning sacrifice, nine o'clock, when the lamb was laid on the altar in the temple, and the Lamb of God was fixed upon the cross. Just before he was fastened upon it he was offered a stupefying potion of "wine mixed with myrrh," but he refused it, wishing to retain his consciousness, even to the uttermost of suffering. At this time he spoke his first word from the cross, a prayer for the soldiers who were crucifying him. "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!" Two others with him. On one side was the impatient thief who uttered curses upon Jesus; on the other was the penitent, who was forgiven and accepted in the dying hour. Thus the two great classes of humanity, the saved and the unsaved, were represented beside the cross of Christ. (1) To which class do you belong? Jesus in the midst. As if to show him the greatest criminal of the three. (2) Even now the cross of Christ is the most prominent object in the world's history.

19. Pilate wrote a title. This was generally carried by the condemned person, hung upon his breast, and afterward fastened to the cross above his head. Pilate made the title an expression of contempt for the Jews more than for Jesus. The writing was. Each of the gospels gives the same title, but in different words, showing that they did not aim for verbal accuracy. The king of the Jews. Thus his cross declared his glory as a king, and Pilate wrote more truthfully than he knew.

20. Read many of the Jews. We learn from the other gospels that the rulers, priests, and scribes gathered around to gloat over the sufferings of Christ. Nigh to the city. It may have been but a few rods or even yards without the gate. Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. These were the three chief languages of the world; the first representing religion, the second culture, the third power; and all unite unconsciously in paying honor to Jesus as the Christ.