

Can. F. 1411

THE CENTURION

A Romance of the Time of the Messiah

Vere hic homo filius Dei erat,
—*St. Mark, xv, 30.*

BY
A. B. ROUTHIER

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY LUCILLE P. BORDEN

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The book which we now offer to the public is an historical romance, in which are recounted and described the principal events of the Messianic epoch in Palestine, with the religious, social and domestic conflicts which they excited there at that time.

The historical part is strictly in accordance with the narration of the Evangelists, and we have borrowed its elements as well as the French translation of its text, from the best authorized historians.

The romantic part, or the fiction, unfolds itself side by side with the historical, without either altering or defacing it, but lending a certain interest which is pleasing to most people in the world.

The aim of the book is to inspire a desire for the study of the gospels, whose interest for all Christians should be powerful.

A. B. ROUTHIER.

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THE CENTURION

PART I LETTERS

I

GALILEE

CAIUS OPPIUS TO TULLIUS

FOR more than ten months, I have commanded the little garrison of Magdala in Galilee and, without forgetting either Rome or my dear friend Tullius, I begin to find this far away country, which had at first appeared one of exile, both interesting and agreeable.

We occupy a fortress built upon a rocky cliff, on the border of a very beautiful lake which the Galileans call the Sea of Genezareth. At the foot of the fortress lies a little village which slopes down towards the lake. On the neighboring heights are terraced orange trees and vineyards, together with several villas belonging to rich Jews and Greek merchants. Along the strand lie the barques of the fishermen. They are beautiful when in the morning they take their flight to

the high seas and again towards evening, when with tired wings, like great wounded birds, they come home to the nest.

The society of Magdala is not numerous but sufficiently choice. None of their customs are too austere. The pleasures of Rome are lacking, obviously, and it is always with a sigh that we recall the Forum, the Field of Mars, the Baths, the Theatres and the Circus. But the pleasures of our over-refined civilization had absorbed me too much, so here I am happy to regain possession of myself. In this Oriental atmosphere, which the breath of the desert renews unceasingly, I once more become free. This country and this people interest me strangely in other respects. They are much older than Rome, and, notwithstanding this, I find them very much younger.

Civilization has aged us before our time. We have had barely seven or eight centuries of existence, while the Jewish people have had twice as many. In spite of this, their faith, their beliefs, are still vigorous, whilst our own are flickering and will soon die out.

Here the population seems gifted with eternal youth, like the nature which surrounds it. Why should it become old? Its inland sea, its sky, its mountains, its forest, its sacred stream the Jordan, remain always unchanged, and, above all, it has been able to retain, together with the candor, the naiveté, and the illusions of childhood, the invincible hope of a great future.

What has been happening here for more than a year is proof of it. One hears on all sides of nothing but preaching and prophecies concerning a Messiah

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expected for centuries, who shall at last come to de-
liver His people and to re-establish the kingdom of
Israel.

Since my arrival, I have heard that a great prophet
whose name is John has been teaching multitudes in
the desert and baptizing them in the waters of the Jor-
dan. And now they boast another prophet, greater
than the first, who preaches in the synagogues, who
cures the sick and the infirm, who gives sight to the
blind and speech to the dumb.

While waiting to inform myself more fully upon
these events which move the crowd so singularly, I
admire the beauties and attractions of this sunlit
country. I understand that the Jewish Prophets have
chosen it for the establishment of the Kingdom of
God. If their ancient Eden, their lost Paradise, could
somewhere be recovered, it is here, and if the Golden
Age sung by Ovid might be reborn, the Lake of Genez-
areth should become its cradle.

Apropos of this, thou rememberest that our poet
had placed this Golden Age in the beginning of the
world, and that he finished it in the Garden of the
Hesperides, where there was a wonderful tree bearing
golden fruit and guarded by a monstrous serpent.
From whence came this legend to him? Without
doubt he found its elements in the poems of Hesiod;
but from whence had Hesiod taken it? Well, my
friend, he found it in the books of Moses, which were
over fifteen centuries old and which recounted that the
first man had been placed in a Garden of Delights and
that he was driven out of it by God because he had

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eaten the fruit of a wonderful tree at the suggestion of the Spirit of Evil, disguised in the form of a serpent.

Is it not interesting to establish, undeniably, the fact that the most ancient poets of Greece and our Ovid appear to have borrowed the theme of their cosmogonical poems from the Holy Books of the Jews?

Thou canst not imagine with what interest I study Hebrew in these extraordinary books that the Jews call their "Bible." Whatever leisure my military duties allow me I consecrate to them, and, when I am tired, I mount my horse and wander through the country.

Galilee measures scarcely one hundred square miles, and in it can be counted about two hundred villages, fifteen towns and nearly three million inhabitants. A great number of these people are Greek, and several of the towns are even more Greek than Jewish; but, despite this exotic admixture and notwithstanding the Roman domination, this country has remained Jewish, and the dominating power is still a theocratic authority.

The soil is fertile and the country picturesque. Sometimes mountainous, again simply hilly, it produces grain, vineyards, olive trees, fig trees, and furnishes rich pasture for the herds.

Its beautiful miniature sea is a radiant jewel, magnificently enshrined; what doubles the brilliancy of its play of color is the bath of light into which it is always plunged. I spend hours watching the fishing boats that float upon it. They remind me of Castel-

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lamare where I was born, and there are moments when I forget that I am in the Orient.

It is really the sun of Italy that bleaches these far away sails and traces paths of light and fire on the waves disturbed by the breeze. It is even the same lapis-lazuli sky, lined here and there with grey and white.

But when my eyes rest upon the broad pathway, Italy fades away and the Orient reappears. Caravans defiling slowly to the rocking step of camels along the great roads that lead from Tyre, Sidon and Damascus; camps of Arabs, who pursue their nomad life across the desert; shepherds driving their flocks along the slope of the mountains; Jews draped in wide showy tunics, their women veiled and carrying great amphoræ upon their heads, coming to draw water at the public fountains — everything reminds me that I am far away from Rome.

Vale, November 5th, Year of Rome 780, Magdala.

II

THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN

CAIUS OPPIUS TO TULLIUS

I HAVE just returned from a trip along the Jordan, as far as the Dead Sea, on the east side, crossing the mountains of Peræa. It is very much wilder than the left bank and infinitely more picturesque. The Dead Sea and that of Genezareth are like two great vessels filled to the top with the same liquid;

but how very different they are! The one is gracious, laughing, fragrant as the chalice of love, its sweet waters fertilizing and embellishing the shore; while the other is full of water bituminous and bitter as the cup of hatred and the anger of a god. Vainly the Jordan empties into it her overflowing urn; it is swallowed up as if in a whirlpool and rises no more. Its sacred, blessed wave that bears prosperity throughout all Galilee becomes a curse as it falls into the Dead Sea, spreading desolation and death upon its arid banks.

This sea is really a curious phenomenon, and I find it difficult to explain its origin without having recourse to the Jewish books, which tell how once, in a day of anger, nearly fifteen centuries ago, Jehovah opened this abyss to engulf five sinful cities.

I turn quickly from this desolate shore, and return with joy to the banks of my beautiful Lake of Galilee, following the left side of the Jordan.

From my window I can see a graceful bay hollowed out between two hills, like an amphora with its two arms, and when night comes, the little boats with their white sails lie upon it, and Venus, leaning from her celestial balcony, casts over its surface her brilliant radiance.

Our rural divinities, in whom these people do not believe, lavish here their favors and their riches with a generosity not shown to us who worship them,—worship them in unbelief. For while we offer them our adoration, are we convinced of their reality?

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my Lares; they are placed around a little altar on which I always keep the sacred fire burning. They are now the only ones in whom I still have faith. The flame rising from this hearth, which I contemplate in my evening dreams, still speaks to my soul. It is alive, shines, enlightens and rises over my house as if to show me that there is a better land beyond this earth on which we live.

Vesta! The great Vesta! She is the divinity I love best, because she is pure, because she is a virgin. Speak to me no more of Venus and of Apollo. Their statues adorn my house, but if they were not objects of art, by Jupiter! I would sell them, not to the Jews, who hold them in abhorrence, but to the Greek merchants.

On the two banks of the Jordan that I visited, all the people in every direction spoke to me of the new religion which the Prophet of Nazareth preaches to the Galileans. But the crowd is less impressed by His teachings than by the wonders He works wherever He passes. I am anxious to see Him, and above all, to hear Him, that I may know what religious doctrine He brings into the world.

Vale, November 10th, 780, Magdala

III

VENUS OR VESTA

CAIUS OPPIUS TO TULLIUS

ON my departure from Rome thou toldest me that I should doubtless meet some alluring Asiatic or bewitching Jewess who would know how to beautify my exile, and thou claimest to be the necessary depository of my confidences.

Well, my dear friend, if I write to thee now, it is less to assure thee of my friendship than to recount to thee the beginning of an adventure which may become a delicious idyl or a tragedy. Does Venus punish me for having despised her in the last letter which I wrote thee? Or does Vesta wish to reward me for having sung her praises? As yet I know nothing of all this, but am inclined to believe that it is not a priestess of Aphrodite but rather a vestal virgin whom I met two days ago.

I was coming on horseback from a trip into Tiberias, when I perceived in an avenue leading to an enchanting villa, a young woman or girl, accompanied by her attendant, climbing the hillock with hurried steps. I saw that she was fleeing with fright from a young man who ran after her and who was about to catch up with her. I flew to her aid and had only to draw my sword for the intruder to take his flight.

She thanked me with emotion, and I accompanied her to the door. She invited me to enter, but scarcely raised her eyes as she spoke. I declined the invita-

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tion and left, begging her to allow me to see her again, but she answered nothing, and when I returned to her house yesterday I was not received.

My dear friend, thou knowest me well. I am neither an enthusiast nor of an excitable disposition. Well, this woman has fascinated me, and (this may seem strange to you) without trying to do so; it even seemed to me that she hid the brilliancy of her eyes in order to appear like an ordinary woman. Thou wilt doubtless think that this was the height of cleverness, but I believe more in her sincerity and in her honesty than in the virtue of our vestals. She is the most beautiful Jewess I have met in the Orient. She is dark, with a lovely figure — straight and supple; her form is worthy of Venus. Her deep black eyes veil a sombre fire. They resemble the eyes of the mariners, who by virtue of contemplating the sea and the sky, have borrowed gleams from the depths and lightning from the storm. I would wager that her abundant hair, when she loosens it, falls to her feet.

Who is she? What is her history? Why does she live alone with her servants? As yet I do not know, but I will learn what it all means, and for the moment, I affirm that she is beautiful, distinguished, alluring and that she does not seem to know it nor care to have it told her. Good-bye.

December 12th, 780, Magdala.

IV

KING AGAINST PROPHET

CAIUS OPPIUS TO TULLIUS

JOHAN THE BAPTIST is the name of the Prophet of whom I spoke to thee in my first letter and who has just been imprisoned by order of the King of Galilee. His history merits the telling.

You know that Galilee and Peræa are governed under the protectorate of Rome in a more or less restrained measure by King Herod. He is one of the sons of Herod the Great, but he has inherited only the vices of his father. Married to the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia, he seduced and carried away Herodias, wife of his brother Philip, who was also his own niece, and he married her. The daughter of Aretas returned to her father, who swore hatred and vengeance on Herod and who watches for a favorable occasion to make war upon him.

Meanwhile, Herodias enjoys her new made royalty, and the two lovers give themselves over to every pleasure. They live in a palace remarkable for its beauty and ostentation, in the pretty town of Tiberias, named in honor of our Emperor. It is a city of recent date, of which Herod has made a cosmopolitan center, as well as a Roman town. It is admirably situated on the borders of the lake, not far from Magdala, and when I rode there, I found the baths, the porticoes, the theatres and the places of amusement of Rome, in miniature.

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The Galileans are greatly scandalized by the conduct of their king, but the terror which he inspires has imposed silence upon them, and this incestuous and adulterous couple were defying in peace the public conscience, when a powerful voice made itself heard and denounced the scandal. It was the voice of the Prophet John,—surnamed the Baptist because he baptized his disciples in the waters of the Jordan. Here, my dear friend, is an extraordinary type which would have made a sensation in the Roman Forum.

He is a man who is the personification of the desert in which he has lived for twenty years. For twenty years he has kept silence; and all at once he has become a voice, but a voice such as has never before been heard. Not only his mouth speaks, but his physiognomy, his attitude, his gesture, his life—everything speaks in him and everything is eloquent. After having been the personification of dumbness, he has become the incarnation of speech, and if anyone ask him whom he is, he answers,—“*Ego sum vox!*” He speaks as perhaps primitive man spoke, or, rather, he speaks the language of a mysterious world which we do not know and which must have been revealed to him in visions, during his solitary life.

This, then, is the man who has dared to rise up in the face of Herod Antipas. In the synagogues, on the banks of the Jordan, on the threshold even of Tiberias, wherever his preaching attracted the crowd, John flung the most terrible anathemas against the king and his scandalous life.

The soldiers of the palace arrested him and brought

him before Herod. But there, in the presence of the courtiers and of Herodias, trembling with indignation, he continued to make accusations. Instead of excusing himself, he said to the royal couple, "Your conduct is criminal!" The indignant queen wanted to have John immediately put to death, but the king did not wish it, and he had the prisoner led to the dungeon of his Castle of Machærus, at the foot of the mountains of Moab in Peræa.

I came back yesterday from a ride to the south of Tiberias, which is six miles from Magdala, and arrived at the gates of the city, just in time to meet the unfortunate prophet dragged along by the Galilean soldiers. His head and his feet were bare, and he wore a coarse garment made of the skin of wild goats, but his hair floated in the wind like a luminous aureole and his eyes raised to heaven, flashed fire. The soldiers whipped and abused him, but he appeared not to heed them. His eloquent mouth, which had lifted up the aspirations of a nation, was closed, perhaps forever.

And there, my dear Tullius, thou seest how the masters of the world choke the cry of honest consciences and courageous voices that dare proclaim the truth and uphold the right. Thou seest well that the world has need of regeneration, and that it is high time that He come, this Messiah whom the Jews expect.

Vale, December 20th, 780, Magdala.

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THE DIVINE TIBERIUS

TULLIUS TO CAIUS OPPIUS

I HAVE received thy two letters, dated from Magdala, and I envy thee thy lot. There was a time, when for nothing in the world would I have wished to live away from Rome, but to-day its atmosphere weighs me down, and I am disgusted with its false pleasures. Do not regret it, my dear friend. Religion, morals, institutions are in decadence. We no longer believe in the gods of Olympus, who were without doubt fabulous, but we replace them with others who are worth much less and who are, alas! realities!

The ancient divinities bored us perhaps less, because they were fabulous, but the gods of to-day are living, wicked beings. They make use of us; they rob us; they govern us with harshness; they spy upon our actions and tyrannize over us. Jupiter to-day is called Tiberius. He is at Capri, which he has made into an Elysium. There he enjoys an indescribable luxury and all the new pleasures which can be devised to satisfy and excite his weary appetites. Incense burns constantly before his cruel and grotesque divinity. He is fawned upon, flattered, and artists offer pictures of the new idol to the people for their adoration.

And during all this time we tremble under the despotic government of another god whom you know, "Sejanus." He has arrived at the pinnacle of power.

His statues fill the Forum and the Senate kisses his feet.

With diabolical skill, he continues to make ready for his ascension to the throne. He removes all who may prevent the accomplishment of his ends. Tiberius alone ignores him, but he will learn that Sejanus is the true instigator of the poisoning of his son Drusus, who was to have succeeded him. Agrippina, worthy widow of the unfortunate Germanicus, is threatened with exile along with her sons. This, you see, is what passes in the world of our new gods.

And simple mortals are not worth much. Celibates, such as I, no longer wish to marry. Those who are married, make a game of divorce. The women are more and more like her whom Cicero called "the woman of many husbands." (*"Mulier multarum nuptiarum."*)

The theatre and the games have but one object, which is the corruption of morals, and the circuses are all places of prostitution, where one does not meet only the women of the people. Virtue is dying, hope is dead; and to those who suffer, there is but one refuge,—suicide. Ah! thou art happy to be far from this home of pestilence. Thou canst acquire new strength in the admiration and study of nature in all its beauty. Thou hast strange and novel sights to see. Thou art elbow to elbow with a nation older than Rome, which has remained young, whether through faith or hope. Thou dost learn Hebrew, and thou readest the books of Mo-

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ses. How curious this must seem for a man versed as thou art in Greek and Latin letters.

Write to me often and keep me in touch with all that interests thee in the strange country which thou inhabitest. Farewell.

Rome, January 2d, 781.

VI

WHO IS SHE?

CAIUS OPPIUS TO TULLIUS

I HAVE once more seen my beautiful unknown. One of her servants opened the door and told me that her mistress had gone out. I was turning away, disconcerted, when I perceived her at the further end of a lane in her garden. Her back was turned to me as she walked slowly away, covered with an ample drapery of white silk striped with black threads. She sat down on a stone bench and began to read from a roll of papyrus which contained, as she afterwards told me, the prophecies of Daniel. As soon as she heard the sound of my footsteps, she arose and advanced to meet me. Her glance showed very plainly that I annoyed her. But I did not have to recall myself to her, nor remind her of the service I had been able to render. A little troubled by the look I fixed upon her, she recalled our chance encounter and began to talk, but hardly opened her big eyes.

The beautiful acacias which allow the rays of the sun to filter through their chiseled leaves, barely shaded our walk, and I proposed that we should sit under a vaulted arbor of little red and green leaves, but she answered that it would soon be time to go in, and she did not invite me to follow her.

Thou art doubtless curious to know what we could say to each other. Alas! nothing that could make me hope for the least success. She thanked me again for having delivered her from an intruder, and I answered her with entire sincerity that on my part, I thanked the gods who had given me this opportunity to know her. A moment of silence followed. Then after a long sigh, she said: "I do not believe in your gods, sir," and very cleverly she led me into a religious controversy. She believes in one God, Jehovah, and in one religion, which is that of Moses.

I feebly defended the gods of Rome, and to bring her to talk of love, I said to her: "Whether there be one God alone, or whether there be several, I do not know. It is to the achievements of divinity, no matter what be its name, that I address my homage, and when I find myself with a woman like yourself, I ask only to adore her."

"Do not profane that word," she said in a severe tone. "Adoration is only due to God."

And on that she turned toward the door and bowed to me with a gesture which plainly said: "Depart."

What then, can this strange woman be?

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January 4th, 781, Magdala.

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MYRIAM

CAIUS TO TULLIUS

MY beautiful Jewess is a mystery, and I have learned some of the most inexplicable things about her. She is called "Myriam," and comes from Bethany, where her family owns a palace. She had been married to a Jewish doctor, who was one of the heads of the synagogue of Magdala, and lived with him two years. But then the unfortunate girl was led astray by an officer of our garrison, whom you must have known at Rome. He is called Pandera, and I remember having met him at Cæsarea. Then the husband abandoned his wife; he denounced Pandera to the military authorities, who immediately changed him from his garrison, and poor Myriam consoled herself with other men. Her conduct was notorious, and she became the scandal of Magdala. Her husband died, and with the money of her marriage portion,—which was a considerable sum,—she lived here in luxury.

Then, not two months since, she dismissed all the courtiers who had flocked about her and radically changed her conduct. The last of her admirers was a rich young Greek merchant. It was he who was annoying her with his attentions and from whom I saved her, as I told you in my second letter. How to explain this change of conduct? It is here that the mystery begins.

The beautiful Myriam met the great Prophet, and the first look He cast upon her upset her completely. It was, they told me, a look accusing and penetrating, which fathomed the depths of her heart and which sounded there all its shame. She lowered her eyes before this look, which she could not endure, and she felt the blushes suffuse her forehead, so unused to blushing. When she once more raised her eyes, the piercing glance of the Prophet was still fixed upon her, and the crowd which had been watching, looked at her with scorn. She turned away, covered with confusion, and since then, she sees, even in her dreams, this terrifying look of the man of God. She is ashamed of her past conduct; she suffers a sorrow she has never before known. She weeps continually, in the hope that her future conduct will merit the Prophet's forgiveness.

This is all I have gathered on the subject of my beautiful Jewess. Naturally, it is all a mystery to me, and I ask myself what amount of truth and sincerity there is in all of this curious story. I was not simple enough to believe in it altogether, and I admire Myriam too much to renounce her easily. I wanted to see her again, and it has not been without difficulty, as her door is closed to all comers. Thanks to the complicity of her maid and under the pretext of important business, I was fortunate enough to secure another interview with her.

At first I pretended to be entirely ignorant of her history and expressed my admiration in terms as delicate and veiled as possible. I tried to paint for her

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the sincerity of my feelings, and implored the grace of a smile and a kind word from her who had conquered me by her look of virginal candor.

Her eyes were cast down as I spoke. When she raised them, I saw that they were full of deep sadness. A bitter smile rose to her lips and she said simply, "You do not understand to whom you speak. If you did you would not feel as you do, and you would speak in other words. If my looks have deceived you, I am really sorry, and I advise you to carry that love of which I am not worthy elsewhere, if it be pure, and if it be not it is unworthy of you. Any acquaintanceship between us is impossible and I beg you as a favor never to try to see me again."

She rose as if to give me my dismissal but I begged her to hear me further and I said,—

"Myriam, I know who you are and all your story, but let me admire you in spite of this and give me at least a little friendship."

"Ah, you know my history," she answered blushing; "and instead of frightening you away, this draws you to me? Well, Centurion, you lose what little esteem I might have had for you, and you are making another mistake. The woman to whom you offer your love is dead, and rest assured that she will never live again. If care for your own dignity does not show you in my past an obstacle between us, it remains for me to tell you that an inexplicable love, one that you could not understand, separates me forever from all other loves. He is an extraordinary Being, one whom I hardly know, to whom I have given

my entire soul. Is He a man? Is He a God? I do not know. He has never addressed one word to me. I have never even touched the hem of His garment. In spite of that, my heart is all filled with the love which He inspires in me, and all my life belongs to Him. One look of His has worked this miracle in me, and I swear to you that Myriam will never again love any other mortal."

Upon that she rose with majesty and austerity; she turned away from me and retired into her house, while the servant came to open the outside door for me. My dear Tullius, thou art going to make fun of me, and perhaps thou wilt do so with reason, but I vow that my adventure is not an ordinary one and that it is worth the telling. If there is to be any more of it, I will let thee know.

January 12th, 781, Magdala.

VIII

THE PROPHET'S DISCIPLES

CAIUS TO TULLIUS

ALL that they tell me on the subject of the Prophet becomes more and more extraordinary. The people believe that He will re-establish the kingdom of Israel and consequently put an end to the domination of Rome over this country. If he wished it, he could create a formidable rebellion. Yesterday, I took my way into Capharnaum to inform myself on the subject of this candidate to roy-

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alty whom the crowd has already wished to proclaim king in the mountains of Peræa.

To begin with, I was shown those men called his disciples. Five or six of them were mending their nets on the banks of the lake, sitting on the upturned fishing boats drawn up on the sand. I approached them and induced them to speak. They are simple fishermen, poorly dressed and, for the most part without education. Several of them had been disciples of John the Baptist and were baptized by him in the Jordan. I interrogated them, and I assure thee that it is not difficult to make them speak of what they know, as they answered all my questions with an astonishing simplicity and frankness. They are evidently people who have nothing to hide. But the mystery which surrounds their Master is no more revealed to their eyes than to those of the multitude.

I wished at first to find out how they had become the disciples of the Prophet and why they had abandoned John.

"It is because John was only a precursor," answered one of them. "He was a great prophet, and at first it was our joy to go and hear him when he preached at Bethabara. He taught things beautiful and uplifting, but he warned us at the same time that one was to come after him who was far greater than he. And when we asked him if he himself were the expected Messiah, he answered, 'No.' Then again one day when we were with him at Bethabara, this man here and I—" Here I interrupted him to learn their names.

"This is Andrew," he said, "and I am John."

"One day, then, when we were with our master, John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth passed by us, and John stretching out his hand to Him, his face transfigured by emotion and ecstasy, said to us: 'Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.' And he prostrated himself before Him. We did likewise and when we rose up again, our own master, without speaking, so great and so deep was his emotion, showed us again Jesus of Nazareth, who was passing along by the borders of the Jordan. His gesture signified that it was He Whom we should follow hereafter, and so we separated ourselves from John the Baptist, not without grief. A feeling hitherto unknown, overcame us, and we felt a presentiment that a new epoch had opened in our lives, an intimate and mysterious call had come to us which we must obey. So we followed Jesus of Nazareth from afar off, not daring to join Him nor to speak to Him, but He turned and said to us: 'Whom do you seek?' 'We seek the Messiah, and we were drawn to John because we thought it was he. But he has just made us understand that it is You who are the Messiah. Tell us, Master, where do you live?' 'Come and see,' he said to us, and we followed him."

"Had he a dwelling?" I asked them.

"He lived in Capernaum, but that night we slept on the banks of the Jordan under a leafy tent made of the branches of palm trees planted in the ground and tied together at the top in such a way as to form a

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vaulted arch, for there is no inn on the east side of the Jordan. The next morning we followed Him again to this place, and we have never left Him."

"And the other disciples?" I asked.

"He met them here, as if by chance on the shore of the lake, and He said to each one, 'Follow me,' and they followed Him."

"Where does He live to-day?"

"Here, near by, in that house made of bricks baked by the sun. There is a ground floor overhung by a terrace and one large room inhabited by the Master. He reaches it by that stone staircase which we can see from here, joined to the exterior wall of the house."

"He does not live alone?"

"No; His mother who is a widow, His aunt, also a widow, and His brothers live with Him."

"What brothers?"

"The children of his aunt and of his deceased uncle."

"Who was this uncle?"

"He was an artisan, named Cleophas."

"And His father — who is he?"

"He was a carpenter. He died at Nazareth where the family lived for thirty years."

"Why did they abandon Nazareth?"

"Because the Nazareans became angry with the Prophet and wanted to kill Him when He announced to them that He was the Messiah."

"And you — do you believe that He is the Messiah?"

"We believe it."

"Does it not seem extraordinary to you that the son of a carpenter should be the Messiah?"

"Yes, but He tells us that His real father is God."

"How can that be?"

"We do not know."

"And you believe what you do not understand?"

"Yes, you must understand in order to know, but not in order to believe. There are in the universe, millions of things in which you believe but which you could not explain to us. The real object of faith is shrouded in mystery. The Jewish nation has believed in Jehovah for many centuries without understanding Him; why then should we not believe in His Son without understanding Him? If you knew our Master, Centurion, you, too, would believe. His speech is not like that of any other man, and his works manifest a superhuman power."

At this moment, I saw a woman coming out of the Prophet's house. She was beautiful and appeared to be about forty-five years old. She was going to draw water at the public fountain, for an amphora upheld by her right hand was resting on her shoulder.

"Who is that woman?" I asked him who is called John. But he had gone to offer his services to the Galilean, and it was Andrew who answered me. "It is the Prophet's mother."

My dear Tullius, I can not explain why it was, but I was deeply moved by the sight of this humble widow of an artisan. I said to myself: "I wish only to see her; she is not like any other woman."

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When John returned to us, I reopened the conversation while the disciples still mended their nets.

"And your Master, what does He do in this little village that seems to be the center of His operations?"

"Oh! His operations," answered John smilingly, "have none of the character of yours. There is nothing military about them."

"Of what character are they then?"

"He calls himself a shepherd, and He announces that it is to the lost sheep of Israel that He has been sent. This is really the mission which He has filled ever since we have followed Him, and in His flock, that grows larger every day, there are two faithful sheep who were once entirely lost. Both of them were known throughout the breadth of Palestine. One was called Photina, the Samaritan woman, and the other, Myriam of Magdala."

"I have known of Myriam of Magdala," I answered, "and I am very curious to hear the history of Photina, the Samaritan. You must tell me about it some day. But now it is your Master above all in whom I am interested. Does He really wish to re-establish the kingdom of Israel and have Himself declared its king?"

John hesitated for a moment, then he said with a candor and frankness that I admired: "We are His disciples, we would like it well but are sorry to say that nothing seems further from His projects. For He disappeared the other day when a crowd wished to proclaim Him king, and He often says to us that His kingdom is not of this world."

"I have heard about this speech of His, but what does it signify? If He be not king of this world, of what world is He king?"

"Of the world of souls."

"And how will He call all these souls to Himself?"

"By His word."

"Is that all?"

"By His miracles."

"And if His speech and His miracles do not suffice?"

"By His blood."

"What do you say? Does He wish to die?"

"He says so."

"But death is the end of all."

"He says it is the beginning."

"But when He is dead, everyone will forget about Him?"

"He tells us that on the contrary, He will draw all things to Himself!"

"It is very strange."

"Yes."

"It is unbelievable."

"Yes."

"It is contrary to the experience of centuries."

"Yes."

"Therefore you do not believe."

"We do believe, but without understanding."

"And when He shall be dead, what will become of you? And what will you do?"

"We do not know, but we believe that He will tell us before dying what we should do, and we will do it."

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"It is beautiful devotion; what do you expect in return?"

"A place in His kingdom."

"In the kingdom which is not of this world?"

"Yes."

"All this seems extraordinary," I said to him, "and I am astonished that you do not seek to assure yourselves of something more positive, more tangible."

"My mother speaks as you do and wished to learn of the Prophet Himself what He has in store for her sons, James and me."

"Well, what did he answer?"

"That she did not know what she asked of Him and that we should have to drink of the same chalice as He; that is to say, to suffer and to die like Him."

"And in spite of that you persist in following Him?"

"Yes."

"But he does not expect to meet such disinterestedness throughout the whole world?"

"No; the other day, a Scribe, very clever and ambitious, who had thought to assure himself of a great future by associating with our Master, came to him and said, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus looked him in the face and answered, 'The foxes have their holes and the birds have their nests, but the Son of man has no place to rest His head.' The Scribe understood and turned away. Another came to him, and said: 'I wish to follow you, but give me time to settle the affairs of my house.' Jesus answered: 'Whoever places his hand to the plough and

looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God.' And the Scribe went away."

"Then your Master exacts that his disciples abandon everything and immediately, in order to follow Him?"

"Yes."

"But how do you live?"

"We live by our fishing, on the property which some of us have, and which has been put into the community, and on gifts which are made to the Master."

"Have you a treasurer or trustee or administrator of the common purse?"

"Yes, here he comes now, he has just bought provisions for to-morrow." And he made known the new comer, under the name of "Judas of Kerioth." He is of a very pronounced Jewish type, seemingly intelligent, but with treacherous eyes. I should be much astonished if this one had not self-interested views in following the Prophet.

At this moment four of the disciples came to put a boat out to sea, and John left me, going to join them. I watched them rowing for a long time and came back slowly to Magdala, loitering along the shore. I cannot understand what role the Prophet has assigned to these poor fishermen, but it is perfectly evident that they are not conspirators and that they do not dream of means by which to shake off the yoke of Rome.

March 10th, 781, Magdala.

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IX

JESUS OF NAZARETH

CAIUS TO TULLIUS

AT last, my dear Tullius, I have seen the Prophet, I have heard Him preach and have had the chance of admiring His eloquence and His beauty. I will try to give an idea of His manner of speech and to draw His portrait for thee.

Several days ago, at the head of my legionaries, I was making my way in the direction of Cana, behind Capharnaum, when on the mountain-side I found a great crowd of men and women gathered together, seated on the grass in a most religious silence. On a slight elevation I saw the Prophet, dressed all in white, standing majestic and solemn, as Moses must have stood on the heights of Sinai. I saw that He often raised His arms to Heaven and gathered that He was speaking to this meditative crowd. I approached closer to listen to Him and mingled with the auditors without attracting their attention, so much were they absorbed by the words of the Prophet.

Well, dost thou know what He said to them? I took note of several things which struck me most forcibly. Listen,—

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall possess the earth.

"Blessed are those who weep, for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.

"Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

What strange words are these? And, above all, what new ideas! This quite reverses all the teaching of human wisdom. It is a contradiction of all our opinions and of all our feeling. The happy, according to us, are the rich, not the poor; those who amuse themselves, not those who weep; those to whom one renders justice and not those who are persecuted for it. Those who possess the earth, according to our ideas, are not the gentle, but the violent who carry it away. Blessed are those who can do justice to themselves, who taste the sweetness of revenge, and not those who do mercy! Blessed, not the pure, but those who can give themselves over to all the pleasures of love and voluptuousness! There you have real human wisdom such as has been taught and practised by all the great philosophers of Greece and Rome.

From whence, then, has the Prophet of Nazareth drawn this contrary wisdom? And how is it that I, a Roman, have tasted in His words an inexplicable sweetness? Our decadent generation is not accus-

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tomed to this language; it is so different from that of our orators and our poets.

And what is this kingdom of the Heavens in which all happiness belongs to those whom we look upon as being the really unhappy ones? Where is this ideal place where at last the great law of compensation will hold sway, where those who weep will be comforted; those who search in vain for justice shall be satisfied; those who dream of a pure love shall be overwhelmed with joy?

He Himself knows it, no doubt. But it seems evident to me that this kingdom is neither that of Israel nor of any other nation in this world.

He preaches a new religion and a social and pacific revolution which at the same time shall be radical and universal. It is not only the Jewish people whom He wishes to regenerate; it is the whole of humanity. His work will not be national, but humanitarian. He leaves crowns and sceptres to those who have ambition for them, but for Himself He dreams of another ideal: He wishes to spread light in the intelligence, faith in the soul and love in the heart.

This, if I be not mistaken, is the sublime dream of this extraordinary Man, whose doctrine eclipses that of Plato and whose eloquence relegates Cicero to the shade.

Is this to be realized? In my humble opinion, if Jesus be but a man, it is absolutely impossible! And how can He be anything else?

All that I have said here is very weak compared with the discourse that I heard.

And then, too, one must see Him. He is a tall man, of great virile beauty, of that beauty which is made of great nobility, distinction, of intelligence and strength. His disciples say that His very regular features closely resemble those of his mother. He is dark, as she is, with the coloring and shading of ripe wheat. His forehead is framed in an abundance of chestnut hair, its color is like the red wine of the South impregnated by the sun, parted in the middle it falls in great waves to His shoulders. His short pointed beard is of the same shade and forms with His hair, an oval frame which blends with the beauty of His countenance. But His most remarkable and most characteristic features are His eyes. Of a very dark blue, they have the depth, the brilliancy and the smouldering fire of a phosphorescent wave. It is difficult to endure their penetrating gaze. It is like an arrow of light piercing the heart and leaving it open and naked to view. In His hours of holy anger, these eyes are terrible. This in part explains why the great number of vendors in the temple, who were not in the least timid, fled before Him without offering the slightest resistance. It was not the whip that frightened them; they could have turned on Him with blows. It was His terrible gaze which threw their ranks into a veritable panic.

But when He is in the presence of the repentant sinner, the unhappy, or the suffering, His eyes, by a marvelous contrast, are of a gentleness and sweetness so great that they enslave one's heart. Rays of grace

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and mercy spring forth and spread about Him a charm which draws all unto Him.

The tone of His voice is sympathetic, His gestures are natural and dignified, and His attitude always noble. He is simply dressed. He wears a long tunic of white wool and over that a brown coat with wide sleeves from which He sometimes slips His arms to cross them on His breast. His head is covered with a "Soudar" or Arabian "koufieh," which is simply a silken handkerchief caught by a woolen cord at the top of His head and arranged in such a way that the folds, falling on His neck, protect Him against the heat of the sun. Leather sandals, fastened to His feet by linen strands, guard them from thorns and stones in the road. Thou seest, my dear Tullius, that I overlook nothing in order that thou mayest know the Prophet of Galilee.

Everything about Him is remarkable. And if He does not leave a name that shall be glorious in history, it is that humanity is unworthy of Him.

Here in Galilee it is believed that at last the prophecy of Isaias is being accomplished: "The people who were seated in darkness have seen a great light. The day has risen on those who live in the shadow of death." Indeed, it is all true, and the word of Jesus of Nazareth is the great light, humanity's glorious day!

Vale, May 1st, 781, Magdala.

X

MYRIAM AGAIN

CAIUS OPIIUS TO TULLIUS

MY love idyl has come to its end, and the climax, which leaves a wound in my heart, will seem to thee perhaps less enigmatical after the story which remains for me to tell thee about Myriam.

There lives here, in the first rank of Jewish society, a rich Pharisee named Simon. Well, several days ago Jesus of Nazareth came to Magdala. Simon, who had met and heard Him in the synagogue, gave Him a banquet, and, as commander of the garrison, I was invited. I was there when the Prophet entered and was received by Simon with the cold politeness and pride that distinguishes the Pharisees. According to the customs of the country, when an important person receives an illustrious guest under his roof, the servants gather about him to wash his feet and pour perfume on his beard and on his hair.

Simon did not observe this ceremony with Jesus. Whilst he showed himself His friend, he maintained the haughtiness of the Pharisee and did not recognize the superiority of his guest. The Prophet appeared not to perceive it. He was gentle, condescending, amiable, kindly towards all, and He took the place at table to which Simon assigned Him. Several of the disciples were with Him. The dinner scarcely had begun, when I saw a woman enter the room. She was dressed in black and heavily veiled. Her height, her

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walk, her attitude immediately reminded me of Myriam, and when she prostrated herself at the feet of Jesus and raised her veil to open a vase of precious ointment to pour on the feet of the Prophet, I recognized her; it was indeed she.

Thou knowest that the Orientals eat, as do the Romans, reclining on the left side around the table, their feet outside of it. Myriam had knelt upon the floor, bending over the feet of the Prophet, and she bathed them with her tears. Then she anointed them with a perfume of great price whose odor spread like balsam throughout the room, and uncoiling her beautiful hair, she wiped them with it. The Prophet appeared not to notice her, but we were all in a state of stupefaction, and our host, above all, was scandalized.

If Jesus of Nazareth were really a Prophet, we thought, He would know this woman to be a sinner whose life was a scandal, and He would repel her with scorn. Simon without doubt would have intervened and put an end to this incident, which shocked the Pharisaical proprieties, but Jesus prevented it.

"Simon, I have something to tell thee. A creditor had two debtors. One owed him five hundred talents and the other fifty. As they had not wherewith to pay their debts, he forgave them both. Which loved him the most?"

"The one to whom he forgave the most, I suppose," answered Simon.

"Thou hast judged well," answered Jesus, and turning to Myriam who continued weepingly to offer Him her service, without appearing to have heard what He

said, He continued, "Seest thou this woman? I entered thy house, thou gavest me no water to wash my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and has wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss of peace; since she came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. Thou didst not pour perfume on my head but she has poured it on my feet. This is why I say to thee, 'Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much, but to him who loves less, less shall be forgiven.'"

Then addressing himself to Myriam He said to her: "Woman, your sins are forgiven."

She arose, coiled her hair anew and threw upon Jesus a look full of confusion and of suffering. He added in a tone of infinite sweetness, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace." Myriam glided furtively through the crowd and disappeared. Simon had lowered his head in deep thought. From being the accuser, he had become the accused, and, while revolting against the lesson he had just received, he was forced to acknowledge to himself that it was all deserved.

Myriam was doubtless a sinner. But was he also not a sinner? Was there not a great deal to be forgiven him? . . . Yes, certainly there was, as Jesus had just taught him, because he had not loved much.

The other guests, of whom several were Pharisees, remained astonished and scandalized. "God only," they murmured among themselves, "can forgive sins. How can this man do so?"

The meal ended almost in silence. Only the soft

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and persuasive voice of Jesus could be heard. He declared that He had come for sinners and not for the just. He sounded the panegyric of His mercy, and added, "Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. You will be judged as you have judged others."

On leaving the hall He cast upon me a penetrating glance which made the blood mount to my forehead, and I said to myself as I watched Him, "If there be a man on earth who can forgive sins and give peace to the heart, it is He."

But now, my dear Tullius, we have an unexpected development. Myriam has sold her superb villa, her rich furniture, everything she has; she has charged Simon and several citizens of Magdala to distribute the price of them among the poor, and she has gone to live with her brother Lazarus at Bethany, near Jerusalem. All that remains for me is to forget this strange and fascinating woman. As thou seest, I live in a country and at a time full of marvels.

June 1st, 781, Magdala.

XI

CLOACA MAXIMA

TULLIUS TO CAIUS

THY letters excite me, and thy unhappy love is the most delicious of romances. And dost thou really suffer? I suppose so, but in any case, I should like to suffer in the same way. I can understand how

sad a thing it must be to have met an ideal — and not be able to attain it; but at least this ideal has been seen and loved and one can love it still more ideally! This is thy case. But mine is infinitely sadder, for the real pain is never to have known an ideal and no longer even to believe in one.

Ah, my dear friend, what a difference between Rome and the country where thou art stationed. Here it is that we need prophets and Myriams; but one would seek in vain for them in the Via Sacra, or the Forum, or on the banks of the Tiber. Those who pass through the triumphal way and who go up to the Capitol are not prophets. It is not God of whom they speak from the Tribune in their great orations. And the women who lounge around the baths would have no desire to imitate Myriam in her new manner of life.

Yes, thou livest in a country full of wonders; but we too have ours, though they are of a very different nature. Tiberius has relegated his mother, Olivia, to a species of exile where she is entirely abandoned and in this way her son, for whose success she has committed so many crimes, has become her executioner.

I have told thee about the dreams and ambitions of Sejanus. Well, my dear Caius, this powerful minister, this tyrannical dictator, has found a strength greater than his own in that of the divine Tiberius, and they say Sejanus' days are numbered.

From his enchanted isle of Capri, the perfidious Emperor would have but to send secret instructions to the Senate to rid himself of him. The Senate will

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answer "Amen." The people who yesterday applauded the all-powerful minister, to-morrow will dedicate him to the "Gemoniæ" and will throw him into the Tiber!

Thou chantest for me an idyl, and I recount tragedy to thee. Magdala is not a civilized city like Rome.

Happy those who can tear themselves away from our City, so fair and formerly glorious, which to-day resembles nothing so much as the "Cloaca Maxima."

June 4th, 781, Rome.

XII

THREE PASTORALS

CAIUS TO TULLIUS

IN the history of the Jewish people, which I study with lively interest, the patriarchal epoch holds a particular charm for me. In this country, at once picturesque and fertile, this pastoral life, which was also that of the patriarchs, must have been both poetic and attractive.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob were but little shepherd kings who lived on the products of the earth, who cared for great flocks and formed colonies and raised numerous families. Jehovah, their God, visited them and spoke to them and, full of faith in His promises, they were convinced that they should become the fathers of a great people. The homage which they rendered this God was of a character primitive enough. It consisted in the erection of altars to His

honor. These altars were made of rocks found along their roads, and sacrifices were then offered Him.

It was He who showed them the country which they should inhabit, and when they had reached it, they raised their tents, erected an altar and dug a deep well which would serve to give drink to them as well as to their flocks. The domestic hearth, which was to become a national hearth, was never really founded save by the erecting of an altar and the digging of a well. The one was an act of consecration of the soil, and the other was an act of taking possession.

These wells were indispensable during the summer, because the country, sufficiently irrigated in the spring-time, became arid during the following season. They were also given appropriate names in order to testify to their importance. In this way Isaac dug several of them for his immense flocks. The one which marked his own estate and his residence is called, "The Well of the Living and of the Prophet." In other places in different localities, he dug others. To one he gave the name of "Calumny," because the shepherds of Gerasa claimed it as their own. A second one, the ownership of which was also contested, he called "Enmity."

At last he went a little distance off and dug a third one which he named "Extensiveness," because no one any longer disputed his right to the vast extent of land of which he had taken possession. A fourth well received the name of "Abundance."

The importance of these wells in Oriental countries explains why they so often mark, in patriarchal his-

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tory, meeting places, whether for the conclusion of treaties of alliance or for the exchanging of the simple vows of love. Nothing is more poetic in touching simplicity than the pastorals which recount the Marriages of Isaac and Jacob, inevitably enacted near a well. And note, my dear Tullius, that this is not fiction, but history and that this history is more than two thousand years old, twelve centuries before the foundation of Rome!

Listen for a while to this narration that I will give as briefly as possible. Abraham grew old and wished to make a marriage for his son Isaac; but he did not want him to take his wife from among the daughters of the Canaanites. He therefore sent his steward into Mesopotamia, his native country, to seek a wife for his son. It was evening when he arrived in the native land of the father of believers; and the steward stopped near a well, at the hour when the women came out to draw water, and he prayed, "Lord God of Abraham, grant that the young woman whom I shall ask to give me to drink and who will lower her pitcher to me will be the one whom you destine for your servant Isaac."

And behold! A very fair and beautiful young girl advanced towards the well and filled her vessel. The messenger of Abraham asked her to give him drink, and carefully lifting her pitcher down to him, she answered, "Drink." And while she also gave drink to his camels, he watched her in silence. When the camels had drunk, he asked what was her father's name and learned that she was Rebecca, daughter of Bathuel

and grand niece of Abraham. Then the steward presented her with a ring and golden bracelets. He received kindly hospitality at the house of Bathuel and that of Laban, Rebecca's brother; the marriage was arranged and the next day the beautiful Rebecca with her attendants, mounted upon camels, took their way with the steward into the land of Canaan.

One evening, after several days of travel, she perceived a man watching the approach of the camels to the well of "The Living and of the Prophet," and the steward said to her, "It is my master." Then she jumped down from her camel and covered her face with her veil. Isaac led the veiled virgin to the tent of his mother, and the sacred writer added as he finished: "He took her to wife, and he loved her."

Thirty years later, it was the son of Rebecca, Jacob, who went in his turn into Mesopotamia to choose his wife, in order that the divine blessings which had fallen upon his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac might be realized and that he should become the father of a multitude of peoples.

When the sun had set and night spread over the earth, he stopped, took a stone on which to rest his head and lay down upon the ground under the serene, immovable stars. A wonderful dream came to him during his sleep; he saw a bright ladder whose foot touched the earth and whose head was lost in the skies, and on its rounds were numberless angels ascending and descending. And Jehovah, who was at the top, spoke to him and renewed the promises which he had made to his father.

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On awakening, he called this spot, "Bethel," which signifies "place inhabited by God;" he transformed the stone that had served him for a pillow into an altar, poured oil upon it and prayed God to give him the bread of which he had need. Then he continued his journey, and when he had reached the country of his ancestors, noticed a well, around which flocks of sheep were lying. Speaking to the shepherds of these flocks, he asked if they knew Laban, son of Nachor and grandson of Abraham.

"We know him," they answered, "and here is Rachael, his daughter, coming with her sheep."

Jacob ran to meet her and told her that he was the son of Rebecca, sister of Laban, that she was his cousin, and weeping with emotion, he embraced her. We can easily understand the cause of this emotion. It was that this meeting reminded him of the idyl of his mother, Rebecca, near the same well nearly thirty years before, and now it was Rachael, the daughter of Laban, whom Jehovah sent to meet Rebecca's son, inspiring him with the belief that it was she whom He destined for his spouse.

Thinkest thou not, my dear Tullius, that these pastorals are superior to those of our Virgil? But it is not only because they are pretty that I care to tell thee these stories. It is because I am now living in the second home of Abraham, this beautiful country of Samaria, where he came to pitch his tent under the shadow of the great oaks of Moreh, and because I have visited the celebrated wells that Jacob had dug there. But only a few months ago, this well was the

scene of another pastoral about which I also wish to tell thee. It is still more beautiful and more ideal than these preceding ones, by reason of the superiority of its principal personage, who is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. I myself was not a witness of it, but I had the story from a disciple of Jesus of whom I have already spoken, who is called John. I write thee from Shechem itself, capital of this country. All those whom I have met here and have interrogated have confirmed the story that John, son of Zebedee, told me in Capharnaum several weeks ago. It is really on account of the impression left upon me by the recital that I wished to see with my own eyes Jacob's famous well, which is so near the city. This is what John told me. I will use his own words:

"We were returning from Jerusalem with our Master and were crossing Samaria, in order to reach Galilee. At midday we had arrived near Shechem, at the well of Jacob; it was very warm, and we were hungry. The other disciples had gone into the city to buy provisions. My Master was seated on the edge of the well. . . ." After this beginning John hesitated, as if there were in his story something which was not for a pagan's ears, but I insisted on knowing everything, so he continued:

"Know, then, that Jesus of Nazareth, is a descendant of Jacob, and that the wells of his ancestors brought to Him historical memories which are dear to all Jews, but which to Him must be dearer still. Know, also, that the mission of His great ancestor in Mesopotamia was but a figure of His own mission

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upon this earth; because He says of Himself that He is sent by His Celestial Father among men, to seek a spouse, but a mystical spouse, with whom a supernatural bond will form the only union. Turning his eyes towards Shechem, Jesus seemed to expect her who was to come and who should be the image, or figure of his mystical spouse. And behold a woman advances as did Rachael of old, to draw water. But this time it was not a pure and innocent virgin, worthy of the chaste spouse who awaited her coming, but a lost woman who lived in public shame. Notwithstanding this, when she approached the well, Jesus cast upon her a penetrating look and said: 'Give me to drink.' She answered in astonishment, 'How it is that you, who are Jew, ask of me, who am a Samaritan woman, to give you to drink? The Jews hold no intercourse with the Samaritans.'

"Without answering this observation, Jesus sighed deeply and raised his eyes to Heaven. Then again He fixed them upon those of the Samaritan woman and said to her: 'Hadst thou but known the gift of God! Didst thou but know Who it is that says to thee, "Give me to drink," thou wouldst perhaps have asked of Him the same question, and He would give thee living water.' 'But, Lord,' said the woman, 'you have no vessel in which to draw water, and the well is deep. From whence then could you give me living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well?' 'Whosoever drinks of this water,' answered Jesus, 'will thirst again, but he who drinks of the water which I will give him will never

thirst. Because the water which I will give him,' added He, raising His right hand toward the heights, 'will become in him a living source springing up into life eternal.' Did the Samaritan understand what was this living water which the Prophet offered her? Obviously not. Did she see in these words any vague glimmer of the truth? Perhaps so. In any case, the poor sinner made an act of blind faith, and in this faith lies salvation. 'Lord,' she implored, 'give me this water so that I may no longer thirst, nor come here again to draw water from the well.' 'Go,' answered Jesus, 'call thy husband and return to this place.' The woman blushed and answered frankly: 'I have no husband.' 'Thou sayest truth. Thou hast had five, and he with whom thou livest now is not thy husband.' 'Lord,' cried the unhappy woman, 'I see thou art a prophet.' And immediately she endeavored to question Him on the foundation of the Samaritan faith, and on the great religious controversy which divided these co-religionists among the Jews, in order the better to understand the truth for which she had an instinctive thirst. 'Our fathers adored upon this mountain,' (she pointed toward the Gerizim) 'and you say that we must adore in Jerusalem. Whom should one believe?' This desire for the gift of God which she spontaneously manifested rejoiced the heart of Jesus, and He answered, as if He were in the temple, in the presence of a crowd eager to hear Him, 'Woman, believe me; the hour approaches when it will be no longer on this mountain nor in Jerusalem that you will adore

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the Father. You adore One whom you know not. But we adore Whom we know, for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour arrives and has already come, when the true adorers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and these are the adorers whom the Father wishes. God is a spirit, and those who worship Him should worship Him in spirit and in truth.' The Samaritan opened her eyes and ears, making all possible effort to understand these transcendent words. She supposed that they meant: 'The names Gerizim and Jerusalem, are of very little importance; adoration is not a physical act but a spiritual one. Thou hast only known the adoration of the flesh, but it is in the Spirit that one must adore.' She felt that a superior Being was before her, and a vague presentiment warned her that it might be the long-promised Messiah. Was not the real 'gift of God' to the earth to be the Messiah? 'Could it be He,' she wondered, and then said to Him: 'I know that the Messiah, whom they call Christ, will come. When He comes, He will teach us all things.' Before this simple faith and generous aspiration toward Him, Jesus opened His heart, and in a spontaneous outburst, said to her: 'I am the Messiah; I, Who speak to thee.' The Samaritan listened no more; she knew all that was necessary to know. She understood now the gift of God, and leaving her empty pitcher without longer thinking of the material water she had come to draw to quench her thirst, took her way into the city, and breathless she cried to all whom she met: 'Come, come, come,

and see a Man who has told me all that I have done. Might it not be Christ?' At the cry of this woman, coming so truly from her soul, the Samaritans, firmly believing in an expected Messiah, ran to the well of Jacob at her call, in spite of the scorn they felt for her. When Jesus saw them coming across the fields, dressed in their white tunics, He said to us: 'Lift up your eyes and see the country-side ripening for the harvest. In a few months the harvest will be ready for the gleaners.' We spent two days at Shechem, and a great number of the inhabitants believed, after having heard our Master, that He was in truth the promised Messiah."

"But what was the mystical marriage of which you spoke and which your Prophet wished to contract?" I asked John.

He explained it all to me: "Jesus of Nazareth is the son of God, and He is sent by His Father to found upon the earth a society which will embrace all nations and which will be His mystical spouse. He calls it His church. Posterity, issue of this marriage, will be innumerable, and will form a new people of God. Humanity entire is invited to become part of it. The well of Jacob, near which the Son of God will go to await it, and which serves as a drinking place for the flocks, but whose water is not living, is the fountain of human weaknesses and of the empty joys of earth. This water cannot appease the thirst for happiness which torments the world. It is the impure spring where the world comes every day to drink, in the vain hope that its passions will be

satiated; is a sinner the Son of God, a mysterious with it."

"All strange,"

"Yes, the Master"

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satiated; because, like the Samaritan woman, humanity is a sinner and no longer knows the gift of God. But the Son of God brings it, in his own person, to the mysterious nuptials which He wishes to celebrate with it."

"All this appears to me to be very beautiful, but strange," I said to John.

"Yes, perhaps so," he answered, "but the word of the Master enlightens everything."

I ask myself, my dear Tullius, if thou wilt enjoy this story told me by my friend John. My idyl of Myriam pleased thee, but there is an abyss between it and that of Photina, the Samaritan. Both, however, prove that Jesus of Nazareth seeks only to purify woman, whilst men seek but to vilify her.

June 8th, 781, Shechem.

XIII

PEASANT AND PHILOSOPHER

TULLIUS TO CAIUS

"O rus, quando te aspiciam."

FOR a long time I have breathed this sigh with our poet Horace. My dream at last is realized. I am become a peasant of Tibur. Roman society no longer held its charm for me, and, to crown my disgust, several of our friends became disciples of Isis. Canst thou understand this aberration, which borrows from dead Egypt a divinity that has never existed and is even more fabulous than our gods of

Olympus? So I have left Rome and have taken Horace's ancient villa given him by his generous friend Mæcenas, eight miles from Tibur, in the Sabine Mountains. Here I will spend the summer and perhaps the winter. Naturally, I have set myself the task of re-reading the Odes and Epodes of the poet, and I say with him, "*Beatus ille qui procul negotiis.*" I find in many passages the description of my new domain. The poet did not over-rate it, but I have greatly embellished it. Horace appreciated a pretty spring forming a stream, near which he loved to sleep, lying in the grass. By turning this stream aside, I have given myself the luxury of a pond sufficiently large for the establishment of small fisheries. I have added to the house as well as to the green and acacia bordered lawns.

I have woods and fields and am surrounded by mountains, which protect me so well against the north wind that I have forgiven them for limiting my horizon.

Love for the country is a distinguished taste, and it is to give themselves this appearance of distinction that many imbeciles bury themselves every year in a place which bores them. But I assure thee I really love this isolation and the repose it gives me. I have acquired this taste, perhaps, through Virgil and Lucretius, whom I have read a great deal and who, in my opinion, had a better understanding of rural joys than Horace. I read them here with a new charm, but the reading of the Georgics has convinced me that I am neither a true horticulturist nor a real

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shepherd. Virgil was an artist in the cultivation of fields and woods and in the breeding of his flocks. I am hardly even an amateur, and my little flock serves but to decorate the landscape.

The Georgics have little power to move me, in spite of the beauty of their verses, and in my present state of mind I rather prefer Cicero. His philosophical and religious works enchant me. A deep thinker, scholar and writer, he is in reality our greatest intellectual light. Nevertheless, all that thou writest me about the Messiah interests me more than anything else, and dost thou know what book gives me at present the greatest delight? It is none other than the Book of Wisdom. I found a Greek copy of it the other day in the Ghetto, and it seems to me that it contains more philosophy than the greatest works of the Greek Sages. These are some of the verses giving depth to my reflection:—

“For God made not death, neither had He pleasure in the destruction of the living, for He created all things that they might be;

And He made the nations of the earth for health:
And there is no poison of destruction in them,
Nor kingdom of hell upon earth:
For justice is perpetual and immortal,
But the wicked hath works and words have called it to them;
and esteeming it a friend,
Have fallen away, and have made a covenant into it: because
they are worthy to be of the part thereof.

“For God created man incorruptible.
But the souls of the just are in the hand of God,
And the torment of death shall not touch them.
In the sight of the unwise, they seemed to die

And their departure was taken for misery,
 And their going away from us for utter destruction; but they
 are in peace.

Afflicted in few things, in many they shall be well rewarded,
 because God had tried them and found them worthy of
 Himself."

While meditating upon these verses, clearer and more reassuring than those of Cicero, I have asked myself if the just alone were not the immortals and if annihilation were not the chastisement of the impious. But no. It would be no punishment to them, for if they call on death, it is because they hope that death will destroy them. Wherefore the Book of Wisdom adds: "But the impious will receive the punishment deserved by their wicked thoughts." Hence, immortality is the sovereign good given by God to all men, and if it become the sovereign evil of the wicked, it is their own fault. What greatness and what exaltation lies in this philosophy! And how much Horace lowers himself in my estimation, when I think of his sterile complaints against death and the justification that he expects to find in it for his epicurean life. When thou shalt know the Prophet of Galilee, ask Him to speak of the great problem of death and let me know what He says of it.

May 2d, 781, Tibur.

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XIV

A RESURRECTION

CAIUS TO TULLIUS

WONDER succeeds wonder, and I ask myself if I live in a real world or in a land of dreams. Were I to undertake to tell thee all that the Prophet does and says in the presence of the crowds who follow Him, I should write volumes. This would be impossible. But thou wouldst censure me if I left thee in ignorance of a few extraordinary facts to which through mere chance, I was witness. Listen to what I saw with my own eyes yesterday, at the twilight hour. I was returning on horseback with several legionaries from a long ride towards Nazareth, and we had crossed the market-town of Naim which is built in an attractive solitary valley at the foot of the mountain. We were slowly following a sinuous route bordered with trees and brushwood, when we perceived in front of us a funeral cortége wending its way along the slope of Little Hermon toward the cemetery of the village. Nothing is sadder nor more impressive than these Oriental funerals, and it was in silence that we drew up alongside the procession. There was a long line of men and women dressed in trailing black garments, who wept, chanting sad and monotonous songs. The body of the dead man was lying on a stretcher carried by four men and covered only with a black cloth. What added to the sadness of this scene was the music, noisy and without art or

harmony, whose despairing monotony mingled with the sighs and tears of the mourners. Soon, at our left, in a crevice of the hill, the white sepulchres of an old cemetery became outlined. I recalled to myself our admirable "Via Appia" with its magnificent funeral monuments, and the contrast saddened me; but our Via Appia never saw and never will see what my eyes then witnessed. All at once at the summit of the hill, several hundred steps in front of us, appeared another procession of men, women and children coming to meet us. At the head of it, draped in the long folds of his white tunic, walked the Prophet of Nazareth. At this sight, I was unaccountably seized with an irresistible trembling. I was far from expecting what was going to happen, for there was nothing extraordinary in the fact of a crowd crossing a funeral procession. But nevertheless, it seemed to me there was something portentous in this unforeseen meeting of the great Prophet with death.

Many times already had He displayed His power over nature, but what could He do in the presence of death, the great enemy who is never overcome? Would He dare command it as He had commanded the angry sea? Stretched on his bier, his head resting on a little cushion of red silk, his face uncovered, the dead man, the only son of a widow, slept his last sleep. Nothing troubled him, neither the tears of his mother, nor the lamentations of the mourners, nor the discordant clash of the brass instruments, nor the psalmodies of the chanters, nor the cadenced steps of

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his bearers. The book of life was closed and sealed for him. It was a supreme unending peace. He heard, he saw, no more; his eyes were closed for all time and in spite of that, he saw through and beyond all time, where in an unknown realm, he would no longer be blind. But what did he see? No one on this earth can tell. It is the great mystery whose secret perhaps belongs only to Him who has just come. But it was not enough to know the secret of death in order to restore the boy to his weeping mother. The power of resuscitation was necessary. Would the Prophet prove that He was the Resurrection and the Life?

I was asking myself this question, when I saw Him raise His hands and command the funeral procession to stop. There was an indescribable agitation in the crowd.

"The Prophet! The Prophet!" they cried, and they grouped themselves around Him, as he drew nearer to the litter that rested upon the ground. I rode up as close to it as possible, and from my height could see over the heads of the multitude, who scattered to allow the approach of the unhappy mother whose only son they were about to bury.

And then, lifting her veil, she fixed her great eyes, red with tears, imploringly upon the Prophet, but she did not pronounce one word, for great sorrows are dumb. "Weep no more," said Jesus to her, with deep feeling, and stretching His hand over the bier, He looked at the dead man. The dumb crowd was breathless. Suddenly He said in a loud voice,

“Young man, I say to thee, ‘Arise!’” Oh, Tullius, wouldst thou believe it, he who was dead arose, and the Prophet, taking him by the hand, led him to his mother, as He said, “Woman, behold your son!” Such was the stupefaction and astonishment of the multitude that it remained for an instant mute and still, but a moment afterwards the very air vibrated to the delirium of enthusiasm and joy.

Those who were nearest the Prophet prostrated themselves before Him and kissed His feet, while others caught up His hands to embrace them, and the acclamations did not cease to resound “Hosannah! Hosannah! A great Prophet is risen among us, and God has visited his people.” I should have liked to express my admiration to the Prophet Himself, but it was impossible to reach Him. The parents and the friends of him who had been dead took possession of Him and returned along the route to Naim singing canticles of joy. Immobile and silent, under the influence of a deep emotion, we watched this triumphal procession a long time. “*Quis est iste?*” my companions asked me at last: I made a sign to them that I could not answer, and I put the same question to thee. “*Quis est iste vir?*” What is this man? As night was coming on, we resumed our way toward Magdala, making our horses gallop the entire distance, while we could still hear from afar the cries of the crowd entering into Naim with the Prophet.

But while I rode along by the light of the first stars, I remained absorbed in the contemplation of the great problems of life and death and told myself that neither

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Socrates nor Plato had solved them. Our Cicero, greatest of all the Romans, tells us truly that after death the spirit remains full of life, even more so, by reason of its detachment from things of earth. But what is this spirit which we also call the soul? What is the life of this soul apart from the body? Where does it go after this separation?

Can we still have any intercourse with it; and how? Neither Cicero nor any other philosopher has found the answer to these questions. But Jesus of Nazareth must know it, since He could restore to a dead body the soul that had left it. He must have some communication with the souls of the dead, since that of the widow's son heard His voice and obeyed Him. This Man, then, must be placed above all the philosophers and perhaps over all humanity?

Magdala, June 20th, 781.

XV

NEW WONDERS

CAIUS TO TULLIUS

I HAVE not written to thee for months, my dear Tullius, and I have many things to tell thee. I ought soon to have forgotten even the memory of Myriam. I believed that in a short time I would no longer think of her, because, after all, I did not really love her, and I ought to have despised her from the moment I learned the scandal of her life. But no, the heart has its mysteries, and once captured, it is

difficult to break its chains. What I have learned since my last letter proves to me first of all that Myriam is really one of the elect. Her great heart had an irresistible need of love, but it was too vast to be satisfied by any mere human affection. Not having found in her husband the ideal of which she had dreamed, she sought it elsewhere without finding it, until at last she met the Prophet, who revealed to her a love which I do not understand, of which even she herself knew nothing and which has encompassed all her soul. It is no longer possible to be mistaken in this, and all Magdala bears witness that the love of Myriam for the Prophet is absolutely ideal, spiritual and supernatural. It is not the Man whom she loves; it is Jehovah's Messenger; it is the mysterious Being who claims to have received from Heaven the mission to establish God's kingdom on earth.

And if I speak thus to thee, my dear Tullius, it is because for months I myself have been living in an atmosphere of miracles and wonders which surrounds and dominates me.

Capharnaum, where the Prophet lives, is two hours' walk from Magdala, and naturally, I hear of everything that happens there. It seems almost unbelievable. Not only does He cure the infirm, the sick, the deaf, the dumb and the blind, the lepers, the most abandoned creatures; but above all He cures the soul, He makes good men of wicked ones and of lost women, like Myriam and Photina, he makes models of virtue. What do I say? He commands the demons as we

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command our slaves, and they obey Him because they are powerless to resist. There thou hast a phenomenon full of mystery which I am incapable of explaining, but of which no one here has any doubt, as it is indubitably proven day by day before crowds of witnesses.

There are in this country great numbers of unfortunates, possessed by the devil, who are no longer masters of their own action, and who in spite of themselves do unconsciously and even with grief whatever the Spirit of Evil inspires in them. Naturally, they themselves do not come to beg their deliverance of the Prophet. They are brought before Him by force, and they cry, "What dost thou wish of us; wouldst thou loose us? Leave us alone. We know thee. Thou art the Son of God!"

And the Prophet, Who always speaks with so much gentleness, says in a threatening tone to the Spirit of Evil, "Be quiet and leave this man!" and the poor wretches are freed.

I give thee these facts for thy hour of reflection and study. Can there be an analogy between these demons and those spirits which formerly took possession of our sybils and witches? Even Nature itself obeys the Prophet of Galilee.

When His disciples have fished all night, catching nothing, He steps into Simon's boat and makes him cast out his net, and immediately it is filled with such numbers of fishes that it takes two boats to hold them.

And then He announces to Simon Peter his future mission: "Thou shalt be a fisher of men."

When the sea is lifted by the tempest and threatens to swallow up the disciples, He cries to it: "Peace be still," and the troubled waters are calmed. Several weeks ago the disciples were crossing the lake at night. They had left their Master in Peræa and were returning to Capharnaum struggling bravely against the wind, but soon the tempest was upon them, and waves filled the boat. The disciples thought themselves lost. But suddenly a white form could be seen outlined against the blackness of the night, walking upon the water. The terror of the disciples increased.

"It is a phantom!" they cried in fright.

"It is I!" answered the luminous apparition, "fear not!"

"Lord," answered Simon Peter, "command me to come to Thee."

"Come," said Jesus.

And Peter went to meet the Master, walking upon the waves; and when Jesus entered the boat, not only the tempest ceased, but the little barque itself had been drawn by an unseen force into the harbor of Capharnaum.

I can add my own testimony to these recitals which were given me by several witnesses; because this same night I, too, was crossing the Sea of Genesareth. I was returning from a visit to Kersa, a little Roman colony situated on the eastern bank. A light breeze blew from the southwest, and my four rowers were very slow in pulling the boat against the wind; all at once the night grew dark and a hurricane raged.

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It was impossible to raise a sail, and we tried to reach land by means of our oars, but all our efforts were powerless, and the tempest became more and more violent. Then came a moment when we thought ourselves lost. All at once, in an instant, the wind ceased blowing, and the sea became calm. The change was so sudden that it seemed inexplicable and contrary to all laws of nature, but the next day when I arrived at Capharnaum, a disciple of Jesus told us what had happened during the night, and it is his story which I have faithfully given thee above.

But I have not written thee what was told me at the moment when I was about to re-embark on my return to Capharnaum. It was, that on the same day, not far from Bethsaida-Julius, the Prophet had fed five thousand men, without counting the women and children, with five loaves and two fishes!

Is there, then, no limit to the power of this man? If He be master of the elements, of the forces of nature, of health, of life, of death, if He have equal power over the body, over the soul, and over the devil, He is undoubtedly a superhuman being.

Magdala, October 6th, 781.

XVI

THE DRAMA OF MACHÆRUS

CAIUS TO TULLIUS

IT is neither an idyl nor a pastoral which I am about to tell thee, but one of the most tragic of dramas. Thou rememberest John who publicly accused King Herod of adultery and incestuousness and who was imprisoned in Machærus a year ago? This punishment did not satisfy Queen Herodias, but she hid her resentment and postponed her vengeance. But lo and behold! last week the King wished to celebrate his birthday, and the Queen asked that this great feast might take place in the castle of Machærus.

The high functionaries of State, the principal officers of the army and all those of the Roman Garrisons were invited, and I thought it my duty to be present. It is a journey of two long days on horseback, but the country is picturesque and full of reminders of the marvelous history of the Jewish people. Its wild character seems almost to illustrate these events and is the frame which best becomes them. The mountains are like part of the construction of Babel and are crossed by deep gehennas bordered with mysterious grottos that seem to bear within them all the horror of crime and chastisement.

The Israelites had traversed these rugged summits when they marched to the conquest of the Promised

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Land, and here Joshua led his victorious battalions as they drove the Moabites before them. Clearly defined against the horizon rises Mount Nebo, scene of the death of Moses. On its heights, Baal and Jehovah had each in turn his altar, and when the children of Israel were led into captivity to Babylon, and when they returned thence, it was across these mountains they made their painful way.

The ride was unpleasant the second day, as we were overtaken by a dreadful tempest of rain, hail and lightning. We were drenched to the bone when at last, at the hour of twilight, the embattled walls of Machærus rose before us. We are lodged in a wing of the castle overlooking a deep ravine, at the foot of which roars a torrent whose waters finally are lost in the Dead Sea. Thanks to the crevice they have worn in the mountain, we were able to see afar off a corner of this curious sea that is strangely like molten lead. It was Chusa, the King's steward, who installed us. He presented me to his wife, Johanna, who asked for news of Jesus of Nazareth.

I told her all I had learned about Him. She listened with a lively interest and put an end to the interview by saying, "As for me, I believe that He is the expected Messiah."

Chusa then took me to visit the castle and its dependencies. Machærus is a truly royal residence, but at the same time it is dreary and its sadness oppressive. After having visited the apartments open to the public, we entered into the turret, which is a round, massive tower crowned by a parapet and which

serves as a prison, while being at the same time the most formidable part of the fortification.

"Have you any prisoners?" I asked the steward.

"Several," he said, "most of them are robbers and assassins, but the most famous is he who is styled the Prophet."

"What Prophet?"

"John the Baptist, who calls himself the precursor of the Messiah, and who is an astonishing personality."

"I should like to see him."

"Here is his cell. You may enter." And the soldier threw the door open.

The cell was very dark. One solitary beam of light found its way down from a loophole in the wall, but out of the depths of the shadow shone two luminous rays like glowing coals of fire. They were the eyes of the prophet, who crouched on the floor as is the way of the Oriental.

On perceiving us, he rose and said, "At last! Do you bring me death?"

"No," answered Chusa, "I am bringing you a Roman Centurion, who is on a visit to the castle and who wishes to see you."

The prophet fixed his piercing eyes upon me.

"I knew Cornelius the Centurion of Capharnaum," he said, "and you are very like him."

"He is my father," I said.

"Well, then, if you resemble him morally as you do physically you are a good man."

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"But my father has never been one of your disciples?"

"Oh, no, but he once came to the banks of the Jordan to hear me, and the questions he asked convinced me that he sought for truth in good faith."

"Have you preached a great deal?"

"Enough to fulfill my duty, but the king has found that it was too much."

"And if he set you free?"

"I would stand again before him and repeat those words he does not wish to hear: '*Non licet*,' what you have done, Sire, is a crime. And I would repeat the same words in public."

"To what good? You do not hope to convince him?"

"No; but it is good for all the world to know that the law of Jehovah is the same for everyone and what is wicked for the humble is also wicked for the great — for kings."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-three years old."

"Why are you, still young, so set upon ruining your career and interrupting a course of teaching so useful to your countrymen?"

"My mission is ended. I was a precursor of the Messiah, whom the world has expected for more than forty centuries. He has come, and He has begun to preach. I have presented Him to the multitude. I have made known who He is, and the crowds have left me and have gone to Him. It was right that it

should be so, and I am content. I do not fear death; I await it. My usefulness is over."

"At your age," said I, saluting him, "one does not die," and as I turned toward the door, I said, "I hope to see you soon in Galilee."

"No, you will not see me again. Go rather to see Jesus of Nazareth. It is He who is the Lamb of God and the great victim whose blood shall efface the sins of the world. It is He who is the true Prophet of the New Law. I am one of the last representatives of those who were known as the people of God and this people will die with me. A new kingdom will be founded of which Jesus of Nazareth will be sovereign. He is the King of kings, and the day will come when your Rome will be chastised as was Jerusalem and will become the seat of His powerful empire which shall eclipse that of Augustus."

I had already left the prisoner's cell, and I thought he raved, his eyes flashing fire remained fixed on some imaginary distance. The steward closed the door, and I returned to my apartment.

That night the banquet took place, which I have not time to describe for thee and which terminated in such a tragic fashion. We had eaten the rarest food and drunk the most exquisite wines, when one of the doors of the hall opened and a dancer glided in. It is a spectacle which the kings of the East never fail to offer their guests, one which is always highly appreciated. But this time the dancer was particularly interesting, for she was not a professional,

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an Egyptian slave, but a Jewish princess. It was Salome herself, the daughter of Herodias.

The music left much to be desired but the dancer was bewitching and her success aroused tremendous enthusiasm. Excited by the copious libations poured out by his cupbearers, the King raved. He made the beautiful Salome approach closer to him so that he could the better express his admiration and said to her in a loud voice, as Assuerus had said to Esther, "Ask what thou wilt and I will give it thee, though it should be half of my kingdom."

Salome ran to consult her mother on what she should ask. On returning she said to the King, "I ask that you give me, at once, the head of John the Baptist in a basin."

The guests were struck with stupefaction. The King grew pale, but very soon he understood that it was Herodias who spoke through the mouth of her daughter, and the power of this woman dominated his own. He signed to a eunuch who stood near him, and the man left the room. The dancer repeated one of her choregraphical steps with great success. After a few minutes the executioner returned, bearing in an agate dish the bleeding head of the Prophet. Salome received it in her hands and smilingly bowing her head before Herod left the hall, carrying the horrible gift to her still more horrible mother.

When I regained my apartment, the banquet had degenerated into an orgy. Thou seest, my dear Tullius, that King Herod is a worthy protégé of the

Cæsars. His first education was received in Rome, his is a product of Roman civilization. Thou rememberest that Fulvia amused herself by piercing the tongue of Cicero with a hair-pin till Anthony made her desist? Well, in the same manner did Herodias amuse herself with the head of the Prophet, John the Baptist. Adieu.

Magdala, Dec. 23d, 781.

XVII

CAMILLA

TULLIUS TO CAIUS

I GIVE thee a piece of news which will perhaps rejoice thee. The old Senator Claudius, a great friend of thy family, has left for the Orient with his daughter Camilla. The noble old man had for some time perceived that he had become a suspect. He was one of the rare members of the Senate who sometimes dared resist the orders sent from Capri, and the informers threatened to inscribe his name in the list of proscription which they send every day to Tiberius. He knew well that his relationship with the god who was master of the world would not save him.

Informed of his danger, his wife Flavia and his daughter Camilla urged him to leave Rome. For a long time his son-in-law, Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea, and his wife Claudia Procla had invited him to Jerusalem to visit them. At last he yielded to

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the insistence of his best friends and embarked for the Orient at Ostia with his daughter Camilla. It is understood that, if their sojourn in Palestine should be prolonged, his wife will join them. They will rest at Pompeii, where they will be the guests of their friends, the Holconii. They will also stop at Alexandria, will visit lower Egypt and then set sail for Cæsarea where, during a part of the year, Pilate lives. I saw them on their departure and spoke to them.

If thou shouldst meet them in Jerusalem or elsewhere, thou wilt find Camilla grown and developed. She has not precisely the beauty which strikes one at the first glance and attracts, but her features, without being absolutely regular, are fine and lend a charming expression to two large eyes full of serene light and sweetness. When she is silent and looks down, her face lacks vivacity, but as soon as she begins to speak it becomes animated. In her wide open pupils her brilliant soul seems to kindle a flame which spreads over her whole face and gives it that warm tone and coloring which distinguishes the Roman beauties. A beautiful figure completes her distinction, but I particularly love her sympathetic smile; it is like a ray of sunshine across the petals of a flower.

When thou shalt know her better, it will be easier for thee to forget the lovely Myriam. The recluse of Tibur salutes thee.

Tibur, March 15th, 782.

PART II
CAMILLA'S JOURNAL

I

FROM ROME TO POMPEII

FROM the beginning of our travels, Mother my beloved, I will start the "journal" which I promised to write for you.

I will faithfully note down all my impressions; I will describe the countries we shall visit, and, should we witness anything of great interest, I shall not forget to tell you of it. I hope to meet returning couriers from time to time who will take these letters to you. I brought with me my favorite book, the *Æneid*, which will serve as guide while being always an incomparable poem. I read it with joy when *Æolus* and *Neptune* leave me in peace.

The better to enjoy the harmony of the verses, I read them aloud while the sailors often draw near and group themselves around me to listen. They, too, seem to appreciate the music of our beautiful poetic language. The *Æneid* is a veritable guide during the voyage we are making, though several spots have changed greatly since the epoch of *Æneas*. But *Virgil* did not always take into account the eight cen-

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turies which separated Augustus from his Trojan hero. He often describes places just as he himself saw them and as they are to-day.

The Tyrrhenian Sea showed itself very gentle. In a few hours we lost sight of the port of Ostia, and on the following day we landed at Cumæ. On the heights still rise ruins of the Temple of Apollo where Æneas came to pray, but the Sibyl has deserted her cave dug in the slope of the rock of Cumæ.

If one were to believe Virgil's description, this cavern should have a hundred doors, and from these hundred doors would issue as many voices, giving answer to those coming to consult her.

“*Exisum Euboicæ latus ingens rupis in antrum
Quo lati ducunt aditus centum ostia centum
Unde ruunt todiem voces responsa Sibyllæ.*”

Can this whole mountain of Eubeus have been overturned by earthquakes? I do not know, but the ground no longer bears the faintest resemblance to the poet's description. It is a long time since people believed in the oracles of the Sibyl. And I ask who could say to-day with the faintest hope of being believed,—

“*Deus, ecce Deus. (God,—here is God!)
It is He who will speak through my mouth!*”

I also wanted to see Lake Averno and the deep cavern which leads down to hell, to the field of tears, “*lugentes campi,*” where those sigh whose unhappy love has led them into wrong; to the field of war-

riors, "*Arva ultima*," to Tartarus and the Elysean fields. But neither the black lake nor the dark grottoes, nor the deep crevices in the flank of the mountain can lead us to the abiding place of souls. Is all that, then, but poetic fiction?

Nevertheless, somewhere there must exist a mysterious kingdom which outlives death, where the wicked are punished and where the good are rewarded! What god will come to reveal the mysteries of these unknown regions? I put these questions to the divine Virgil when I visited his tomb at the foot of the mountain where the children of Greece came to found a new Parthenope. But he answered nothing.

This beautiful colony is becoming a flourishing city. The rich are building sumptuous villas facing the sea, which are terraced upon the hillside in the midst of vines and orchards as far as Pompeii.

II

POMPEII

HERE we are in the city of pleasure seekers, and I find it not only gay but most beautiful. I never tire of admiring its superb Doric and Corinthian colonnades. The walks beyond the city, above all those that zigzag up the slopes of Vesuvius, are ideal. They are shady and sweet with the breath of flowers. On all sides they take in a vast horizon and an endless perspective of azure sea. Nothing is more smiling, more flourishing, more enchanting than this

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Mount Vesuvius, carpeted as it is with vineyards, green grasses and flowers. One appreciates its beauties all the more if thoughts are allowed to wander. Should the interior fire that sleeps in this mountain awaken, if the Titans whom Jupiter struck with his thunderbolts and enchained in these shady caverns should suddenly revolt and force open the walls of their prison, what a catastrophe it would be, and what would become of those beautiful cities — Herculaneum and Pompeii, that dream only of multiplying their enjoyments and perfecting their pleasures.

Pompeii is an aristocratic little city of thirty thousand souls. In spite of this it carries on an immense commerce. Its beautiful harbor, constantly receding and on which it is necessary to work without cessation, is covered with sails.

We are the guests of Holconius and have been received at his house with the most delightful welcome. These friends of our family live comfortably, and their palace, though not large, is luxurious. The atrium is comparatively small, but the peristyle is spacious and flooded with light. The colonnade surrounding it is wonderful and monumental. The cornice is in rose-tinted stucco and the frieze, remarkable for its grace and delicacy, is adorned with arabesques. The pavings are of mosaic, the walls frescoed, and represent the loves of our gods, which between ourselves, are not particularly edifying. Between the columns and steps surrounding the peristyle are placed bronze and marble statues, alternating with

rose oleanders and orange trees laden with golden fruit. The family spends the greater part of the day in this vast hall open to the sun.

You know, Mother, how our beautiful Appian Way reaches as far as Pompeii; and that in leaving Rome it passes through the resting places of the dead? Well, here, too, it is transformed into a cemetery on its approach to Pompeii, and they call it "The Way of Tombs." This lugubrious entrance into the city of pleasures does not make its careless visitors reflect more deeply; they simply admire the sculptural art of these funeral monuments. None of them seem to dream that pleasure does not last forever and that Venus is not the only divinity in the world, if she be a divinity at all.

The life of the Pompeian appears to be altogether consecrated to luxury and sensuality. The paintings that decorate the frieze and the ceilings, the mosaics which cover the pavements and the walls, a whole world of statues in suggestive attitudes excite them to enjoy and abandon themselves to the sweetness of an idle and voluptuous existence.

The Forum is always filled with loungers chanting of Bacchus and sleeping in the sunshine on marble benches and on pavements around the fountains whose constant drip, drip, accompanies their dreams.

The theatres overflow with spectators every night, where the comedies of the most licentious poets of Greece and Rome are played.

The same crowd is to be seen at the amphitheatre and at the baths, and in the vicinity of these edifices,

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taverns, too much frequented by the friends of the gladiators and athletes, are always open.

The amphitheatre is at the extreme end of the city and commands a beautiful view over the country. It is far from having the immense proportions of our own Circus, but in spite of that, it is a beautiful edifice and holds twenty thousand spectators. The games are the same as in Rome; the bloodier they are, the more they become popular. The gladiators there are more admired even than the best tragedians. The Theatre of Tragedy is not very spacious, but the "cavea" can hold five thousand spectators. Like most of the Greek theatres, it is built on the slope of a hill, and on the summit of semicircular steps rises a majestic portico upheld by ninety Doric columns.

Like our own, it is opened by means of poles and ropes. It is covered with a red and white awning to protect the spectators against the hot rays of the sun. No longer are the classical masterpieces played there—the Alexandrian dramatists are no longer in vogue. Even Aristophanes is considered too serious, in spite of his immoralities and ungodliness.

Notwithstanding an extensive taste for Greek literature, nothing is written or spoken here but Latin; all the inscriptions are in Latin. The *Æneid* is the poem most read, even by the common people. Learned men quote its verses in their conversation and must know entire stanzas of it by heart. After Virgil, they read Ovid, and his *Art of Loving* meets with the approbation of the multitude.

The aspect of the Pompeian Forum is a splendid one, closely resembling our own. It is extensive, bounded on three sides by superb porticoes formed of a triple marble colonnade, around which is raised a veritable amphitheatre of Temples, triumphal arches and other edifices.

Among the temples dedicated to Jupiter, Hercules, and above all to Venus, under different names, I was very much surprised to find a temple of Isis. It seems that the worship of this Egyptian divinity is widely cultivated here. I have seen a statue of Isis seated and by her side a serpent twined about a fruit-laden tree, while the serpent watches and seems to fascinate her. What can this marble group signify? A Pompeian scholar assured me that the Jewish people believe that the first woman, mother of the human race, was lost through a serpent who had given her poisoned fruit. Is it possible that the Egyptians have borrowed their Isis from the Jewish books?

What pleases me the most here is the smiling country surrounding the town, the rich vegetation that covers it, the vineyards that frame it and the azure sea that reflects it.

Our great Cicero understood the choice of beautiful spots. He owned here a villa almost as sumptuous as that of Tusculum which you know. In Tusculum he enjoyed the vivifying air of the mountains, the aroma of the great woods and the immense horizon which extended to the sea. From his portico with its white columns he could see at his feet the beautiful Sabine cities, lower down, the vast Roman

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campagna with its great aqueducts, and farther on, Rome, with her colossal forest of marble.

Here the horizon is narrower but most graceful. The wonderful orator enjoyed a closer view of the ocean, and he could drink in its refreshing breeze. He could see the floating sails of Neapolitan fishermen, and on returning home he could rest his eyes on the green slopes and abundant vines of Vesuvius.

The dear great man! How he must have wept on this spot over the death of his well-beloved daughter, Tullia!

To-morrow we again start out to sea, and after visiting Sicily, we will set sail for Alexandria.

III

ON THE COAST OF SICILY

ON leaving Neapolis our ship skirted the island of Capri, where our Cæsar lives. It is said to be an enchanted spot, and all the pleasures of this world are within his reach. But it is also said that he is none the happier for that, that he is taciturn and gloomy and, that he may not suffer alone, he invents tortures for others. The world trembles and kneels before him as before a god. Dark days have come over our beautiful fatherland. Who will save it from the tyranny, corruption and decadence that threaten it? Who will restore liberty, religious faith and the morals of ancient days? This is what I asked this morning, while watching the banks of Capri fade away, with

its splendid mountainous amphitheatre crowning Baia, Pozzuoli and Pompeii. And I have re-read the fourth eclogue of my divine Virgil, who seems to announce the renewal of humanity as very close at hand. Is it a revelation of the gods? Is it a real vision of the future such as had the Sibyls? I believe and hope that it is so; but who will come to tear away this veil which envelops all truth in unfathomable mystery?

I was thinking of this, when a young man came and sat beside me in the stern of our ship and began to read from a roll of papyrus written in Hebrew. He had embarked at Pompeii. He is a young Jew from Jerusalem who has been spending a year in Rome and is returning into his native country. I had met him and we had chatted for a long time. His name is Gamaliel; his father is a Scribe, Doctor in Israel, who is devoting himself to teaching literature and the Hebrew religion and whose school is celebrated. Numberless pupils from all parts of Syria, Persia, Egypt and even Greece surround his chair. The son himself is well instructed and interesting to hear, though he bears for Rome an implacable hatred, and the dream of his life is to deliver his country from the yoke of the Roman. We spoke of religion, and he explained several features of the history of his marvelous nation. What interests me most is its faith in one God and its firm belief in the coming of One who shall be sent from Heaven, whom Gamaliel calls the Messiah and on whom he counts for the deliverance of his people and their worldly power.

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I expressed my surprise, and I read to him the fourth eclogue of our poet, whose verse he did not know. And it was his turn to be astonished when he heard these words:—"At last, the times predicted by the Sibyls of Cumæ have come. A new race descends from the heights of Heaven, this child whose birth shall end the century of iron and reopen the golden age to the entire world; chaste Lucina deign to protect him. Son of the gods, this child will govern the world. The time approaches. Rise to supreme honours, cherished child of the gods. Noble offspring of Jupiter. All nature trembles in expectation of this happy age."

"It is very strange," said Gamaliel, "because your Virgil could not have been a prophet. There has never been one in your country. This hope of a regeneration which has penetrated to Rome, as well as to Greece, must have its origin in our Holy Books that some of your poets may have known."

"But do you really believe," I asked him, "in the near approach of your Messiah?"

"Not only I believe that he will come, but I am almost convinced that He is already here, that He is alive and that at this moment He is working wonders in Galilee and Judea."

"Is it possible? And what manner of man is he?"

"I do not know Him yet but when I left Jerusalem more than a year ago, He was in Galilee. Crowds followed Him. He announced to them the approaching establishment of the kingdom of God, and He cured all the sick and the infirm who were brought to

Him. Since then, all the letters that I have received from my country speak only of Him and of the prodigious things which He does. His name, Jesus of Nazareth, is in every mouth, and the people hope that He will soon re-establish the kingdom of Juda."

"And release it from Roman domination?"

"Obviously. You can understand how eager I am to see my country again and above all my well beloved city."

Our conversation was prolonged far into the night. The weather was delicious, the sky serene, and from time to time the rowers sang to the cadenced accompaniment of their oars. I hoped in the long undulations of the sea to catch a glimpse of Nereids and hear the voices of Sirens, but I neither saw nor heard anything.

When I awoke this morning, we were passing between Scylla and Charybdis. I ran up on deck to see these terrifying whirlpools, of whom both Homer and Virgil have given such frightful descriptions; but Æolus held his breath, and the two monsters must have slept, I think. Because I neither saw their foams nor heard their sinister cries. It must be only a poetic fable. I begin to think that everything is a fable with us, beginning with our religion.

We drift slowly along the coast of Sicily, driven by our swinging oars, and here is Ætna disgorging its enormous column of black smoke and red flame straight up to the sky. Here, the poets have exaggerated nothing.

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but I find it far below the truth. The verses are beautiful and musical, but they are only a feeble picture of the terrible mountain. At its foot on a bed of red lava, nestles a pretty little white city, near the shore of the Blue Sea. How can she live tranquilly in such a neighborhood? Ætna and not Avernus must be one of the gates of hell. This must have been the immense furnace into which the giants who desired to scale Mount Olympus and frighten away its gods were thrown and swallowed up. At the time of Ulysses, the famous Cyclops, of whose depredations Homer has sung, lived upon this coast. Æneas whose vessels skirted along these same shores was, like Ulysses, a prey to their attacks, only escaping through the protection of Venus. These classical memories returned while we rowed along the coast and passed the immense pile of rocks Polyphemus threw into Ulysses' ships, the crests of which can still be seen above the waves.

We were favored by a high wind, and towards evening cast anchor near the island of Ortygia from which rises Syracuse. What a picturesque sight and how charming this beautiful city looks from a distance! One easily recognizes a Greece, less artistic, less ideal, perhaps, than that of Athens and Delphi, but more extensive, rising like an amphitheatre in the centre of green and flowering hills, proudly draped in a chlamys of enormous walls and crowned by the summits of the mountains of Hybla.

A city of marble does not exist here as in Athens, but the architecture is the same, and I find again all

the marks of Grecian art. The palaces and temples have their colonnaded porticoes, copies of the Parthenon and of the Temple of Theseus. The great door of the citadel facing toward the sea is formed by high pillars, imitations of those of the Propulæa.

In the theatre, with white marble steps rising upon a hill, the *Cedipus* of Sophocles was played. What a drama! And how happy I was to find that I knew Greek enough to really enjoy this incomparable poem, given by the best of actors. The island is joined to the main land by a pier, and we find Greece everywhere, Greece, mother of all the arts and of all civilization.

I did not fail to see the fountain of the Nymph Arethusa. It is limpid and beautiful. Tufts of papyrus float upon it, and red fishes bathe in it. But the nymph was far more lovely, and I hold it against Diana for having changed her into a fountain for the simple crime of wanting to please the river Alpheus. Our vessel put into port for several hours at Acragas, which Virgil only casually salutes, because in the time of Æneas it was not the city of great Grecian temples it is to-day. It is not a rich and flourishing town like Syracuse, but is admirably situated on a height overlooking the sea; bound around by powerful ramparts, above the walls rises a forest of marble columns supporting the façades of its numberless temples, presenting a vista of incomparable beauty. On seeing this grouping of architectural wonders I was as strongly impressed as at the sight of the Athenian Acropolis two years ago. It is really splendid, and

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after the Parthenon I know of nothing more beautiful. The temples of Juno, of Hercules, of Esculapius, of Jupiter, and of Leda, of Castor and Pollux and of Concord are all gathered together inside the ramparts and in sight of the sea. Behind the temples the city rises like an amphitheatre up to the summit of the mountain, which forms the Acropolis, but which has nothing monumental about it, its only beauty being its marvelous site.

We climbed there and admired its most picturesque points of view. At our feet lies the fortified city with its temples, theatres, palaces and tombs which touch the interior line of ramparts. A far off is the blue sea with its limitless horizon.

Then, we came down again to the temples which in their beauty held us for hours. The more time given to detail, the more one's admiration grows. The Corinthian fluting, the sculptured frieze, the metopes, and the leafy lace-like capitals, the noble pose of the statues, the harmonious drawing of the reliefs, everything is ravishing. Alas, all these beautiful monuments of the ancient faith are deserted and in ruins. It is the end of the beautiful civilization of the Hellenes; they have lost their power. Their faith is extinct and decadence has fallen on their art and letters. Greece, in her greatness is dying.

IV

IN CARTHAGE

WE know now by experience, oh, my Mother, all the vicissitudes of navigation. We were about to set sail for Alexandria, when a frightful tempest overtook us. We were the victims of its violence during the entire night. At daybreak our skillful pilot was able to hoist a little sail and directed our ship through a narrow entrance into a spacious bay.

It is the port of Carthage. As you see, my Mother, we are far from our route. But we are forced to submit to the inconstancy of the sea and its winds, and thus in looking for Alexandria we have found Carthage. I am tempted to thank the gods for it, now that the tempest has passed. Carthage is, as you know, much older than our Rome. It was a flourishing colony of Tyre when Æneas bade farewell to the still smoking ruins of Troy, setting sail for the banks of Latium, where he was to become the great ancestor of the Romans.

Juno, whom Virgil represents as being cruel and jealous, loved Carthage better than all the cities of the world, without even excepting Samos. But she knew the Sibylline oracles predicted the destruction of Carthage by a people, issue of the Trojan race, for whom she nourished an implacable hatred. For this reason she pursued the unfortunate Æneas with her hatred and made use of every means in her power

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to prevent his reaching our shores where he was to lay the foundation of Rome.

It is this epic combat of divinity against simple mortal that forms the subject of Virgil's admirable poem, and you will remember, Mother, in the beginning, the poet describes an appalling tempest which assailed the fleet of Æneas after it had left the shores of Sicily. Old Æolus had placed the most violent subjects of his kingdom at the service of Juno; Aquilo and Notus came to her aid. The unhappy Trojans saw their vessels disabled and dispersed and at last were saved only by the intervention of Neptune, to whom belongs the empire of the seas, who had not at first noticed how the children of Æolus troubled his domain. On the coast of Libya, not far from Carthage, the Trojan hero found a harbor where he could gather his vessels together.

Well, my Mother, we, too, withstood a terrible tempest, and it was only by taking refuge in the port of Carthage that we were saved from shipwreck. Can it be that Juno still cherishes her resentment to the Latin descendants? I hope not, since Jupiter has predicted that the irascible goddess will in time be appeased and end by protecting the Romans. However that may be, we have proved that the description of the tempest imagined by Virgil is not exaggerated and are happy to have found the same harbor as Æneas.

Carthage! What historical and even poetic memories this name recalls. Virgil's hero almost failed

in his mission here. It was the scene of his love for Dido, who had founded the city. Had he not torn himself away from his culpable love, he would not have fulfilled his destiny and Rome, perhaps, would never have existed. But so tend the events of this world. How different its destiny had its great geniuses always fulfilled the missions received from the gods! Carthage, Rome's chief rival! Had Hannibal had strength to tear himself away from the delights of Capua, as Æneas from the seductions of Dido, Carthage herself would have become mistress of the world. Terrible were those Punic wars lasting over a hundred years! How glorious for us Romans to recall the dramatic history of Regulus and the exploits of the two Scipios! Barely two centuries ago our army destroyed Carthage; but it was to rebuild it, and you could not imagine, Mother mine, the magnificence of the new city.

Caius Gracchus had reconstructed it but up to the time of Julius Cæsar, it was only a little colonial town. Cæsar and Augustus restored, enlarged and embellished it. To-day it rivals imperial Rome in its riches and the proportions of its public monuments, through its temples, its baths, its amphitheatre and its vast porticoes.

More fortunate than Æneas, we find here a second native land, and we see everywhere the great deeds of our own ancestors graven on their monuments. Unfortunately it imitates not only our arts and architecture, but copies our morals and unbridled luxuries. Our vices transplanted to this African soil under a

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fiery sun, enervate and soften the colonists and will produce in them decadence more rapid than in us if the child of the gods whom Virgil has promised does not come to save us. Here corruption is more ungovernable than in Rome and religion cannot sufficiently bridle it.

Where, then, will we find the religious beliefs of ancient times. Faith remains young, it is said, in the Jewish people alone. I am most anxious to discover if this be true, *de visu*.

V

BIBLICAL IDYLS

AFTER our departure from Carthage, we had another day and night of storm, but this morning "Neptune has appeased the wrath of the sea, dissipated the clouds and recalled the sun." We drift along past the coast of Libya in a dead calm which has great charm, but our oarsmen are weary, though they relieve each other at intervals of three hours, and our progress is slow. They complain of the heat, which is, however, very pleasant for us who do nothing but watch the horizon, chat and read.

The younger Gamaliel, of whom I have already spoken, constantly seeks our society. Intimacies are established quickly on board ship, where informality is inevitable. We have long talks about history, literature and the religion of his country. I find it both curious and interesting. He reads for me number-

less pages of a Greek translation of the "Scriptures," which are the sacred books of his people. This translation is the work of seventy-two scholars gathered together by Ptolemy Philadelphus in Alexandria more than two centuries ago. I understand Greek perfectly, as thou knowest, Mother, and take great interest in this reading.

My pleasant traveling companion said to me to-day, "You have revealed the eclogues of Virgil to me, let me tell you of some of our biblical poems. For our "Scriptures" are not only books of history, morals and religion, they contain most beautiful poems, especially "lyric ones."

"Is it in form as well as style that your poetry is distinguished from prose?"

"Certainly; we have Hebrew verse, just as you have Latin verse, and the characters which distinguish it from prose are metre and parallelism. This last characteristic trait does not exist in the poetry of the Latins, any more than it does in Greek verse, and while it is not apparent in the translations, is easily to be felt in the Hebrew text."

Gamaliel reads well and knows how to bring out the beauty of these biblical poems. I love the passages which he quotes from the Book of Job, the Psalms of King David, Proverbs, the Books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. Most of the prophets have written in verse, and there are in Isaias, Jeremias and Ezekiel, poetical inspiration of incomparable beauty and aspiration surpassing all that our own poets have written.

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The poem of Job is a sombre drama wherein cries of pain and desperation alternate with prayer and a plaint of resignation. The Psalms are hymns to Jehovah, praising His power, His justice, His goodness and His great works scattered throughout all creation. In the poems of Solomon beautiful lessons of morality and wisdom evidence in their author vast experience of life. Among the Jewish prose writings many pages are found full of poetry.

Gamaliel read me a delicious idyl entitled the Book of Ruth. Nothing is more touching in simplicity and grace than the history of this ideal gleaner, come from Moab, who, following the harvesters of Boaz, gathered the grain they dropped and finished by gleaning the heart of the Master. Boaz was enchanted and married her, and thus the beautiful Moabite became mother of Obed and ancestress of King David. "They even say," added Gamaliel, "that Jesus of Nazareth is one of his descendants."

To-day Gamaliel recited (for he knows it by heart) the Cantic of Canticles. The sky was of an unblemished azure, and never did the sea appear more beautiful. Under the red reflection of the setting sun, it was bathed in glimmering light. A gentle breeze filled the sails of the "Nauticaa" and we glided slowly across the little fiery waves into the great Circus of Neptune. Rosy clouds gathered in the north in disquieting fashion. They would soon become black when the sun disappeared, but in the meantime were beautiful along the horizon.

"What an enchanting calm," I said to Gamaliel,

"in this empty immensity which surrounds us, and what sweet solitude!"

"Solitude is only a word," answered Gamaliel. "It exists absolutely and completely nowhere. The desert is shadowed with caravans and scattered with oases full of life. The sea is ploughed by vessels, and its depths are peopled with living beings who form the families of Nomad tribes. The Heavens are peopled with planets, which are drawn toward each other and meet, with nebulous families or swarms of stars which seek a corner in space where they can accomplish their destiny and re-create new worlds. You see that absolute solitude cannot exist."

"You do not complain of this?"

"Certainly not. I like neither noise nor crowds, but I like a solitude of two."

"It seems when I watch the heavens on these beautiful summer nights that the stars are pupils of mysterious eyes, and their looks are sweet and sympathetic."

"I like yours better."

I looked down and went to lean on the edge of the rail. Gamaliel followed me, and we looked out over the waves to admire the sparkling path made by our ship.

"You see," said Gamaliel, "this pretty garland of white flowers that we scatter behind us, I would like to gather it into a crown for your lovely head."

I must have looked a little surprised but did not answer. Then he unfolded the "Canticle of Canticles," and said,—

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Then Gamaliel which I should have made no objection. silent.

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"This poem is a song of love: or rather it is a passionate colloquy between two persons whom Solomon calls 'the Well-Beloveds.' What names are hidden under this sweet title, whose alternate voices sing the duet of love? I do not know, and my father teaches that one must attach an allegorical sense to the burning words which these two address one to the other."

Then Gamaliel recited for me with an enthusiasm which I shared the admirable poem of Solomon. I made no observation, and for a long time we remained silent.

"If this beautiful poetry makes you dumb," said I at last, "you had better study the Book of Wisdom."

Gamaliel barely smiled, and remained plunged in deep reverie. His eyes were fixed on the far-away shores of Libya which cast a long streamer of dark blue on the horizon.

"Of what are you dreaming?" I asked.

Gamaliel hesitated a moment and then said,—

"I dream of all the unexpected in human existence and ask if it happen by chance or through a providence. I admire the immensity which surrounds us, this infinity which seems very empty and in which I had expected to find complete isolation. Nevertheless it is the unexpected that comes to me. On these narrow planks that hold us, I am not alone, I feel less alone with you, than in the circle of friends surrounding me when I went to dream my dreams on the Palatine Hill. What is this mysterious current that draws us across the world, causing two beings, who, in the natural order would have been forever separated, to

start from different points of the far-away horizon and come to their meeting place in the middle of the ocean, led by — who can tell — what unknown force? Are we the playthings of chance, or is there a Sovereign Master who directs our destinies without our knowledge, and whose decrees we blindly obey? And if this Master exist, are we His instruments to such an extent, that we cannot even order our own sentiments? You know, Camilla, that I am a Jew, that I love my country better than all the world. When I left it, my heart was full of hatred for Rome, and this hatred grew in the midst of the Jews who lived there. And for you I had also, when I saw you first on the deck of the "Nauticaa" a feeling of repulsion, which seemed uncontrollable because you are a Roman. And now, why should I not tell you? I do not know what sympathetic impulse drew me to you, and when I try to explain it to myself I am obliged to acknowledge that I could even love Rome were Rome like you."

I had lowered my eyes and a long silence followed. I felt that he was still looking at me, and I did not know what to say. When I finally spoke it was to ask him the cause of his hatred for Rome.

"I will not tell you to-day," answered Gamaliel, "I am afraid of hurting you."

"I do not understand the meaning of hatred," said I, "neither that of individuals nor nations. And I want all my friends to be friends of my country."

A great wave breaking over the deck warned us that the wind had risen and put an end to our conversation.

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ALEXANDRIA

HERE I am at last, on this Oriental shore I have so wanted to see, and with absorbing interest I roam the streets of this great Egyptian city. I say Egyptian, but it is rather Greek or Greco-Roman; for though its population is Egyptian, its arts and its letters are Greek, and its political and military government is Roman. It emulates Rome in its magnificence and, like all great colonial cities, has its pro-consul, senators, magistrates, and great dignitaries, likewise its baths, temples, circus and theatres.

Its learning and its schools rival those of Rome, and it possesses great libraries of manuscripts, the largest of which, containing seven hundred and fifty thousand volumes, was unfortunately burned at the time of Julius Cæsar, but Anthony repaired this loss in part by giving two hundred thousand manuscripts to Queen Cleopatra.

This celebrated name recalls many historical memories to my mind; though our great Romans did not play as glorious a role here as they did at Carthage. Pompey, Cæsar, Anthony were bewitched each in his turn by this enchantress, and it was not without deep emotion that I first saw the shores which bore testimony to the tragic death of these two powerful men, Pompey and Anthony, who might have been the glory of their country and who were lost through love! Octavius himself narrowly escaped being ensnared by

the charms of this siren, and, had he succumbed, we would not have had "Augustus Imperator." What a strange power is love! What ruin it can work when wrongly used! Even the founder of Alexandria was not proof against its seductions! But what a great man he was! I sometimes wonder if our Cæsar ever equalled him. His colossal ambition, never satisfied, was the cause of his downfall. In twelve years he became Master of the world. But he still sought to enlarge his vast empire and had not yet turned over to the government all his conquered lands when he died, at the age of thirty-three.

The Egyptian quarter of Alexandria is the ancient village of "Rakotis," where decayed remnants of the people of the Pharaohs are still found. An old ruined temple of Serapis dominates the other edifices.

The modern part is the city of palaces in the center of which rises the "Brucheon" with its beautiful colonnade of Grecian architecture. Several thousand palaces with as many baths and hundreds of theatres, temples to the Greek and Roman gods, monuments, statues, obelisks and race-courses make Alexandria a great city, surrounded as it is by walls and towers.

A new civilization succeeded that formerly represented by Heliopolis, Memphis and Thebes, with their gigantic and astonishing ruins. Ptolemy Philadelphus and his successors, who reigned over Egypt for three centuries after Alexander the Great, were the fathers of this African Greece, and even the Rome of to-day is their achievement.

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There is also a large Jewish quarter in Alexandria, and my friend Gamaliel was of great service to us when we visited it. Its appearance is wretched, as is the Ghetto of Rome, but the greater number of money lenders are there as well as the richest of the bazaars. Here the Hellenic language rather than Hebrew is spoken. The University and its vast library interested us particularly. Gamaliel showed us the original manuscripts of the Grecian translation of the Holy Jewish Books, called "The Version of the Seventy." The Jews have the greatest veneration for this translation, which they believe to have been inspired by Jehovah, and their teaching is that the seventy-two Jewish scholars to whom they attribute it worked separately and yet, by a miracle, their translations were identical.

At the University, Gamaliel presented a Greek of great distinction to us, an eloquent Hellenic scholar, who embraced Judaism several years ago. He emigrated from Athens to Jerusalem and became a disciple of Gamaliel, the ancient and doctor in Israel. For several months he has worked here on a translation of the Five Books of Moses in the Chaldaic language. Onkelos — this is his name — is of a fine Grecian type, speaking Latin, Hebrew and Chaldaic well. He told us that he was returning to Jerusalem to assure himself of the truth of the rumor that the Messiah had made His appearance in Galilee. He decided to travel with us, and we are delighted, because he knows and speaks so well of many things.

Gamaliel and he will come with us to visit Heliopolis and Memphis, and we could have no better traveling companions.

VII

HELIOPOLIS

WE went up the Nile in our boat as far as Heliopolis, the trip lasting one long day. It would have been longer if we had not the help of a strong north wind to fill our sails. Our ten oarsmen were happy to rest and sing hymns to Ra, the Sun-God:

"All homage to thee, Ra,
Mummy, whose youth is constantly renewed,
Who is born again unto all time,
Homage, to thee, Ra."

"Who dartest rays of life to beings of intelligence,
Homage to thee as thou encirclest the firmament.
The Gods who accompany thee, shout out for joy,
Oh, beneficent, resplendent, flaming one!
Those who are never affrighted, armed with long oars
Manœuvre thy barque.
All Heaven is in ecstasy,
All earth is in joy,
To render glory to Ra-Karmakhis,
When they see him rise in his boat." . . .

These songs were translated into Greek for us by Onkelos, and while listening to their monotonous melody, we drifted rapidly, now past the waving grain along the banks and now under the shade of the palm

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trees. We appreciated the palm leaves above us for their protection against the rays of the terrible Ra.

I was anxious to see the City of the Sun, Heliopolis, because formerly it was one of the greatest religious capitals of Egypt. I questioned Onkelos on the religion of the Egyptians. "It is nebulous," he answered, "and in the fullness of decadence. In the beginning, this people unquestionably believed in one God, and that God was the Sun. But the numberless nomes or provinces which composed this country gave him different names and worshiped him under diverse forms. Thus in certain nomes he was called 'Phtah' or 'Ra,' and in other provinces 'Hor,' 'Atoum,' 'Thot,' 'Osiris.' These gods at the same time assumed different shapes and hid themselves in the bodies of animals, so that this worship was carried on in honor of the 'Scarab of Phtah' the 'Ibis of Thot,' the 'Hawk of Ho,' and the 'Jackal of Anubis,' the 'Bull of Hapi,' the 'Phoenix,' the 'Crocodile,' the 'Serpent.' But there are no longer any believers in these degrading divinities."

"I understand that all this grotesque mythology, which did not even have a poetic side as has our own, has fallen into disfavor. But their one God, the Sun, still exists, and how beautiful he is."

"That is true," returned Onkelos, "nevertheless, he, too, will soon disappear."

As he spoke the sun hid itself behind the mountains of Libya, its last rays gilding a forest of obelisks which slowly rose to our left over the sandy plain. It was the City of the Sun. Alas, but a mass of rub-

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bish! Its countless obelisks, each one of which recalls a destroyed temple have remained standing together with part of the fortifications. The most majestic of its ruins is the great Temple of the Sun, which was the glory of the celebrated city. The walls are cracked and crumbling, but the colonnade, the architrave and the porch still exist. The three hundred and sixty-five statues which adorned it and which were overthrown and broken thirty years ago have not been replaced. This is a strange story.

One day, while the priests of the Sun were offering their sacrifices to the gods, a terrible earthquake shook all the temple, and the symbolical statues representing the three hundred and sixty-five days of the solar year were dashed from their pedestals and shattered. On running out expecting to see some frightful cataclysm of nature, the priests found all calm and serene; nowhere else had been felt the terrific shock which the temple had experienced. Only a family of poor travelers could be seen passing through the street on which the temple faced. It consisted of a woman mounted upon an ass carrying a child in her arms and of a man walking behind armed with a long staff which served to spur the animal and to sustain his own weary footsteps.

The peaceful and inoffensive travelers crossed the city and stopped a mile from the gates under the shadow of a great sycamore. The man, who was a Jewish carpenter, built himself a little home with the branches of trees and lived there two years with his wife and child. Living in isolation, they were the

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most peaceful people in the world. The woman was young and very beautiful and her child was her own image. Many legends and strange stories are told about them. One thing is certain, there was no water on this spot, and with the coming of this family a limpid and abundant stream which still flows sprung from the ground.

After two years spent in their leafy shelter under the old sycamore, which was shown me, the strange family resumed its journey across the desert in the direction of the country of the Jews and never returned to the land of the Pharaohs.

"Tell me, you who are a scholar," I asked Onkelos, "did you know this story?"

"Yes, I heard it several years ago, and many of the Nazareans connect this fact with the childhood of their prophet. They appear to remember that his family made a journey into Egypt about thirty years ago, and it was at the moment of the passing of this Child, whom they believe to be the Messiah, that the false divinities of the Temple of the Sun were thrown down. The Child was perhaps a little more than two years of age when his family returned from the country of the Pharaohs and took up their residence at Nazareth. But to me it all seems legendary."

VIII

MEMPHIS

FROM Heliopolis we went on to Memphis, ancient capital of the Egyptian empire, to-day, like Heliopolis, in ruins. It is the great cemetery of primitive Egypt and consequently the City of pyramids. The first Pharaohs had the mania of wishing to sleep their last sleep under these conical stone mountains, which even to-day are marvels.

We then crossed the Nile, visited the three great pyramids of Kheops, of Kephrem, of Menkera, built on the borders of the Libyan desert, and the Sphinx, always the great insoluble enigma; then turning to the south, we directed our way towards Memphis with its colossal tombs sharply drawn against the horizon.

My father and our young friends, Gamaliel and Onkelos, rode by my side and seemed an escort for a young princess, as I dominated them from the great height of my camel. Ah, my dear Mother, what a glorious ride! My traveling companions on their shining Arabian horses made fun of my mount, but I felt myself above their foolish ridicule. Comfortably seated on the soft purple cushion which covered the hump of my enormous camel, I felt as if I were on one of the Eastern thrones, and they were my humble servants.

"You look like the Queen of Sheba coming to pay a visit to Solomon," said Gamaliel.

"With this difference," added Onkelos, "that had

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Solomon known you, he would have come first to visit you!"

In the desert I like a camel better than a horse. My father, who is always so good to me yielded to my caprice and gave me the mount of my choice. It is the ship of the desert which is like an ocean and indeed which rocks like one. At first it is rather upsetting, but after becoming accustomed to it, the hump of the animal seems like the cupola of an observatory from which to admire the horizon. It is generally thought that there is no horizon in the desert, but this is a mistake. To have before one's eyes the immensity of the sands and at a hazy distance a blue zone resembling the sea, to discover here and there islands which rise up and gradually transform themselves into forests of palm-trees, to see the long line of caravans, or herds on the sandy fields, in a mirage which changes and gives them the proportions of monstrous antediluvians, to see the resplendent sun shining over white tents like wings of giant swans, to climb, or encircle mountains of red granite or pink quartz, to perceive all at once a fountain or a monumental tomb or a temple to "Tot" or "Phtah" with high pillars and enormous colonnades with capitals of lotus-leaves; these are some of the horizon's varieties, each of which in turn charmed my eyes along the way.

And into what exquisite reveries this slow and monotonous travel plunges one! Nowhere else and never have I so deeply felt the charm of great solitude and the profound recollection inspired by the presence

of living beings in the midst of dead things! To be only a short distance from a great city of past centuries and to have in spite of this the sensation of limitless proportion, of a desert without end, of ceaseless repose, of permanent silence, is a state of soul whose quiet and sweetness I love.

Sometimes one sees shadows spreading across the burning sands, they are fleeting clouds which pass before the sun. Sometimes I have the sensation that it is all a dream and that I am going to awaken. But, no; my dream is a reality. These camels of whose continuous motion we become a part, and whose heads move without stopping, like the prow of a boat upon the waves, are very much alive, and their tired gait announces that they will be happy to lie down to rest at the next stopping place.

It is the real picture of our voyage through life. We are nomads upon an earth which is a desert, and we only camp here until the time comes for us to make our last halt for that night from which there shall be no awakening. And we grope along in the midst of things which shall remain and continue to live when we shall have entered into death, and which shall continue to be dead when we shall have entered into life by the door of this same death. The desert is not death; it is the absence of life. It seems as if creation here had not yet begun. It is chaos in course of construction, and in this chaos we are the frail ambulating dwellings, enlightened and vivified by the spirit.

What shall I tell you, Mother, of the colossal ruins

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of Memphis? How shall I describe for you the "Serapeum" and the "Mastaba of Thi," and the "Colossus of Rameses the Second" and the avenues of sphinxes as well as the eleven great pyramids? The antiquity of all these monuments, ranging from fifteen to twenty and thirty centuries in age, their enormous proportions, their massive and simple architecture, throw me into a stupor. I remain speechless in the presence of these wonders whose history I should love to know. I have been saddened by the contrast which these great ruins — the work of men — present with the eternal youth of nature. Amid the vestiges of ancient Memphis and the monumental pyramids where unknown Pharaohs sleep, life still exists. There is a forest of palm trees always green which shades the borders of a little sacred lake. Wild fowl skirt the shore, while on the bank, the pale Ibis and pink flamingoes perched on their long legs as if on stilts appear to sleep their last sleep. What are their dreams, as they stand there in a stillness so like death? What strange visions pass before their half closed eyes to fascinate them!

IX

ON BOARD THE "GAZELLE"

ONCE again we have put to sea in a Phoenician galley called the "Gazelle" and we float along the coast of the ancient country of the Philistines. Night falls and the moon rises slowly in a serene sky.

There is not a breath of wind, and our sails are furled. The song of the rowers is hushed and only the cadenced sound of the oars reaches our ears. Our friends Gamaliel and Onkelos travel with us, and I question them ceaselessly on the prodigious history of the Jewish people. What they tell me is extraordinary. The blue coast disappearing behind us at our right is the country of the Philistine giants, the theatre of their hundred years' war upon Israel, which finally vanquished them.

Marvellous are the adventures of one of these Judges of Israel, a giant called Samson. Our friends showed us the places on the Coast where the colossal Jew had accomplished his most extraordinary exploits, Gaza, Ascalon and Lechi. Wonderful deeds of prowess where one man alone fought against thousands!

After a silence I again questioned Onkelos about the religious state of Egypt, and he answered: "The gods of Egypt are dead as are those of Greece and Rome, and the powerful nation itself which produced so many astounding works along the banks of the Nile has also died."

"But are not the gods immortal?"

"No. God, the one God, cannot die, but the gods who are only figures of human creation are not immortal."

"If they be but fiction, if they have no real existence, can it be said that they die?"

"They die in man's belief."

"What matter, then, that men believe no longer in

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gods who are fictions? In losing faith they simply rid themselves of error."

"Yes, but they fall into deeper error by no longer believing."

"You think, then, that it is better to have a false religion than none at all?"

"Yes, provided one be in good faith. Because after all religion in any form is always homage to the Divinity. God wishes to be honored by man, and, whether men call him 'Phtah,' as do the Egyptians, or 'Zeus' as do the Greeks, or 'Jupiter,' as the Romans, or 'Javeh,' as do the Jews, and the worship offered Him be as varied as the names by which He is called, if it be sincere and honestly believed to be the true faith, it is acceptable to Him. In the beginning, all nations believed in one God alone, and worshiped Him with sincerity, but the false learning of some and the passions of others have altered primitive beliefs and multiplied the forms of divine worship. While this was done in good faith with the object of honoring the Divinity, religion was still meritorious in the eyes of God. But when it took for its object unrestrained indulgence of evil passions, the gods became a mockery, and the extinction of faith led the nations into decadence. This is the lesson of history. Primitive religion, founded on ancient revelation, on tradition and the laws of nature, degenerated, but for a long time retained enough of virtue and truth to maintain these nations strong and glorious, like Greece and Rome. Rome could rise no higher, but should have been able to maintain herself on the

glorious summit she had reached. But her decadence has begun and is very rapid. Who will stop it? No one, because the religious faith of Rome is dying. Jehovah Himself appears to have abandoned His chosen people because they forget and neglect to serve Him. The Jew is dispersed throughout the world; he no longer has a home, and had he not still his Temple, would be but the shadow of a nation. Where then does the world tend? What will be the end of these tattered nations conquered by Rome? What does the future hold for this mistress of the universe herself? What destiny awaits her?"

My father then said, "Its destiny is to return to its primitive virtue. It is not possible that this immense empire, embracing the whole civilized world, was created to remain submissive to such sovereigns as Tiberius."

"Precisely," answered Onkelos, "and that is why the world expects a Master who will reconstruct it upon another basis, because the vast Roman edifice, such as it is, is not made to endure. It was built by violence, by cruel wars and by the destruction of other nations. The Master who is to come will gather up these remnants, will raise these ruins and from the shattered temples He will build an immense and unique Temple where every race will come to do homage to Him who created the universe."

"But He who created the universe is none other than Jehovah," said Gamaliel.

"Yes, but the world needs a Jehovah who will be

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better known, better understood, and a larger Temple in which there will be room for all humanity."

"And on whom do you count?" asked Gamaliel, "to make the world better understand Jehovah? What architect greater than those of Solomon do you expect to enlarge God's Temple and give it the proportions of this Roman empire which embraces the universe?"

"I expect Him whom the prophets have promised us. The ideal is not in the past, it is in the future; the sorrows of the world show its need of a man who shall be the incarnation of this ideal."

"In fact," said I, "you expect Him whom you call the Messiah?"

"Yes."

"And it is He who will regenerate the world?"

"Yes."

In this manner speaks Onkelos, my Mother, and thou canst imagine what interest I take in this conversation. He speaks classical Greek, and Socrates himself could not have been more eloquent teaching philosophy to his disciples.

Day follows day, each different from the other. After an ideal night, a dark and dreary day forces itself as a reality upon us. Masses of clouds coming from nowhere gather in the west and have formed themselves into a chain of black mountains but these mountains are moving towards the zenith like an army ranged in battle assailing a formidable citadel. Again it is like a great grey fringed curtain, lifted

by a hand invisible and powerful! Soon the curtain spread and covered the sun, the calm sea took on the color and polish of slate. Frightened birds flew with lowered wings across the waves. A light wind ruffled the ocean's surface, the breeze then grew into a tempest, the waves broke high and the hurricane burst forth. A sail they tried to raise was carried out to sea with its mast. The useless oars were drawn in and the vessel driven by the tempest drifted far from the shores to open sea. Floods from the sky met those of the waves inundating the deck which floated between them. The elements were unchained. The terror and disorder on board were indescribable, and for two hours we thought we would perish.

"Must we pray to the gods and to which ones?" I asked Onkelos.

"Pray to the unknown God," he answered, "He is the only one no longer doubted in Greece and who is believed in a little everywhere."

At last the storm became more calm, and the quieter sea permitted the rowers to take up their oars and the pilot to direct the vessel. When night came we reached the shores of Samaria and resumed our conversation on the subject of the expected God, who is for us as for the Greeks the "Unknown God."

To-morrow at daybreak we will be in Cæsarea.

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CÆSAREA

CÆSAREA is entirely a new city. As its name indicates, it dates back only to the epoch of Cæsar Augustus and it is in honor of this great man that its founder, Herod, so called it. At first there was but a Phœnician village here and a tower called the Tower of Straton, which marked the entrance into a little bay which served as harbor. But it was insufficient protection in the storms so frequent on these shores. Herod Agrippa built at first a long pier which partly closed the bay and transformed it into a more spacious and stronger port. Then he built a temple dedicated to Augustus, a theatre and amphitheatre, aqueducts and a superb palace as a residence for himself. The members of his court, his officers, priests, magistrates and notables of the kingdom, little by little gathered about him and built themselves houses and more or less elaborate villas.

The Roman procurator has a residence in Cæsarea and rich Jewish and Greek merchants come to spend the winter here in the country, because the climate is softer than on the mountains of Judea, where Jerusalem is built. In a few years the Phœnician village has thus become an attractive city, which King Herod has completed by surrounding it with a wall and erecting a fortress on one of its rocks which faces the sea and commands the port.

This, then, is the city where we found Pilate and

Claudia, who were expecting us. Their villa is well placed on the summit of a hill which commands a vast horizon over harbor and sea. Sheltered on the north by a forest of olive and Egyptian fig trees of enormous size, and on the east by the mountains of Samaria, it has a pleasant climate and a great deal of light and sun after the sixth hour of the day. The garden is immense; hedges of myrtle and rosemary divide it; coppices of Barbary fig trees surround and guard it against thieves. Flowering orange groves, rose laurels, lavender, fennel and wall flowers shed their fragrance everywhere.

The city, situated on a gentle slope half hidden by its rich southern vegetation, leans towards the sea on the west, and the fortifications which crown its heights and shut off the horizon on the eastern side descend toward the cliff. During the second half of the day, the light grows intense and the sun's rays are multiplied by the reflecting sea. I often walk with Claudia on the Marina. This is the city's great avenue and commands the port. I need hardly remark that it does not compare in the slightest degree with the Via Sacra. It is not bordered like ours with palaces, temples, porticoes, colonnades and marble arches. It is shaded by great sycamores and extends out over a terrace whence the view embraces the sea I love so well. Claudia and I spent an hour watching this great expanse of blue. Wild with joy and light, drunk with its own beauty, it sang and danced, bounded, turned and cast on every side a scintillating rain of multi-colored drops. From

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the waves rose a delicious odor of salt and seaweed which stimulated and revived us and a murmuring song that enchanted us. There is nothing more beautiful than the sea, and I never weary of watching it. What is the secret of its charm? Is it the lack of visible limitation which appeals to our thirst for the infinite? Is it that it offers no obstacle to our gaze and pleases us by the suggestion of limitless freedom? Is it its unending variety, as changeable as human nature? Yes, it must be that for these reasons and for many others there is a harmony between the sea and our own nature. Like our heart, it is vast and has its depths; like our soul, it reflects the sky and receives from it its light; like each one of us, it has its days of serenity and its days of storm. I love it best towards evening, the setting sun then traces, to the utmost extremity of the horizon, a long triumphal way all paved with flaming golden spangles. I say then to myself, this path reaches to the mouth of our well-beloved Tiber, and instantly my spirit travels along its course up to the City of the Seven Hills. I see you again, dear Mother, and put my arms around you and tell you all my impressions of the Orient, so variegated, so alive and so original.

I will sincerely regret having to leave my great friend, the sea. I will miss it in Jerusalem, for I never weary of its companionship.

But other interesting scenes await us, for the town

in itself is most picturesque, its people strange and life here altogether different from that of any other place. You cannot imagine how interested I am in this country and its people. I am so well placed to observe what passes and for questioning those who can best inform me. I have the good fortune to find myself here in an epoch perhaps the most extraordinary in the history of this country. The Jewish people is a nation apart. Its history has little or nothing in common with that of other nations. I have studied it with avidity ever since I came and find it wonderful. It was already old before the founding of Rome, its existence running back two thousand years. Surrounded by nations more numerous and more powerful than itself, it lived in isolation, always fighting for its own government. Its victors oppressed and led it into captivity but they were never able to assimilate it. It remained itself in spite of foreign domination, living its own life, keeping its national character intact even in the midst of other nations, surviving all catastrophes, rising above all defeats, triumphing over reverses and death, remaining always upright in the ruins of even older civilizations, which had each in turn crushed it.

For two thousand years, it has believed in one only God whom it calls Javeh (Jehovah). When it has been faithful to this God, it has triumphed over its enemies in a series of prodigies. Every time it has abandoned His worship, it has been vanquished, chastised, exiled. Its long and terrible experience has taught it nothing. Happiness and prosperity have

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been the reefs on which it has been wrecked. The moment it becomes fortunate, free and powerful, it forgets its God. But when it suffers, it returns to Him and like the Phœnix is re-born from its own ashes.

Other peoples are directed and governed by men of genius and through them achieve glory and greatness. The Jewish people is led by prophet and priest, and all its dreams of grandeur and glory rest upon a Messiah expected for centuries. When it disappears as a nation, it persists as a cult and a race. Even when it no longer has a country, its patriotism lives, because this patriotism is blended with its religious belief, its faith in a Messiah, which remains alive though all other religions be in decadence. It is neither remarkable for its art or science, nor for its military prowess, but has a Law which at the same time is a Religion, and a Book which it believes to be divine and which remains its glory, its consolation and its hope.

Its children wander throughout the world, everywhere erecting great establishments and amassing fortunes but never fusing with other peoples. The land they inhabit is always a strange land, and their only home is Zion, or Jerusalem, with its Temple. In the past it believed in its prophets and killed them! In the future, it believes in its Messiah, and when He shall appear, the prophets announce that it will also kill Him. Is this not a strange people? And now the question is to know if it be really the Messiah who made His appearance in Galilee about

two years ago. Crowds surround Him and proclaim Him, but the synagogue and the chief priests, the Scribes and Pharisees have declared war against Him and seek to put Him to death. There is nothing in this war that in any way resembles the combats of Cæsar, Pompey and Anthony. It is a violent and religious war. Claudia and I take such interest in it that, were we free, we would soon be among the prophet's friends, so great is the sympathy He inspires in us.

Pilate goes frequently into Jerusalem in discharge of his duties and to keep himself in touch with the emotional state of the people, who are greatly agitated and complain always of the weight of the yoke of Rome.

He himself has begun to be disquieted at the popular mental trend on the subject of Messianism. He fears intricacies which might involve him in the bitter contest of the Jewish priesthood against the prophet. For this reason, I think, he has warned us to be ready to leave to-morrow for Jerusalem, where we expect to spend several months.

In the evening Claudia proposed that we take a little fresh air on the Marina, and we went to sit under a great cedar with the sea lapping at our feet. The moon slowly descended from the limpid heights of the zenith and like a long Roman way, bathed in silvery light, her rays traced out the direction of Italy. The peaceful waves murmured lovingly to

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the sands on the shore and left behind a trail of foam, white as the phantom of the Sirens. A large black galley came to cast anchor, and great boats filled with returning travelers floated to the cadenced accompaniment of oars and the song of rowers. These were Jews, for they sang the psalms of their great poet, David, songs full of sadness and harmony, recalling the sufferings of their ancestors while in captivity in Babylon. They have been translated into Latin; here is the first verse:

"Super flumina Babylonis
Illic sedimus et flevimus
Cum recordaremur Sion."

"On the banks of the rivers of Babylon
We were seated, and we wept
While recalling to ourselves Jerusalem."

XI

IN JERUSALEM

HERE I am in Jerusalem and I want to tell thee, oh, Mother, without waiting longer, how wonderful is this city, and how deeply its appearance has impressed me. I had heard so much about it, had read its description and still had not the faintest idea of it because it is unlike any other place in the world.

It is less the city of a people and of a race, than of a religion. Its Temple is its glory and its beauty. It commands it, eclipses it, is its base and its apex.

Its foundations are driven deep into Mount Moriah. Crossing the threshold of the great city, and on leaving it, the Temple can be seen from every spot shimmering above the walls and towers.

We arrived by the road from Samaria, and when Jerusalem appeared through a gap in the mountains, I thought it was the vision of a dream—a magic vision. For the Romans there is only one city in the world, Rome, but what great emotion I felt before this glorious apparition, emerging as it does from the depths of history, with its two thousand years of existence, massive and sombre at the base, ethereal, ideal, glittering with gold, at its summit, the Holy of Holies.

Evidently, Mother, one must not seek here the Roman Forum nor the Capitol nor temples dedicated to the multitude of our gods. Here is but one Temple and one God. But how vast and magnificent is this Temple, and how majestic He seems to me in His unity, this terrible God of the Jews! I began to visit this strange city with Claudia and to study its history. First Gamaliel and then Onkelos serve us as guide and one could not have better, because they know so perfectly their city, where every spot is witness to the great events of its marvelous history. Besides this, they are both pleasant and sympathetic friends.

In the beginning, Jerusalem was called Salem, and its king, whose life was full of mystery, was a priest

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of the Most High. What was his origin and his family? From what race and from what country did he come? Who made him priest and king? No one knows. His name, Melchisedech, signified King of Justice, and the name of his city Salem meant Peace. His city and he represented, then, two great blessings to humanity, justice and peace. It is, perhaps, he of whom David thought, when he said, "Justice and Peace have kissed each other."

He lived in the epoch of the shepherd kings, who governed their people while tending their flocks and also guarded souls, spiritual sheep. The two powers were united in one man, who was at the same time, father, king, and priest. Later on these people became nations and the powers were separated.

One day Melchisedech summoned to his presence one of the neighboring shepherd kings in the valley of Save, to-day called the Valley of Jehosaphat. Abraham, the shepherd king, bowed his head before the king priest and recognized his supreme authority by paying a fine called a tithe. Since then, the Jews have called Abraham "Father of Believers," and Melchisedech "Priest Eternal," archetype of the Priesthood and figure of the expected Messiah.

One of the successors of the King of Salem was called Jibus, and the fusion of the two names formed Jerusalem which the city has borne ever since; it signifies "Vision of Peace." This appellation appears a sort of irony, because peace is a blessing it has never known in the past and which it will never enjoy for long at any time by reason of the change-

able character of its people. The very earth on which it stands is as unstable as its history. Its mountains recall its high aspirations, its periods of glory, of power and pride. Its deep gorges, its dark ravines symbolize its slavery and the abysses of humiliation into which its people have fallen each time the arm of God has ceased to sustain it.

Nevertheless, from this irregular city, convulsed as it is and full of ruin, there emanates an exquisite charm which enchants and draws me to it. The grandeur, the poetry, the dramatic interest of its history has no equal, this history is written on the stones of its monuments, in the overturned soil and on its formidable heights. This, then, Mother, is the theatre, so filled with memories, in which a new era of prophets is about to open and where events still more wonderful than those of past centuries are in course of accomplishment.

The time has come to open well my eyes and ears, to instruct myself to the very depth of things pertaining to this country. Claudia takes the same interest in it as I. But Pilate is far from sharing our enthusiasm. He doubtless holds his position dear on account of its appointments and the honors which accrue to it, but he likes neither Judea nor the Jews. He is sadly bored here. It is not in a city like Jerusalem that he can find the amusements he loves; here are neither theatres nor circus, nor gladiators, nor even baths, for the baths of the common people are nothing like ours of Rome. And then my brother-in-law is not without anxiety on the subject of the

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Messianic movement. The agitation grows and might cause serious trouble.

There are two things Claudia and I do not like. One is the smoke of the sacrifices constantly rising from the altar of the Holocausts, the odor of which is blown as far as the palace, when the wind comes from the south, and another is the traffic of victims under the beautiful porticoes of the Temple. This spectacle is disgusting at the time of the great religious festivals, and when the Prophet of Nazareth preached His first sermon here, He Himself was revolted. Taking a whip He drove the sellers and their flocks away and upset the tables of the money-changers. His aspect was so terrible that no one dared resist Him.

But when He had returned into Galilee, the merchants came back and once again took up their business.

PART III
CONCERNING THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT

CHAPTER I

PILATE'S HOUSE

IN Jerusalem the Roman Procurator inhabited the castle "Antonia," named by Herod the Great in honor of his friend Anthony. It was the most monumental of the fourteen great castles of the Second Wall of Jerusalem and touched the northwest corner of the Temple. Joined to it, it encroached a little on the vast esplanade where the colonnades and porticoes lengthened out and, from an architectural point of view, completed and protected it. Its square walls were constructed of enormous chiseled blocks, measuring twelve feet in width and six in thickness and in length. Around the top ran a colossal cornice bordered with a machicolation or perforated parapet, crowned with battlements. It was a citadel and a palace, a barracks for the Roman cohorts and a residence for the Governor and his family. A massive postern with bronze doors served as egress on the north into the wide streets which led to the "Sheep Gate," and another narrower one brought the

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Pilate had married Claudia Procla, daughter of the Senator Claudius, one of the last descendants in the direct line of the gens Claudia, a patrician family of Rome. It was from this family that Cæsar Octavius, who later became Emperor under the name of Augustus, had chosen his first wife Claudia, whom before many days he put away. He had married her to gain favor with Anthony and sent her back to reconcile himself with Pompey. The Emperor Tiberius was himself descended from the elder branch of this family, Claudia. The Roman Senate, of which the old Claudius made part, was by that time stripped of its first grandeur.

The Senators had become courtiers with servile souls and to gain favor with the Emperor did not blush to play the role of informer. They denounced and accused all who bore them ill will or who did not assist them in their wasteful extravagance. From time to time the highest officers of state were killed but by what hands and for what crimes they had been struck was unknown. The secret orders of the Emperor had been executed by the Senate. No one suffered more than Claudius from the decay of this high magistracy to which he belonged. With the assistance of several of his colleagues, he had endeavored to resist this state of things; but human force could no longer stay the fatal movement which led to the ruin of all those institutions which formed the glory of Rome.

The old Senator was not of his time; he was rather of the type of the ancient Romans of the Republic. Remaining faithful to primitive polytheism, he considered the propagation of Greek philosophy a danger to Rome. The doctrines of Zeno and of Epicurus, differing as they did, both involved the ruin of polytheism, and he was sincerely grieved to see the best minds of Rome divided between them. The decadence of morality saddened him as well, and he attributed it also to the corresponding passing away of ancient polytheism. This is why he preached of a return to old beliefs and primitive gods. These primitive gods were for him not simply Grecian divinities like human creatures having the weaknesses and passions of humanity. The sovereign god for him was not Zeus, a poetic but effeminate ideal, it was Jupiter, majestic, austere, all powerful and good. Without exactly knowing the nature and attributes of the gods, he attributed to them all the good things of this world as well as the government of the nations.

The inferior gods designated under the name of "*indigetes*" did not find in him an unbeliever, but he considered them simply manifestations of divine power, not persons distinct from the supreme divinity. He repudiated the worship of idols, though he admired the work of illustrious sculptors who fashioned images of the gods, but he wished it well understood that these images were but figures designed to remind men of the gods' existence. He had the piety of the ancient Romans, offered sacrifice to the gods and

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frequently prayed to them. His two daughters were superior women in intelligence and culture.

Camilla was less beautiful than Claudia, Pilate's wife, but her mind was more brilliant and virile than that of her sister and had developed astonishingly in the study of the philosophers, moralists, historians and poets. While admiring his daughter's erudition, the old Roman became alarmed at her tendencies and above all at the weakening of her faith in polytheism. But he was deeply afflicted by the scepticism of his son-in-law.

In reality, Pilate had no religion. Like most of the enlightened Romans of his epoch, he looked upon polytheism as a collection of poetic but childish fables. The study of philosophy had at first attracted him, but no school convinced him. He would not accept the doctrines of the Stoics. To suppress the senses and live the life of the soul alone; to consider that the only misfortune in this world is vice which draws us away from the divine and the eternal law of order; that sufferings, sickness, reverses of fortune are not in reality evils, and that even death itself is not an evil to be feared,—these ethics were too austere for a man who had known the easy life of Rome. He applauded the disciples of Plato when they demolished stoicism, but followed them no further. Their doctrine, too, was too severe. Epicurus himself had not won his allegiance because of his strict code of morals. He taught the search for pleasure but placed it among the virtues. The disciples of Epicurus pleased him more, because they condemned

only the excessive pleasure which might engender pain, and, if reason held supremacy over the senses and passions, it would still allow them certain liberty and permit a wide range of enjoyment.

"My philosophy," he said, "is very simple. The more I have observed the world and understood life, the more have I simplified it. I no longer seek the reason of things, being convinced I will not find it; why weary myself in research which I believe useless? And how could I hope to unravel this great problem when so many philosophers have not succeeded? I content myself, then, with watching the passing of things without asking myself from whence they come, or where they go, or of what they are made. If they are beautiful, I admire them and try to stop them in their flight to enjoy their beauty. If they are ugly, I close my eyes, turn away and repulse them; but if they persist in obscuring my vision and if they trouble my pleasures or darken my horizon, I use all the force in my power to crush them. Nevertheless, I do not like contention, and I fly from it. I like an easy life and the pleasure which it permits; power, glory and the satisfaction they give; riches for the well-being they create."

Pilate extended a very limited hospitality in Jerusalem, and his friends were few. Besides which, he was not popular. Popularity imposes a thousand sacrifices he was not disposed to make. The Jewish priests, in particular, were displeasing to him, and he received them through official necessity alone.

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II

SOME OF PILATE'S FRIENDS

AMONG the number of rare friends who frequented the palace of the Governor, were to be found the two Gamaliels, Prince Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Onkelos and several Roman officers, among others Caius Oppius, the Centurion of Magdala who had been promoted to command the guard of the Procurator. Caius Oppius belonged to two great families of Rome. His father was Oppius of the family of Oppia, and his mother was of the gens Cornelia. He had made his studies in Rome and had visited Greece. Then he had enrolled himself in a Roman legion and, after a campaign of several months in Syria, had been put at the head of a Company and sent to the garrison at Magdala.

The families Cornelia and Claudia were friends in Rome, and Caius as a simple legionary, had known Camilla when she was barely sixteen years of age. The expedition into Syria had separated them, but on finding each other in Jerusalem their former close association drew them nearer to each other.

Caius was a fine type of soldier, frank, loyal, brave and generous, a character fair and straight, a mind which wished to know the truth and sought it in good faith. One could be certain that whenever he found it, he would not hesitate to embrace it. He was essentially a champion of just causes, no matter what might be their chance of success. Vanquished causes

might count upon him truly with as great certainty as triumphant ones. He had read widely and learned much, but belonged to no school. He was an eclectic, his mind remaining open to all wholesome doctrines preached. We have already seen, through his letters to Tullius, the admiration he had for Jesus and with what growing interest he followed the Messianic movement.

Joseph of Arimathea and Prince Nicodemus were great friends, though the latter was much the younger. Both were powerful rulers with large fortunes and belonged to the Chamber of Elders in the Sanhedrim. But far from having the usual haughtiness of the chief priests, they were modest and diffident. By birth and connection they belonged to what was then called the governing class, but the class which in reality governed was the priesthood. Content with their lot, ambitious for neither power nor honors, they asked but to live in peace while awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Nicodemus, nephew of Gamaliel, had followed in his uncle's footsteps and had become also a Doctor in Israel. He belonged to the sect of Pharisees but was of the more moderate party. He would not have fought for the triumph of justice and liberty; but there were occasions when he condemned those who refused justice to others. Joseph of Arimathea held the same opinions. Without authority over other members of the Sanhedrim, they both enjoyed the consideration of all as well as public esteem, carefully avoiding everything that might cause them to lose it. Seeking fairly for the truth,

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they felt a secret sympathy for Jesus and grieved that their colleagues were preparing unrelenting war against the young prophet. But they were afraid of creating enemies for themselves or compromising their position by openly declaring themselves his disciples.

Thus it was that Nicodemus wished to hold his first interview with Jesus at night. His conscience imposed this duty upon him, but through human respect he did not wish it publicly known. This interview had thrown him into deep disquiet, and he spoke of it to Gamaliel.

Gamaliel, surnamed the Elder, was the grandson of the illustrious Hillel, from whom he inherited genius, love for learning and some of his grandfather's great reputation. Doctor of Law, Member of the Sanhedrim, he kept the most renowned school in Jerusalem, and numberless pupils gathered about his chair. Some came from Alexandria and some even from Athens, but at the time of our story, the most illustrious were Onkelos, Nicodemus, Saul of Tarsus, (who became St. Paul) Barnabas who was the companion of his missions, Luke who came from Cyrene, Manahem, foster-brother of the Tetrarch Herod and Stephen who was the first martyr to the faith.

The illustrious professor was an orthodox Jew, closely attached to the Mosaic Law, but sincerely longing for the coming of the Messiah. He carefully collected all the information he could procure about Jesus of Nazareth, and when he had heard Him in the Temple had been carried away with admiration and astonishment.

"How is it possible," asked he of Nicodemus, "that this young Rabbi, who has never followed my teaching nor that of any other school, knows the scriptures better than I who have studied them for fifty years? He is an extraordinary man. His doctrine has never been taught by any other prophet. In my childhood, I heard my illustrious ancestor, the great Hillel speak. I was present at his greatest oratorical triumphs, but he never spoke as does Jesus of Nazareth; never would he have dared say such things as fall from the mouth of this prophet. Never has any man known to history pronounced such words as these, 'I am the Way and the Truth,' 'I am the Resurrection and the Life,' thus confirming that profession of faith made by Job, which at the same time is a prophecy; 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' Such language passes my understanding, Nicodemus, and if this man is not the Son of God, who can He be?"

Gamaliel was head of the old school of Scribes, and his erudition was traditional, but at his side arose the younger school, eager for novelty, which had chosen Onkelos for leader. Greek, of remarkable distinction, born of one of the old families of Delphi, brought up in paganism to the age of twenty-nine, Onkelos had known only the gods of Olympus. For some time, however, he had held that great need for religious reformation existed in Greece, and the Sophists employed all their ingenuity to discover doctrines and formulas which might satisfy this need of humanity. But one after another the Schools destroyed each other, and the great overwhelming melancholy that

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leads to suicide enveloped all society. They had ceased to believe in the gods, who had become ridiculous, but nevertheless they regretted them. They demanded others, and those who gave anxious thought to the future of humanity asked themselves, "What gods are to re-people empty Olympus?" Heaven appeared closed, who was there to re-open it? The oracle of Delphi had formerly spoken to announce a new era, but for a long period it had been dumb.

Then Onkelos emigrated into Judea to Jerusalem and became one of the disciples of Gamaliel. The subtle and learned doctor had convinced him of the falsehood of polytheism, and the young Greek finished by embracing Judaism with a zeal that had thrown him into the Pharasaical intolerance, except with regard to the Sadducees, with whom he willingly associated.

All that he had adored he burnt; the gods of Greece filled him with horror. Even the heritage received from his parents seemed impure, and to show the loathing with which the pagans and their gold inspired him, he went to the Dead Sea and buried in its depths his whole inheritance. This last was not a Jewish trait, for while the Jew detests the Gentile, he still gladly takes his money.

Onkelos was learned in the Mosaic Law, and became the author of a Commentary on the Pentateuch in the Chaldaic language, which is celebrated even now and which the Jews read with confidence and admiration. But Greek philosophy had not inspired in him the same repulsion as did the polytheism of

Delphi and Corinth. He still admired Socrates and Plato and had set up for himself a religious ideal which carried him to the point of believing that the expected Messiah would be the realization of this ideal. It was a fusion of the purest Platonic doctrine with the Mosaic Law. One could understand how with these ideas Onkelos could not become a disciple of Jesus.

Simeon Gamaliel was his most intimate friend. A new link had formed itself between these two,—their mutual admiration for Camilla, which each had confided to the other.

Gamaliel, the son, did not in the least resemble his father. While the father was conciliating and peaceful, the son was fanatical, intolerant and aggressive. He was a silent man; he did not like the slow methods of speech, but preferred energetic and radical action. He had studied the law of Moses in his father's school, but had only learned it in the letter which kills and not in the spirit which vivifies. Pharisee and proud, infatuated with a knowledge which he believed he had inherited from his ancestors, especially from his grandfather Hillel, whose name was always on his lips, he showed himself imperious and intolerant. It seemed absurd to him that the Messiah could be of humble condition and poor, as was Jesus. He must be a prince, if He were the son of David, and surrounded with great power, since He was to re-establish the kingdom of Israel. He received great consideration in the Sanhedrim, in which with his father he

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had a place. The names of Gamaliel and of Hillel crowned his brow with an aureola, and his silence was attributed to wisdom. It must be added that his features were distinguished, he was tall and his carriage noble and imposing. He was twenty-three years of age when his father sent him to Rome to study Latin letters, Roman history and the history of polytheism. The father had hopes that travel, contact with other peoples, other customs and other manners and ideas would give his son a more conciliating, broader and more diplomatic culture; for he was the first to condemn his son's exaggerations and fanaticism. But the sojourn at Rome had not at all produced this result. The scepticism of the Schools, the degrading creed of polytheism, the corruption of morals had revolted him, and he returned more than ever an enemy of Rome. From the moment of his return, he began to conspire secretly and enrolled himself among the "Nationalists" afterwards called the "Zelots" who wanted, at all costs, to throw off the yoke of Rome. His love for Camilla forced him still more violently into this course of action, when he perceived that the beautiful Roman did not share his feelings and was attracted by the new doctrine preached by Jesus of Nazareth.

Such were those whom religious questions and above all the question of the Messiah, interested most, and who often met, now in His Excellency's state apartments, again at the house of Prince Nicodemus, who occupied a sumptuous residence near the gate of

Damascus, and sometimes at the residence of Joseph of Arimathea, who lived on the declivity of Gareb at the northwest of Golgotha.

It is astonishing that religious discussion formed the principal subject of conversation every time the above personages found themselves together, and the passionate exasperation caused by such discussion is well known. The singular state of mind among the learned at this epoch was most interesting.

III

RELIGIOUS DISCUSSIONS

AMONG the Gentiles as well as among the Jews, the most enlightened minds felt a presentiment that the ancient religious and political institutions were perishing and that a new era was about to open upon the world. But what race and what man would give humanity this regeneration so greatly needed? Here was the problem, this was the question of the day. And this great question had passed from speculation into fact, since a great prophet had made his appearance, saying to the crowd, "This Regenerator,—this Messiah whom you expect, is I; and it is God who sends Me to you." The religious future of the world and of Messianism had become the theme of discussion, not only in the synagogues and public places, but even in the home of the Roman procurator. One evening it was Caius Oppius who began the

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conversation, saying, "It seems to me the times have come sung by our poet Virgil and predicted by the Sibyl of Cumæ. Rome is achieving its historical evolution as that of Greece is already achieved, and this Roman civilization, of which we are so proud, will soon rejoin the Oriental civilizations in the night of the past."

The old Claudius answered, "What you take for night is but an eclipse. Wait a little while, and the sun will reappear. Rome is immortal."

Caius.—I say nothing to the contrary and sincerely hope Rome will not die. But it will be transformed. It will live only upon the condition that a new religious faith be infused into its national life. What is true of Rome is equally true of Greece. Are these not, Onkelos, the beliefs and hopes of your native country as well?

Onkelos.—More than three centuries ago, our great Plato announced the coming of one sent from Heaven to teach us the proper worship to render God. But I have often asked myself from whence had he drawn the idea of this supreme hope? Did he have it from the oracles of the Sibyl? Did he base it on the conviction that the human mind unaided was incapable of discovering what form of worship was due to God? Or had he acquired it through intercourse with the Jews and knowledge of their sacred books? I do not know. But it is certain that he speaks of the coming of a divine messenger and that he describes his life and death almost in the same terms as does

the prophet Isaias, and I do not see how he could have written certain passages of his work, had he not known the books of the Prophets.

Nicodemus.—But in speaking thus, did Plato simply express a new and personal sentiment? Or was it the echo of beliefs popular in Greece?

Onkelos.—I believe he gave expression to a tradition of a long expected coming. This belief was eloquently affirmed in the Prometheus of Æschylus, and in certain pages of Socrates.

Nicodemus.—And is it perpetuated in Greece?

Onkelos.—I believe that it has found its definite manifestation in the erection of a temple at Athens which is dedicated, "To the Unknown God."

Gamaliel.—And does the same belief exist in Persia and Egypt?

Camilla.—In Italy our poets have gathered these Oriental traditions, and Virgil has given them the most precise and complete expression. I have in my hand his Fourth Eclogue, which is really extraordinary.

Camilla began to read, but her father interrupted her.

"That is but a poet's dream, and there is nothing in it save for those who have lost faith in polytheism. For me, I remain faithful to the religion of my ancestors. This has made the greatness of Rome; to abandon it will cause her downfall. I have no illusions as to the weakening of our faith; it is the result of the corruption of our morals. We congratulate ourselves on having riches and living in luxury, but

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these are the things that cause our decadence. When the Romans lived simply instead of amassing treasure and riches of vanquished nations, rare furniture, rich paintings, soft carpets, objects of art and antiquities, every family gave to its country great, strong and courageous soldiers, virtuous citizens and honest magistrates. Alas, how the times have changed! The Jews no longer have anything to do with us; they hold themselves apart because they fear our corruption; and they are right. History repeats itself elsewhere. Egypt and Greece have preceded us in the path of decadence, and the same causes will produce with us the same effects. But I do not believe, in spite of all that, in the final downfall of our religion."

Pilate.— Well, I believe it and do not expect any reformation. Religions have had their day; they have been a great governmental force, necessary institutions to the formation of society and clarions of battle; to-day they are nothing but brazen cymbals. They have been beacons throughout centuries of darkness, but since the century of Augustus they are nothing more than smoking lamps. I understand that certain persons allow themselves to be captured by religious novelties. But these novelties will last a shorter time than the rubbish of Egypt and of Greece. I am not an impious person. I believe with Ovid that a god formed the earth and man by separating them from primitive chaos, but where is he, this god? What manner of being is he and what relation can there be between him and us? No one knows anything about it, and that is why religions are chimeras.

God alone could instruct us upon this fact, but nothing proves that He has judged it right to do so. Those who pretend that He has spoken to them and given them a mission to instruct are either liars or dupes of hallucinations.

A personal friend of Pilate's, Greek by origin and a man of letters, named Pancreas, then said,—

“Governor, I am almost entirely of your opinion, though my belief has another basis than yours. I do not distinguish between cause and effect; between creator and creation. The two make but one, and this one is God. He is spirit and body; his body which I see is the universe, and I presume that this body has a soul which is invisible, but whose manifestations I see.”

Pilate.— And when did this body begin to exist?

Pancreas.— It is eternal, like the spirit.

Pilate.— And everything is God?

Pancreas.— Everything.

Pilate.— Thyself?

Pancreas.— Myself; I am a fraction of God.

Pilate burst out laughing and said, “My dear Pancreas, from the moment that thou makest thyself a part of him, I cannot believe in thy god. Neither do I believe that the chief priests will ever take him for their Messiah, in whom, by the way, I do not believe.”

Gamaliel the younger.— Well, for me, Governor, I believe in Him and expect Him, and even if the prophets had not promised us a Messiah, I would believe that His coming is near at hand.

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Pilate.— And why?

Gamaliel.— Because the world has need of Him. Because if God exists, and you do not doubt His existence, He can no longer permit it to remain under the dominion of one man alone, who is called Tiberius. There is no longer a law, there is no more justice, there are no more rights nor liberty for anyone. What do I say? Even your Roman gods are no longer anything but myths. There exists but one sovereign master of all things and of everyone, and this sovereign is a monster.

Pilate.— Gamaliel, such language is not permitted under my roof. I am Cæsar's representative, and no one must fail in respect to him in my presence.

Gamaliel.— I beg your pardon, Governor, for having allowed myself to be carried away by the ardor of my nationalistic sentiments. I know that under your roof I am not excusable for mingling politics with religion. I only wished to express my profound conviction that the present world has need of a Saviour and that He will soon be given to it, if I have a clear understanding of the prophecies.

And it was thus that all conversation was turned into religious controversy and finished with Jesus of Nazareth, who was the Man of the day. Camilla often took part in these discussions, and her remarks were clear and reasonable. Above all, she listened with extraordinary interest, and to keep her with them Caius and Onkelos often provoked disputes, now

with Gamaliel and Nicodemus, again with the Governor and the old patrician.

"Nicodemus," Caius said one day, "I recognize the truth of monotheism, but Nature herself draws men into pantheism, which is Pancreas' religion and which ends by being about the same as polytheism. This is an historical fact. How, then, do you explain that the Hebrews have remained monotheists? Is it because they are of Semitic origin?"

Nicodemus.—No; we are surrounded by nations who are of Semitic origin and are idolators. This neighborhood has always been a great religious peril for us, and when Israel sinned by idolatry, Semitic people themselves led it away.

Caius Oppius.—Where, then, do you find the cause of this fidelity of your people to the monotheistic faith?

Nicodemus.—The cause is supernatural and is discussed in our Holy Books. It is limited to the chosen people of Jacob. Without revelation, without our constant relationship with God through the mediation of our prophets and without the periodical chastisements with which He has afflicted us, we would have done as other nations and glided into polytheism. This has happened to the Semitic races which did not descend from Jacob and inhabited Phœnicia, Chaldea and Egypt. But that is not all. The unity of God is not our only dogma; we have another as important as the first, which has preserved it in its extraordinary vitality. It is the expectation of a Messiah. For many centuries, the Hebrews have be-

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lieved that He will come and that He will establish the kingdom of God in the world. So that this kingdom will also be ours, since we are the chosen people of God. And, mark well, that is not a thing of the past, but an institution to come and which consequently cannot grow old. Our belief is a hope, and this hope has made us live.

Caius Oppius.— But hope dies like everything else. How, then, has yours been able to exist through such long centuries without realization? Man quickly tires of waiting.

Nicodemus.— It is true, and that is why I see in this historical phenomenon a supernatural cause and find in it one more proof that Jehovah has always protected Israel.

Sometimes the discussion would turn directly upon Jesus of Nazareth and on His teaching, which all the world declared extraordinary, but which they did not wish to recognize as divine. Onkelos was the most ardent in denying all idea of divine inspiration in the discourse of the Nazarean.

“There are certainly in the preaching of Jesus,” he said to Gamaliel the elder, “doctrines which existed before Him. He borrows many things from Greek philosophy.”

Gamaliel.— And what deduction do you draw from this fact, supposing it to be true?

Onkelos.— I deduct and conclude that he deceives His disciples by telling them His teaching is divine.

Gamaliel.— But, my dear Onkelos, Jesus would not reject a truth because some of your philosophers had taught it before Him. Truth itself bears a divine character and does not lose this character because it proceeds from the mouth of Plato, Socrates or Zeno. There is some divinity in the human genus, but the divine can only touch us by becoming human. Still, it is always divinity. I do not believe that Jesus ever studied Greek philosophy, but suppose He really had taken some of the truths it teaches, they would not be the less divine, and so He has every right to say to His disciples, "These truths come from God."

Onkelos.— But our philosophers were neither gods nor prophets such as the men Jehovah sent the Jewish people to teach them truth.

Nicodemus.— No, without doubt, nor were they inspired. But you have there precisely, my dear Onkelos, a great historical problem which you would do well to study deeply. Whence came the truths great geniuses have known and taught? We ourselves believe in a primitive revelation made to man by God Himself. But how have other peoples acquired the summa of truth we find in their books? Has primitive revelation been transmitted to them through tradition, or have they raised themselves by the force of reason alone to the knowledge of primordial truth. This is the condition of the historical problem; but however that may be, truth is always truth, and whether it be inspired in us by our conscience or whether it be taught us through our reason, or by

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learned men, it is always of divine origin, and Jesus has the right to say, if His teaching be true, that it comes from God. Neither does He pretend to give us a law of His own invention, new in all its parts. On the contrary, He says and repeats, that He has not come to abolish the ancient law but to accomplish and perfect it. Thou thyself, Onkelos, holdest the belief that the Mosaic law is not to be changed but that it is susceptible of development, of being made perfect. This is also my idea, and if I be not mistaken, it is in combining with it the best in Grecian philosophy that thou wilt arrive at this state of perfection. But then, if it be true that Jesus of Nazareth borrows part of His doctrines from Socrates and Plato, thou shouldst work in unison with Him, thou, who hast remained a disciple of these great philosophers, in spite of thy conversion to Judaism.

Onkelos found himself at a loss to answer these questions, when Nicodemus intervened and changed the course of the discussion.

IV.

NEW CONTROVERSIES

IT often happened that the same controversialists met at the house of Prince Nicodemus, who exercised a generous hospitality. Naturally the discussion recommenced on the Messianic problem, which was more than ever the subject of the day. Among the doctors in Israel, members of the Sanhedrim who did

not belong to the Chamber of the Priests, Gamaliel and Onkelos were those who had greatest authority. They were not only eloquent and learned in letters, but their deep knowledge of the Scriptures was widely recognized. One evening Nicodemus asked Onkelos this question,—

“How translatest thou and to whom dost thou apply the name ‘Scheloh’ in this little verse of the prophecy of Jacob, ‘The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, until that time when Scheloh comes. It is He whom the nations shall obey’?”

Onkelos.—The meaning of the prophecy itself is not doubtful, and all the Doctors in Israel interpret it as applying to the Messiah, which means that He will come when Juda shall have lost its sceptre, that is to say, its autonomy. The only difficulty lies in the translation of the name Jacob gives the Messiah. He calls him Scheloh. To what language does this name belong and what does it mean? I myself believe it means, “He to whom belongs the kingdom.” Others say “To whom belongs the sceptre.” But the two different etymological versions have the same meaning.

Nicodemus.—Whatever may be its etymological formation, thou believest, then, that it is by this name that Jacob calls the Messiah?

Onkelos.—Yes.

Nicodemus.—Well, then, has the time come for the accomplishment of the prophecy, since the sceptre has gone from Juda?

Onkelos.—Obviously,

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Nicodemus.— Then why should Jesus of Nazareth not be the promised Messiah?

Onkelos.— If He wishes me to believe in Him, then let Him take possession of the sceptre of Juda; let Him tear it away from the servile and unfaithful hands of the Herods; let him re-establish this kingdom which will assure universal domination to the Jews, since the holy patriarch has predicted that all nations shall pay Him homage. This, then, is the miracle He must work to prove to me His right to the title of Messiah. What does it matter that He cures the sick and the infirm, that He gives sight to the blind and speech to the dumb? Other prophets have done the same before Him. Instead of delivering those who are possessed by the devil, let Him deliver His people from the yoke of the stranger. Let him restore to Jerusalem its enfeebled glory and its destroyed power and I will be the first to pay Him homage. If He is incapable of accomplishing this great work, the only miracle which interests me, it is because He is not the Messiah.

Pilate, who had gone away, returned in time to hear these words and said,—

“I did not know, Onkelos, that you were an enemy of Rome.”

“I am not, Governor, and have never pretended that its yoke is tyrannical. On the contrary, I am of opinion, that the colonial policy of Rome is broad and gives us all necessary liberty. But we are looking for the Messianic character of Jesus of Nazareth, and as I am hardly disposed to recognize it in Him, I reason

thus: the Messiah is to re-establish the kingdom of Juda. If Jesus be powerless to perform this miracle, He is not the Messiah."

Gamaliel.— Do you know him personally?

Onkelos.— I accompanied a group of my countrymen who obtained an audience of Him, and He told us things that were strange enough.

Gamaliel.— Tell us about them.

Onkelos.— You may judge for yourselves. After having given Him my idea of a religious reform which should be a mingling of the doctrines of Plato and Moses, I said to Him,—

"But surely, Master, you do not expect to abolish the Mosaic law and the priesthood?"

He answered, "I did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. One does not put new wine in old vessels, otherwise the new wine would break them; the wine would be spilt and the vessels would be lost."

And my eyes continuing to question Him, He added, "One does not sew a piece of new cloth to an old garment."

I understood that He meant to say, "Your Plato, your Socrates and your Jewish priesthood are ancient vases and old garments. What do you wish me to do with them?"

I frowned and turned my back upon Him.

Gamaliel.— You will admit it was a very ingenious answer to a Doctor in Israel who had just taught Him how to accomplish His mission.

Onkelos.— But was it not an insult to me and contempt for the great philosophers of Greece?

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Gamaliel.— No, because, after all, His observation was right and just. You were speaking to Him of a religious reformation; that is to say, you wish to make of the old religion a new wine. But you expected to keep the old formulas and the old worship. He answered that you should put the new wine into new vessels, that is to say, into a new dogma, and to sew the new cloth to a new garment, that is to say, to a new creed.

Onkelos.— However, He declares that He is the Word, and He borrows this title from the Platonists who believe in a "Logos," species of divine emanation, establishing communication between God and man.

Gamaliel.— Well, then, this title should please thee, Onkelos, and draw thee nearer Him.

Onkelos.— No, not at all. The Logos of the Platonists is not a distinct personality nor an incarnation of God. Plato never had the idea of a Logos made man.

Gamaliel.— Then Jesus of Nazareth does not copy the Platonists. He rises far above them in saying, "I am the Logos — the Word."

Onkelos.— Well, then, Gamaliel, here is my frank and firm opinion of the Galilean: He is a great genius, perhaps, but He lacks equilibrium. Ambition will be His destruction. He is proclaimed prophet and thaumaturgist. If He were content with this glory no one would contradict Him, perhaps. But He dreams of the impossible. He wishes to make Himself accepted as God. It is a folly astonishing in so

remarkable a man and which will soon lead him to destruction.

Pilate.— I think a little as you do, Onkelos; Jesus is an astonishing man, a genius apparently beyond all understanding, and, if the circumstances which make men are favorable to Him, He will without doubt leave a name in history. But, like many others who have been thought and who are great men, He will leave nothing else. He will be like the ship which makes a deep impression on the waves but leaves behind it nothing but a white wake that soon becomes effaced. What does He want? I do not know. I have questioned those who have heard Him and have been able to learn nothing which could indicate in any way His plans, His real ambition.

Nicodemus.— His ambition! It is that very thing of which Caiphas and the Princes of the priests accuse Him, but this accusation does not hold good before the following fact which I affirm, that is, that He foresees His approaching death, that He announces it and does nothing to avoid it. On the contrary, "He wishes it," because He says it is necessary to the establishment of His kingdom.

Pilate.— Then He is insane.

Nicodemus.— Or else He is a God. Your Excellency, let us reason a little. Here is a man thirty-three years old, in all the vigor of health; He is endowed with the most brilliant faculties and such extraordinary gifts that human reason cannot explain them. The people love and admire Him; crowds follow Him into the desert to hear His words without

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thinking of taking with them any food. There He feeds them miraculously. They wish to make Him king, and He flees into the mountains! He would have but to make a sign and to-morrow all Galilee would rise to proclaim His royalty; and I ask myself how could you prevent it, Governor. And then He avoids all homage of the people. In the flower of His youth He prepares to die without having tasted the pleasures of life. He runs to meet this death because He says it is necessary for the establishment of a kingdom He will not enjoy! And you call this man ambitious! Ye gods! Since when did the ambitious work for the glory and the happiness of others? And what ambitious person was ever insane enough to believe that he would be more powerful dead than alive? No, Governor, nothing betokens ambition in Jesus. Remember Cæsar. Was it for his successors or for himself that he coveted the Empire? And Augustus? Did he work for others in taking up again Cæsar's designs? Did he build a throne to make his shadow rise upon it after death? No, human ambition has its history and that of Jesus is its contradiction. Say, rather, that He is insane or that He appears to be so, for His conduct reverses all the principles of human wisdom. Say He is an eccentric, because He lives and thinks and acts outside the sphere of our understanding and our capacity to understand. In a word, He is so different, so far above us that we cannot grasp His nature or know how to classify Him. How can you reasonably call a man insane whose intelligence shows itself so vastly superior to our own?

Gamaliel.— If we could admit and understand that He is at the same time God and man, we might perhaps penetrate the mystery which surrounds Him, But how can a man be God? And how can God be a man? This is beyond understanding.

Pilate.— My dear friends, the problem seems neither complicated nor superhuman to me: you will see it unravel itself in the most human, the most natural and the most vulgar manner. This man appears to you through a mirage, and popular imagination has transfigured Him, but wait until the mirage has disappeared, and you will see Him reduced to ordinary proportions, subject to all the miseries of human weakness. If He really wants to die, He will easily find a way, thanks to His many and powerful enemies; and if He die, what happens to all the world will happen to Him as well. It is what happened to Cæsar. His disciples will not sacrifice their lives for Him, and no one will dream of proclaiming Him God. His kingdom will have been but the ephemeral dream of a madman. In the lives of men there are many mysteries, but in death they find their brutal and definite solution.

Nicodemus.— But is death itself a definite solution?

Pilate.— I believe it; since we know nothing of what comes after. Since the mysteries of the beyond have not been revealed to us, scepticism seems the only reasonable doctrine on this point as on all religious questions.

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tality—the future life of the soul? You must have forgotten the eloquent proof Cicero left us of this truth in his treatise, *De consolatione*. “The soul is the image of Divinity, emanated and come out of it, and Divinity is immortal.” It has its source in Divinity; Heaven is the centre toward which it tends; it was its first dwelling, and it unceasingly longs to return into this eternal home, its true country. The great orator reverts to this belief, so very strong within him, in his *Dream of Scipio*. He represents Scipio Africanus, appearing to his grandson, the second victor of Carthage, on a great height strewn with stars and resplendent with light, speaking thus to him, “What you call life is death; the real life is here. It is not thou but thy body which is mortal. The soul is the man not this shape which thou callest thy body.”

Caius.—No philosopher has spoken better, Governor, not even Plato. For the rest there is no scepticism in nature. The human mind thirsts to believe, as it thirsts to know. When it abandons its original beliefs, it is to take up others. Look around you; read history. Save for very rare exceptions, you will see everywhere throughout all epochs men who change their creeds, not men who have none. Horace, your favorite poet, one of the disciples of Epicurus, is not in reality a sceptic. When he preaches in honor of the gods his convictions are not strong, but he believes in presentiments, in dreams, in sorcery and magic. Pliny, Ovid and other writers believe in all sorts of superstitions. And your Emperor Tiberius!

He despises the gods but fears their occult power and the predictions of astrologers. All this shows a natural necessity of the human mind for belief in something, but in something mysterious and occult which can neither be explained nor understood.

Pilate.— Well, for me, Caius, I wish no mysteries nor anything too complicated. My religion is simple and comprehensible. I have no objection to the belief in one god or many gods, for my scepticism is not absolute. One God alone, however, seems more reasonable. But what do I know of anything else? And who can teach me anything else with authority, proving to me the divine origin of His mission and of His doctrine? Is it you, Onkelos, with your great philosophers who have not been able to regenerate Greece or who, with their disciples called the Sophists, have increased its decadence pretending in spite of this to be the real sages? — Which were the madmen? I cannot say, but almost believe with your Pythagoras that life is too short to spend in the discussion of these great problems.

Onkelos.— I deplore, as you do, the work of the Sophists; they have caused the unhappiness of my country, but this proves nothing against religion. On the contrary, if Greece be in decadence, it is because the Sophists have destroyed its religious faith.

Gamaliel.— That is true. But the Governor is right in wishing that he who pretends to found or only to teach a religion should prove his authority — his divine mission. That is why our religion is the only true one; it had for its founder one sent by God.

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Moses was not only a genius like Socrates and Plato; he had received his authority and mission from Jehovah; he has transmitted to us the teaching of God himself. If the people believed in him, it is because he gave proof of the divinity of his mission. Our prophets have also proved by their works that God himself inspired them. Witness the vitality of our religious faith and the immortality of our national sentiment. Israel has been vanquished, dispersed, led into captivity without leaders, without a country, without a flag, and has survived all the misfortunes that should naturally have annihilated it. Egypt is nothing more than a shadow. Greece has just died. Rome itself is in decadence, while Israel, eight centuries older than Rome, conquered by her, is more alive. The Jew is everywhere, in all countries of the world. He establishes himself, lays the foundation of his home and builds Jewish cities in the midst of pagan ones; he learns the language of the company in which he lives; establishes social relations, becomes powerful; but remains a Jew. The governments which find him encroaching upon their territory take every measure either to assimilate or to proscribe him, but he resists assimilation and proscription, and when they have sent him out by the door, he returns through the window. And his home? Is it these lands that he inhabits? Does he make for himself there a second country of his own? No, he remains a Jew; he retains the memory of his native country, that country of his ancestors. He preserves the faith of his race and his national feeling, and neither the

frontiers of nations nor the seas, prevent his contemplating and loving here, at the far end of the world, the ideal Jerusalem which is always his true home.

Pilate.— I willingly recognize, Gamaliel, in that there is something extraordinary, outside the laws of history, but if your Mosaic law has given you this astonishing national vitality what need have you of a Messiah?

Gamaliel.— It is our religious faith which has made us live. But the promise of the Messiah is precisely the vital dogma of our religion. It is not only what Jehovah has given us but what he has promised us that has kept us alive. We believe in Moses but we believe also that his law is capable of being perfected, that it will be the work of the Messiah to perfect and complete it, and so our religion, having arrived at its full development, will have two founders, both sent by God; Moses and the Messiah.

Pilate.— And you believe that the time fixed by your prophets for the coming of the Messiah has arrived?

Gamaliel.— We believe it.

Pilate.— And that this Messiah will deliver you from the yoke of Rome and establish the kingdom of Juda?

Gamaliel.— On this point we are divided, and the prophecies are quite obscure.

Pilate.— And what do you think, then, of Jesus of Nazareth?

At this question Camilla, Claudius, Caius and Nicodemus fixed their eyes upon the old Doctor in Israel

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while anxiously awaiting his response. He hesitated and said at last,—

“Your question, Governor, brings many other serious ones to my mind. How could a woman give birth to a god? How can she have become a mother and remained a virgin according to the prophecy of Isaias? How can divine and human nature be united in the same person? These are the great problems I would have to solve to penetrate the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, and to this day they are unsolvable by my poor powers of reasoning.”

In this way the discussions nearly always concluded. The Messianic problem rose before the interlocutors and remained without solution. It could not be answered by reason alone; the human mind reduced to its own impotence, was powerless to explain these mysteries. It was necessary to make an act of faith and not a syllogism. One could only say, “If Jesus of Nazareth be God, He is Himself a living mystery far above my understanding. If I insist that the Divinity show itself to me without a veil, I no longer have a reason for believing in Jehovah, Himself a mystery. Jesus is a living miracle, whose existence is its own proof.”

This is what the Princes of the priests should have said to themselves, had they sought the truth in good faith; but they were blinded by pride, ambition and self-interest.

V

ONKELOS AND CAMILLA

CAMILLA took the greatest interest in these controversies between the distinguished men who met in the drawing-rooms of the Governor or at the house of Prince ben Gorion Nicodemus. In this chosen circle her brilliant intelligence lost none of its radiance. She herself held strong opinions on the extraordinary personality of Jesus of Nazareth. She would have liked to see and hear him; because she was already convinced, by what Caius had told her, of the superiority of this man to all others. Unfortunately, the prophet no longer came to Jerusalem. He had not even come on the last Passover, and they had learned that he had gone to the sea, about the region of Tyre and Sidon.

Would he ever return to the Holy City? It was doubtful, because it was known that the chief priests had decided to put him to death and had charged spies to arrest him at the moment of his reappearance in the Temple.

While waiting, Camilla continued to study the history and writings of the Jewish people and to visit the places where so many wonderful events had occurred. Under these conditions, Simeon Gamaliel and Onkelos were most valuable friends, because each in turn accompanied her to different parts of the city and its environs which they knew so well. And both were authorities in the interpretation of the Holy

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Books. Unfortunately, these archeological expeditions, especially with Simeon Gamaliel, became too sentimental for Camilla's taste. Gamaliel could no longer disguise his admiration, dating from their long conversations on board the "Nauticaa!"

Onkelos was not less sensible to the charm of the beautiful Roman, but took care to express his feeling in such veiled terms that Camilla could not possibly take offence. One day, just as the sun was setting, she wanted to see for herself Mount Bethesda and to visit the grotto of the Prophet Jeremias and the tombs of the Kings. Onkelos offered his services as guide, and they left the city by the "Sheep Gate." They slowly followed along the high walls of the enclosure and turned towards the north corner, keeping to the left side of the road. After thirty minutes' walk, they entered a narrow path between two ruined walls leading to the grotto of the celebrated Prophet Jeremias.

"Here," said Onkelos, "is the dark cell hewn out of the rock which served as a dwelling for the gloomy son of Helcias. It was here he composed his Lamentations, the saddest words which have ever emanated from a human voice."

"Do you like this lugubrious poem?" asked Camilla.

"Very much; I admire it all the more since I have known sufferings similar to those of the Prophet."

"But you have never been persecuted, accused of treachery, imprisoned, thrown to the depths of a well, as he was?"

"No, his own suffering is not the subject of the

lamentation. To a man who loves his race, individual suffering is nothing. The great sorrow of the son of Helcias was the ruin of his native land, the destruction of that Jerusalem he thought so beautiful and loved so dearly. This is the suffering I have known." Onkelos sighed deeply and said, "Let us leave this place; come, rather, and look at Jerusalem."

The two left the cave, climbed the hill which rises over it and looked at the great city. The setting sun illumined all its crenelated towers, and the gilded cupola of the Temple gleamed out of this wonderful frame.

"See," said Onkelos, "is it astonishing that the Prophet contemplated this incomparable scene with an almost adoring love? Judge, then, how he must have suffered when his prophetic eyes saw in the near future the lamentable ruins which would replace these splendors and what was his dejection, when he returned here towards evening after his interview with King Sedecias. All his prophecies, all his warnings, founded on the word of Jehovah, had been unavailing. Not only the king persisted in his blindness, but his ministers and the leaders of his army had resolved to put this prophet of misfortune to death. And, at last, measure if you can, the depth of his affliction when with his own eyes he saw the dreadful accomplishment of his prophecies. Nebuchadnezzar became master of his well beloved city, destroying it from top to bottom, slaying the great of Juda, even the king's son, before the eyes of the unhappy Sedecias, at last blinding him and loading him with chains to lead him into captivity

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together with all his people. Picture to yourself, the son of Helcias seated where we are now with this indescribable vision of grief before him, and you will better understand the elegiac stanzas of this poet of sadness.

“‘Quomodo sedet sola civitas.’ . . .

“‘See how she sits alone, this populous city.’”

And he recited for her a whole page of the Lamentations.

After a silence Onkelos resumed, “How beautiful is the wonderful architecture of Jerusalem under the rosy reflection of the flaming sun; and yet I remember a far more beautiful scene lost to me forever. Yes, Jerusalem and its Temple make a splendid picture, but the Acropolis of Athens and the Parthenon are still more glorious. Man’s genius has never erected anything more grand, more harmonious nor more inspired.”

“Why, then,” asked Camilla, “have you abandoned your country and embraced Judaism?”

“Ah, Camilla, you recall deep sorrow to my mind. Nebuchadnezzar never destroyed my well beloved city, but the Romans took it, and my country is but the shadow of what it was. The great ones of earth have become our masters. They have destroyed, ruined, scattered and depopulated my unfortunate country. And then, religion has fallen into decadence. Sophists have replaced the philosophers who had been our glory. Our morals have become corrupt, and I could no longer endure the spectacle of national

decay. Then I came here, where I have found fragments of my country in the flourishing Greek cities of Galilee and Samaria. I have studied the Jewish religion, and it has proved far superior to polytheism. It is the only real religion of the past and is the religion of the future because of its fundamental dogma, the belief in a Messiah who will make of the Jewish nation the most powerful people on earth. It is then that this people, which has become my people, shall triumph over Rome."

"You believe that, really?"

"Yes; what Greece cannot do, the Jewish people will accomplish, when the Messiah shall have come. Do you understand, now, why I embraced the religion of the Jews? One's country is not changed without a cruel wrench, and when I find myself near you, a bitter regret is added to my sorrow."

"What regret?"

"That of knowing you to be a Roman."

"Then it is painful for you to walk with me?"

"No, on the contrary, I welcome any suffering you may cause me."

Camilla did not answer, and they resumed their walk toward the fortification.

Onkelos followed her and spoke again,—

"These heights are alive with historic memories. It is here the prophet Isaias came at God's command to meet Achaz, king of Juda, and gave him this message from Jehovah:

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His name shall be called "Emanuel," which signifies "God with us." "

"Does this prophecy apply to the Messiah?"

"Undoubtedly. And it is one of the titles which is lacking to Jesus, whose father and mother are well known at Nazareth.

"Here are the tombs of the Kings," added Onkelos, pointing with his hand to the door of a great cavern hewn into the rock.

"Is this really the sepulchre of the kings of Juda?" asked Camilla.

"No," answered Onkelos, "they rest in the city of Zion by the side of David."

"And these sarcophagi, what are they?"

"They belong to the Herodian princes."

They entered the sepulchral chambers and sat upon an overturned tombstone. Living flowers grew on the earthy bed which time had spread over the graves. Through this garment of resurrection the tombs seemed to smile, but a wailing wind trembled as it grazed the monuments, its breath swaying the living stems as if to show a careless world that human ashes rested there.

Onkelos gathered some of the flowers and offered them to Camilla, saying,—

"My heart is not unlike their ashes, but like the flowers too, there are tender feelings budding in its depths."

Camilla took the little bouquet saying, "Thank you."

They rose and after walking a little distance, found themselves out in the open air, where immortal nature sang of the fulness of life and intoxication of love. The red globe of the sun was just about to hide itself behind a mountain of clouds that touched the earth, in which the rents resemble torrents of red lava. But Onkelos' eyes were all for his companion. He did not speak — though he thought the moment for speaking had come.

"You have become a great dreamer," said Camilla.

"It is the sight of the tombs that makes this impression upon me. Why must one die?"

"Do you find life so beautiful, then?"

"To-day it seems full of charm."

"Then, why are you sad?"

"Because I already see the end of my joy, as I have just seen that of human life."

"But every end is a beginning, and one dies but to live again."

"Are you so sure of that?"

"Why, of course I am — Cicero affirms it in his immortal pages."

"You are very happy to have this faith. But I almost believe that the Sadducees who deny the future life are right."

"You have not then noticed, Onkelos, that there is life throughout all nature even amid the tombs? There are germs of life in the depths of the earth and the seas, as well as in the infinite spaces of Heaven. They are carried by mysterious winds to all beings without life and vivify them. And you think the

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God who created this abundance of life for the most infinitesimal beings in nature would have made death eternal for man, His image, as your scriptures say? It is unreasonable."

After a moment's silence, Onkelos, fixing his great grey eyes upon her, said,—

"Speak again; this beautiful Latin tongue is like music from your lips, and every word goes straight to my heart. Life! O, yes,—speak to me of life! I want so much to believe in it, when I see everything about me dying—men and nations. Greece is dead and Rome is dying. Who will raise them up? Alas, man is not like other beings. Life exists everywhere in nature, because love is everywhere. The trees, the flowers, the animals, all obey the law of love. But men will not see, or if they do, they crush it under foot. Make me believe in love, Camilla, and I will believe in life."

Her sole response was, "Here we are already at the Gate of Damascus. This walk has intensely interested me, and I am grateful to you for having accompanied me."

The sun had disappeared behind the heights of Bethesda, and the walls were hidden in shadow. The silhouette of crenelated towers, magnified by the mist which enveloped the city, was plainly drawn against the still blue sky. Higher up above Mount Zion, fleecy clouds floated like a rose-colored tent. Onkelos looked at them.

"What do you seek in the firmament?" asked Camilla.

"I search for the first star and do not find it because it is on earth. I dream of the child who imagines it can grasp the stars and keep them for himself."

Camilla pretended not to understand and asked Onkelos the latest news of Jesus of Nazareth.

"He is still in Galilee," answered Onkelos.

"And will you become reconciled with Him?"

"No; His ideal of the Messianic kingdom is not mine; and He will leave behind no lasting achievement. I recognize His genius and the extraordinary influence He exercises over all who approach Him, but when He shall have disappeared, His apostles, who have no intellectual weight, nor any influence, nor plan of action, will be absolutely powerless to establish anything, no matter what it be."

"That would be a misfortune," answered Camilla, "because He is a good Man, and it would be worth while to make at least a trial of His teachings."

Onkelos answered nothing.

The two had arrived at the Tower of Antonia. Onkelos took his departure and disappeared under the portico of the Temple.

He slept little during the night which followed. He had long ago known the disquiet of love and had thought himself forever cured. He prided himself on having placed his ideal higher. But with Camilla he felt rejuvenated and did not wish to suppress the feelings of his heart. In the morning, considering what might be the obstacle that separated them, he

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said to himself, "Alas, yes; there is a double obstacle between us; Rome and Jesus of Nazareth."

There was a third, Caius, who was soon to become a dangerous rival. On her side, Camilla had but little sleep. She felt herself loved and enjoyed the sweetness of the experience, but there was much anxiety mingled with this happiness. She did not forget that Gamaliel, too, admired her, that he bore one of the best names in all Jerusalem, that his mind was brilliant and that he spoke the language of Rome fluently. But Onkelos, though older, was of a fine Greek type, a scholar, eloquent, and of great reputation among the Doctors in Israel. It was evident Camilla could not quite know the meaning of love, for she weighed the advantages of each. A star shone in at her window. For a long time she watched it, remembering with a delicious thrill that her new friend had compared her to a star a child found beautiful and wanted for himself.

"Love is the law, Onkelos told me. Yes, but whom shall I love?" Camilla was perplexed.

The Book of Ruth was on her table. She opened it and read that delicious idyl with growing emotion. When she slept peacefully toward morning, she had made her choice, she had found it, in the inspired Book. "I will love," she thought, "and I will marry him to whom I can say, 'Thy people shall be my people and thy God, my God.'"

VI

PATERNAL ADVICE

DURING the days which followed, Camilla was much preoccupied with her future while the beautiful words of Ruth absorbed her mind; they seemed to her the true solution of the problem of her destiny. Not only Onkelos and Gamaliel were not of her race, but they were the declared enemies of her country, so that she could accept neither one nor the other as her husband. She wished, however, to consult her father on this subject and quoted the speech of the Moabite which he had never known. He admired its wisdom and entirely approved the decision she had made.

"It is obvious," he added, "that the question of race is of great importance, when it comes to forming the indissoluble union of marriage. But the religious question is still more important, and I hope, Camilla, that thou wilt decide it with the same wisdom, should the occasion present itself. I thought I noticed that the Centurion, Caius, admired thee. Has he not shown his feelings?"

"No, Father; he appears to enjoy my companionship, and I feel flattered by his attention; I admire his intelligence and noble character, but he has never given expression to me of anything but most cordial friendship."

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has any faith in polytheism, and I regret it. This scepticism is, unfortunately, shared by a great number of the most cultivated minds of Rome; but I hope it will stop there and that Caius will not push his sympathy for Jesus of Nazareth, to such a point as to take Him for a God and worship Him. It would be an aberration which I could not tolerate and which would prevent my accepting him as a son."

"But, Father —"

"It is a simple hypothesis. If it came to the point and were a fact, I am very sure that thou wouldst be the first to tell him that his God should not be thy God."

Camilla bowed before her father and answered nothing. She understood everything, above all what her father had not said. For a long time she remained plunged in reverie, feeling that a great misfortune threatened her. Did Caius Oppius really love her? Her father evidently thought so, but what did he know? And if Caius loved her, why did he not declare his love? Perhaps he had formed other ties during his stay in Galilee. She thought she recalled that one day Gamaliel, in the presence of Caius, had made allusion to a beautiful Galilean with whom the Centurion of Magdala had been enchanted. Well, has not Solomon the Wise said,—

"There is a time for everything,
A time for silence and a time to speak,
Wisdom disposes of all with gentleness."

These thoughts put an end to Camilla's reverie.

VII

CONFIDENCES

CAIUS on his part reflected with much wisdom, saying to himself the time had not yet come. He was not insensible to the attractiveness of Camilla, whom he had known as a child and found again in Jerusalem, grown up and lovely. It was no longer the rosebud in the Gardens of the Aventine, it was the developed flower in all the freshness of its coloring and delicacy of its perfume. A rare distinction gave a finishing touch to her beauty. A lovely smile added wonderful charm to her expression, and her exquisite choice of words showed her intellectual culture.

From the first, Caius had been attracted, but had observed that others as well yielded to the charms of this beautiful Roman. This star already had two satellites which moved close to her, Gamaliel and Onkelos. He must, then, suppress the beating of his heart, remain master of himself and not expose himself to a rejection by prematurely showing his love.

Lodged in the barracks of the Tower of Antonia, he often had occasion to go to the palace of the Governor for a little chat with the two sisters, Claudia and Camilla. Sometimes he accompanied them in their walks to the bazaars of the Tyropæon or around the vestibule of the Temple, under the big marble porticoes, where they found either sun or shade according to their wish. There they often spoke of

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Rome, of the friends they had left, of the amusements they had enjoyed long ago and the events which were passing there at the time. They spoke of the coming of the Messiah and of the more or less uncertain issue of the opposition of the priesthood to Jesus of Nazareth. The walks they took together in the environs of Jerusalem became more and more frequent and full of charm.

One day, Caius and Camilla went on horseback to Mt. Olivet. At the turn of the road, on the summit of the southern slope, they stopped to admire the incomparable picture presented by Jerusalem from these heights; the colonnades of the Temple rising in unison about the escarpment of Mt. Moriah, the high tessellated walls which seemed to be joined to the declivity of Ophel, the palaces, the Tower of David and his monumental tomb crowning Mt. Zion, all this marvelous architectural beauty overhanging the two abysses of the Cedron and the Gehenna. Resuming their way, they soon arrived in sight of Bethany, and Camilla asked the Centurion what was the castle the high tower of which dominated the humble village.

"It is the residence of a rich and excellent Jew, named Lazarus," answered Caius.

"Do you know him personally?"

"Yes; I have met him several times in Jerusalem, but have never gone to his house. He is a friend of Joseph of Arimathea, of Prince Nicodemus and especially of Jesus of Nazareth."

"Do you mean to say he is His disciple?"

"I mean more than that, because a very intimate

friendship unites them. The prophet is his guest every time He comes to preach in Jerusalem. They seem about the same age."

"Has he a family?"

"He is a celibate and lives with his two sisters."

"Do you know them?"

"I knew the younger one last year at Magdala. Her name is Myriam, and her beauty is wonderful. I was madly in love with her for several weeks."

"Love at first sight then?"

"Yes, truly."

"You have never told me about it."

"A soldier never boasts of his defeats."

"How is that; she rejected you?"

"Completely and definitely."

"But this is much more interesting; was it very dramatic?"

"No. You would like me to tell you about my adventure, would you not?"

"I do not dare ask you to tell me."

"Well, then — I will give it to you."

And in a few words Caius told the little romance my readers know. "Well," said Camilla when he had finished the story, "I would like to know this woman."

"It will be easy for you, but you must forgive me if I do not offer myself as intermediary. I retain only a feeling of the deepest respect for her and do not wish to take any step which she could construe into abnormal curiosity."

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tion and of delicacy that keeps you away from her."

Caius made a sign of assent, and the two friends turned their horses' heads toward the north. They rode around the Mount of Olives and returned to Jerusalem by the Valley of Jehosaphat, where more than twenty generations slept their last sleep. The appearance of this vast cemetery made them silent and sad.

It was in the evening of that same day that Camilla wrote this description of the Valley of Jehosaphat in her journal:

"How quiet and sad is this solitary valley! It resembles the 'Field of Tears' described by Virgil in his Hades; and the Cedron with its meagre thread of water recalls the Lethe. Though noisy enough, it is a sad and dreary stream. It does not sing, but moans, and makes its painful way across the venerable tombs, the rocks and mountains, in ravines where the sun never shines, and then goes to lose itself in an ocean of forgetfulness called the Dead Sea. I no longer find in this narrow valley the solitary groves of whispering trees. . . . 'In valle reducta seclusum nemus et virgulta sonantia silvis.' But on the border of the Cedron as around the Lethe, I seem to see flying the souls of innumerable generations. . . . 'Hinc circum innumeratæ gentes populique volabant.' The murmuring woods are replaced by a forest of funeral monuments and silent tombs.

"In crossing this lugubrious valley, I am reminded that the old Anchises gave an answer to his son Æneas only after having drunk the 'long forgetful-

ness' 'Longa oblivia' that souls would live again in other bodies 'Animæ, quibus altera fato corpora debentur.'

"Resurrection. The future life! Behold the great problem for which scholar and philosopher vainly seek a solution. Who can tell what we will become after death? We see well what becomes of the body, and this fact carries with it little conviction of immortality. Nevertheless, the hope of a future life still forces itself upon us. The prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, preaches of life without end in a kingdom not of this world. But He does not base His teaching on a study of science and philosophy; He pretends to know it of Himself because His Father is God, and He and His Father are One!"

VIII

MYRIAM AND CAMILLA

SEVERAL days later, Camilla proposed to her father to visit the family of Bethany, accompanied by Prince Nicodemus. Martha and her brother received them with courteous simplicity and chatted pleasantly. But Myriam did not show herself. Camilla having expressed a great wish to see her, Martha approached her while the three men talked together and spoke with lowered voice, saying:

"My sister is a widow. Formerly she was very worldly, but she lives to-day the life of a recluse. She consents to see no one, except when Jesus of Nazareth

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comes to us. She never goes out unless veiled in black to pray at the Temple when she hopes that our Friend will preach there."

But Camilla would not be repulsed. She renewed her visits to Martha, won her good graces by making her speak of Jesus of Nazareth and then insisted upon meeting Myriam.

"Tell your sister that it is not idle curiosity on my part, but that I want to talk to her particularly of Jesus of Nazareth. Tell her that I fully share her admiration of the Great Prophet and perhaps shall join the number of His disciples, when I shall have learned to know Him."

Myriam could not remain deaf to this pressing appeal, and, from the time of their first interview, the two women felt themselves unconsciously drawn towards each other. Camilla was struck by Myriam's great beauty, but it appeared as if she were ashamed of this gift as of a defect and that she tried to veil its radiance. She had no intellectual culture other than what she had gathered from reading the Sacred Scriptures, but she had great distinction of mind and spoke both Greek and Hebrew well. Hers was a more ardent and enthusiastic nature than that of Camilla. Sensible to beauty in all its forms, she felt an instinctive attraction toward the ideal.

At their second meeting, they held a long conversation. These two elect souls commenced with absolute confidence and communicated to each other their inmost feelings. After having asked Myriam a great many questions about Jesus of Nazareth, Camilla said

to her, "Myriam, I want to confide in you and ask your advice. For several weeks one of the officers of the Roman cohort stationed in Jerusalem has been paying me attentions I cannot misunderstand. In a word, I believe he loves me sincerely, and this man you know."

"I?" asked Myriam in astonishment.

"Yes," answered Camilla, "he told me he had met you at Magdala when he was stationed in the garrison there. It is the Centurion, Caius Oppius."

"Yes, I remember that officer; but why do you make this confidence to me?"

"I am going to tell you in all sincerity; he told me that he had been in love with you and that you repulsed him. I want to know what there was in him to displease you."

"But Camilla, I hardly knew him, and, despite his culture and distinction, showed him plainly that any relation between us was impossible. That is all."

"But, why did you treat him so?"

"Because I no longer belong to the world, Camilla."

"What do you mean? Do you expect to tear from your heart all human feeling?"

"No, human love will never again take possession of my heart."

"And the Prophet do you not love Him?"

"Yes, certainly, but there is nothing human in this love. It is not enough to say I love Him; — I adore Him, He is my one love; He is my all; He is my God."

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"Does this love you have for Him exclude all other love?"

"Yes."

"Could I not love Him and at the same time accept the devotion of Caius Oppius?"

"But, Camilla, these two loves are not incompatible, because they are not of the same nature. If you wish to enter into the state of matrimony, there is nothing to oppose your loving the Centurion with the most tender love and also loving the Prophet with the adoring love which is only due to God."

"Well, can you not do the same thing?"

"Oh, for me, Camilla, I am not like you. My past is a sad one which you do not know and which I have drowned in my tears. I misunderstood love. I dragged it in the mire, and it will take a lifetime of sacrifice to efface the stains which have sullied my soul. I am not worthy of this chaste love you can have for the Centurion; all I can hope for is that through my repentance the Prophet will give me back the purity I have lost. This is why I want to consecrate my entire life and all the feelings that may still be left in my poor heart to Him."

"And does this exclusive giving of yourself, this extraordinary love which appears so mysterious, bring you any happiness?"

"There are days when my soul is comforted and refreshed by a hope that carries me up to the heights like a dove lifted by the wind of the sea. There the noises of earth cannot reach me, I lose sight of it and enter into an atmosphere of joy which I cannot

describe. But I also have days of depression and self-abasement. The Spirit of Evil then tries to inspire me with discouragement and despair."

"And could not your Well-Beloved, if He be God, spare you these trials?"

"He could, but He does not wish to do so, because I must expiate my sin by suffering."

"But at least He sends you consolation?"

"You cannot know with what interior consolation He overwhelms me. My loves of other days gave me but incomplete joy, fleeting and troubled, followed by remorse, disgust and pain. They humiliated and lowered me and I despised myself, because I felt degraded to the level of the brute. But the love I have for Him is of another kind, and the effect which it produces is altogether different. It raises, consoles, ennobles me. In finding it, I have regained myself and a little of my lost dignity."

"Your sister tells me that you weep a great deal in spite of all this."

"Oh, yes, and I would weep even more,— I would bathe myself in tears. But there is happiness in the tears of repentance, because by purifying me they draw me closer to Him whom I love. When I recall my past life, I feel unworthy of Him and am grieved, but I think this grief pleases Him because it is proof of my love, and I feel then that He Himself loves me a little better."

"You suffer though?"

"Oh, yes; and the more I suffer, the more I wish to suffer, because my sorrow makes my joy."

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"It is very strange."

"It is strange for you who do not understand the nature of the feeling which draws me to Jesus of Nazareth. Formerly I thirsted for love as I do to-day, but sought it in paths which lead away from true love, from the love which is perfect. This is what the Prophet of Nazareth has made me understand, and now I am on the opposite path. I taste this ideal love which gives itself entirely to the beloved object in order to be altogether transformed by it."

"Oh, Myriam, I do not understand. You speak a language unknown to me."

"Perhaps. Because this love of which I speak transforms the human being. It draws it close to the divine being and makes it speak a superhuman language, but when you come to love Jesus of Nazareth, you too will understand this language."

"Oh, Myriam, you open a horizon too vast for my feeble intelligence. I cannot follow you upon the heights to which you soar, but all that you tell me does me good. I feel myself better. May I come to see you again?"

"Whenever you wish. But tell me, what are the feelings of your friend Caius for Jesus?"

"He admires Him, he champions Him, and I should not be surprised if he became His disciple."

"Then love him well, this brave Centurion, and become like him a disciple of Jesus."

IX

VOWS

A SHORT time after this visit of Camilla to Myriam of Bethany, the Procurator decided to spend a couple of months in Cæsarea. Claudia Procla, Camilla and their father followed him. The month of June in the year of Rome 782 drew to its close, and it was very warm throughout all Palestine. But at Cæsarea, the breezes from the sea gave life to the atmosphere, and great sycamore trees shaded the "*Marina*" which ran along the coast.

Caius remained in Jerusalem and was separated from Camilla nearly two months. The Governor enjoyed perfect tranquillity in Cæsarea while Jerusalem was at peace. But with the month of September, he prepared to return to the Holy City. The feast of Tabernacles was approaching, and popular uprisings were always to be feared during the epoch of these great assemblies of pilgrims in Jerusalem.

Caius was ordered to report at Cæsarea with several cohorts to form an escort for the Governor and his family on the day of their return. He was delighted, and next day toward evening arrived in Cæsarea. The heat had been intense, and he hastened to the terrace to breathe the sea air. The sun was about to sink beneath the waves. The red disc stood out in bold relief at the base of the purple horizon.

He was gazing enraptured at the beautiful scene, when he noticed a woman, her back turned to

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him, leaning against one of the pillars of the balustrade. She, too, was admiring the beauty of the picture, and the breeze from the sea ruffled the stray curls of her hair. She was too much absorbed in contemplation to perceive that some one drew near, and she did not turn. But Caius easily recognized her. What other woman had such a noble head, such distinction of attitude and a face so lovely that even the last rays of the sun gathered around her as if to set her in a frame of gold.

"Is it Italy you look for — there beyond the sea?" said he stepping forward and greeting her.

"It is Rome," answered Camilla, as she turned, giving Caius a long look, "You have just come?" she asked. "What news do you bring us of Jerusalem?"

"Do you want me to tell you of worldly, political, military or religious news?"

"Tell of the Messianic question; it interests me most."

"It is no longer a simple question; it is one of the gravest of conflicts, an implacable dispute between Jesus of Nazareth and the Sanhedrim."

"And the disciples of the Prophet — are they men upon whom He can count? Have they any learning, influence or resources with which to establish their system?"

"None. They are poor men of the people, without instruction, who have to this day remained unknown, possessing no power whatever over public opinion."

"In that case He could not rely on them to make the foundation He announces?"

"Evidently not."

"And He Himself shall found it during His lifetime?"

"He will not have time to do so, because He warned His disciples the other day that He was going to Jerusalem and that there He would be put to death."

"Then His work will cease when it has scarcely begun, and he will confide its execution to poor ignorant men radically helpless to build anything at all."

"Camilla, you must not judge this Man as others are judged. He employs for His success none of the means used to this day by wise and clever men. Why could He not upset all the principles of human wisdom as He overturns the laws of nature? If He be God, He must prove His divinity to man. Now if He found for Himself a lasting work with the means and instruments He employs, He will prove it better than by His miracles."

"Do you believe, then, in His divinity, Caius?"

"Not yet, but I am not far from believing in it. And you?"

"Oh, I do not know Him, but I feel a deep sympathy for Him. He attracts me, and the injustice of the Pharisees toward Him revolts me. What does He do but good wherever He passes? What miracles that are not good works does He perform?"

"That is well thought, Camilla, and I am glad to hear you express these sentiments. I was afraid you might be drawn into the camp of the Prophet's ene-

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mies by the Governor, by Gamaliel and above all by Onkelos."

"But why do you fear I should submit to the influence of Gamaliel and Onkelos?"

"Because you have been more or less intimate with them both, because they are supposed to be authorities on all questions regarding Messianism and at last because —"

"Well, then, what is the third because?"

"Because I know they both admire you very much."

"If that is the case, it is I who should have an influence over them and not they over me."

"It may be reciprocal."

"Which should be reciprocal — influence or admiration?"

"Both."

"But in what way does this interest you?"

"Oh, Camilla, look at this immense sea with its limitless horizon; we see nothing beyond it, nevertheless we know that over there lies a blessed land we both love, our common home, which has been the cradle of our childhood and whose name alone awakens dear memories in us. Is not this enough to keep anything concerning you far from being indifferent to me?"

"Why then have you delayed so long in talking to me of this bond of sympathy that draws us together?"

"In our military campaigns we sometimes come to a city whose doors we believe to be open when in reality they are closed and guarded. We then stay at a distance."

"But I thought, in that case you laid siege to it?"

"Yes, but the position of the besieger is always difficult, and the campaign must be carried on with wisdom and deliberation. These were the tactics of our Fabius."

"And what do all these words really mean?"

"They mean I have acted towards you as I would in the case of a city to be taken, and I am trying to find from what quarter to begin the attack."

"Don't you think it would be wiser first to assure yourself whether or no the gates are in the power of the enemy?"

"Ah, Camilla, you alone can tell me that, and you take pleasure in torturing me, leaving me in uncertainty!"

"Well, then, Caius, you are in the presence of a Free City, and its gates are not open to all comers."

"If it be free, and if its gates may be opened by other means than violence, it is all I want."

"And what other means would you use in this case?"

"Peaceful negotiations."

"That lead you to what?"

"To a cordial understanding and perhaps even to an alliance."

"I begin to believe that you are more of a diplomat than a soldier."

"I only war against the enemies of my country."

Camilla started to walk slowly along close to the balustrade that faced the sea. Caius walked at her

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side and both were silent. Their eyes did not sound the depths of the ocean but the abyss of their own hearts. The sun had set and night had spread its mysterious veil over all the world, which grew darker and still more dark. The evening breeze scarcely stirred, and the waves softly sang their plaintive and monotonous nocturne. Orange blossoms impregnated the air with their sweetness, and the stars that lighted the firmament threw their diamond-like brilliancy over the sea. The silence of the two lasted a long time. Camilla finally spoke.

"If you have nothing more to say to me, Caius, let us go in."

"Not yet, Camilla, I have a thousand things to tell you."

"Tell me just one."

"Yes, dear, there is one that contains all the others. I love you, Camilla. For a long time this feeling has grown in my heart, and these words have tried to escape my lips. I was waiting a more propitious hour, the hour which decides destinies. But it seems this hour has come. If I still believed in our gods, I should say that they had prepared this day for me, and I do not want it to escape. You have lifted the weight that oppressed my heart, you have torn away that which condemned me to silence. Since you are free, I also am free. My power to speak depended altogether on the freedom of your heart to hear. I beg you, Camilla, if there are any other barriers between us, do not take this moment to reveal

them. Do not destroy the charm of this delicious hour, given me wherein to open my heart to you in the hope that bids it love — and live.”

“I do not doubt the sincerity of your love, Caius, but the more sincere it be, the more grave is it in its consequences. You have said this is a decisive hour, a time which will make an epoch in our lives. You ask me to give you hope, and why should I take it away from you, when it seems that everything draws us together, patriotic feeling, family relations, the search for truth superior to that which has been bequeathed us, aspiration toward a divine ideal which remains for us unknown. If this community of feeling and affection does not exist between us, it means that I scarcely know you. I do not wish to pronounce the word love, because it frightens me, and when you dared say, ‘I love you, Camilla,’ I felt a pang that still stifles me. You have opened the door of an unexplored world, under a sky at once full of stars and dark with clouds. Let me stop on the threshold of this unknown land, on the border of this sea of deceiving mirages whose sands are known by its shipwrecks. Let us prove our hearts, Caius, or rather let us raise them above terrestrial horizons. My heart is free, it is true, but my will must be submitted to that of my father, and I can say nothing before I have spoken to him.”

“You are right, and I too wish to speak to him. Your words, Camilla, have given me wings, and I shall follow you to the luminous heights to which you soar, and if on these heights we meet with the ‘Un-

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known God' to whom the Athenians have raised a Temple, He will be our God." Then they entered the house and two days later left for Jerusalem.

X

FROM CÆSAREA TO JERUSALEM

THE little journey which lasted three days was very pleasant for Caius and Camilla. Pilate and his father-in-law, Claudius, went on ahead, leaving Camilla and Claudia, who wished to stop at Sebaste and Shechem to follow. Caius was ordered to accompany them with a few of his legionaries. The road follows a rough country full of historical interest, which the Centurion described to his traveling companions as they rode along in the delicious atmosphere. Two legionaries on horseback led the way. Then came the Centurion and the two ladies followed by five other horsemen. From time to time they stopped in the villages, and the Samaritans brought them figs and oranges with fresh water and wine. Camilla asked about their families and manner of living, taking lively interest in their answers. "And the Messiah," she asked them, "do you expect Him in Samaria?"

"He has come," they answered, "last year He spent two days at Shechem, and all who heard believed in Him."

"What did he teach you?"

"He taught us that it does not matter whether one

adores God in one place more than in another, in Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim, but that one must adore Him in spirit and truth."

It was all more than interesting to Camilla. On his part, Caius was enchanted to be traveling in such delightful companionship. Claudia and Camilla were excellent horsewomen, and Caius sometimes dropped behind to watch them as they rode, then he would gallop up to them to point out the beauties of the country.

"Nevertheless," said Camilla, "our Italian landscape is far more beautiful."

"Perhaps so, but this scenery has an unusual charm for me. See these undulating hills that tremble under the caresses of the sun. Notice the reflection of light melting into the far away blue of the skies. Study the architectural effects of these great trees bordering our path. They unite all styles of arches, capitals and vaulted ceilings. Never have I been so carried away with the beauties of nature."

"Compose some poetry for us; you seem to be in the mood. Sing of the enchanting country of Magdala and the beautiful Myriam."

"Do not ridicule me, Camilla; Magdala has its beauties, but there I was alone. No heart there was to beat in tune with mine. To-day I am no longer alone. Between the beauties of nature and myself there is a sympathetic bond that you and you alone have created." . . .

"Oh," cried Claudia, "see that beautiful city rising on the horizon. It is like an immense stone pyramid."

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"It is the ancient city of Samaria," said Caius, "which Herod the Great repaired, enlarged and beautified and which he named Sebaste in honor of Augustus. From the spot where we stand, it gives the effect of a pyramid, because it is built upon a hill six hundred feet in height, its summit being crowned by both a citadel and temple, also in honor of Augustus. Ancient Samaria was the capital of the kingdom of Israel. It had its days of glory, but they finished in dire tragedy. During the reign of an impious king called Achab, it abandoned the worship of Jehovah and built a temple to Baal on the spot where you now see that of Augustus. Jehovah was patient, but in the end chastised Israel. The Assyrians were the instruments of His justice. Salmansar destroyed Samaria and led the schismatic tribes into captivity; all their beautiful country became a desert, colonists from Persia and Media coming to establish themselves here. They brought their idols with them, while the Israelites who had escaped captivity persisted in their heresy. Little by little these different races were blended together and, while preserving certain superstitions and idolatrous practices, the new Samaritans pretended to embrace the religion of Jehovah. They even offered to contribute toward the construction of the temple of Jerusalem, but the Jews refused this with scorn. They then built for themselves a temple to Jehovah on Mt. Gerizim. Since then the Samaritans and the Jews have treated each other as enemies."

"Your story is very interesting, Caius, it is not my

sister and I who give the attraction to this beautiful country, but you, who reveal so well its historic interest."

"I ask but one thing, that I may please you and give you a share of my great joy."

The little caravan had arrived at Sebaste. There they visited the Acropolis, the temple of Augustus, the fortifications, where they had the pleasure of finding a great number of Roman soldiers, and then the ruins of ancient Samaria. But it was the picturesque site of the new city they admired above all. The sun was rapidly dropping toward the horizon, the travelers remounted their horses and, crossing the valley which extends from the west to the east, between Mt. Gerizim on the south and Ebal on the north, arrived at Shechem. There they had some little trouble in finding a suitable inn where at last they spent the night. Next morning three attendants with donkeys were at the door of the inn with their little grey beasts already saddled. Caius had engaged them to make the ascent of Mt. Gerizim. Claudia and Camilla were enchanted with his plan. The little donkeys were prettily caparisoned. Red cockades with bells adorned their heads, while the brown leather saddles were covered with cushions of red silk damask. They gaily ate breakfast and afterwards began their journey.

The Valley of Shechem is the most fertile of the oases in this desert-like Oriental country. It must have been this that Moses saw in his prophetic visions, when he described the Promised Land with such enthusiasm. Lying between Mt. Ebal, which protects it

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against the north wind, and Mt. Gerizim, which supplies it with abundant streams of water, it was like a resplendent cradle. The sun from its rising to its setting warms it throughout the entire day. The Samaritans believe it to be the terrestrial paradise where God put the first man. Camilla seemed bubbling over with child-like gaiety and the joy of living. Spurred on by his keeper, the little animal on which she rode, trotted joyously ahead of all the others. Then she laughingly cried to them, "Hurry, hurry; Festinate." Claudia urged on her mount and in turn led the rest. Caius rode by Camilla's side, and said to her,—

"This is how I should like to make the journey of life."

"On the back of a donkey?" asked Camilla with a burst of laughter.

"Oh, no, they go too fast. I should want to travel by your side on foot and slowly that the journey might last a long time — a very long time!"

"But the path of life is not always as beautiful as this one."

"Do not take away my illusions. See how beautiful and smiling is this tranquil valley spread out in all its fulness before our eyes, with its forest of half-grown trees, from which rises the song of life and love. It seems an image of our future."

"You are full of sentiment and poetry to-day. Let the historian speak in place of the poet, tell me rather some of the great events which took place in this poetic and fertile valley."

"With pleasure," answered Caius, and they stopped just under the slope of the mountain.

"The oldest events history recounts," said Caius, "go back two thousand years. At that time, the patriarch Jacob was Shepherd King of all this country. His history is full of catastrophes and dramatic scenes it would take too long to tell. I might also tell of his son Joseph, who was betrayed and sold by his brethren, led into Egypt, where he became the steward of one of the most powerful of the Pharaohs. His tomb is beyond this hill, over there at the foot of the valley. I would rather tell you of something not so old. You will admire its grandeur as I do. It goes back, however, fifteen centuries, seven centuries before the foundation of Rome. Joshua had achieved the conquest of the Promised Land and, following the instructions received from Moses, wished Israel to renew the alliance it had formed with Jehovah. He led the twelve tribes, forming an army of six hundred thousand men, into this valley, at the foot of which he had placed the ark of the covenant. He ranged six tribes, forming three hundred thousand men, on the side of Mt. Ebal, and the other six tribes facing them on the slope of Gerizim. He, himself, took his stand by the side of the Ark of the Covenant, where he was surrounded by Priests and Levites. Then turning toward Mt. Gerizim, he proclaimed in a loud voice the twelve blessings promised by Jehovah, should Israel observe His commandments. Listen to the first two,—

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" 'Blessed shall be the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, and the fruit of thy flocks. . . .'

" And to each one of these benedictions the six tribes on Mt. Gerizim answered with a loud cry, 'Amen.'

" And turning then towards Mt. Ebal, Joshua pronounced twelve curses against the violators of the law.

" 'If thou dost not obey the voice of Jehovah, thy God, thou shalt be cursed in the city and cursed in the fields.

" 'Cursed shall be the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy lands, and the fruit of thy flocks. . . .'

" And the three hundred thousand men on Mt. Ebal answered each malediction with the same unanimous cry, 'Amen.'"

"What a marvelous sight that must have been," said Camilla.

"How grand, imposing and solemn," added Claudia.

"Did not this valley and these mountains deserve a visit?" asked Caius.

"Oh, yes," said Camilla, "and we do not know how to thank you."

On the summit of the mountain they found the ruins of the ancient temple and the altar on which the Samaritans still came to offer sacrifice. They could see over all the surrounding country, from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. Then they descended into the

plain with perfect confidence in the careful steps of their donkeys. Caius led them to the wells of Jacob.

"What are these wells," asked Camilla, "and why do we stop here?"

"This is the well dug more than two thousand years ago by the patriarch Jacob, one of the ancestors of Jesus of Nazareth; and it is here that the prophet began last year His wondrous preaching."

Caius then described to his companions the meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan Photina on this spot and the conversation of the Shechemites. The two women listened to this story with an interest mingled with emotion. Claudia walked away to gather some of the flowers which shone amid the green grass, while Camilla seated herself on the edge of the well, saying,—

"This Photina is very happy to have received the 'Gift of God.'"

"And you, Camilla, will receive it when the hour shall have come. So many things happen which one cannot foresee. I never foresaw it, but I have longed for this exquisite meeting given me to-day near this well which witnessed so long ago so many vows of love. I can hardly stammer my feelings for you, Camilla, but you understand me perfectly without words. Do not speak. Some day, I hope, we will meet again on the banks of the Tiber in our Rome we love so well, and there we will have the same God just as we have the same country. Who will this God be? I have a presentiment that it will be He who sat where you are seated. Who teaches the religion

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Camilla closed her eyes and a tear fell on her hand. Caius caught this hand and kissed it.

"If all tears were as sweet it would be happiness to weep," he said. Camilla smiled a little sadly.

During the evening Caius succeeded in finding Photina and in bringing her to the inn. Claudia and Camilla made her recount her meeting with Jesus of Nazareth and their excitement was great. As she finished the Samaritan woman said,

"With what joy I look forward to seeing the Prophet again! We leave to-morrow by caravan for Jerusalem, where we expect to assist at the feast of Tabernacles, and Jesus will surely come."

The next day, towards evening, Claudia, Camilla and Caius entered Jerusalem by the gate of Joppa.

XI

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

IT is difficult to form any idea of the great religious festivals which bring such immense crowds into Jerusalem and make such deep impressions on the faithful believers in Jehovah. The two greatest festivals of the year were the Feast of the Passover in the spring and that of Tabernacles in the autumn. The first recalled the departure from Egypt and the second the forty years' wandering through the desert. The Tabernacles were not cloth tents. According to

the instructions in Leviticus, they were to be made of palm branches, wild olive, myrtle and other leafy trees; sturdy poles driven into the ground along two parallel lines and joined at the summit, tied and covered again with palm leaves or grasses; this was their ordinary form. The great tents were divided into three parts by curtains. The one at the foot was reserved for women, that in the centre for the men of the family, and the ante-chamber was occupied by the servants.

At the door of the tent, in a triangle formed by three stones, burned a fire which served to cook the food and around which the people gathered in the evening to chat, to tell stories or to read the old tales of the Scriptures.

Pilgrims coming together from the same city or village gathered on the heights where their tents were placed in a circle. In the center, was always to be found the leader of the caravan, whose tent was generally larger than the rest. Both for the offering of sacrifices and for the feeding of the pilgrims, each caravan had its flock of sheep, of calves and even of oxen, cared for by shepherds. Long before the feast days, caravans could be seen arriving in all directions from the cities of Judea and Galilee, from Peræa, from the sea-shore and from Liban. It was a peaceful and happy invasion which took possession of all the surrounding country of Jerusalem and especially of the heights. The great joy of the pilgrims was to see from the elevation of their camps the vast porticoes and cupola of their well-beloved Temple, to

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see the smoke of the sacrifices rising in columns above the walls night and day from the altar of Holocausts; to hear the joyful flourish of sacred trumpets calling the people to the ceremonies.

Jerusalem was thus surrounded by an immense city of leafy tents, gathered on the summits of Mt. Olivet, Bethesda and Scopas, in the principal part of the Valley of Jehosaphat, on the slope of Ophel and the summit of Mt. Zion. Even within the walls of the city, all the children of Israel were bound by Leviticus to celebrate the feast by living for seven days in tents made of leaves. They built them on the terraces of their houses, in their gardens, in the public places and especially at the gate of "The Waters" and that of "Ephraim."

This great festival, in which more than a million Jews took part, had been instituted in memory of the years that the Israelites had spent under tents in the Arabian desert after their departure from Egypt. For eight days the Temple was filled with pilgrims, and the most solemn religious ceremonies there recalled the wonders accomplished by Jehovah in favor of His people.

Every morning twenty-one blasts of the trumpet reverberated from the summit of the crenelated earthworks and from the porticoes. Then a procession of priests, Levites and the faithful formed and descended the slope of Ophel as far as the fountain of Siloah and returned with a golden vase filled with fresh water which, while hymns were being sung, was poured by the officiating pontiff on the altar of Holo-

causts. Then there was the reading of the Law and preaching. From time to time, this preaching was interrupted by divers ceremonies it would take too long to describe. It is sufficient to say that, taken altogether, they formed a sort of memorial of Jehovah's favors to His chosen people.

The water brought from Siloah recalled the stream which sprung from the rock in the desert at the word of Moses. The illumination of the Temple was in memory of the Column of Fire which lighted the way of the Israelites to the Promised Land, and the expected Messiah would become the true column of fire, scattering the darkness in which humanity groped and guiding it across the desert of this life toward the Land of the Living.

The altar of Holocausts smoked all day and all night; the fire had to be constantly kept up and continual sacrifice was offered. Young bulls, lambs, deer, pigeons and doves were thrust into it. The priests offered the blood of the victims which they poured all over the altar of Jehovah. Then the bodies of the animals were cut in pieces, of which part was placed on the fire and consumed. Oblations were also made of flour sprinkled with oil, and a handful of this was thrown on the fire with incense. The rest of the flour as well as the fragments of the victims belonged to the priests. This, then, was the great feast which the Jews celebrated every year in Jerusalem in the middle of the month of Thisri, which included part of September and October.

But in the year of Rome, 782, the feast took on

much gratification among the people. The Messiah was accepted with a breadth of knowledge possible in those days. It could be such as His words. Him said the Crowds of priests and feasted them and made a Feast of the crowd of and desired upon His motives preparing would not orders to show Him. "But I there in the people with Scripture simple as Him. But the Sanhedrin where M

much greater proportions and made greater commotion amid the people of Israel, because the time of the Messiah appeared to have come and a great Prophet was accomplishing wonders throughout the entire breadth of the ancient kingdom. It was no longer possible to doubt that He was the One expected, for it could not be denied that He accomplished miracles such as had never been seen since the time of Elias. His words were so eloquent that those who had heard Him said, "Never has man spoken as He speaks." Crowds followed Him with admiration but the chief priests and the Scribes were angry and openly manifested their hostility. Would He come to Jerusalem and make Himself heard in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles which was beginning? The crowd of pilgrims, more numerous than ever, expected and desired Him. But the Pharisees had set spies upon Him in Galilee and had sought all manner of motives for accusations against Him. They were preparing new traps from which they thought He would not know how to escape, and their agents had orders to arrest Him during the festival if He dared show Himself.

"But He will not dare to come," they said. "Over there in Galilee He is in His element, in the midst of people without instruction, who know nothing of the Scriptures. He tells them parables and stories as simple as themselves, and these honest people admire Him. But here in the Temple in the Rotunda where the Sanhedrim sits, in the presence of an audience where Masters of religious science mingle with the

crowd and the most illustrious Doctors in Israel, He will lose His assurance and no longer dare maintain His Messianic pretensions."

The Centurion, Camilla and Claudia Procla were among those who believed that the Prophet of Galilee would come, and every day they went to the Temple to see and hear Him; but three days had already passed and Jesus of Nazareth had not appeared.

XII

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

WE will take the description of the fourth day of the festival from Camilla's journal, which gives the impression it made upon her:

He has come at last, and I have seen and heard the great Prophet of Galilee! Everything about Him is beautiful and great, and His words impressed me deeply. The ceremonies of the fourth day had begun, and again in the vestibule of the Temple it was said He would not come.

In the group where I stood, several Scribes were disputing. How can He know the Scriptures since He has never studied them? He cannot be the Messiah, because the prophets say that when the Messiah appears, we will neither know from whence He comes nor whither He goes, and we are perfectly aware of Jesus' origin; we know that He comes from the obscure village of Nazareth, where He worked at His

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trade of carpenter. Who can have taught Him the doctrines He preaches?

Suddenly a thrill run through the crowd. A white figure had made its appearance on the top step of the vestibule of the Jews. It was the Prophet! We drew near Him as possible. I told Caius to listen intently to what He should say, because we knew that He generally spoke in the popular Hebrew dialect, that is to say, in Aramean, and Caius understood it better than we.

A deep silence fell. Jesus began to speak.

"A great number among you ask yourselves from whence I have drawn the doctrine I preach. This doctrine is not of me; it is of Him Who sent me. It comes from God! The man who speaks of His Master has but His own glory in view. But He who seeks only the glory of the God Who sent Him, that one is in the way of truth and justice.

"You pretend to know who I am and from whence I come, but then you should know that I do not come of myself. He Who is the Truth has sent me, but Him you do not know. I know Him because I proceed from Him and because He sent me."

Great was the astonishment of the Scribes who stood beside us. They looked at each other and whispered: "He has guessed the thoughts we exchanged a little while ago and answers us that we are mistaken in believing we know from whence He comes, because He comes from God, and we do not know God, and it is also from God that He receives His knowledge."

Jesus continued to speak, but there had been a movement in the crowd that pushed us back, and we could only hear Him at intervals. The murmurings of the multitude reached us more clearly.

"Is not He the one," they asked, "whom the chief priests seek to put to death? There He is speaking in public, and they say nothing to Him. They do not even contradict Him. Can they have recognized that He is really the Messiah? When Christ comes, could He possibly work greater miracles than this Man has done?"

The voice of the Prophet said,—

"Still I am with you for a little while; and I shall return to Him Who sent me. Then you will seek me, and you will not find me, because whither I go you cannot follow."

Suddenly from the great central door, acclamations were heard mingled with the sound of trumpet and cymbal. Jesus became silent while a long procession filed under the portico. The high-priest Caiphas, in his garments brocaded with pontifical ornaments and carrying in his hands a golden urn, walked at the head. The urn was filled with the water that the people and Levites had gone in procession to draw from the fountain of Siloah at the foot of Mt. Ophel. It recalled to the Israelites the living water that Moses had caused to spring from a rock on that day when their ancestors, coming out of Egypt, were dying of thirst in the desert. Behind him came the priests wearing magnificent vestments of purple and gold. But those of the high-priest were of marvelous brilliancy and

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richness conformable to the instructions given by Moses and fully described in chapter thirty-nine of the book of Exodus. The pectoral was of the same material as the ephod, of purple, scarlet, violet and crimson, with four rows of precious stones, sardonyx, topaz, emeralds, carbuncles, sapphires and diamonds. These stones were mounted in two golden rosettes bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The shoulder pieces of the ephod were formed by onyx stones "fast set and closed in gold, graven with the names of the children of Israel." The entire dress of the ephod of violet purple had at the bottom a trimming of scarlet pomegranates and golden bells which tinkled at every step of the pontiff. His head was crowned with a tiara artistically modeled, and on a band of pure gold encircling his forehead, one could read the words, "The Holy of the Lord."

After the priests came several Scribes and elders and a crowd of pilgrims, strangers in Jerusalem. A choir of five hundred voices accompanied by harps, flutes, psalteries, trumpets and cymbals sang the canticle of the redeemed of the Prophet Isaias.

"A rod will come from the root of Jesse and from it will spring an offshoot on whom will rest the spirit of Jehovah, Spirit of Wisdom and of Understanding, Spirit of Counsel and of Fortitude," and the canticle ended in the following verse,—

"You will draw water with joy from the spring of salvation and in that day, you will say 'Praise Jehovah, invoke His name, dwellers in Zion, for the Holy of Israel is great in your midst.'"

Oh, Mother, we found this song so beautiful, for we thought perhaps Jesus of Nazareth was He whom Isaias had prophesied.

The old Gamaliel had caught sight of us and had come up to us. He was glowing with enthusiasm.

"Can it be possible," said he raising his hands, "that we shall see with our own eyes, at this same moment, the realization of the prophecy of Isaias? Could it be possible that this man who is before us and who speaks to us, is the rod come out of the root of Jesse, the offshoot on whom rests the Spirit of God, the Holy One of Israel, great in the midst of Zion?"

And the old doctor in Israel, his eyes filled with tears of joy, watched Jesus in silence, who stood calm and impassive on the high steps which served Him as pulpit.

And the procession advanced singing, crossing the ante-chamber of the Gentiles, then of the women, then the vestibule of the Jews; the pontiff who carried the golden urn passed through the door of Nicanor, and the balcony which surrounds the anteroom of the Levites. At the moment he mounted the steps leading to the altar of Holocausts, the people cried,—

"Raise your hand," and then the pontiff emptied the golden urn towards the west while the choir continued the refrain: "You will draw water with joy from the Springs of Salvation."

As soon as the choir ceased, Jesus again raised His voice. The ceremony which had just finished furnished Him with a new metaphor for His doctrine.

"If anyone has thirst," He cried, "let him come to

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me and I will give him to drink. Whoever believes in Me shall himself be like the rock of which the Scripture says, from its bosom shall flow springs of living water." The crowd became tumultuous. Some of them cried, "It is really the prophet announced by Isaias; It is Christ; It is the Messiah!"

But others objected, "Does Christ come from Galilee?"

Jesus continued without allowing Himself to be turned from His subject.

Night was coming. Great candelabra were lighted, illuminating all the Temple. Their rays transfigured the Prophet, when suddenly, He said in a loud voice, "I am the Light of the World. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have light and life."

"Never has the world heard such mighty words," said Gamaliel, "and I know of no other eloquence which is so personal and decisive. A moment ago, He called Himself the Spring of Living Water unto Life Eternal, and now He is the Light of the World. Note well," he added, "that He quotes no other authority save that of God and that He does not say, 'I am going to teach you where are the sources of light and life and how you can reach them.' He says, 'I am the Spring of Life and of Light.' To speak thus, He must be God."

The Pharisees had interrupted the Prophet and expostulated with Him for giving testimony of Himself. He answered that His testimony was worthy of belief because He knows from whence He comes and whither

He goes, while they do not know it. Besides this, He is not alone in giving testimony but that his Father who sent Him also gives testimony of Him.

“Who is your Father?” they cried.

“You know neither me nor my Father,” answered Jesus; “if you knew me, you would also know my Father, because my Father and I are one.”

“What does He mean?” I asked Gamaliel.

“I understand that He means to say God is His father.”

“Is that possible?”

“It is the mystery of this man, and it is that which baffles my understanding and all my knowledge.”

The ceremonies and preaching continued until the eighth day. Unfortunately, during the last days, the crowd was clamorous. The chief priests, the Scribes and Pharisees were scattered in every direction and excited the people against Jesus. They interrupted Him, complained, abused Him, and He Himself finished by declaiming to them some very hard truths.

You can judge of this by several words Caius gathered together, and which I will copy for you. When we found Him in the anteroom of the treasury, Jesus was saying to the Jews, who seemed greatly excited,

“I go away and you will seek me, but you will die in your sin. Where I go ye cannot come.”

“Is He going to kill Himself?” murmured the crowd.

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Jesus continued, "You are from below but I am from above; you are of this world but I am not of this world. Again I declare it to you! You will die in your sin, if you persist in not believing who I am."

"Who are you, then?" they asked Him.

"I am Who am. I am the Principle. He who sent me does not deceive and all that He teaches me, I tell it to the world." . . .

Gamaliel paled and turning to us, said,

"Do you notice this personal and absolute affirmation?—'I am the Principle.' Has ever man spoken like this? Is there in the world a purely human being who can say with truth, 'I am the Principle'? Moses himself would not have dared pronounce such words."

The Prophet pursued His discourse.

"When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then you shall recognize Who I am. You will see that I do nothing of myself—but that I say what my Father has taught me; that He Who sent me is with me and that He does not leave me alone because I will always do His will."

A great number of His hearers then acknowledged Him and declared themselves His disciples.

"You will really be my disciples," He said to them, "if you live in my doctrines. Thus you will understand the truth and the truth will set you free."

All who testified their hostility protested then against these words with anger:

"We are the Children of Abraham and have never been the slaves of anyone."

"How haughty they are," remarked Gamaliel; "they forget that they have often been led into captivity and are to-day under Roman dominion."

But Jesus explained that He spoke of moral freedom, that real slavery is sin and that, far from doing the works of justice which Abraham did, they sought at that same moment to put to death Him who taught them the truth He held from God.

Greater grew the tumult. The Jews proclaimed loudly that they had but one Father, God.

The Prophet raised His voice to quiet them and said with decision,

"If God were your father, you would certainly love me, because I come from God, and I go to Him. No, I did not come from myself; I repeat to you, it is He, Who sent me, notwithstanding you do not recognize my language and do not wish to hear my speech.

"Ah, he who is of God, hears the words of God, and if you do not hear it, it is because you are not of God.

"Your father is the devil and it is the instinct of your father you gratify in seeking the means to put me to death. From the beginning that one was a homicide and the truth is no longer in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own heart because he is a liar, the father of lies."

Cries of rage drowned these words. The Jews cried out to Him that He was possessed of the devil, and as there was a pile of stones in the anteroom which the workmen had been using to make certain

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repairs to the walls, the Jews gathered them up and hurried towards Jesus to stone Him, but He had disappeared.

It was the end of the preaching because it was the last day of the feast, but the Prophet did not cease to work His miracles.

XIII

THE MAN BORN BLIND

HARDLY had Jesus left the Temple, when He noticed in the street a poor man blind from his birth. Lifting up a handful of dust Jesus mixed it with saliva and anointed the eyes of the blind man. Then He said, "Go now and bathe in the baths of Siloah." The man born blind washed there and immediately recovered his sight.

The next evening Gamaliel the elder received at his house several friends. Among them were Claudia, Camilla, Nicodemus and Caius. The old Claudius and Pilate had declined the invitation, because they said they had heard sufficient controversy on the subject of Jesus of Nazareth. The cure of the man born blind had made a great sensation in Jerusalem, and Gamaliel's guests were curious to know exactly what had happened. Camilla was the first to question the old doctor on the subject.

"This," said Gamaliel, "is all that I know about it. For several years I have seen a man blind from his birth at the door of the Temple. I have often

spoken to him and in the hope that doctors perhaps could cure him, I one day examined his eyes. But though I am not familiar with this subject, one glance sufficed to show me that the evil was incurable.

"Yesterday, on coming out of the Temple, I saw a crowd of persons engaged in violent dispute. I drew near them and recognized in the middle of the group my blind man on whom all eyes were fixed and who spoke with great animation. I listened to the discussion.

"Some said, 'It is undoubtedly he, it is the man born blind who always stayed by the door of the Temple and begged.'

"'No,' said the others, 'it is someone who resembles him.'

"And he answered, 'It is indeed I.'

"'But thou art not blind!'

"'I am no longer blind but I was blind less than an hour ago.'

"'And how have your eyes been opened?'

"'It was in this manner. A man whom I could not see because I was blind, but whom I heard called Jesus, approached me. He put wet earth on my eyes and said to me, "Go to the baths of Siloah and bathe." I was led there by this child whom you see. I washed myself and recovered my sight.'

"'Where is this man who cured thee?' I asked him then.

"'I do not know nor do I know Him. I have never seen Him.'

"There happened to be in the Temple at that time

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a gathering of priests and Pharisees because it was the Sabbath. I led the man before them and told them what I had just learned. The members of the Sanhedrim were angry at what they considered a violation of the day consecrated to God and, suspecting at the same time a fraud, immediately inaugurated an inquiry, interrogating the blind man and his parents. The man answered all their questions with a simplicity, frankness and firmness that seemed admirable to me. The fact was not at all complicated. It had just been accomplished and, without hesitation as if having no fear, the blind man told his story again in the same way. He had been blind since his birth and an hour before he was still sightless; then a Man whom they told him was called Jesus had suddenly cured him by putting mud upon his eyes and sending him to wash in the fountain of Siloah; that was all. It was clear, precise, positive, but it was inexplicable and contrary to the laws of nature. 'Therefore,' said the members of the Sanhedrim, 'there is no truth in it, this man is a liar.'

"Then they had the mother and father of the blind man brought and questioned them.

"'Is this your son?'

"'Yes, it is our son,' they answered simply.

"'Well, was he born blind?'

"'Yes, he was born blind.'

"'But how does it happen that he sees now?'

"'We do not know nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, himself. He is of an age when he can speak of what concerns him.'

“Once more questioned the blind man recited the same story with the calmness, assurance and precision of a man who speaks the truth.

“Then discussions arose amongst us. Some said, ‘This man is not sent from God because He does not keep the Sabbath;’ others again, ‘How can a sinner work such miracles?’ ‘And thou,’ they asked the blind man, ‘what dost thou say of Him who has opened thine eyes?’

“‘He is a prophet,’ he answered without flinching.

“This response irritated the Pharisees, and they answered, ‘We know that this man is a sinner.’

“‘If he be a sinner,’ replied the blind man, ‘I do not know but I know one thing,—I know that I was blind and that now I see.’

“It was precisely this overwhelming fact, more eloquent than all argument, that exasperated my colleagues. The miracle blinded their eyes; they did not wish to see it. The crowd affirmed it and bore witness to it, and in spite of his ignorance, with his good sense and faith alone, the cured man triumphantly answered all the arguments of the incredulous and spiteful doctors. There was a moment when he even seemed to make fun of them, when for the third time they asked how Jesus had opened his eyes.

“‘Why do you wish to hear it again?’ he said to them, ‘Is it because you, too, wish to become His disciples?’

“Then they cursed him, and said angrily,

“‘Go, thou, be His disciple, but we are the disciples

of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses but we do not know from whence this one comes.'

" 'It is very astonishing,' answered the new disciple of Jesus, 'that you do not know from whence He comes when He opened my eyes; God does not listen to sinners, and never had it been heard that one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, He could not have done this.'

"It was too much; the Pharisees were enraged and had recourse to abuse, that last argument of those who are in the wrong. 'Thou wert born in sin and thou darest teach us.' Then they had him thrown out of the door of the Temple."

"Doctor Gamaliel," said Camilla, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your story has deeply moved me."

"It is really touching," added Caius.

"But there is a sequel," added Nicodemus, "an epilogue that you probably do not know, Gamaliel."

"No, I know nothing more."

"Well, this is what followed. Driven from the Temple, the happy man was passing down the street, when Jesus of Nazareth met him; He stopped him and said, 'Dost thou believe in the Son of God?' He answered, 'Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?'

" 'Thou hast seen Him,' answered Jesus; 'it is He Himself who speaks to thee.'

" 'I believe, Lord,' answered the blind man of yesterday, without hesitation, and throwing himself at the feet of Jesus, he adored Him."

“What faith!” breathed Camilla, Claudia and Caius at the same time. “Is it not admirable, Gamaliel?”

The old teacher raised his eyes to Heaven and remained silent. At last he said, “I am more moved than any of you, but I am troubled by the profound mystery of this Man. He cannot be an impostor since God hears Him. But how could any one conceive of a man’s calling himself the ‘Son of God’ and allowing himself to be adored? It is beyond my understanding.”

“It is a mystery,” added Nicodemus, “but how could He redeem humanity if He be not God, and if He is God, is He not bound to say it?”

XIV

THE MESSIANIC QUESTION

IN Judea as in Galilee, in Samaria, in Peræa, and as far as the seashore where Tyre and Sidon rose, the Messianic question had been discussed. It excited the people and aroused the minds of those interested in controversy. It awakened national sentiment and somnolent patriotism. Jesus of Nazareth had but to speak one word, and it would become even for Rome a grave political question.

But nothing was farther from the mind of Jesus than the dreams of creating a popular movement and freeing His country from Roman domination. This rôle would have been much beneath so great a Personage,

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and it could not have been for the creation of political revolution that a Messiah had been promised the Jewish people for so many centuries. Also, far from pronouncing the word of rebellion which the people wished and expected, Jesus said to those who cared to hear Him,—

“My kingdom is not of this world; it is the Kingdom of God.” For such as added faith to this declaration of the Prophet, the Messianic question was rather a religious one. It raised the gravest theological problems and became complicated with threatened ecclesiastical conflict. Face to face with Jesus rose the Jewish priesthood, whose personal interests were menaced.

No one could longer ignore the numberless miracles performed by the young Prophet nor His extraordinary preaching in the Temple, in the synagogues, on the banks of the Jordan and in every place through which He passed. Everywhere the crowd asked if He were the promised Messiah. Even John the Baptist had wished to assure himself of it through the mouth of Jesus and sent a messenger for this purpose. Jesus' answer had satisfied John, who had dismissed his own followers by saying, “My mission is finished. Now He must increase and I must decrease.”

The humble, the ignorant and the simple did not doubt that Jesus was the Messiah. They had seen His works, and His works had sufficed to convince them. He had declared from the first who He was, and God does not work miracles to prove an untruth.

But He did not go among the great, the rich nor the Jewish priesthood. The governing classes never see the growth of a new or powerful influence without defiance and jealousy. They are naturally envious of the success and elevation of those whom they call upstarts.

It is especially in Jerusalem that the disputes were most violent. And they were organized by the leaders of the people, especially those who represented religious authority. They gave divers motives for refusing to recognize the Messianic character of Jesus which might excuse their scepticism but which could not justify in any way their hatred and hostility.

“The Messiah,” they said, “should be of the family of David. He should have been born in Bethlehem and not in Galilee. But Jesus came from Nazareth. Since His most tender infancy He as well as His family had been known there. His father was an obscure carpenter. He Himself had worked at this trade up to the age of thirty years, and it was without any preliminary study, without having left a name in any celebrated school that He had suddenly started to preach. What relation could there be between this poor family from the despised country of Galilee and the royal race of David?”

These first objections were easily refuted by those who sought in good faith their solution; it was only necessary to carefully study the genealogy of Jesus and the spot of His birth. Archives were to be found

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in Bethlehem and Nazareth and several witnesses of the birth of Jesus must still be living.

There were also among the great of Jerusalem conscientious persons who had inquired into these facts and learned their truth. Nicodemus ben Gorian, Joseph of Arimathea, decurions, and Gamaliel were among them. Nicodemus had met in the environments of Bethlehem several of the shepherds who had known of the birth of Jesus in the cave at Bethlehem, and they had told him of its marvelous occurrence. The oldest among them were not yet sixty years of age. In the same manner, the mother of Jesus, His friends and relatives could have been questioned, and it might also have been proved that Joseph, foster-father of Jesus, and Mary, his spouse, were both descended from the family of David.

Another motive was also put forward for not acknowledging the Messianic titles of Jesus: the Messiah, it was said, was to appear on the earth in splendor and glory, in all the brilliancy belonging to a powerful prince. He was to redeem Israel and all nations were to bow before Him. But it was evident that this preacher of Galilee, surrounded by poor fishermen from the Lake of Genezareth, possessed neither grandeur nor power nor any other royal appanage. This second reason for doubt was more serious than the first, and really an obstacle to the faith of the people themselves. For it was their belief and supreme hope that the Messiah should re-establish the kingdom of Juda and that He would be a conqueror

rather than a prophet, a new Joshua, a David or a Judas Machabeus.

But when the people had wished to proclaim Him king, Jesus had fled, and neither His apostles nor He, Himself, had ever said one word that might betray any intention of shaking off the yoke of Rome. The only kingdom of which He constantly spoke and which He wished to found, was the kingdom of God and not the kingdom of Juda.

But this belief in a Messiah-king, liberator and emancipator of His people was founded on prophecies that were far from being clear. Without doubt the promised Messiah should be a king. But of what nature would be His royalty? Over what regions would His kingdom extend? It became difficult to decide by consulting the prophecies alone. It was believed that He would deliver Israel and seize its sceptre. But the prophecies also said that He should deliver the nations and that all people would obey Him. He should also be a prophet in order to teach the people, and a priest of the Most High, to offer the expiatory sacrifice for the sin of the first man.

But how could He be at the same time a powerful king and the victim of the serpent who was to bruise His heel? What did this wound signify which the serpent should have power to inflict upon Him? And if He were to reign over all the nations with so much glory, how, according to these same prophecies, could He be an object of scorn, subject to all suffering and forced to undergo such torment that He would no longer resemble a human being?

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This had all been predicted and seemed contradictory, if one did not admit the purely spiritual royalty of the Messiah. Granted this supernatural character, nothing was opposed to what Jesus proclaimed, since His kingdom, as He said, was not of this world.

One last motive, greater than all the others, had been brought forward by the great, the doctors and the priests, to justify their incredulity. On several occasions Jesus had affirmed that He was the Son of God. "But," they said, "how can this man who has led an obscure life at Nazareth and rubbed elbows with all the world since His childhood, be the Son of God?" "It is absurd, insane," the sceptics said. "It is a blasphemy punishable by death," added the chief priests. The poor, the ignorant, the people answered simply, with greater logic than was shown by the scholars, "Yes, it is blasphemy if He does not really proceed from God, but if this be so, how do you explain that a blasphemer has command over the elements, sickness, life and death?" The priests answered, "It is by Beelzebub that He does these miracles, He is possessed of a devil."

"Ah," answered these poor people, "this is something new. It is the demon who drives other demons from off the earth, and who delivers those unfortunates who are possessed! It is the devil who cures the sick, the infirm and the lepers; it is the devil who restores hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, sight to the blind, life to the dead! Then let us abandon the worship of Jehovah who ceaselessly chastises us,

and let us dedicate the Temple to the devil who overwhelms our country with his good works."

The priests answered this outrageous irony by abuse and insult as they answered the man born blind. And their recourse to abuse revealed the true motive of their hostility to the Messianic character of Jesus.

It is probable that some of the leaders of the priesthood as well as the Scribes, doubted that perhaps Jesus might be the Son of God. They believed that He should be an autocrat, a monarch of great power, Liberator of Israel, but did not admit His divinity.

Notwithstanding this, certain prophecies affirmed it clearly enough. Michæas called Him, "He whose origin dates from the olden times into the days of Eternity," which meant that He was the Eternal One. The Prophet King put into His mouth these words, "Jehovah said to me Thou art My Son, to-day I begot Thee; ask of Me and I will give Thee all the nations as an inheritance." Isaias, "Behold a Virgin shall bear a son, Emanuel, God-with-us. Unto us a Son is born, and He shall be called Councillor, Admirable, the Mighty God, the Eternal Father, the Prince of Peace."

The title of Son of God is also given to the Messiah in the Book of Henoah and in the fourth Book of Esdras. It was then, the traditional belief that the Messiah would be the Son of God and that He would pre-exist near His father in Heaven.

But the greater number of Jesus' enemies did not occupy themselves with this question of pure dogma. At bottom it did not matter to them whether or

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no He called Himself the Son of God. There was nothing superhuman in their hostile attitude. The most ambitious and clever of the Sanhedrites knew perfectly well that the propagation of the new doctrines which the Galilean preached undermined their authority and their social position; that His success diminished their prestige and would exhaust the spring of their revenues.

While the expectation of a Messiah had been but a far-off hope, this dogma had not troubled them. They had exploited it and lived upon it. But they had not foreseen the result of its accomplishment, and now this result came as a disaster to their revenues and their influence over the people. Messianism, as Jesus interpreted it, was antagonistic to the Pharaisaical interpretation of the Scriptures and Mosaic worship, such as was practised by the priesthood.

Jesus indeed said that the new law was the confirmation of the old law, but He criticised and rejected most of the practices of Rabbinism. He instituted a new priesthood to preach and spread the new religion. One of the first acts of His public life had been to drive the vendors from the Temple, but the vendors paid both taxes and rent to the priests who allowed them to carry on their commerce under the porticoes and in the anterooms. If this trade came to an end, if the sacrifices were suppressed, the great source of revenue for the priesthood would be destroyed. And if the new priesthood were accepted by the people, the usefulness of the old would cease.

In the face of this imminent danger, a union had

been formed between the different sacerdotal sects, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenees, at first strongly divided, had become united. Jesus had become the common enemy.

On its part, the mass of the people was not disposed to renounce the re-establishment of the kingdom of Israel, and its ideal of a Messiah was a king who would realize this great national hope. But Jesus of Nazareth did nothing to gain for Himself this influence and power in the high spheres of the social and political world.

From that time it could be foreseen that the people would not consecrate themselves to His defence against the priesthood, which bestowed high places, honor and favor on all sides, but would rather remain spectators in the combat which was imminent, would even range themselves on the side of the priests, if these in turn would support them. It was evident to the eyes of the intelligent observer that the Messianic question would have a violent solution. The priesthood had undertaken the combat and would pursue it with vigor and hasten its climax. But the only climax which could satisfy it, because it appeared definite, was the death of Jesus. In delivering Him to death, thought the chief priests, "we will prove that He is not God, since God cannot die."

And yet it was to prove that He was the Son of God that Jesus desired His own death, for if He did not die, He could not come to life again. It was through His resurrection He would prove His divinity.

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XV

LAZARUS

WHILE the Jews of all classes throughout Judea were agitating this question of the Messiah and discussing it under its divers aspects, Jesus had returned into Galilee. From there He went to Peræa. In December, of the year of Rome, 782, He returned to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Dedication. He re-appeared in the Temple and answering the questions of the Jews, declared anew that He was the Son of God. For the second time the Jews took up stones to throw at Him, and Jesus said to them, "Through the power of my Father I have accomplished before you many good deeds. Is it for these works that you stone me?"

Did they understand all the irony of this question? They did, indeed, but their hatred only grew. They then employed means to seize Him, but He escaped their hands and departed again for Peræa. There He lived until the following March, year of Rome, 783.

The journal of Camilla will tell us of the occasion of His return to Bethany.

 EXTRACT FROM CAMILLA'S JOURNAL

March 1st, Year of Rome, 783.—I have just returned from Bethany. Myriam and Martha

are plunged in deepest grief. Their brother Lazarus is very ill. The doctors have declared his illness incurable, that he can live a few days only. One hope alone remains to these poor women. They expect Jesus of Nazareth and are certain that He will come to cure their brother, His dearest friend. They sent messengers into Peræa to Him, who said, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick," nothing more. They did not even pronounce the name of the sick man. They simply designated him by the title which gave him most honor; "he whom Jesus loves!" They asked nothing of the Prophet. He knows full well that this message means "Come to see Lazarus and cure him." But Jesus contented Himself with answering, "This illness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified in it," and He remained in Peræa.

Does this answer mean that Lazarus will not die, and that Jesus will come in time to save him? But He should make haste. Every hour of vain expectation aggravates the illness and increases the grief of this family whom, nevertheless, the Prophet loves.

I said to Myriam, "Of course He will come; His heart is too tender to abandon His friends in their grief."

She answered me, "Indeed, yes, He is good. But He is also just, and I have sinned so much I have deserved to suffer."

Poor Myriam! She is in despair, and her soul is crushed; she is so deeply attached to this brother who is the head of the family, who had always been

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good to her, even during the years of her sinfulness, who took her back after her conversion and who fills the place on earth of her mother and father, dead long since. If he were going to die, what emptiness it would leave in this home and in the heart of these two sisters!

Oh, what a sad and mysterious thing is death; it is night for the dead, but it is emptiness which is far worse for the dear being who survives. Which of the two suffers? It is the survivor, for he who has gone is necessary to him who remains, is everything to him; and how long will the parting be? For how many years? Forever, forever and always. Is it possible that all the links we form on earth shall be torn apart in such a way that they can never be united? What is the name of this force which destroys and dissolves all things? Is it chance? Is it fate? Is it in ourselves? Do we bear its germ in our being? Or does it come from some unknown world? And if death be not the end of all, what is the future?

Oh, Prophet of Nazareth, will you not come to reveal these mysteries?

March 3rd, Year of Rome 783.

Irreparable misfortune! They expected the coming of the Prophet to cure, and death came instead! Nicodemus has just told me the sad news. Lazarus is dead, and since yesterday has slept his last sleep in the sepulchre of his family at Bethany.

Nicodemus told me that a great number of friends had assisted at the burial with the usual demonstra-

tions of grief and mourning, to the sound of lugubrious melodies of the flute-players and the lamentations of the mourners. For seven days friends and relatives will come to weep at the tomb and visit the afflicted family. How could Jesus of Nazareth have abandoned the hospitable dwelling generally so calm and happy, with doors always open to Him, His dwelling place when He came to Jerusalem? How could He have allowed death to enter there?

Martha and Myriam do not understand why their Friend has not come, and their lamentations always end with these words, "Ah, if He had been here, our brother would not have died."

I will go to see my poor afflicted friends, but what consolation can I offer them? What can I say to those who have lost him who was their dearest on earth? In the presence of death, man is powerless. Only the Prophet of Nazareth can console those whom He seems to have forgotten on this fatal day. But I wonder if He be made of the same flesh as ourselves, if He feels as we do, if He loves as we do? Perhaps He is so far above human nature that He cannot share our feelings of friendship nor the pity inspired in us by the unhappiness of our friends. And yet, does He not console all who have recourse to Him in their misfortunes? Has He not cured thousands of sick? To how many lepers has He not given clean bodies? To how many blind people has He not restored sight? Oh, Jesus, why did you not come to Bethany?

March 6th, Year of Rome 783.

Oh, Mother, how great He is! How powerful and how good is this wonderful Prophet of Nazareth! I myself have witnessed the greatest of miracles. Lazarus, dead and buried four days, is to-day alive. I am still so excited that I am incapable of telling you as I would wish all of this extraordinary occurrence. Let me simply note my impressions, and you will try to understand what I cannot express.

On my arrival, I found everything in Bethany just as Nicodemus had described. It was a lamentable sight. In the principal room hung in black, the two sisters had secluded themselves, dressed in deepest mourning, going out twice a day only, each time to visit the tomb. The rest of the house was open like an abandoned dwelling to all the neighbors, relatives, friends and the morbidly curious, who walked about, lamenting and sighing.

I was admitted into the main room, where I found my two friends in a sorrow bordering on despair. It was not only that they suffered the loss of their brother,—what doubled their grief was the thought that their Friend, the great Prophet, appeared to have abandoned them. Myriam was dumb with sorrow and let Martha speak, who complained bitterly of the forgetfulness of the Master. I could but express my sympathy as well as that of my sister Claudia and then went away to mingle in the crowd below.

Several Pharisees were there. Under pretext of sympathy for the afflicted family, they loudly blamed Jesus of Nazareth for His unjustifiable absence. "He who deigned to open the eyes of the man born blind,"

they said, "could He not have come to save His friend from death?"

Suddenly the crowd whispered, "The Prophet! the Prophet! At last He has come! He is there at the gate of the avenue that leads to the house."

A thrill ran through them, the emotion of all was intense. But the Pharisees said, "Unfortunately He has come too late, He has failed in the most sacred duty of friendship."

Martha hastened to meet Jesus and said to Him,

"Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died."

"Thy brother will rise again," answered Jesus.

"I know," answered Martha, "that He will rise again on the last day."

Then Jesus raised His voice and said in a solemn tone, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me though He die, shall live. Dost thou believe this, Martha?"

Martha no longer doubted. Throwing herself on her knees before Jesus, she said to Him,

"Yes, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Myriam came in her turn all bathed in tears, and Jesus Himself shuddered in spirit and wept. Then He turned toward the sepulchre which was shown Him, and the crowd followed. The Pharisees said one to another,

"He weeps because He can no longer do anything. What good does it do to weep these useless tears and

promise these poor afflicted women that their brother will rise on the last day?"

The sepulchral cave was dug at the foot of a hill in the vertical wall of the rock and was reached by a stone staircase. Jesus descended with some of His disciples, and the crowd gathered before the tomb. Every heart stopped beating in expectation of what should come to pass. What could human strength no matter how great, do against the inexorable power of death? Jesus stood before the sepulchre and said, "Take away the stone!" The disciples moved it, and the door of the tomb gaped open. Before this sombre opening, ante-chamber to death and eternal night, the Prophet all in white, majestic and grave, His eyes raised to Heaven, prayed.

After an instant these words fell from His lips,

"My Father, I thank Thee for having heard Me," then raising His voice, He cried, "Lazarus, come forth!"

Then my eyes were fixed upon the yawning sepulchre, and I saw appearing in the black frame of the tomb, a form covered with a winding sheet, the body, hands and feet enveloped in bandages, but this phantom lived.

"Unloose him," added the deep-toned voice, "and let him go."

The disciples, stupefied and trembling, did not move.

It was Peter who first approached him and raised the cloth which covered his face. Then I recognized Lazarus, who fixed his eyes upon the Prophet and

when he was released from his bandages, his sisters and he prostrated themselves before Jesus and kissed His feet.

A smile of unearthly joy illuminated the august face of the Prophet, and the happy family accompanied by its superhuman Guest turned towards the dwelling, speaking words I did not understand. The Pharisees went silently away. I followed them, a prey to the greatest emotion of my life!

XVI

THE SANHEDRIM

THE raising of Lazarus produced an extraordinary commotion in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea. A great number of Jews believed in Jesus. The chief priests were of the opinion that it was high time to act, if they wished to prevent the whole nation from becoming converted to these new doctrines.

Caiphas convoked a large assembly in the Sanhedrim. The Sanhedrim consisted of three chambers, that of the priests, that of the Scribes and that of the elders or ancients. There should be twenty-three members in each, but it often happened, notably in the time of Jesus Christ, that the chamber of the priests contained the greatest number. Two secretaries also formed part of the Sanhedrim, which brought the regular total up to seventy-one. It was at the same time a species of parliament on religious and even civic matters and a superior tribunal. The greatest share

of influence in this assembly was held by the priests, who in reality governed it; and the sacerdotal aristocracy belonged, as a general thing, to the sect of the Sadducees. Outwardly they appeared to have great respect for the law of Moses, but interpreted it with individual liberty, each one according to his conscience, without the intervention of any authority. Thus they had arrived at a sort of rationalism. Many of them no longer believed in the future life.

The democratic element among the priests was found among the Pharisees. These were beyond all authority; practically they substituted their own learning for the law itself, understanding well its letter, but misconstruing its spirit. They were of those whose religion is exterior, and they replaced the practice of virtue by much outward religious show.

It was for this reason that Jesus had compared them to those sepulchres which one sees everywhere throughout the Orient, whose exterior is immaculately white, but which within are full of infectious rottenness. The people at large believed in their sincerity, and that is why they had far greater influence than the Sadducees. All the Jewish priesthood however, whether Sadducean or Pharisaical, was filled with pride, egotism and ambition.

The great sacerdotal families, Annas and his five sons, descendants of Boethus, the ben Phabi, the Cantheræ, the Johns, the Alexanders, disputed among themselves how best to enjoy the goods and benefices of the people and crush the nation to increase their own revenues. The Talmud represented them as scourges.

“They are high-priests,” it says, “their sons are treasurers, their sons-in-law commanders and their servants strike the people with their staves.” They kept the people in subjection and superstition and shamefully exploited the religion of their fathers, which was for them but a narrow and ridiculous formalism.

They collected in the granaries of the Temple the tithes which they extorted from the simple and humble faithful and stole from each other in order that each might gather in a greater part. Their palaces were sumptuous, their tables well appointed and their clothing luxurious. Hypocrites, avaricious, ambitious, they reigned and governed, thanks to the lowliness and ignorance of the multitude.

Everything which might threaten this hypocritical exploitation of religion and open the eyes of the nation to the truth must be fought against, prohibited and hidden in the background. The natural trend of all human power is to absolutism, and the great tendency of those who exercise this power is to suppress all in their way. Jesus had become too great a menace to the Jewish sacerdotal authority and the continuance of its power.

In driving the vendors from the Temple, He had shattered at one stroke the principal source of revenue which the Temple guaranteed to its priests.

The preaching of a new religion, a modern creed that should abolish the sacrifices of the ancient law, the profitable hecatombs of the altar, a doctrine which would found a new priesthood — all threatened the

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prestige and material welfare of the ancient priesthood. From that time on, the Galilean reformer was its enemy.

The principal members of the Chamber of the Priests at the time of Christ were Annas and his five sons, Eleazar, Jonathas, Theophilus, Mathias and Ananus, who later ordered the stoning of St. James; Caiphas, High Priest and president of the Sanhedrim; the two sons of Boethus, Joazar and Eleazar, who had successively been High Priests; Simon Cantherus, third son of Boethus, who became High Priest several years after Jesus Christ; Israel ben Phabi, Simon ben Camite, Helkias, who was treasurer of the temple; John and Sceva, who are named in the Acts of the Apostles.

After the priests came the Scribes; their name signified writers, and their principal duty was the preservation, reproduction and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. But the authority they possessed in the interpretation of the writings was relative and had none of the characteristics of infallibility. One might express disbelief in them without being accused of heresy. They themselves recognized this and at first were reasonably humble. Every time a prophet appeared and gave the proofs of his mission, they recognized his authority and accepted his teaching.

But when the era of prophets passed, their authority grew. Little by little, their teaching took upon itself the character of absolutism; some were Levites and others laymen. They were called Doctors in Israel

and formed the body of scholars, the most influential one after the Chamber of the Priests.

The most celebrated among the members of the Sanhedrim at the time of Jesus Christ were Gamaliel the elder, grandson of the famous Hillel, whose school had great renown; Simeon his son; Onkelos, one of his most illustrious disciples; Jonathas ben Uziel, Ismael ben Eliza, Rabbi Zadok and Iochanan ben Zachai, who was surnamed the "Splendor of Wisdom" by reason of his learning. The Chamber of Elders was composed of men whose position in the world of affairs and whose riches placed them above the common people. Their influence in the Sanhedrim had no weight, because for the most part, they had neither the learning nor eloquence necessary to give force to their opinions. The most remarkable members of this Chamber were Simon, to whom the historian Josephus gives great praise, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, whom our readers already know. In learning and reputation for honesty these three men eclipsed all their colleagues.

Such were the three chambers which Caiphas had united in the rotunda, adjoining the Temple and which communicated with it by the Royal Door.

The circumstances were grave and solemn and all present were well aware that the object of the reunion was to decide the line of conduct to be pursued in regard to the Prophet of Galilee. The Sanhedrim was nearly complete. Caiphas presided. Strange coincident, his name in Hebrew — Caiphas or Kephias — signified Peter, and it was this name that Jesus

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Christ had chosen for the head of His Apostles, in order that after Him the leader of the new religion, as well as that of the ancient, should be called Peter.

XVII

STORMY SESSION

CAIPHAS was the type of the authoritative priest, absolute and violent, an ambitious, energetic and clever politician. The preaching of Jesus in the Temple during the feasts of the Dedication and of Tabernacles had aroused him to a state of extreme irritation. He no longer listened or reasoned, he simply hated. The one preoccupation of his mind was to discover some means by which to cause the disappearance of the object of his hatred. He could not disguise his feelings in his opening address to the Sanhedrim. He did not ask his colleagues what they thought of Jesus of Nazareth and His doctrine; He did not even broach the Messianic question, which was the real one to be solved by this assembly, composed of the most learned interpreters of the sacred writings. He guarded himself carefully from drawing attention to the miracles accomplished by Jesus and from seeking an explanation of them. As to denying them, he knew well that it was not possible.

He considered as proven and undeniable the fact that Jesus was a false Prophet, who held the Law of Moses in contempt, who disturbed public order, who was the declared enemy of the Jewish priesthood, a

rebel who drew the people to Him and who would soon rouse Cæsar's anger, bringing upon Jerusalem some terrible chastisement by the Roman power.

"The measure is full," he cried as he finished, "It remains for us to secure the necessary means to escape this evil which threatens Israel. Already it has ruined our authority over the people and our power, and when we dispute the doctrines of this Man, when we denounce Him as an unbeliever, He dares hurl at us the most terrible anathemas. We wished to have Him arrested during the festival and sent our agents to the Temple to apprehend and lead Him before us. But His power of bewitching the people is such that even our agents became His disciples and reported that never before has man spoken as He.

"What must be done to put an end to this scandal and stop this peril which threatens both religion and country? I had thought at first that we could summon Him before us on the ground of outrage to religion or for blasphemy and have Him scourged. But after the scourging He would begin anew His preaching and would pose as a martyr before the people. His fame would grow in proportion to the diminution of our own. No, against this clever seducer of the people, who is already recognized as a great Prophet and even as the expected Messiah, and who whether by magic or by the power of the devil, does extraordinary things which the ignorant proclaim as miracles, against such an enemy, I say, flagellation and even imprisonment would avail nothing.

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and the only one which can assure us national and religious peace. I know that we cannot reach this result without the consent of the Roman Procurator. It will not suffice that we judge Him deserving of death according to our laws. Pilate alone has the right to pronounce capital sentence and have Him executed. But rest assured that He will not dare to resist us if we are united, energetic, tenacious and if we succeed in creating the least popular movement against the culprit. Pilate knows well that if we denounce Him at Rome for belittling our religion, our laws and the judgments of the Sanhedrim he will be censured.

"Nothing is easier than for us to organize in Jerusalem a popular movement to exert the necessary pressure upon the Governor. Has not each one of us command over dozens of these people who are always ready to create an uprising for the sake of a few coins? And note well one thing; the capital punishment authorized by Roman law is ignominious and infamous. Not only does it kill, it dishonors.

"When the people once understand that Jesus of Nazareth has been judged worthy of death by the Sanhedrim, that Pilate has pronounced sentence, that the culprit is to die upon a cross, they will at last realize that Jesus of Nazareth is nothing but a common criminal. No one will dare acknowledge that he has been His disciple, because no one will dare draw down upon himself the suspicion of the courts, the condemnation of both religious and civil authority.

"This is my opinion, my dear colleagues, and I doubt not that it will meet with the assent of all."

This discourse, rather unworthy of a judge who accused and condemned before the trial, met with almost unanimous applause. Then silence fell, and for a moment it was thought no one would dare answer the High Priest. Gamaliel looked around him, thinking that some of the head Sadducees would rise and utter at least a few words of protest against this anticipated condemnation to death, but not one among them opened his lips. When the old Doctor in Israel, whose learning was so renowned, arose all eyes were upon him. He was a beautiful old man, tall and robust, whose seventy years had not yet bent him and whose open face so full of vitality was framed in hair and beard as white as snow. He began in a quiet tone:

“If the trial of Jesus of Nazareth had already taken place, and if He had been judiciously announced, as the High Priest affirms Him, a false Prophet, a despiser of the Law of Moses, a rebel who would draw upon us the anger of Rome, I would share the opinion of the High Priest and would say with Him ‘This man must die!’ But the judicial proof has not been given of the crimes of which He is accused, and we have not the right to treat Him as a criminal before giving Him a trial.

“This trial, Sanhedrites, is the gravest, most complicated and most important one in which this tribunal has ever engaged. The question it raises is not individual; it is national. Lift your hearts and minds, Sanhedrites, to the height of this great question which I will place before you on its proper ground. As a

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nation, we have arrived at a memorable epoch of our history, an epoch which for a long while has been predicted and expected. It is the opinion of those who have studied the prophets with greatest zeal that the time appointed by them is accomplished and that the Messiah should be born and living to-day in our midst.

"Messianism, as you know, is the great dogma of our religion; because of it our nation has survived all the crises and trials through which it has passed, and the events of which we are the witnesses appear to be preparing a decisive evolution in our national life. Ancient Judaism, the only true religion on earth for fifteen centuries, appears to me to have given Israel all that it contains of truth, of life and of light. It has been the foundation of its national existence, has assured its progress, its development, its marvelous restoration after great misfortunes and has given it centuries of glory.

"But the days of its transformation have come, and Messianism ought to create its peaceful reformation. It is a renewal of religion that is preached by Jesus of Nazareth, who announces Himself to be the Messiah.

"Is He really the Messiah? Here you have the true question. To kill this Man at this moment, is not to solve it; it is to cut it off, violently and prematurely. Israel has come in this epoch of its history to the place where the road divides. The choice lies in the parting of the ways before us, and this definite choice which admits of no possible return you would make

brusquely, summarily, of your own will, while listening only to your prejudices, your anger and the voice of your threatened interests. Now I cannot approve such conduct, and I say we must await the development and result of this religious movement created by Jesus of Nazareth. We will judge of the tree by its fruits.

“Why precipitate the solution of such a complicated problem? Up to this time, what harm has Jesus done to the crowds which follow Him? Is it a public calamity to diminish the number of lepers, the possessed, the infirm, sick, dumb, and blind? You pretend that He has accomplished these miracles by the power of the devil? You must admit that it would be extraordinary for the devil to drive the devils out of the world, but if it be so, let Him do it.

“You accuse Jesus of blasphemy because He calls Himself the Son of God. But, if He be so really, which of you can demonstrate through the Scriptures that the expected Messiah is to be nothing more than a man? I admit it is difficult to believe that a man can be a God. But there are in the Scriptures many words which I could quote which attribute divine sonship to the Messiah. And then the question is to know whether Jesus be the Messiah or not.

“They say, again, that the Messiah is to be a king and to re-establish the kingdom of Juda. But it seems to me more than doubtful that the religious evolution to be accomplished by the Messiah is to be also a political evolution. That He is called to rule over souls, and by the same means over nations, I believe, but I

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doubt very much that He is to wield a sword and re-establish the political kingdom of Juda.

"Neither does this appear to be the work which Jesus of Nazareth proposes to do. When the crowd wished to proclaim Him king, He fled, and He declares to those who hear Him that the kingdom He will found is not of this world. Therefore it must be the kingdom of souls. From this, I do not see that His work could possibly injure Rome. However, we are not responsible for Rome's interests; let us leave to the Procurator the care and anxiety of watching over it.

"I conclude that our attitude with regard to Jesus of Nazareth should be one of expectation, observation and study. Add to this doubt, if you will. Continue the watch you have placed upon Him. I do not object to it. Even engage in debate with Him on theological, dogmatic and moral questions, if your heart prompt you to do so. I will follow it with lively interest. Several of you have already attempted it; try again. You have studied the Scriptures much more than He. Demonstrate to the people that He is ignorant in the knowledge of God. This procedure will be more humane and quite as efficacious as putting Him to death, and more glorious for you.

"I repeat, Sanhedrites, the situation is grave, and must be met with the calm and circumspection that befits serious and responsible men. Do not hasten events. Time is the great cure for most ills, above all for national and religious crises. Let us have patience and carefully weigh the reasons the friends

of Jesus of Nazareth have for upholding His Messianic pretensions. I recapitulate them:

“First: The time has arrived for the coming of the Messiah. The prophecies are clear on this point, and I defy you to indicate another epoch. And, I ask, is there among us or among our acquaintance, anyone who would dare proclaim himself the Messiah without provoking a general burst of ridicule? No, there is not. Jesus of Nazareth alone dares do it, and even if it shocks us we have not the right to laugh. Why? Because He says at the same time, ‘If you do not believe My word believe My work.’

“Who among us can say as much? Who can show deeds such as His from which it can be concluded that He is Master of the elements, of the forces of nature, of health, of life and death? And if we do not want Him, we must find another, because it is certain that the time fixed by the prophets has come.

“Second: The prophecies have not only fixed the epoch for the coming of the Messiah for centuries, they have described His life and death. There are in the life of the Nazarean up to this day many facts which accord with the prophetic narratives, and if you carry out your plan, you yourselves will accomplish in Jesus of Nazareth the end forecast in the prophecies relative to the Messiah; the manner of death you prepare for Him has been predicted.

“Third: You reproach Him for giving testimony of Himself. But reflect a little, Sanhedrites; would you recognize a Messiah who during His mortal life would not claim His title and who Himself would not

affirm His Messianic character? Would you understand a Messiah who would answer your interrogations saying, 'No, I am not the Christ'? Jesus of Nazareth owes this testimony to us, if He be truly the Messiah. He must tell us if it is the truth. But He must understand that His testimony must be based on works whose genuineness He will prove, and our duty is to investigate these deeds.

"The other day in the Temple several of you interrogated Him, putting this question directly to Him, 'If thou art the Christ, declare it openly.' He answered, 'I tell it you, and you do not believe Me.' Then the crowd took up stones to stone Him. Is this justice? Sanhedrites, our duty is to inform ourselves fully of the origin of Jesus of Nazareth, and particularly of the works which He does as proof that He is divine. If His undertaking be human, it will be its own destruction, but if it be divine it will triumph in spite of all your efforts."

This speech met with a glacial silence. Pharisees and Sadducees alike trembled with rage. The Scribes turned to Onkelos.

Though one of the younger members of this venerable assembly, Onkelos could not resist expressing his opinion. He was acknowledged to be well versed in the Mosaic law. His clever works were well known, above all his commentary on the Pentateuch in the Chaldaic tongue. He not only spoke his own language, Greek, with rare eloquence, but also Latin, Chaldaic and Hebrew. Devoured by ambition, proud of his intellect and genius he had already made for

himself an eminent position in the Chamber of the Scribes, and it was said that he would be a worthy follower of Hillel and the Gamaliels, so it was with marked interest that his discourse was received.

He declared at first that Messianism would not only be a religious evolution but a gradual and peaceful political evolution. However, this second mission of the Messiah was, according to his idea, less certain than the first. The prophetic texts on this subject not only did not agree, they seemed to contradict each other. One represented the Messiah as a conquering king; another as a man despised, outraged, abased and persecuted, subject to all sorts of humiliation and suffering. Whence Onkelos gathered that the principal mission of the Messiah would be the renewal of ancient Judaism and the infusion of new ideas into old beliefs.

“You know, Sanhedrites, my deep and unchangeable attachment to Jewish monotheism, and you know with what strong conviction I renounced the polytheism of my fathers. But neither are you ignorant of my great admiration for the Grecian philosophers. Socrates and Plato have bequeathed to the world fundamental truths which all nations should accept as the highest summit the human mind can reach in its relationship to the divinity. But the religious evolution of which I dream, and which the Messiah should bring about, is a Neo-Judaism, an infusion of the most ideal doctrines of Grecian philosophy into monotheism. Such an evolution would renew even the foundation of the synagogue and would make the Jewish priest-

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hood more powerful, more influential than ever, to such a point that it must soon reduce Roman domination to an honorary supremacy, tearing from it, not by force but by a warfare altogether intellectual, the prerogatives of a people, free and independent. According to my view, this is the mission of the expected Messiah; to conquer not only the intelligence of Israel but of all nations.

"Sanhedrites, when I learned all that was said of Jesus of Nazareth, I asked myself if He were the Man sent by God to accomplish this mission. I have observed Him, have inquired about Him. I have awaited events and have tried with several of my compatriots to obtain speech with Him. His conversation disappointed us. He does not speak the language of the schools; He ignores scientific and philosophical methods. He is not a scholar, He is a visionary. The visions which pass before His mind He tries to show us, but our eyes, too weak, perhaps, cannot always see them. Some of His doctrines appear to be borrowed from our great philosophers, but He does not seem to doubt — He affirms that they come to Him from His Father.

"Who is He whom He calls Father? He allows it to be understood that He is God. He is, evidently, an extraordinary Man, but who is He and what does He desire? He must tell us clearly and prove for us He is in reality the ideal Messiah whom we expect. The kingdom He proposes to establish appears imaginary; it is the dream of a visionary. He who wishes to found a lasting achievement must secure for him-

self the support of influential men of high and powerful position; must place before the eyes of his partisans honor, or other advantages. But Jesus of Nazareth has selected His future ministers from among the ignorant and simple in the most obscure ranks of the people. Far from conciliating the authorities and those with fortune and influence, He speaks against them and tries to destroy their power.

“And what does He preach to His followers? Poverty, suffering, the renunciation of the good things of this world. What does He promise them? A place in His imaginary kingdom in the country of dreams, which kingdom shall only be established after His death. All this is contrary to human reason, to the teaching of history and the experience of centuries. Therefore, the work of the pretended Messiah is necessarily condemned to the most ignominious failure.

“Must we conclude by this that we are to allow Him to continue His work? No! Every attempted organization which is dangerous should be suppressed that it may have no chance of success. Jesus is the declared enemy of the priesthood. He undermines its authority and destroys its glory. He also opposes the Scribes, refuting and demolishing their teaching and interpretation of the Scriptures. This twofold combat will react on religion itself, and I believe it is high time to take measures against this Innovator. I do not say it is urgent to decree His death, but we must seek means to suppress the propaganda He has initiated and to put an end to His teaching, subversive alike of the social and religious orders.”

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This speech produced a great impression on the calmer portion of the audience and was much applauded.

Other members of the Sanhedrim, priests and Scribes, among them the Rabbi Zadok, Ismael ben Phabi and Helkias, treasurer of the Temple, spoke in turn. As they were incapable of answering the calm and conciliating speech of Gamaliel, they contented themselves with abusing Jesus and turning the naïf and simple persons who formed His escort into ridicule, telling amusing stories about the disciples. They also feigned astonishment at hearing a man of such reputation as Gamaliel make so unexpected a discourse. Several of them insinuated that age invariably weakened the most brilliant faculties; that Gamaliel would not have fallen into this mistake in the vigor of his great talent. Jonathas ben Uziel alone, scholarly author of the Chaldaic paraphrases on the Pentateuch and the prophets, dared to advance some objections against the arguments of Gamaliel. He held that the old scholar could find the Messianic character of Jesus only in the pretended prophecies of Daniel.

"For you know, Sanhedrites, that in my study of the Prophets I dispute this title to Daniel and have shown that the book attributed to Him is apocryphal. But there are two things admitted by everyone; one that the Messiah should be of the race of David and the other that He should be born in Bethlehem. But Jesus of Nazareth gets His name from the obscure

village where He was born, and His parents are humble Galileans, working people whom everyone there knows.

“From the beginning we have expected a glorious Messiah, a Messiah, who as Isaias says, ‘Will prosper and grow, will be exalted and elevated above all; before whom kings shall be silent.’ But I do not see in the Nazarean any of these traits of grandeur.”

Prince Nicodemus of the Chamber of Elders rose then and said:

“Sanhedrites, you know that I am a Pharisee and recognize that Jesus of Nazareth in His speeches often addresses hard sayings to us. I suffer from them as do you, but this does not prevent my admiration for the transcendent genius of this man, nor my being convinced by the wonders He works that at least He is a great Prophet and Thaumaturgist. It has been said that His works are fables to which alone the credulity of a simple people can give credit. Well, Sanhedrites, I am one of these simple people. But before believing, I secured all the information possible. I interrogated those who had been miraculously healed and the witnesses of the miracles.

“Have you already forgotten the cure of the man born blind? It is barely seven months since it was performed here at our door, and several members of this high tribunal made inquiry to assure us of the truth of this fact. We had him who had been blind and who had received his sight brought before us, as well as his parents, his friends and the witnesses

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of the miracle, and we questioned them all. The proof was convincing. Several of our colleagues abused him whose eyes Jesus of Nazareth had opened, because his testimony did not please them; but abuse is not reason."

"Are you also a Galilean?" ironically asked Eleazar, son of Annas. "Eleazar," answered Nicodemus, "I am not ignorant of the scornful sense which you attach to the title of Galilean, but your ironies do not touch me. I am not a Galilean, neither am I a priest nor the son of a High Priest like yourself. I do not live by religion, nor from the temple, nor from the revenues which it assures the priesthood, this is why the success of Jesus of Nazareth can neither annoy nor serve me. You all know, Sanhedrites, that I am of independent fortune and have neither political nor social ambition to gratify. If Jesus of Nazareth be but a man, He can do nothing against me nor for me. But I realize that He can do a great deal against you, priests and Scribes, and I clearly understand your animosity against Him. (Interruptions and cries.)

"You dread a religious evolution, the institution of a new priesthood, a new creed which shall abolish bloody sacrifices and empty the treasury of the Temple. (Cries of rage.)

"Do not shout. I was going to add that you are right; yes, you are right to fear for your future. The new priesthood is instituted, the new creed is affirmed, religious evolution is being accomplished and already has drawn a great number of disciples to

itself. The new priesthood will replace the old, new preaching founded on the spirit and not on the letter of the Scriptures, threatens to empty your chairs, Scribes, and no one will longer read your paraphrases and your commentaries. (Murmurings.)

"All your prestige and authority is in danger. I see it plainly, and if the sacrifices are abolished, your tables, priests and pontiffs, shall be swept clean. (Interruptions.) Therein lies your peril, in the success of Jesus of Nazareth, and it clearly explains your wish to do away with Him. This is also why I am a more disinterested and impartial judge than yourselves. (Cries.) And to judge of this cause with full understanding, I propose that we make a minute investigation for the purpose of discovering exactly the origin of Jesus, that if trickery or fraud exist we may discover it." (Shouts and tumult.)

Then Joseph of Arimathea, *vir probus* but *non dicendi peritus*, spoke simply saying,

"For my own satisfaction I have already begun the examination requested by our colleague Nicodemus. You know that I own great properties in Bethlehem and Nazareth, as I do in different parts of Judea and Galilee. While on business in these different places I enquired about Jesus of Nazareth, and this is what I have learned.

"Jesus is to-day thirty-three years of age. He was not born in Nazareth but in Bethlehem, during a visit which His parents made there in the time of the taking of the census of Quirinus, which happened as you know, Sanhedrites, thirty-three years ago.

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Joseph, His father, was originally from Bethlehem, and the orders from Rome were that each person should be registered in his own birthplace. It was thus that Joseph and Mary found themselves in Bethlehem at that time.

"Inhabitants of Nazareth fifty and sixty years of age are not lacking, and they remember very well that Joseph and Mary started alone for Bethlehem and returned two years later to Nazareth with a son a little under two years old. In the interval, this family had gone into Egypt and lived there more than a year. This is known by everyone at Nazareth. At the same time the other members of His family informed me of His genealogy, which proves that Joseph and Mary are both descended from the royal race of David.

"Later on, I went to Bethlehem, and in a little neighboring village several shepherds, of fifty years of age and more, recounted to me the extraordinary events which took place in Bethlehem at the birth of a child who afterwards became Jesus of Nazareth. These are the facts, and you can inform yourselves, as I did, of their veracity.

"Hence, the Messianic pretensions of Jesus of Nazareth are justified on these two points: He is of the race of David, and He was born in Bethlehem in the country of the Prophet-King. I invite Jonathas ben Uziel to verify these facts."

The Sanhedrites became impatient, and one of the Scribes said, "Behold us now in the realm of fiction."

Then rose the High Priest Annas. He was suf-

focated with indignation and pulled his long beard with a nervous hand.

"It is time, Sanhedrites, to put an end to this scandalous debate. Nothing proves better the urgency of acting against Jesus of Nazareth than the humiliating fact of His having found defenders and made proselytes among us ourselves. The question is very simple to my eyes, and in order to judge it, I place myself on the same ground as the disguised disciples of the false Prophet.

"What need have we of a trial? You have heard the proselytes yourselves. That which their Master wishes is to transform the established religion, to substitute a new priesthood for the old, a new creed for that which we received from Moses. And these blind defenders of a false Messiah do not see that His work is criminal! Yes, as priests, we fear this clever and astute Innovator who wishes, in truth, to abolish the law and not to perfect it, because in ruining the priesthood, He will ruin also religion itself. There is no religion without a priesthood, and the enemy of the priest is the enemy of the nation.

"We are the guardians of the Mosaic law. It is the divine code for humanity. The very desire of altering it is a crime. It is the ark of our covenant with Jehovah. Whoever dares to touch it commits a sacrilege. Anathema to him who wishes to destroy this holy ark. Anathema to him who wishes to touch the anointed of the Lord. He has already lived too long!"

In spite of the applause which greeted this ful-

minating harangue, several of the Scribes and Elders still hesitated and some of them proposed to organize a trial and inflict on Jesus of Nazareth punishment by flagellation. But Caiphias, beside himself, cried out,

"You understand nothing! To what good would serve a chastisement that would allow this profane and sacrilegious reprobate who wishes to destroy the Temple to live. He must die under the weight of a double condemnation, pronounced by us, representatives of God on earth, and by the representative of Cæsar, Master of the universe! His death, which must be surrounded by the majesty and infallibility of the law, must at the same time be ignominious and of such nature as to drown His prestige in humiliation and public scorn! However it be, He must die for the salvation of the people and, according to Roman law, the death of the cross!"

"It will be the accomplishment of the Messianic prophecy!" Gamaliel dared to say.

"It does not matter," answered Caiphias.

"And if He be the Messiah?" added Gamaliel.

"Well, then so much the worse for the Messiah," cried Caiphias.

"But I," parried Gamaliel, "I say, so much the worse for the Jewish people."

At these words, a veritable tumult arose in the august assemblage. Gamaliel, Nicodemus, Joseph of Aramithea and several others left the room.

Then, when calm was established, the following resolutions were taken unanimously:

“First, whoever dares uphold Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah shall be cut off from Jewish society, excluded from the Temple and dedicated to the devil!

“Second, whoever knows where Jesus of Nazareth may be shall declare Him to the Sanhedrim for arrest.”

This decree of execration (choerem) was the second degree of excommunication according to Jewish law.

The third Schammata involved sentence of death. But first of all it was necessary to arrest Jesus. He had left Jerusalem on His way to Ephraim, on the border of the desert.

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PART IV

FINAL COMBAT AND DEFEAT OF THE
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I

TRIUMPH OF A DAY

SEVERAL times since the beginning of His public life, Jesus had aroused the enthusiasm and acclamations of the people. His extraordinary preaching, His mighty miracles had drawn multitudes after Him, in the valleys, on the mountains, on the banks of the Sea of Genezareth, as far as the solitudes of Peræa. However, in Jerusalem He had met with enemies, numerous and powerful. The chief priests, the Pharisees and Scribes, members of the Sanhedrim, warred so intensely against Him, that the intimidated people no longer dared manifest sympathy for the Son of David.

His apostles, as also His disciples, His relatives, His friends, used all their efforts to keep Him away from the city. But the Feast of the Passover drew near, and from the most remote parts of Palestine caravans started on their journey to Jerusalem.

Spring had come, and in this beautiful sunny country scattered flowers and fragrance everywhere. The days were very warm in the beginning of this

April, so caravans traveled by night under the light of the stars and of the new moon, whose crescent grew larger night after night.

As if by instinct Jesus one morning entered with the rest into the great popular movement and took the road which led to Jerusalem, accompanied by His disciples. Numbers of pilgrims joined them, and before long they formed an immense caravan. Most of the men traveled on foot, and many women followed mounted on donkeys.

At midday a long stop was made on the banks of the Jordan under the shadow of great palm trees. The meal and siesta terminated, once more they began their march. Conversation languished and ceased altogether as night approached, but when the sun had disappeared behind the mountains of Judea and when the moon showed its fine profile above the leafy branches of the palm trees, the pilgrims shouted aloud, for they had caught sight of the crenelated towers of Jericho which seemed to scale the mountains of Judea on the right.

Already the perfume from the "City of Balsam and Roses" reached them. The domes of the amphitheatre and the race course built by the Romans were clearly visible above the walls, and on the left extended the great plain bathed at its edge by the Dead Sea.

Jesus walked silently at the head of His disciples who communed with each other in low voices. Dark presentiments disturbed them, and they asked themselves what would become of their Master should He

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show Himself in Jerusalem, but they did not dare question Him. Suddenly, Jesus who read their thoughts, moderated His pace, waited for them and said,

“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all that the prophets have announced concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. He will be delivered to the chief priests, and to the Scribes, condemned to death, given into the hands of the Gentiles, mocked, scourged, crucified,—and He will rise again the third day.”

What a terrible answer to the mute interrogation of the disciples! And so, then, the die was cast, and the climax of the drama approached. The great Prophet had, indeed, on different occasions, allowed the sad end awaiting Him to be known, but His dark predictions had not been understood, and His disciples had not wished to believe in the possible triumph of His enemies. How could such an extraordinary Man, one who commanded the elements, sickness and death, allow Himself to be vanquished, condemned, crucified? And if He were going to be put to death, who then would establish this kingdom of which He spoke so often to them? No, He could not die; at least, not at this time. His work had only started; His mission had scarcely begun. However, the awful prophecy had fallen once more from the lips of the Divine Man, and this time in terms clear, precise and formal. The lamentable event is near at hand.

These are His last days that are beginning. It is the last journey He will make. Farewell, beautiful Galilee, country of His childhood; farewell, lovelier Lake of Genezareth, with your memory-laden banks;

now the Son of Man must go up to Jerusalem, and He must die. The decree has gone forth; it is the Will of His Father and it is His Will. He is going there to die; because He wills it and because it must be. It is by His death alone that the world will be born anew. It is in His blood that man shall be washed and purified. It is His tomb which shall be the cradle of the new kingdom, and the sooner it be so, the better; for in this tomb He will remain but three days, and because He will come forth from it alive, humanity will live again. The apostles and disciples remained plunged in stupor and sadness, for the predicted resurrection gave them but a vague hope. It was not under this form they had expected the definite triumph. It seemed to them that passing through the most ignominious death to arrive at final glory was a dreary road. They did not understand the words of the Master. They could not grasp that each event has its hour marked in the designs of Providence, and one must know how to await it.

In the beginning, Jesus had fled from Jerusalem and even from Galilee when His enemies had wished to kill Him. On several occasions He had miraculously escaped out of their hands. And why? Because His hour had not yet come. But to-day the hour approaches; the voluntary victim will deliver Himself. He walks freely and steadily in the face of this death which He foresees and announces.

But before dying, He wishes to give His enemies a new proof of His power, even terrestrial. He wishes to show them that the nation is with Him, and

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that if He were on the earth to play the role of revolutionary and conqueror, He would have but to desire it. What could the Jewish priesthood and the synagogue, even the Roman power itself, do against His word alone and His miracles? But any possible demonstration of His power and popularity could not open the eyes of the Sanhedrites, the Scribes and the priests. There is a miracle which God cannot perform, so much does He respect human liberty. This is to cure the voluntarily blind; only those who wish to see can be cured.

On the side of the road which led from ancient Jericho to the new city two blind beggars had sat for many years longing for sight. When the procession drew near, their penetrating cries could be heard through the noise of the acclamations. "Have pity on us, Lord, Son of David." Jesus had them brought to Him, touched their eyes and cured them.

Then He continued on His way, seeking a lodging for the night. Suddenly He perceived a very little man who, the better to see Him, had climbed into the branches of a sycamore. "Zacheus," cried Jesus, "hasten to come down, that I may stop in thy house."

Zacheus, a publican, collector of taxes and as such hated by all, was the more detested because he was rich. Thus it was a scandal for the Jews to see Jesus ask his hospitality, when there were in the city Levites and nobles who would have been proud to receive Him. But Jesus knew that Zacheus, who did not dream of this honor, had already opened his heart to Him and would be overjoyed to open to Him his

house also. Zacheus proved it by generous hospitality and by saying to his guest on the following morning, "Lord, I give half of all my goods to the poor and for all the wrong which I have done pay again a fourth."

From early morning, an immense crowd surrounded the approach to Zacheus' house. The arrival of Jesus, His cure of the two blind men had thrown the whole city into excitement. A great number wished to accompany the Prophet as far as Jerusalem, convinced that there He would accomplish wonders and re-establish the kingdom of Israel. Therefore, when He took His way anew to the Holy City, Jesus was followed by a multitude. The road is sinuous and winds along through the defiles of the mountains where the sun's rays are concentrated, and the travelers' steps were slow. Towards evening, when the sun had set behind the crest of the Mount of Olives, the long procession of pilgrims was winding its way up the eastern slope with Jesus at its head.

Bethany, the hospitable village that He loved, expected Him, and there He spent the night. The following day a great banquet was given him by Simon, surnamed the Leper, and among the numerous guests was Lazarus, Jesus' intimate friend whom He had raised from death several weeks before.

The serenity of Jesus and His graciousness toward all could not remove the grave and solemn character of this banquet. This army of the faithful experienced the same emotions as those of soldiers on the eve of battle. The shadow of the dark days that were

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to follow lay heavy upon the guests. They spoke in low tones. Jesus Himself had a look of sadness and even of austerity when Judas, faithless guardian of the common purse, dared blame Myriam for renewing the scene of Magdala and pouring a perfume of great price on the head and feet of the Saviour. He then pronounced these sad and prophetic words, "Do not blame this woman for her good action; for the poor you have always with you, but me you have not always." And the better to make it understood that His death was near at hand, He added, "It is for my burial that she has anointed me."

During all this time Jerusalem had become filled with pilgrims who came from all corners of Judea, Galilee and even Samaria, to celebrate the Passover. Nearly a million strangers obstructed the streets and public places. The porticoes and vestibules of the Temple were especially crowded, and everywhere a great number of people sought the Prophet. Where was He? How had it happened that He had not yet arrived? Was it possible that He was not coming for the great Feast of the Passover? At last the news of His arrival spread throughout the multitude. "He had come to Bethany Friday night, and there He had spent the Sabbath. A great banquet had been given Him, and this morning He is to set out for Jerusalem."

The multitude scattered, and numberless groups came out from the Temple and hastened into the valley of the Cedron, climbing the side of the Mount of Olives to meet Him.

Suddenly, far-away acclamations resounded, and from the point where the path turns around the summit of Olivet, a long and noisy procession could be seen. It was like a living stream coming from the heights. At the head slowly came the Prophet, dressed in white, mounted upon an ass. The immense crowd sang as it followed Him, shouting cries of enthusiasm! On the edge of the road other crowds waved palm branches, flags, banners and covered the ground over which the Saviour passed with leaves and with their garments, filling the air with their cries of triumph. "Hosanna! Hosanna! Glory to the Son of David! Blessed be the king of Israel! Blessed be He who comes in the name of the Lord! Glory from the highest heavens! Hosanna! Hosanna!"

In a short time the walls of the city which faced Mt. Olivet, the platforms of the bastions and towers, the immense porticoes of Solomon and the terraces of the Temple were covered with spectators watching the interminable and clamorous procession descending into the valley of Jehosaphat and again mounting the rocky hill which led to the "Sheep Gate."

Leaning on the balustrade of the terrace that crowned the "Gilded Door" of the Temple, Nicodemus and Gamaliel watched this scene with joy and wonder, while Gamaliel recited to his friend the prophecy of Zacharius, "Rejoice, daughter of Zion! Shout for joy, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold thy King cometh to thee; humble and sweet, He brings

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"Ah, Nicodemus, there you have before your eyes the realization of the prophecy."

On the summit of the Tower of Antonia, the Centurion with Claudia and Camilla, the Roman soldiers and the guards of Pilate's palace also watched, while several old officers, who had assisted at the triumph of Augustus in Rome, said to each other: "This is a real triumph, not conventional but spontaneous; not organized with the price of gold like the triumphs of great generals at Rome. Those who follow here are not unhappy victims condemned to death, cursing their destiny and their victors, but are the innumerable happy people whom He has cured of illness and infirmity."

When the triumphal procession had passed through the gates of the city walls and directed itself toward the Temple, the jealous and furious Pharisees made their way through the crowd and approaching Jesus, said to Him,

"Master, silence your disciples." But Jesus with majestic calm and full of dignity answered, "If they be silent, the stones themselves will cry out!"

The irritation of the Pharisees grew in measure with the popular enthusiasm, and the manifestation assumed proportions disquieting enough for the synagogue and the Jewish priesthood. The entire city was stirred. The most peaceful people left their houses and asked from whence came this new manner of victor, and the crowd repeated, "It is the

Prophet! It is Jesus of Nazareth! Hosanna to the Son of David!"

He entered the Temple like a sovereign going into His palace, and when the effervescent enthusiasm of the believers had been appeased, His marvelous words could be heard by all the people. The sick and the infirm were then brought Him to be cured, and when night approached He tranquilly took His way to Bethany with His apostles.

Never had triumph so deeply agitated the Holy City. No human intelligence could have foreseen that it was the last and that the strife about to be renewed was to be for this all-powerful Victor a defeat, complete and final.

II

THE LAST APPEAL

STRANGE contradiction in human nature that, while it has invincible need of the Divine, hates it because in conflict with it. It hates only the true God, and, when it overturns His altars, makes unto itself false gods. These do not oppose human nature but pander to its evil passions. Such were the gods of the Greeks and Romans, personifying vice rather than virtue. This double tendency of human nature has been manifested a thousand times in the history of the Jewish people in a more striking manner than in any other nation.

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ets, they created for themselves false divinities. Then, when the need of a real god seized them, they crushed the idols underfoot and returned to the worship of Jehovah. But still they bore hatred in their hearts for the true and only God. This perverse side of human nature may explain in a certain measure how so many of the Jews became the rabid enemies of Jesus, who spent His life in doing good. They opposed Him, either in the name of religion which they themselves did not practise, or in the name of Cæsar, whose yoke they would have been glad to shake off; but always they were bitter in their hatred towards Him.

But the most terrible of Jesus' enemies were not among the common people. They belonged to the governing classes. They represented religious authority, learning and riches, effete luxuriousness. They formed the powerful body known as the Sanhedrim, which was made up of the priests, Scribes and Elders.

The first, a proud and fawning aristocracy whom caste spirit rendered intolerant, actively sought the honors and benefices attached to the sacerdotal functions. The Scribes were the Doctors in Israel, authorized interpreters of the Scriptures, and though less powerful than the priests, had great authority over public opinion. The Elders of the people owed their influence to their riches and social position. It is only necessary to reflect for an instant in order to understand that Jesus would find bitter enemies in these three Chambers of the Sanhedrim. He could

not expect to be welcomed by a priesthood that He proposed to abolish. The Scribes, infatuated with their learning and convinced that the Messiah, when He should come, would look to them for the establishment of His kingdom, could not extend their sympathy to this Nazarean, who surrounded Himself with ignorant people, and chose the future heads of His Church from among poor fishermen of Galilee. As to the Elders, they would naturally receive with scant courtesy this Reformer who preached contempt for riches and honor. For during His three years of public preaching how had He treated these haughty personages who were to be His judges? How often had He humiliated the Pharisaical priests by demonstrating publicly that they neither knew nor observed the Law of Moses! How often had He convicted the Scribes of ignorance and ridiculed their pretended learning! How often had He predicted misfortune for the "Rich of this world!"

And now, these people steeped in luxury, these false doctors, these corrupted priests were to judge of His life and teaching! Was He not condemned beforehand?

But what a moving spectacle this was — this conflict between the synagogue and Jesus! On the one side, self-interest, envy, jealousy, hatred, hypocrisy, intrigue; on the other, integrity, frankness, good-will and even charity. The synagogue set a trap for the new Prophet. Everywhere, it had its confederates who followed, watched and questioned Him, making reports to the chief priests. The most insidious ques-

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tions were put to Him, now with a view of compromising Him with Cæsar and representing Him as a rebel, again in the attempt to prove Him at variance with the Sacred Scriptures, to show Him to be a despiser of the Mosaic law.

Jesus understands their perverse and deicidal designs and treats them, nevertheless, with touching kindness; He still endeavors to enlighten them and above all to show them the abyss toward which they are tending. In parables He strives to make them understand that He is the bearer of salvation and truth; that it is to them He offers the first fruits of His mission, but that if they wish none of them, He will give them to the gentiles, and it will be the gentiles who shall reap the harvest. Not only would the gentiles become inheritors of the divine promises and possess the kingdom which He had come to establish upon earth, but the Jews who misunderstood and rejected Him would be heavily chastised and the sceptre taken away from them forever.

The day of His last preaching has come, and the echoes of the Temple will vibrate to His final appeal to this hardened nation "who, having ears, hear not."

In the luminous parable of the Wedding Feast, He tries again to make them understand that the King supreme over all nations, His Father, has sent Him upon earth to celebrate a mystical marriage with humanity; that they, the Jews, are the first to be invited to the banquet and that not only do they scorn the invitation but despise, beat and even kill the Prince's servants, who were the Prophets. That is why the

King, full of indignation, will command his soldiers to exterminate the murderers and destroy their city, and he will send new servants to go through all the streets and to bring in to the wedding feast all whom they should find — that is to say, all the nations.

In another parable, which scintillates with historic truth, Jesus represents His Father as the father of a family, owner of a beautiful vineyard, surrounded with high walls, protected by a tower and furnished with all that was necessary for its cultivation. He has leased this vineyard, so dear to Him, to chosen vine-dressers and has gone away into far distant lands. From time to time, when the season for the vintage comes, He sends His servants to collect the price of the products of his vineyard. But the vine-dressers abuse them, beat and ill-treat them, stoning some and killing others. Then the Father sends His Own Son, and the vine-dressers seeing Him coming, say to each other,

“Here is the heir; let us kill him,” and they put him to death. “Then what would the Father do to these vine-dressers?” asked Jesus of the crowd. “He would treat these miserable creatures without pity,” they answered, “and would rent His vineyard to others.” “You are right,” answered Jesus. But the Jews did not understand that the homicidal vine-dressers were they themselves, preparing to put the Father’s Son to death.

These strong appeals, which so beautifully teach the mercy and justice of God, awakened no echo in these corrupted hearts. Then Jesus changed His manner of speech, thinking perhaps anathemas would produce

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a stronger effect on such hardened souls, and, rising before them like an angry Judge, He cried, .

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who have taken the key of knowledge and used it to shut the kingdom of Heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter, and those that are going in you suffer not to enter.

“Woe to you who pillage the houses of the widow.

“Woe to you because you tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law; judgment and mercy and faith. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.”

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men’s bones and all filthiness. . . .

“Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers, you serpents! Generation of vipers! How will you flee from the judgment of hell?

“Therefore, behold I send to you prophets and wise men and Scribes. And some of them you will put to death and crucify. And some you will scourge in your synagogues; you persecute them from city to city, that upon you may come all the just blood that hath been shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the Just even unto the blood of Zachariah, the son of Barachius, whom you killed between the temple and the altar. Amen I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation!

“Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how

often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not!

“Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate. For I say unto you, you shall not see me henceforth till you say, ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.’”

Neither His tender plea nor His vehement malediction, the most terrible that the Temple had ever heard, touched the heart of the Jews. It was the last appeal of God, and the people of God did not hear it.

III

FAREWELL TO THE TEMPLE

IN this touching peroration of the last speech of Jesus in the Temple, He announced three great events: His death, His resurrection and the destruction of the Temple. His death was imminent, for He had but three days longer to live. The Scribes and Pharisees who plotted against Him were less certain of it than He. But they must have understood that He was ready to die when He said, “You will see Me no longer.” Did they also understand the announcement of His resurrection? Doubtless they did not. In any case they did not believe it.

Jesus then sat down and for a long time was silent. He looked around the Temple, where He had spent so many days of His earthly life; He remembered His visit there, when He was twelve years old and

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had addressed His first speech to the Doctors in Israel. Several times since, He had returned into this house of His Fathers, for the Feast of the Passover or that of Tabernacles. Each time, to the age of thirty years, He had been silent and contented Himself with praying there, while awaiting the day that He had fixed for His public ministration.

But during the three years just passed, how many times He had made Himself heard in this house, which was His own since it was "the house of God." It was there that the multitudes had so often come from the far-away confines of Galilee and Samaria to see Him and hear Him. It was there that He had so often explained and commented on the Scriptures in the presence of the people of Jerusalem and of the Jewish priesthood, whose sophism and hypocrisy He had unveiled. His oratorical triumphs had left in Him no impression (because He had none of an orator's vanity), but He remembered the souls of those of good will who had opened their minds to the light and had believed His teaching. Oh! How He had loved this Temple, built by His ancestor, King Solomon, representing the faith of past generations! It was for this reason that twice He had driven out the Jewish vendors who had set up their tables in the court-yard of the Gentiles and under the porticoes.

Above all, Jesus loved the beauties of nature. The most vivid imagination of poets could not express His mysterious colloquies with this creation which was His work and, unlike man, had not failed in its mission. But He loved the work of human genius as

well, spark sprung from divine intelligence, when the action of this genius led to the glorification of His Father. There is no doubt that in His attachment to the Temple there was a feeling of admiration for the architectural beauty of the edifice. And so He gazed at the long colonnades which surrounded the anteroom and at the great red and white marble arches of the porticoes and the pillars garlanded with bunches of golden grapes. He admired the majestic doors, almost entirely covered with gold and silver reliefs. His eyes wandered from the high façade of the peristyle to the curve of the arcade and the wide architrave, sculptured as with an Oriental embroidery of marble. The vestibules rose one above the other as they approached the Holy of Holies. These superimposed edifices with their double or triple rows of lateral colonnades, rose like a giant stairway before the Holy of Holies, which crowned them like an ivory dome with a golden roof.

Each anteroom had its crowd of visitors, those of the higher vestibules dominating the inferior ones; below, the gentiles, above, the Jews, higher up the women, still above them, the priests, until at last came the Holy of Holies reserved for the High Priest alone.

A learned author has written, "All this harmony of the exterior Temple as well as of the interior Temple and the sanctuary, forming rectangular inclosures one within the other, was full of splendor and dignity. From the rising of the sun when from afar on the Holy Mountain, the sanctuary appeared, dominating by a hundred cubits the two rows of porticoes which

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formed its double walls; when day shed its first rays on the white and red marble façade; when the thousand different spires which surmounted the roof scintillated in the sun, it was like a mountain of snow illuminated little by little and enkindled by the red fires of morning. The eye was dazzled, the soul amazed, piety awakened; even the pagan prostrated himself."

Jesus appeared absorbed in the contemplation of this masterpiece of human art, and gradually a great sadness enveloped His soul. He looked at all the beauty and richness of this monument, the fragrant wood, the marble of great price, the bronze, gold and precious stones. But in the crowd He saw circulating there, what moral hideousness! What hidden filth! What vice masquerading under the appearance of virtue! And this is why this beautiful Temple must be destroyed. All the prevarications of the Jews were drawing down upon it the divine lightning. Longer grew the silence of Jesus and greater grew His sadness. For Him the future is always the present. He already saw the accomplishment of the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus and the desolation which would accompany the destruction of the Temple.

His disciples drew near and tried to distract Him from His sad thoughts, drawing His attention to the great stones which formed the base of the foundation, assuring it long centuries of existence. "In truth," answered Jesus, "of all this monumental construction there shall not rest a stone upon a stone."

Then the Master rose, and, leaving the Temple, took the road which led down to the Cedron. His

disciples followed in silence. The prediction contained in these words, "Behold your house shall be left desolate," already began to be accomplished. The Temple was no longer inhabited, because God had gone out of it nevermore to return. Its glory was ended! No more would the world come to its great solemnities, and when it should be burned and destroyed from top to bottom, attempts to rebuild it would be vain.

Followed by His disciples, Jesus walked along by the wall of the Garden of Gethsemane, reflecting that in two days He would undergo there all the mental tortures of the most cruel agony. Arrived at the summit of Mt. Olivet, He turned towards Jerusalem and seated Himself upon a stone by the roadside. All the Holy City lay beneath His eyes, but His prophetic vision at that time embraced all the earth and all humanity.

His disciples wanted to know what this formidable vision was which appeared to Him and which so strangely dilated His eyes. Then Jesus raised the corner of the veil which hid the future from them. In a striking picture of grandeur and power, still enveloped in mystery, He painted for them two awful catastrophes; the first, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish people, the second, more awful still, the end of the world which would be at His final coming.

The disciples were stupefied. But Jesus increased their consternation by adding, "In two days they will celebrate the Passover, and the Son of Man shall be delivered to them to be crucified!"

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IV

DAY-BREAK VISIONS

IT was on Tuesday, April 4th, in the year of Rome 783 that Jesus bade farewell to the Temple. He did not return to Jerusalem the following day, but we like to think of Him as coming out of Bethany in the dawn of Thursday, the 6th of April, and climbing the hillside which leads to the summit of Mount Olivet. It was His favorite place of prayer. The mountains are God's footstool. They are like altars which nature raises to Heaven, from whence man's prayers may rise more easily to God. This is why Jesus often went up to the mountains to pray. On that morning, He not only went to pray, but He wished to contemplate from the heights for the last time, the beauties of the great city He loved, which had not known Him, the magnificence of the earth He was to leave, the work of His hands and of which He was the interpreter for the Creator. From time to time, He stopped, turning to the east to watch the growing dawn. The sun at the horizon did but whiten the summit of the Mountain of Moab, but already its pale rays sharply outlined the peaks of the mountains and the depths of the ravines. This picturesque and mountainous country offered Him a strange image of His people, who had known, one by one, the summits of glory and the abysses of defeat. How well it symbolized definite ruin,—this gathering of mountains, melting into the Dead Sea, while at the bottom of the

deep valley, the Jordan wound like a silver ribbon on its way to extinction in the same abyss.

Soon the brightening dawn was tinted with rose and orange shades. The sky unfolded its azure robe and bathed its edges in the blood of Moab. All the horizon blushed and then became inflamed, while the earth, awakened by fire, entoned the joyous song of life and heaven continued its eternal Hosannas in honor of the Divinity.

The God-man continued His ascent and arrived before long at the summit of the mountain. Far away to His left the morning light revealed to Him the walls of His native city and the fields of those shepherds who had adored Him in His cradle. Before Him, all the Holy City, the City of Cities, displayed its castellated walls, its formidable bastions and its high towers; He was only separated from it by the deep cañon of the Cedron joined to the sombre ravine of the Gehenna. On the summit of Mount Zion, He noted the towers of David's palace, raising their heads above the cupola of his tomb. Nearer by, above the walls, the rays of dawn caressed the long porticoes of Solomon and reflected red against the white marble columns. Façade rose above façade in the morning light and the dome of the Holy of Holies covered the vast edifice of the Temple like a crown of gold and precious stones. But all these beauties of the great city could give Him no joy; it was a sterile field, where, august Sower that He was, He had vainly thrown the divine seed. It had fallen upon rock and had not germinated. All about Him, less ungrateful

nature celebrated His coming. Everything smiled in the springtime festival which brightened at the break of day.

In the green fields, violets shed their perfume and cyclamen raised its red crests like flags of victory. Grain and wild flowers carpeted the earth and poured forth their fragrance at His feet as Magdalene had done. Great yellow tulips lifted their golden chalices wherein shone the tears of the night, as if to make Him forget the bitter chalice which wicked men prepared for Him. Asphodel, iris and anemone rivaled each other in brilliancy and beauty to worship Him. All the east displayed its magnificence to honor Him,—the trees, the plants, the flowers spoke a language to Him no other man had ever understood so well.

On the eve of nature's greatest grief, every being that composed it, smiled and sang as if each understood that the day of sorrow was to be that of the world's salvation. Jesus heard and understood this universal praise of creation better even than the poets who have translated it into human language, better even than the Prophet King, though he had been its most perfect interpreter. For Jesus was the Word of all Creation; He was the great composer of all harmonies of Heaven and Earth. Figures, symbols and analogies which created relationship between the real and the spiritual, between Nature and the Supernatural had no secrets from Him. And if the wonders of our universe form a luminous ladder allowing the human mind to raise itself to God, what prodigious

ascensions, then, must have been made by the intelligence of a man who was God!

To the poets, worshipers of the true God, nature is like a veil hiding the rays of a divinity whose brilliancy our mortal eyes could not endure. It is the trellis of the Canticle of Canticles through which the human soul perceives its well-beloved. But to the eye of Jesus, the veil had a marvelous transparency and the trellis did not alter the splendor of the beatific vision. How beautiful was this dawn of His last day on earth. But the shadow of death already eclipsed its splendor. The evening of this perfect day would be as well the evening of His life.

Doubtless at this moment Nature offered Him the worship of all her most beautiful productions in form, color, design, fragrance and life. The earth turned to Him only to draw Him to itself, giving Him this one last triumph before His burial. But a few hours, and He would no longer be seen. Like the sun, the work of His hands, He would disappear from off the horizon.

The following day, toward noon, at the hour when heaven bathes the earth in warmest light, darkness would envelop Jerusalem and Jesus, Himself nailed to a cross on the summit of the hill visible just beyond the "Gate of Justice" would enter into the night men call eternal. For Him this night would be but an eclipse and would soon give place to the true dawn, the day that is without end.

In their fleeting visions the Prophets had announced it, David has described it as a stream of light which

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would surround the earth, "a solis ortu usque ad occasum." But Jesus of Nazareth already saw it pointing across the dark night into which He was about to enter. He saw it growing and inundating with its light, not only the habitations of the living, but also the dwellings of the dead. In this Valley of Jehosaphat, spreading out before his eyes, where man's only labor lay in burying the dead, its light would penetrate to the bosom of humanity, endowing it with new life. From the abiding place of the dead, its rays would spring as far as the confines of the celestial horizon, opening at last the vision of God to the just detained in the mysterious prison of Limbo.

This glorious to-morrow, out of the dreary to-day, this coming triumph of the great vanquished One was already present to the eyes of Jesus, and He could truly say to Himself, "It is not I who am to die; it is the ancient world. It is Jerusalem, home of my fathers; it is Rome, the great prostitute which has perverted all the nations. Over there on the banks of the Tiber, I already see rising a throne for my apostle Peter who shall have become an immortal king. And on the highest hill of the great city, where flourished the worship of Juno, false mother of false gods, I see a temple rising, sumptuous and beautiful, in honor of my venerable Mother, the Mother of the true God. Everywhere, everywhere on all shores, in the midst of the ruins of great empires, even to the desert, I see the seed I have thrown upon the earth, germinating and propagating with marvelous results. Everywhere I see the rising of innumerable altars to my

worship and the growth of a new civilization which shall bear my name. Behold, the true aurora which shall brighten all the centuries.

“Oh, Jews, hasten; stretch me upon this Cross which to-day is the sign of ignominy and to-morrow shall be the standard of victory and power!”

V

THE TERRIBLE NIGHT

IT was the fifteen hundredth anniversary of the bloody night when the Lord descended upon the land of Egypt to put to death all the first-born of the Egyptians and when the Red Sea swallowed up Pharaoh and his army. It began as a festival and finished as a tragedy. The first scene was a double banquet and the last a condemnation to death! To the Eucharistic banquet, miracle of love, came the spectre of treachery, Judas.

In all the history of humanity, there has been no night on which man was more worthy of hatred, nor where God has given greater proof of His love.

God had become man; He descended upon earth to teach all truth, to expiate all sin, to give the example of all virtue, to snatch man at last from the yoke of the demon and insure his eternal glory. He had proved His divinity in a thousand ways, had worked thousands of miracles which were so many deeds of beneficence. But all this had touched but a few obscure souls of the elect; the governors, the ruling classes,

the priest refused to make any prediction of the coming of salvation to the laity. His love would encompass everything. The miracle of the most wished for still more to its own humanity time as his miracle of the Christ.

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the priesthood, all the mass of humanity not only refused to recognize God in Jesus, but hated Him and made ready to kill Him. Jesus knew this; He had predicted His own death; He awaited it and did nothing to avoid it. The chief priests were united in becoming deicides. They awaited only Judas. For the salvation of humanity, Jesus could but shed His blood to the last drop. Everything, then, would be complete. Humanity would satiate its hatred, and God's love would embrace even the death of the Cross. But everything was not finished; there still remained one miracle for Jesus, the greatest of His miracles of love, the most wonderful of His miracles of power! He wished to remain always with mankind. He wanted still more. He extended the love and power of God to its utmost. He decreed the nourishment of humanity with His body and blood, and for as long a time as humanity should live. And He realized this miracle of miracles in the institution of the Eucharist.

The traitor Judas had the audacity to take part in this divine banquet, but from that moment he ceased to belong to himself, for the demon took possession of him. When he went out, under a pretext the falsity of which Jesus knew, to arrange with the chief priests for the arrest of his Master, there was a moment of silence and consternation. Then Jesus again spoke, and for the last time He poured out His heart to His apostles. They all shared His emotion and sadness. He announced that He would leave them, that they could not follow Him where He was going to prepare

a place for them but that He would return and that later on they would follow Him.

He gave them this new commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you. It is by this love you will be known as my disciples." Then He rose from the table, and said, "Let us go."

The sacrilege of Judas had profaned the Cenacle, and its very atmosphere seemed charged with treachery. Followed by the eleven apostles who remained to Him, Jesus walked to the end of the hall, passed through the door on to the roof of the second floor which formed a terrace. The Paschal supper had taken place in an upper chamber. In the Orient, the great stone villas usually have an upper story narrower than the lower one, so that two terraces are formed, the first of which makes the roof of the second. It was on this spacious lower terrace surrounded by a balustrade that Jesus went to sit with His disciples. The air was pure and fresh. There was no other dwelling to shut out the horizon on this side of Mount Zion, its abrupt slope leading to the junction of the Gehenna and the valley of the Cedron. The full moon, already risen two hours, shed its limpid light over the entire landscape. The noises of the city became hushed as they reached this quiet corner, and Jesus, leaning His arm on the stone balcony enjoyed for a brief moment the calm and solitude. A heavy grape-vine climbed the wall of the villa, its green branches bending like a cradle over the corner of the terrace.

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his silent Master, "though the earth on this arid mountain is far from rich." Jesus had been looking up at the moon whose brightness illumined His august countenance. He rested His eyes on Peter and said, "I am the true vine and you are the branches. My Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch which shall not bear fruit shall be cut off. You live in me and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remain joined to the vine, neither will you bear fruit if you do not live in me."

For a long time, Jesus conversed with these, His friends. Several times He commanded them to love one another. He predicted that they would be persecuted and hated, as He Himself had been. "You will mourn, but your sorrow shall be changed into joy." He announced the coming of His Spirit of Consolation. He preached to them of firmness in faith and prayer and, addressing Himself to His Father, He prayed for them and for all in the centuries to come who should believe in Him.

Sadness and discouragement descended more deeply upon the disciples, for they could not understand how or why their Master, so young, so powerful, so extraordinary, for whom they had abandoned all things and who had loved them so much, would now abandon them, leave them alone on earth without having established His kingdom. . . . "Let us go," said Jesus, "My hour has come."

He turned to the steps of the terrace, and they all quitted the Cenacle, to meet later in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was ten o'clock, that is to say, the

fourth hour of the night. Like a mysterious lamp hung from the celestial vault, the moon shed a flood of white light over the City of David. In the streets, tinted by the half glow of day, the towers and cupolas were drawn into distinct and precise shadows. Nothing is so beautiful as these calm Oriental nights, where everything sleeps in immutable serenity under the caressing gaze of myriad stars. Jesus walked at the head accompanied by John, while the other disciples followed Him. Wrapped in sadness, which the cowardly treachery of Judas had caused Him, the Master kept silence, and not one of His companions dared raise his voice. They felt a presentiment that a terrible night was about to begin.

After several minutes' walk, they turned into the street leading to the "Gate of the South," passing before the palace of the high priests Annas and Caiphas. The atrium was brightly lighted, and several men spoke in low voices in the court where they were gathered together around a flaming brazier. It was there that Judas had gone after he left the Cenacle, and there he still remained, to make his final preparations.

Jesus sighed deeply as He hastened His steps, and soon He and His companions were outside the walls on the east slope of Mt. Zion. They followed the enclosure and turned north toward the Valley of Ophel. Here and there were leafy tents sheltering numerous pilgrims, who had come from all directions to assist at the Feast of the Passover. But these strange visitors must all have been asleep, for the only

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noises heard were the bleatings of the sheep destined for the morrow's sacrifice. Poor lambs! They too, foresaw the fate awaiting them. Their last day had come, and it was, alas, in vain that their blood would be shed. For hereafter the sacrifices of the ancient law would be inefficacious; and it was the blood of the true Lamb which should be spilt on the following day for the salvation of nations.

Did the apostles understand this great mystery about to be accomplished and the ineffable sacrifice which was to replace the ancient ones? It is doubtful. Vague sounds reached them now from the Valley of Jehosaphat toward which they turned, and the slopes of Mt. Olivet appeared to them like a city of tents. These were still other pilgrim encampments.

Jesus' mind must have been fixed on the great feast of the morrow and the wonderful memories it evoked, for as they walked along, He reminded His disciples of the great events associated with the departure from Egypt. It had been fifteen centuries since this great historical event had taken place, it was just such a night as this, on the same day of the year, the fourteenth day of Nisan. The Israelites, their fathers, docile to Moses' instructions, had immolated a lamb and eaten its flesh with unleavened bread. They had marked the doors of their Egyptian enemies with the blood of the lamb and Moses had said to them: "It is the Passover," which means "Passage of the Lord." And on this same night wherein the Lord had passed, there were put to death all the first-born of Egypt, and the Israelites, to the number of six hundred thou-

sand had started on their march. On the following day, the 15th Nisan, they had crossed the Red Sea. It was in commemoration of this double passage that the institution of the Feast of the Passover, the Hebrew name, of which, "Phase," signifies passage, had been made. The evocation of these great events, the most memorable in the history of the Jewish people, moved the apostles deeply and increased their heaviness of spirit. It was doubtless a glorious anniversary which commemorated the triumph of their fathers and the overthrow of their enemies. But with what sadness it had been announced to them! Was it not to be the antithesis of the days of Moses? And were not they themselves to be swallowed up in a Red Sea while their enemies should triumph? Alas, yes; it was indeed thus that events would pass for all who, not seeing the future, judged by appearances alone. But Jesus understood the reality of things. He saw them as if in the present and tried to explain them to His apostles. It was only too true that on the following day He Himself would be plunged into another Red Sea — a sea of blood — but He would cross it, nevertheless, and come out of it alive. While years later, the Red Sea would open again upon His enemies, and close down upon them, burying them with their Temple and their city in complete ruin, with no hope of resurrection.

While speaking, Jesus watched the rising of the moon, majestic as a queen, white as a virgin. Now it crowned the crest of Mt. Olivet, brightening the tombs which bordered the torrents of the Cedron, finally

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stopping far off above the two slopes of the Valley of Jehosaphat. There, under marble arches and in stone caves, slept the Fathers of Israel, the Judges, Kings and Prophets. There lay, pell mell, all the generations that for centuries had been the People of God. Alas! how it had degenerated, this nation so pampered by Jehovah, which at different epochs had been so glorious and powerful. The divine effigy was no longer visible on these degenerated foreheads which Jesus had compared to whited sepulchres. Alas, alas! The hour of the great sin was to strike, and this nation would fill the measure of its iniquity. It was about to accomplish its separation from God and, at the same time, its final defeat. To dig more deeply the abyss where it should hide, it was about to put to death Him whom the heavens had sent to save it, after twenty centuries of expectation and promise. This sight darkened Jesus' brow, but suddenly a fugitive ray of light touched and illuminated it, for the thought had come to Him that in this field of death, lying before His eyes, were the just whose tombs would be opened to-morrow. Yes, to-morrow, many of those who had slept for centuries beneath these sepulchres would hear His cry from the heights of the Cross and would rise up, living and glorious!

It was about half-past ten when the Master and His disciples reached the Garden of Gethsemane, filled with olive trees and barely closed by a wall of crumbling stones over which ill-kept vines were climbing. Perhaps it might have been part of that ancient Eden where sin had had its birth and where the great expia-

tion and redemption would also commence, that where death had germinated, life might spring up. Its name signified "The Press," and was given without doubt to the machinery that had been placed there for pressing olives and extracting the oil. But in this terrible night, the Son of Man would replace the fruit of the olive tree, and under the press of pain would shed the first drops of His blood to wash the earth stained by the first sin.

The moon pursued its way, tranquil and serene, above the Mount of Olives, and shed a whiteness like that of marble upon the great stones of the Temple's wall which crowned Mt. Moriah facing Gethsemane.

Jesus knew what was to come; He already saw it before Him, but the apostles, anxious and sad, were entering into the unknown. Vainly their Master had foretold them everything that would come to pass. It had seemed impossible to them by reason of its unfathomable depths of sadness. Black presentiments overcame them, and they felt a mystery of sombre horror descending upon them.

But was not their Jesus all-powerful; He who had commanded the sea, driven out devils, opened the tombs, restored life to the dead — was He not Master of the world? Alas, in this terrible night, along with the strength of a God, one felt another force greater even than itself! Insoluble mystery! God Himself had become weakness! How could the apostles understand? How could the all-powerful become the powerless?

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Suddenly Jesus Himself was seized with terror. On this ocean of life which He had just crossed, He had been shipwrecked, and the current had thrown Him upon the sands, naked and abandoned. And behold, a great wave of blood comes upon Him and threatens to engulf Him. He sees it swelling, rising and springing. He falls upon His knees, which bend beneath Him, and sends a great cry to Heaven, but Heaven remains deaf to His voice. What formidable visions then pass before His eyes! What terrifying scenes do the multitude and horror of human iniquity show Him! What were the mental tortures which triumphed over His physical forces and led Him to the gates of Death in an agony which would have made of Him a lifeless body, had not an angel come to give Him aid?

These questions are unanswerable and contain so many mysteries that the human tongue is incapable of describing them. This mysterious hour of agony is the first of the hours of the passion and was obviously the most terrible of them all. The next day Jesus was to endure the horrible pain of the scourging and the crucifixion, without betraying any weakness. From the height of the Cross, His blood would drain through all the parts of His body. In the face of death He would remain calm and patient, fully cognizant of all that happened about Him. He would hear the blasphemies of His executioners and would ask forgiveness for them; He would listen to the good thief and pardon Him. He would speak to His Father, His mother, His well-beloved disciple. Unto His last cry,

He would remain in full possession of Himself; He would keep the plenitude of His strength. But it is otherwise during the first hour of His passion, though He be in the fullness of health and has not lost one drop of blood. Nothing has happened to diminish His physical strength. His anguish is yet to come. Nevertheless, this Man who commanded the sea, sickness and death is seized all at once with an inexplicable weakness. In the apparent fullness of His strength, He is in an agony, He trembles, He falls with His face to the earth, and from every pore of His being surge billows of blood and water. What is this mystery of suffering which surpasses human strength that Jesus has assumed? Have the innumerable sins He is to expiate been driven like so many arrows into His tender flesh? No human answer can satisfy this questioning. But it appears certain that the suffering of the agony was greater than that of either the scourging or the crucifixion. Why? Perhaps because moral suffering is greater than physical, and it is in proportion to the perfection of the Being who suffers. Perhaps also because the executioners of the Pretorium and of Calvary were but men, while in Gethsemane the invisible executioner was God Himself, striking in the name of His implacable justice, and what He struck was the mountain of humanity's sins rising menacingly before Him like an immense pyramid of hatred, whose base was large as the earth and whose summit reached to Heaven.

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ing of Judas. Jesus was still praying, when He heard the steps of a multitude approaching. He watched them coming with swords, clubs and lanterns. All this armament was quite useless, for He whom they came to arrest had no intention of hiding nor of defending Himself. He awakened His disciples and said to them, "The hour has come; he who betrays me is at hand."

In a few minutes, He had been taken and bound, and then he quietly followed the procession, which returned by the route along which it had come; while the frightened apostles fled into the darkness. It was midnight. The rays of the full moon reaching the zenith had penetrated into the depths of the ravine where the Cedron emptied its thin stream of water. The porticoes of the Temple, shining in the moonlight, seemed to raise their colonnades to the summit of Mount Moriah. The Roman cohort formed an escort for the Prisoner, who had recovered His strength and ascended with firm steps the height of Zion which shortly before He had descended with His apostles.

Hereafter, He was to be alone. For three years, His disciples had always accompanied Him. This was finished. The family was dispersed and its Head delivered over to the malice of His enemies. It was shameful that these people feared a personal encounter with Him, who up to now, had been meek and humble of heart. The combat no longer had a reason for existence. The head of the new religion was now but the Lamb of God, voluntary victim, who in all

resignation had decided to offer no resistance and patiently awaited His condemnation.

When the band with its Captive arrived at the palace of the high-priest, the moon was hidden. Dark clouds rose from the Valley of the Jordan and veiled its brilliancy. A cold wind, impregnated with a slight odor of bitumen from the Dead Sea, blew about the Mount of Scandal and was smothered in the Valley of Jehosaphat on its course to the Cedron. Jerusalem slept.

VI

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM

IT might have been one o'clock in the morning when Jesus appeared before the high-priest Annas, an old man of seventy years. For about a half a century the high priesthood had belonged to his family. Appointed under Herod the Great, whose sanguinary tyranny he had condoned, he had been deposed by Valerius Gratus, predecessor of Pontius Pilate. His sons had succeeded each other in turn, and it was now his son-in-law, Caiphas, who was invested with the supreme dignity of the priesthood. It was well known that this old man had always remained the ruling spirit of the synagogue and retained the prestige of authority, even though he no longer exercised its functions *de jure*. He was a wicked old man, ambitious and imperious, belonging to the sect of the Sadducees. His palace, in which he dwelt with Caiphas, rose above Mt. Zion, several steps from the

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Cenacle. It formed three wings around a vast court. That of the centre was inhabited by Annas, the one at the right by his son-in-law, and the left one sheltered the servants of both families. The night was cold, and a great fire was lighted in the middle of the court. Around it were grouped the friends of Judas, the Roman soldiers and the curious, while Jesus was led into the apartments of the old pontiff surrounded by retainers and Levites.

By what right did this high-priest, deposed fourteen years before, dare take upon himself the trial of the Galilean? And how dare he sit at night, when to do so was forbidden absolutely by Mosaic law? The old fanatic, actuated by his hatred, hoped, by forcing his victim to submit to a preliminary interrogation, to obtain from Jesus' own lips the proofs that would enable him to formulate the exceedingly indefinite accusations Caiphas and he proposed to make.

As to the motives of his hatred, they were without end but might be summed up thus: the new religion preached by the young reformer would not only ruin the authority and standing of his family but would suppress his revenues. Had not this bold reformer recently driven from the Temple, as if it belonged to Him, the merchants who were carrying on their business there? Like all accused before a regular tribunal, Jesus had the right to be told the cause of His arrest and the nature of the accusation brought against Him. However, it was not in this way that the justice of Annas was to proceed; so, without telling Jesus of what He was accused, he tried to obtain

from Him an explanation of His doctrine and a biographical sketch of His disciples. Knowing the object of this interrogatory, Jesus baffled the cleverness of the astute old man by refusing to make any answer other than this,-

"I preached openly by day. Question those who heard me." And by this Jesus meant to say, "It suits you to act by night and in secret, to plot and pay for treachery in the dark; but as for me, I speak and act in the light of day, in the presence of the world."

By refusing to answer, Jesus also signified to the ex-pontiff that he had no jurisdiction, since he no longer exercised the sovereign pontificate. The old fox understood all the significance of this lesson and appears to have dropped his role as judge of a court of inquiry. With culpable complaisance, he allowed one of his knaves to answer Jesus by striking Him and then had Him taken before Caiphas. Led by the guard, Jesus crossed the court through the crowd, which elbowed its way as close to Him as possible. On entering, He saw the high-priest seated on a platform, having with him more than thirty members of the Sanhedrim. He recognized among them several whom He had often met in the Temple. Without either haughtiness or fear, with a modesty full of dignity and an assured and quiet step, He advanced to the spot shown Him and waited.

Doubtless informed of all that had passed before Annas, Caiphas and his colleagues intended to proceed with more regularity. But the trial was badly managed and contrary to all rules of precedence. In

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their blind hatred and harsh desire to do away with Christ before the festival, with this Man who disturbed their sleep, the secretaries had neglected all usual formalities. Before this tribunal there was neither denunciation nor accusation. The prisoner had been suddenly arrested as being guilty of a flagrant crime, and, in spite of the law forbidding trials by night, these iniquitous judges began the examination without even learning the accusation brought against the prisoner and without informing Him of it. Instead of interrogating Jesus, as Annas had done, they called on witnesses — and, God! What witnesses!

They were the dregs of liberated convicts, who but repeated badly learned lessons without coherency. In spite of their intentions and wish to please the priests, they could bring forward nothing of importance. At last came two who accused Jesus of wishing to destroy the Temple. One pretended that Jesus had said, "I *will* destroy the Temple," but the other affirmed that He only said, "I *can* destroy the Temple." This was evidence at variance, which embarrassed the members of the tribunal. And as no other witness came forward to confirm one version or the other, Caiphas tried to obtain an admission from the accused. "Dost thou not hear?" he said, "what they say against thee, and hast thou nothing to answer?"

Jesus could have said, "Neither the one or the other of these testimonies is exact. I did not say 'I will destroy nor I can destroy,' I said, speaking to my enemies, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days

I will build it up.'” It was a hypothesis, equivalent to saying, “If you destroy this temple I will rebuild it in three days.” “By this temple,” the victim could have answered, “I wished to designate this body, which you are about to destroy and which I will rebuild in three days.” But why make answer to those who did not wish to understand, these judges whose consciences He read like an open book? He cast upon Caiphas a look, calm and resigned, but answered nothing. Exasperated and embarrassed, Caiphas no longer knew what to do. If the prisoner persisted in this silence, what proof could he find to bring against him?

Suddenly a thought inspired by the spirit of malice flashed into his mind, providing a plan of action which would also be a dramatic stroke of great effect. It was to obtain from the victim Himself the acknowledgment of His pretended divinity. With a spontaneous movement, he advanced close to the prisoner and, looking Him in the face, with his right hand raised to Heaven, said,

“I adjure thee, in the name of the living God, tell us if thou be Christ the Son of God.” The stroke was well aimed, and Jesus understood that it was His death-blow. No one knew better than He the text of the Mosaic law which declared that any man who proclaimed Himself God should be found deserving of death. He knew that in answering Caiphas, “I am He,” He would pronounce His death sentence. But He could not nor ought He be silent. This ques-

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tion could not remain without an answer. It was to speak this great Word that He had come into the world, and it was to submit to this death which it brought upon Him that He had assumed our humanity. Doubtless He knew that neither Caiphas nor His other judges would believe His word. But it was not to them He would speak; it was to all souls of good faith; it was to the people of centuries to come, to all the nations of the world. He did not hesitate for one minute; looking His judges in the face without either boasting or terror, in the solemn and serene tone suited to such divine words, He answered, "I am He." And the better to accentuate the meaning of His answer, so clear of itself, He appropriated the words which the Prophet Daniel applies to the Messiah by adding, "You will see the Son of Man seated on the right hand of God the Father, descending on the clouds to judge the world."

Horrified by this answer, Caiphas rent his garments and cried, "You have heard the horrible blasphemy! He deserves death."

It was the opinion of all present. But it was not enough to declare Him guilty and deserving of death. The power of inflicting capital punishment belonged to the Procurator alone, and besides, it was still the middle of the night. To give their condemnation an appearance of legality, it was necessary to have it pronounced again at a regular sitting of the Sanhedrim during the day. While waiting and congratulating himself on his success, Caiphas delivered the ac-

cused over to the derision and outrages of the mob. Between his iniquity and the perfect innocence of Jesus; between his own ferocious hatred and the unalterable sweetness of his Prisoner; between his base villainy and the noble attitude of the Accused there was such a contrast that he himself would have suffered had there been a more prolonged interview with his Victim. In order to punish and humiliate Jesus and to assert his own power over his Victim, Caiphas delivered Christ over as a plaything to the crowd of scoundrels who formed his body-guard. Until the morning, Jesus submitted to outrages and insults beyond the power of words to describe. But Caiphas slept no more than did his Victim during this dreadful night; he wished to hold a full session of the Sanhedrim at break of day, in order to make regular, if possible, his criminal proceeding, and so spent the rest of the night calling together the members of the High Tribunal who were scattered throughout the city. Formerly these general sessions of the Sanhedrim, particularly in capital cases, had taken place in the rotunda of the Temple, but for three years they had not sat there, having power no longer to pronounce sentence of capital punishment. So at daybreak the Sanhedrites gathered at the house of Caiphas. Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and Gamaliel the Elder did not assist at this reunion, not wishing to share in the crime about to be committed and knowing that neither their presence nor their protestations could prevent it. They had defended Jesus at earlier meetings when there was question of measures to put an

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end to His preaching, as well as of betraying Him to justice. But they had had no success.

It would, doubtless, have been more generous on their part to come and protest again by their words and votes against this iniquity, but their faith was still trembling in the balance, and their courage had not risen to the heights demanded by the circumstances.

Caiphas had been careful to tell all the Sanhedrites who had not assisted at the night trial about the astute and solemn question which he had put to Jesus, and (according to him) the blasphemous answer he had received. He had told them how he and his colleagues had already declared Jesus deserving of death. Recourse was made then to the same mode of procedure. Caiphas called Jesus again before him and adjured Him in the name of the Living God to say if He were the Christ.

Several hours before, Jesus had answered, "I am He," and not only had He not been believed, but they had said, "It is a blasphemy which merits death." Now it was this same blasphemy that Caiphas wanted Him to speak again.

Full of calmness and serenity, Jesus answered,

"If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I question you, you will not answer, nor will you see me again, but hereafter (that is to say when you shall have put me to death) the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

"Thou art, then, the Son of God?" repeated Caiphas.

And Jesus answered, "Thou hast said it; I am He."

The blasphemy which the Sanhedrites expected and wanted was repeated before them all, and they hastened to pronounce a new condemnation. Up to this time everything had gone well and quickly, according to the will of the chief priests. However, it was necessary that this verdict be followed by sentence of death, which the Roman Procurator alone could pronounce; but there was reason to believe that Cæsar's representative might show himself refractory. Jesus' enemies foresaw an obstacle there and realized that they must display all their astuteness in order to triumph over it. Was it possible that Pilate, relying on the Book of Leviticus, would condemn Jesus to death because He called Himself the Son of God? No, because Leviticus had no authority over a pagan, and to all appearances Pilate would not hesitate to reject the Mosaic law. A matter of obligation for the Jews, it was for the Romans but an historical document. It was necessary, therefore, before Pilate, to produce another foundation for the accusation and transfer it if possible to political grounds. To obtain a verdict from the Sanhedrim, the charge must have religious grounds, because, if, instead of accusing Jesus of blasphemy, they denounced Him as a rebel, who dreamed of shaking off the yoke of Rome, many Sanhedrites doubtless would have said, "So much the better; let us allow Him to do it." But, on the contrary, before the tribunal of the Procurator, this accusation stood every chance of being favorably received, and by following it up with

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cleverness and energy, with threats and popular demonstrations, it ought to bring about the sentence of death. Then Jesus was brought before the Governor.

VII

THE END OF JUDAS

THE night of April 7th, in the year of Rome, 783, was a terrible one, not only for Jesus, but also for Judas, his unfaithful disciple. The punishment of the guilty and the sacrifice of the innocent were to be accomplished on the same day, about the same hour.

Judas was the type of a bad priest, and all apostates from the beginning of time have been more or less like him. He had all the great passions which cause the ruin of so many; ambition, love of money and perhaps luxury, though the gospels do not speak of this. In following Jesus, he had not obeyed the call of his conscience, but the suggestion of his ambition and his thirst for riches. Like the greater number of Jews, he said to himself, "If Jesus be the Messiah He will re-establish the kingdom of Israel and will give His disciples lucrative and honorable positions." This is why he joined the first disciples, why he caused himself to be recommended by them to his Master and offered his services as treasurer of the community, that he might keep for himself the generous gifts made to Jesus by His friends. He is

the model for those dishonest people who cleverly turn their employers' money to their own profit.

The other disciples had doubtless discovered some of his frauds, since the Evangelists have written that he was a thief. Jesus knew it all, and must often have reproached Judas for his evil ways, but did not dismiss him, which would have ruined his reputation and have removed every pretext for betrayal and desertion. However, the faithless apostle finally understood that his dream of fortune and greatness would never be realized, if his Master continued to avoid honors and riches. There was no longer occasion for self-deception. The Prophet had spoken clearly. His kingdom promised the disciples only poverty, humiliation, suffering and death. From that time, to the eyes of Judas, it was but a false kingdom his Master would give to visionaries.

In the camp of the enemy, close to the rich and powerful priesthood, his future would be better assured. And this was Judas. He was neither a monster nor abnormal; he simply followed the perverse instincts of human nature and the suggestions of the devil. A great number of men think and act as he in less serious affairs, and often without giving them a second thought. Little by little the spirit of evil entered more deeply into his soul and represented the betrayal of his Master to his enemies as an act of independence and deliverance. For three years he had served Him without profit. He had had enough of this miserable, wandering life, and it seemed fair to think of the future.

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The chief priests would better recompense his services and doubtless later on give him a more lucrative situation. "And besides," again suggested the Spirit of Evil, "Jesus, the great miracle-worker, will know how to escape the hands of the priests." From that time forward his treachery seemed to him of little importance.

But, once consummated, the crime, even in Judas' eyes, took on enormous proportions. The devil showed him all its horror and villainy, and at last he understood that he was a monster of ingratitude and perversity. He had betrayed his Master, this Jesus, so good, so gentle, so merciful, who had so often forgiven him his thefts and infidelities. He had betrayed and sold for thirty pieces of silver this wonderful Man, masterpiece of nature and of grace, miracle of love, of knowledge and of power, whose good deeds were without number. What infamy and shame! A violent despair took possession of his entire being, and all his projects, all his dreams, all his reasoning, gave place in his mind to the one idea of suicide.

This money he had idolized, this price of his treachery burned his hands; he bent under the weight of these thirty pieces of silver, that filled him with horror. He ran to Caiphas, where the Sanhedrim had just pronounced final sentence against Jesus. He entered the room where the principal Sanhedrites were still deliberating, and said to them, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. I bring you back your silver." They repelled with contempt this traitor

whose usefulness had come to an end, and he left the hall, blaspheming.

A company of soldiers and cowardly scoundrels of the high-priest led Jesus toward the palace of Pilate. He followed them and tried to approach his victim, to see His beautiful face for the last time, but the crowd pushed him roughly away. Then he ran to the Temple and cast the thirty pieces of silver, that weighed him down like the iron ball of a galley-slave, upon the floor, and without either stopping or turning, hastened down to the Cedron. As he passed near the Garden of Gethsemane, he met Peter coming out of it, who made a motion as if to throw himself upon Judas. But he did not have to defend himself, for Peter turned away into the little path which led to the Temple.

Arrived at the tomb of Absalom, breathless with fatigue, with sorrow and with shame, Judas seated himself for an instant on the marble steps and sank into a reverie. Like him, the Son of David had betrayed his father and his king and had plotted his death. But Jehovah had chastised him, and a short time afterward he was found hanging from the branches of a cedar on the banks of the Cedron. A shoot of this same tree was still there, and they called it the cedar of Absalom. Judas shuddered from head to foot; the air was cold and the sun, barely risen, was hidden behind the Mt. of Olives. "The Master is at this moment before Pilate," said Judas to himself, "and perhaps the sentence of death is already pronounced against Him." He rose and slowly climbed

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the heights of Mt. Zion. Arrived at the edge of the precipice of Gehenna, he stopped and looked into the abyss. From the bottom had formerly risen the brass statue of Moloch to whom bloody victims and even human sacrifices had been offered. The statue had disappeared, but the abyss remained dark and seemed to invite suicide. For a moment the traitor was tempted to throw himself into it, but he drew back and, after climbing the hill, descended its southern side. He crossed the valley of Hinnom and stopped in a potter's field, formerly a shady garden which he had dreamed of buying with the price of his treachery, to build himself a home there. From this spot a great sycamore raised its long branches to heaven. Judas seated himself at its foot, rested his head on his arms and forced himself to bring his thoughts together. Childhood memories came in a tumult to his mind. Again he saw Kerioth, his native hamlet near Samaria, so peaceful and so green. Would it not be possible to return there, to forget everything and lead a hidden life?

Alas, no; neither peace nor forgetfulness were any longer possible for him. Satan, who had taken possession of his soul, showed him anew all the monstrosity of this crime which would be published throughout the world and make his name in history synonymous with apostate and traitor. Then he hesitated no longer, but rising quickly took his girdle and hung himself from one of the branches of the sycamore.

At the moment when God the Son was condemned

before the tribunal of Pilate, Judas appeared before the tribunal of God the Father. And then his cursed dream was realized. The potter's field was bought with the traitor's thirty pieces of silver, his last dwelling was dug at the foot of the sycamore that served him for a gibbet.

VIII

BEFORE PILATE

PILATE was a Roman knight and had the pride of his caste and the violence of his race. He felt no antipathy to Jesus, and the hatred of the Jews against the young prophet rather excited his sympathy. He detested the Jews and, had he believed it possible to obtain the approbation of Rome, would gladly have tyrannized over them. But on three occasions he had attempted to press Rome's yoke heavier upon them and govern them with a rod of iron, and Rome had disapproved. This had made him not only more prudent, but weak and timorous. The popular uprisings of the Jews inspired him with terror, because it was his duty to suppress them in such a way as not to merit rebuke from Cæsar. In suppressing them, he created malcontents, who hastened to Rome to denounce him and demand his recall. Aspirants to his post were not lacking there, and he knew, through practical experience, all the intrigues and manœuvres at the service of ambition. In spite of his scorn for the Jews, he feared to irritate them be-

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One of the larger rooms of the Tower of Antonia served as audience-chamber, and it was to this hall Jesus was brought before Pilate. There the Jews could not penetrate, for they considered it against the law to enter the house of a pagan. Jesus, led between two of the palace guards, appeared alone before the Governor, who was seated on a sort of throne symbolizing the Roman authority.

Pilate had long heard of Jesus, but had never seen Him. He looked attentively at Him and was struck by the nobility, the distinction and the beauty of His countenance. Everything about Him breathed of dignity and a quiet conscience. Jesus cast upon the Governor a long, inquiring look; then dropped His eyes, as if in meditation. Before this victim, already loaded with chains, whose noble countenance manifested such superiority, Pilate was seized with pity. He rose and advanced under the portico, at the foot of which the Sanhedrites were grouped before the crowd.

"What accusation do you bring against this Man?" he asked in a loud voice.

Caiphas, speaking in the name of the Sanhedrites, answered scornfully, "Were he not a malefactor, we should not have delivered Him over to you." Which meant, "You do not need to inquire into this Man's offence; we ourselves have judged Him guilty, and all we ask of you is to ratify the sentence and find Him deserving of capital punishment." It was a singular belittling of the authority of the Governor, which

would assign to him the role of executioner of high crimes rather than that of judge.

This was not Pilate's understanding of the administration of justice, for he was fully cognizant of the Roman rights; he never pretended to condemn without inquiring into the offense and without hearing the cause of the victim. But if the Jews wished to proceed otherwise, he would simply refuse them his ministry.

Assuming in turn a haughty tone, he said to them, "Well, take Him away, judge Him, and put your own laws into execution."

This answer, by which Pilate relinquished the right to try Jesus, was at the same time ironical and clever; it baffled the homicidal plot of the Sanhedrites and saved Jesus from death. For, since the conquest, all that their law would permit was to have Jesus scourged for His pretended blasphemy. But what they had plotted and wished at all costs to obtain was His death, and the Governor alone could ratify and cause the execution of the capital sentence.

Then Caiphas, insolently and without further deceit, unveiled the designs of the synagogue. "Our laws? You know well that we have no longer authority to sentence to death, and we wish this man to die."

Caiphas had said several days before, without suspecting the truth of his words, "This man must die for the salvation of the people," and all the Sanhedrites knew that the death of the cross was the death inflicted by the Roman law. What strange

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blindness in these men who, understanding the prophecies, refused to see their accomplishment in Jesus, and themselves fulfilled these prophecies to the letter, without being aware of it.

To obtain execution of the death-sentence, the Sanhedrites understood that it was necessary to hold at least the pretense of a trial before the Roman Governor, since he did not appear disposed to pronounce sentence himself without having heard either accusers or accused. But what accusation had any chance of success? This was the question. To accuse Jesus of having proclaimed Himself Son of God would probably leave Pilate utterly indifferent, and he might say, "What does it matter to me, or to Cæsar?" In reality, this offense was the only one which affected the synagogue, because it threatened its authority.

But the Sanhedrites were too astute, too clever to embarrass the Roman Governor with theological dissertations. It would have been an awkward complication of the trial and might have exposed it to a check. To show themselves favorable to the representative of Rome, they must place the litigation on other grounds; so they said to Pilate, "This man excites the people; He prevents the payment of tribute to Cæsar and calls Himself the Christ-King."

In preferring this accusation, the Sanhedrites lied audaciously and assumed a hypocritical loyalty. But the Governor could not close his eyes to an accusation of this nature. He was the chosen defender of the supremacy of Rome. To proclaim one's self king

was to revolt against Cæsar and commit the crime of high treason.

Doubtless the accusation was without foundation, for Jesus had never manifested any aspiration toward the political royalty of Israel. He had never disobeyed any part of the Roman law, never refused to pay tribute, never incited the people to shake off their yoke. He had never organized any political uprising, nor countenanced any plot against the authority of Cæsar. But at last the direct and formal accusation was brought forward. If the Governor refused to take notice of it, he himself would be accused of treachery.

He returned, then, into the hall of the Pretorium, and found himself alone with Jesus. On seeing Him, he said to himself. This man cannot seriously aspire to royalty, and if I myself question Him on this subject, He will answer that the imputation is ridiculous. He is too intelligent and too honest to give any other answer, and then I shall set Him free. I shall not even ask if He expects to become a king, but if He be a king, and He cannot do otherwise than answer "No."

Outside, the hateful and turbulent mob, excited by the chief priests, shouted like madmen; the noise reached the audience-chamber, and to make himself better heard by Jesus, Pilate had Him draw closer. Then he questioned Him, asking, "Art thou really the King of the Jews?"

The negative answer that the judge expected, did not come, for Jesus is really king and could not answer,

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"No." In the temporal order, He was not the King of the Jews, but in the spiritual order, He is King of all nations.

This is what Jesus wished to make His judge understand and why He explained to Pilate the nature of His royalty.

"My kingdom is not of this world; if it were of this world, my servants would fight that I might not be delivered to the Jews; but My kingdom is not of this world."

Did the Governor understand this speech and the real character of the kingdom of which Jesus spoke to him? Probably not. In any case, he wanted a more decisive answer, perhaps in the hope of obtaining this denial, which would have permitted him to release the victim.

"You are a king, then?" he asked Him.

And Jesus, who had explained in what His kingdom consisted, gave Pilate this answer, which would serve as a motive for the death-sentence.

"You have said it. I am king."

And the better to affirm the truth of this response and the reality of this new species of royalty that Pilate seemed to doubt, Jesus explained to him that He could not lie.

"I am born and I am come into the world to give testimony of the truth." He then added, "He who is of the truth hears my words and understands them," which meant, "If you do not understand me, Your Excellency, it is because you are not of the truth." This surpassed Pilate's understanding.

"The truth!" Who in all the world knew what it was? He Himself had sought it in the days of His youth and simple faith. He had studied it in the works of Greek and Roman philosophers. Learned professors had pretended to teach it to him, but his studies and his life's experience had led him into scepticism. On hearing these last words of Jesus, he shrugged his shoulders and with a bitter smile, asked, "What is truth?"

It was not a question that he proposed to his victim, because he was convinced that neither Christ nor anyone else could tell him in what truth consisted; it was his own universal doubt which he expressed in this interrogative form. What his attitude and phrase said to Jesus, signified, "You are an ignoramus, and if truth exist, no one knows what it is."

The Governor rose and for several moments walked backwards and forwards with hands clasped behind him. He did not know what to do. He would like to have been able to save Jesus, but did not wish to create difficulties for himself by irritating the Jews. If he had had right ideas of justice and rectitude, he would have liberated the prisoner without thought of the consequences. But he cared above all for his own interests and ambitious dreams, and for no consideration whatever would he have risked loss of position or the compromising of his future. He sought different expedients for appeasing the crowd and, going out, said to the Jews, "I find no fault with this just Man."

This declaration was received with cries of rage,

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and the Sanhedrites drawn up at the foot of the portico protested and renewed their accusations.

Then Pilate had Jesus brought out, and His presence on the steps of the portico aroused a new explosion of fury.

On all sides could be heard every species of accusation accompanied by abuse and insult. "He is possessed of the devil." "He is a malefactor, a transgressor of the law." "A despiser of the Mosaic dispensations and of the Sabbath." "A profaner of the Temple." "A rebel against religious authority and Roman domination." But nothing troubled the calm of Jesus. Serene and dignified, He looked upon this howling mob with the same eye that had formerly looked upon the angry sea of Tiberius. With one word, He could have calmed it, but He kept silence and let it rage.

"Dost thou not hear," said Pilate, "of how many things they accuse thee?"

Jesus remained silent.

The Governor thought, "A singular person in truth, who does not help me to save Him. When He should keep silence, He speaks and says precisely the things which serve for His condemnation. When He should speak and defend Himself, He keeps silence." Pilate was puzzled. Suddenly one of the accusers denounced Jesus for having created an uprising among the people in Galilee. This name suggested a new expedient. Jesus was a Galilean, and the offense imputed to Him had been committed in Galilee. He could be sent before Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee. This

prince lived, at that time, in the old home of the Machabees on Mt. Zion. Jesus was led there by legionaries under the Governor's orders. Following the outer walls of the Temple on the west side and crossing the bridge which united Mt. Moriah to Mt. Zion above the Valley of the Tyropeon, the procession arrived in a few moments at the Palace of King Herod.

It was the first time that Jesus had been Himself in presence of an earthly king, He who was King of kings. But the sovereigns of that day inspired no respect for royalty. These of the Orient were but kinglets and servile vassals of Tiberius, that master reviled by the world. The royal puppet of Galilee inspired in Jesus simply a sentiment of profound contempt, for He knew all his criminal life.

On his part, Herod was curious to meet the Prophet who had been so much spoken of and was grateful to Pilate for having sent Jesus to him. The first time the report of the wonders performed by Christ had come to his ears, he had been seized with terror. It was in Peræa shortly after the murder of John the Baptist, and his conscience was not yet dead to remorse. He had imagined to himself that the new prophet was John risen again.

He had communicated this fear to his courtiers. Some said, "No, it is Elias come back to earth," others, "No, it is one of the ancient Prophets who lives again."

"It is John whom I decapitated," insisted the king. "He is risen from among the dead." But he was reassured when several people affirmed that Jesus had

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begun to preach several months before the death of John. Nevertheless, he had always wished to see Him, and as Jesus declined his invitations, threatened to send Him away from Peræa. The Prophet was giving His first mission there at that time, and the king lived at Machærus. He had sent several Pharisees to say to Jesus, "Fly from here! For King Herod wishes to put you to death," but Jesus had answered them with a firmness touched with contempt, "Go say to that fox, that I will drive out devils and will cure the sick to-day and to-morrow, and that I will finish on the third day." And to affirm at the same time His knowledge of the future and His firm determination to finish His work completely, He had added, "It is not fitting for a Prophet to perish outside of Jerusalem." It was a defiance of Herod's power and meant, "You have no power over me, and I will continue to spread my beneficences among your subjects without heeding your threats. Whatever you may do, I shall fulfill my mission, and it is not in your kingdom that it will be permitted to put me to death, but in Jerusalem. For it is 'Jerusalem that kills the prophets.'"

Therefore, when Jesus appeared before Herod in Jerusalem, He had nothing more to say to this fox, instrument of a wolf's cruelty. His mission was accomplished; His hour had come, and He had voluntarily submitted Himself to the powers of darkness.

His attitude before the King of Galilee was that of a victim retaining His nobility and His dignity, but resigned to undergo all humiliations and every defamation without opening His lips.

The prince was flattered by this mark of deference shown him by the Roman Governor, and he also expected that the Prophet would accomplish some miracle before him, were it only to curry favor or escape justice. So at first he appeared to be full of consideration for his prisoner, and after having put several questions to Him which Jesus did not answer, asked Him, as a favor, to give some manifestation of supernatural power.

Jesus did not appear to hear him. Herod insisted, begged, threatened Him. Jesus remained silent, but His piercing look, which penetrated into the conscience of Herod, seemed to say, "Oh, King, if I opened my mouth, it would be to express to thee all the contempt which thou inspirest in me; it would be to reproach thee as John the Baptist did for thy adulterous life and orgies. It would be to curse thee in the name of all those victims whom thou hast assassinated; in the name of my precursor whom thou didst shamefully put to death to please a dancing woman. It would be to predict to thee that soon the hand of Jehovah will grow heavy upon thee; that thou shalt lose thy crown, thy throne and thy palaces; that thou shalt be exiled into Gaul; that the adulterous Herodias shall be decapitated there with a piece of ice which will recall the alabaster urn that held the head of my Precursor. If I were man only, I could not contain myself in thy presence, but I am the Word, and the Word must know how to keep silent to teach men patience."

The Sanhedrites profited by this obstinate silence

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of Jesus to renew all their accusations against Him. They hoped that before Herod, who was Jewish by birth, they could more easily obtain condemnation of Christ for what they called His blasphemies and scorn of the Mosaic Law.

But Herod no longer believed in the Mosaic precepts and did not trouble himself even to put them aside. These accusations left him quite indifferent. The persistent silence of Jesus alone offended him. Humiliated and wounded, he thought to take revenge by ridicule, and so, making fun of the pretended royalty of Jesus, had Him dressed again in a purple garment and sent Him back to Pilate.

During all this time, Pilate had been thinking, and his apprehensions grew. He watched the crowd and collected all the reports brought him by his secret agents. The anger of the people assumed alarming proportions, and he did not see how he could appease this popular movement created by the Sanhedrites, unless he acceded to their demands.

In his terror he already heard the roars of the revolutionists; he already saw his legionaries massacring the revolvers, blood flowing in streams on the pavement of the Temple; he saw himself denounced at Rome, accused, blamed, dismissed, exiled.

His wife, Claudia, had had a sleepless night. Only toward morning had she slept, when a terrible dream came to trouble her. Jesus appeared all bleeding, before the tribunal where her husband sat; the blood which flowed from His veins flowed even upon Pilate himself, dyeing his garments. The Governor had a

vase of water brought him and washed his hands, but then the water turned into blood and dyed his arms and all his body.

This vision had awakened her with a start, and she had not been able to sleep again. She had told her dream to her sister, and they both decided to repeat it to the Governor, but when Claudia went into her husband's rooms, he had already betaken himself to the tribunal.

Crowds filled the court and the stairways of the Pretorium, and as it was impossible for her to reach Pilate, she sent this message:

"Have thou nothing to do with that just Man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him."

When this message was given Pilate, he sought for means to release Jesus.

A few minutes before, he had attempted to convince the chief priests and the elders that he found no crime in Jesus, and that Herod must have been of the same opinion, since he had sent away the victim without pronouncing any word of condemnation. But his words had raised such an uproar among the Sanhedrites that, to satisfy them and perhaps excite their pity, he thought it better to sentence the prisoner to a scourging. He then proclaimed that he would have Him chastised and liberated, and while Jesus was being led into an interior court of the palace to be scourged, Pilate thought of another expedient.

It was the custom and it was his right, on the day of the Passover, to release one criminal to be chosen

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by the Jews. To exercise this right of pardon, he gave them the choice between Jesus, whom neither he nor Herod had found guilty, and a notorious robber and assassin named Barabbas, who was in prison.

Convinced that the choice of Jesus was obligatory, and that the Jews would never dare to name Barabbas, Pilate asked them "Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

Oh, horror! The unanimous cry of the Jews resounded,—

"Barabbas! Barabbas!"

Pilate hardly believing his ears answered,—

"What, then, shall I do with Him whom you call King of the Jews?"

"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" vociferated the crowd.

"But what evil has He done?" objected the judge pleading for the accused. "I find no cause for death in Him."

"Crucify Him, crucify Him," the multitude continued to shout.

Instead of simply administering justice, the Judge had tried to be politic and had had recourse to the expedients which policy suggested. Universal suffrage had answered by imposing upon him an act of injustice. As a result of his culpable indecision, Pilate was no longer either Governor or magistrate. He no longer represented the majesty of the law and of justice. He had become a tool in the hands of the multitude. To conceal his weakness from the eyes of the people, he performed an act which, according

to a custom in Israel, might be considered a protest against the popular verdict.

He had his servants bring water, and he washed his hands in the presence of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Man. Look you to it."

The people cried, "Let His blood be upon us and upon our children."

Barabbas was set free.

The scourging completed, Jesus was again brought before Pilate, whose conscience was still troubled and who continued to seek other means to appease the Jews.

The tortures had horribly disfigured their victim. He was truly an object of pity. Covered with blood, spittle and dirt, His head dishevelled, bloody, crowned with thorns, His face disfigured with the blood which had trickled through His hair, His shoulders covered with a red mantle all in tatters, His hands crossed and chained,—thus appeared the Son of Man to Whom humanity had given birth only after forty centuries of waiting, this Son of God, in Whom the Father rested all His hopes!

Pilate was touched and, believing that the people would also be moved to pity at seeing Him in this state, caused Jesus to be brought forward to the highest step of the portico and, showing Him to the Jews, said,

"Behold the Man! I bring Him to you that you may know I find no crime in Him."

But the cries of hatred were renewed,—“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

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"Then," returned Pilate, "take Him yourselves and crucify Him. As for me, I find no fault in Him."

But the Sanhedrites knew well they had no right to crucify Jesus without a sentence from the Governor, and when they saw that he persisted in refusing it, despite their formal declaration that the accused had declared Himself King of the Jews and had thus rebelled against Rome, they came back to their first accusation of blasphemy.

"We have a law," they told him, "and according to our law, He must die because, He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

This evocation of the Jewish law increased Pilate's trepidation, for he remembered the instructions often received from Rome. Several times before he had despised this law and given orders contradicting it and had been blamed and reprimanded. It was with great trouble that he had prevented his recall. And now again a conflict with the Mosaic law was threatened. If Jesus really called Himself the Son of God, could he himself prevent the law from taking its course, thereby exposing himself again to Roman denunciation?

Pilate had Jesus brought in again, and said to Him,

"From whence art thou?"

He doubtless hoped that Jesus would reveal to him a purely human origin and would repudiate all pretension to divine sonship.

But Jesus could not lie; and as Pilate had no jurisdiction in religious matters (as he was not competent

to judge whether, according to the prophecies and events accomplished, Jesus should be accepted and recognized as the Messiah), He did not think it His duty to answer Pilate's question. At the house of Caiphias, before the Sanhedrim, He would have liked to open the question of His divine origin, because this tribunal was competent to pronounce sentence on this question. Not only was it competent, but it was its duty to examine His titles to the Messiahship and make them known to the people.

That was why Jesus had not hesitated to proclaim energetically before Caiphias in the Sanhedrim that He was the Son of God. But He could not submit His claim to divinity before the tribunal of Pilate, because this would have been to recognize a jurisdiction with which this tribunal was not vested. He answered nothing, therefore, to the Governor's question.

"Dost thou not speak to me?" asked Pilate in a vexed tone. "Dost thou not know I have power to crucify thee and power to release thee?"

"Thou wouldst not have any power over me," answered Jesus, "if it were not given thee from on high." Which was equivalent to saying to him, "This power, which thou dost boast and which thou appearest to hold from Rome and which thou dost fear so much to lose, does not come to thee from Rome; it comes to thee from my Father, and it is to Him thou shalt be obliged to render account."

Did Pilate understand this speech? Perhaps so. But the fear of the Jews, who redoubled their fero-

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rious yells, greatly disturbed him and he saw no escape from the perilous situation. He came out a third time with his prisoner; but now the Sanhedrites cried,

"If thou dost release Him thou art no friend of Cæsar's."

"Friend of Cæsar" was a high imperial dignity to which Pilate aspired, as did all the ambitious of Rome. He was terrified by this new threat. He tried, however, to make his voice heard and said to the Jews,

"Behold your King!"

"He must die! He must die! Crucify Him!" shrieked the crowd.

"Shall I crucify your King?" he said again.

The Sanhedrites answered with one voice, "We have no king but Cæsar."

He trembled at the mention of this terrible name. He deliberated a few moments and said to himself, "Nicodemus was right; this strange Man is tired of life. He wishes to die. Well, then, let Him die." And he pronounced sentence of death against Jesus, giving as motive that He had proclaimed Himself "King of the Jews."

IX

CLAUDIA AND CAMILLA

ON returning to his apartments, after having delivered Jesus to the executioners, Pilate found himself in the presence of Claudia and Camilla, whose faces betrayed anxiety and agony.

"Well?" asked Claudia.

"It is finished," he answered with a weary sigh.

"And you have condemned Him?"

"I did all in my power to save Him, but He Himself wished to die."

"How is that? Explain yourself."

"It happened in this way; the Sanhedrites accused Christ of high treason, saying that He proclaimed Himself King of the Jews. Then I myself questioned Him, and He answered me with inexplicable candor that He was, in effect, King of the Jews. What could I do then? To reject the accusation after this acknowledgment was to expose myself to a charge of treachery to Cæsar. In spite of that, I sought means to escape, to save Him at least from death. I even compared Him with Barabbas, in order to deliver Him. The Jews forced me to deliver Barabbas, a scoundrel! I had Jesus scourged in the hope of softening them; but the Sanhedrites remained implacable, insensible to the horrible scene of the flagellation, while all the people demanded His death with loud cries. I had to give way to violence and threats; but it is the fault of the accused as well as of the Jews. What need was there for Him to acknowledge His pretensions to the Kingdom of Juda, which moreover are absurd?"

"It is very strange. But did He not explain what His kingdom is?"

"Yes, He pretends that His kingdom is not of this world."

"Well, then, how do His pretensions cause you or

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Cæsar any anxiety, if it be not in this world that the gentle Prophet expects to reign?"

"My dear Claudia, I know of no other world than this, and if Jesus be a dreamer, so much the worse for Him if His dreams be dangerous."

"And you have delivered Him over to the Jews? Ah, Pontius —"

"It was necessary to put an end to it all. And now leave me in peace. The strange look of this man stirs me more profoundly than all your words could do. I must forget it and do not wish it mentioned in my presence. In a few hours He will be dead. Everything will be over, and I will fly from this accursed city I abhor and go into Cæsarea, where I may perhaps find a little calm and repose."

Caius entered.

"Governor," he said, "the Sanhedrites demand instant execution of the sentence because to-morrow is the Sabbath. What must be done?"

"It is well, the sooner the better."

"O, my dear one," spoke up Claudia, "put off this sentence until later. Perhaps time will give you some means to prevent the death of this just Man."

"No. The uproar will break out anew, and this struggle overwhelms me. Its only definite solution is death. Death alone gives peace to Him who is dead as well as to those who have killed Him.

"Go, Caius. *Expedi crucem*, and see that the thing is done quickly. You will inscribe on the Cross the name of the condemned and the title which was the

motive for His condemnation, 'King of the Jews,' in the three languages, Latin, Greek and Hebrew."

The two women left the room in tears, followed by Caius. Pilate threw himself upon a divan and tried to rest, but in vain he closed his eyes. Out of the shadow, were two burning flames fixed upon him. They were the eyes of Jesus. For a long time he lay in anxiety upon his couch. Suddenly, several leaders of the Sanhedrim called to him from the portico. He rose with a start, and said to them in furious tones, "What more do you want of me?"

"The Centurion has had written on the Cross, 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,' and we come to ask you to have this inscription replaced by the words, '*who called Himself king of the Jews!*'"

"Leave me in peace; what is written is written," answered Pilate and turned his back upon them.

X

THE TWO SENTENCES FROM A JUDICIAL POINT OF VIEW

IT is humiliating for human justice to acknowledge that the greatest mistake of which judicial annals make mention was committed by both ecclesiastical and civil tribunals, by the representatives of authority and by the people, by judges and juries.

There is so much uncertainty and chance in the decrees of human justice that to fall into its hands is one of the greatest trials of man's life. That is why Jesus

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wished to submit to this as well as to every other humiliation. But what a lamentable mistake on the part of justice! We have seen how it seized the person of Jesus by calling into use the treachery of one of His disciples; how it led Him by night, without previous denunciation, before a High Priest who no longer had jurisdiction and how He was summarily condemned by the Sanhedrim and by Pilate!

Let us weigh the value of these two decisions from the judicial point of view. We shall not dwell upon the errors of form nor the irregularities of the trial. The night session at the house of Caiphas was a grave illegality. The law was that the tribunal should sit by day in order that the public might assist and even take part in it, for in the criminal assizes of the Jews the people had a share. Nor did the people assist in silence, they expressed their opinion loudly, boldly and more tumultuously than a jury.

Again, according to the law, one day should have intervened between the examination of the case and the sentence. The Sanhedrim put aside this prescription of the law, in the same manner that it set aside the most elementary principles of justice, by allowing the people to insult and abuse the accused before His condemnation.

It was also illegal to sit and judge on the eve of the Sabbath and the day of the Passover. The Sanhedrim despised this prohibition by sitting on the day of the great festival itself. The majority of the members of the Sanhedrim had openly given expression

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to opinions against Jesus, for a long time before the trial. His death had been implicitly decreed. From that time forth they were no longer impartial judges, they made it their business to find witnesses against Him.

In the preceding September, during the Feast of Tabernacles; in the month of February after the resurrection of Lazarus, and, finally, on the eve of the arrest of Jesus, they had met and agreed to this decisive judgment of Caiphas, "This man must die for the people, and in order that the nation may not perish."

This condemnation pronounced in advance by those who later on were to judge Jesus, is one of the monstrosities of this trial. But it is the foundation of this trial which interests us above all, and of which we wish to have an intelligent appreciation. It is neither necessary to be a lawyer nor a magistrate in order to understand that legality and justice are far from being synonymous. A condemnation may be strictly legal and at the same time sanction an injustice. It is evident that Jesus, being God, was above human laws, and that the sentence of death pronounced against Him was necessarily unjust because He could not have committed any crime.

But can one maintain that this sentence was legal? In other words, did the Sanhedrim and Pilate, in pronouncing it, apply only the laws then in existence? If the answer to this question be in the affirmative, it is a terrible blow to the law. But we believe that the judges of Christ made an erroneous application of the

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Let us first study the judgment of the Sanhedrim.

The crime for which it condemned Jesus was that He declared Himself the Messiah, the Son of God; for were this solemn affirmation of the accused false, it was blasphemy.

So this was precisely the question to be decided, and the Sanhedrim had not even examined it. The entire case lay in this point. Jesus had proclaimed Himself Son of God. If He were not, He had assuredly blasphemed and deserved death according to the Jewish Law. But if He were, the Sanhedrim should fall upon its knees and adore Him. It was the duty of this High Tribunal, composed of pontiffs, priests, Scribes, and doctors in Israel, who expected the coming of the Messiah, to examine and study the rights to divine sonship which Jesus appeared to have. In not doing so they were guilty of injustice.

If anyone be accused of perjury before a competent tribunal and answer the accusation by saying, "I have affirmed under oath the fact brought forth in the accusation, and I affirm it again because it is true," what would be the duty of the tribunal? Obviously, it should say to the accusers, "Now prove this fact false." It is the only question which bears on the examination, for if the fact affirmed be true, there can be no perjury. It remains for you therefore, accusers, to prove it false.

Had the tribunal, instead of acting in this way, said

to the condemned, "You admit having sworn to such a fact, therefore you are a perjurer and I condemn you," it would have been a perversion of justice as well as a crime. It was, therefore, the duty of the Sanhedrim to say to Jesus, :

"You pretend to be the Messiah, the Son of God! Well, let us examine your rights and your proofs. What is your origin? What points of resemblance are there between you and the promised Messiah? Show us that the prophecies have been accomplished, that the time fixed for the coming of the Messiah has arrived, that you have realized in your life and in your works the signs and characters by which we are to recognize Him!"

Nothing would have been easier for Jesus than to have answered this presentment of His case. All the judges were more or less versed in the Scriptures. They were all conversant with the prophecies relating to the Messiah, for it had been the principal object of their studies, their supreme hope, the fundamental dogma of their belief for centuries. They were all, then, in a proper frame of mind to understand and appreciate the triumphal demonstration Jesus was able to make of His Messianic title and divine origin. They themselves were the depositaries of the promise of a Messiah. They believed in Him, they expected Him. They knew the history of the personages who had prefigured Him in the past, the characteristic traits by which the Prophets had pictured Him, the political events which were to precede His coming. In a word, as an historian has said, "they had His

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description." If then they had wished to study the case brought before them, as was their duty, they were the most competent judges in Israel to pronounce on this question as to whether Jesus were the Messiah or they were to await another. And had they interrogated Him in good faith, nothing would have been easier for Jesus than to have enlightened them and proved the accomplishment of the prophecies, the uniting of Messianic signs in His own person and the divine character of His life and miracles.

But it was not in this manner that the Sanhedrim proceeded. Scarcely had Jesus, solemnly questioned by Caiphas, pronounced these words, "I am the Messiah, Son of God," than the Sanhedrim declared that it wished to hear no more. He was a blasphemer and deserved death. Not one of the Sanhedrites dared interrogate his own conscience, which, however, must have cried out to him, "If the speech of Jesus be true, there is no blasphemy, and hence we could only condemn Him after certain proof that His word is false. Let us inquire strictly into His genealogy, into the circumstances of His birth, His life, His works, and let us see if there be not in Him some of the Messianic signs predicted by the prophets." And if the Sanhedrites were of opinion that Jesus should furnish them this proof, they should at least have asked it of Him.

In a word, when He had solemnly affirmed in the name of the Living God that He was the Messiah, they were at least bound, before declaring Him deserving of death, to put Him in a position to prove His title.

When John the Baptist had wished to know more certainly if Jesus were the Messiah, out of the depths of his prison he sent messengers to ask Him this question: "Art thou He who is to come, or look we for another?" And Jesus answered, "Go, tell John what you have heard and seen; the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are restored to life, the poor have the gospel preached to them." John was convinced; he asked no other proofs. These same proofs and many others could as easily have been produced before the Sanhedrim.

And had these judges, prompted by good faith, not been convinced by His works, they would have had but to question Jesus as to His divine sonship, and He could have explained it to them in language that would have fully convinced them.

But it was not the truth the Sanhedrim sought, nor was it justice which preoccupied it. For to these priests, these hateful and jealous scribes, Jesus was but the enemy of their authority, of their prestige, their fortune and their future! He must at all price be put away. That is why the verdict was so quickly given after a pretended trial and with no inquiry into the truth of Jesus' words.

The Sanhedrim "conjectured" their falsity, and without inquiry, judged that what Jesus said "could not be true" and that in consequence it was blasphemous. It was a perversion of justice, a taking part in an injustice.

To judge of the Sanhedrim's decree, one must not lose sight of the fact that Messianism was the funda-

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mental dogma of Judaism; that the Jewish people had expected a Messiah for many centuries and that it was the great *desideratum* of its national life. No other nation, whether ancient or modern, had ever been found in such a situation, and from that time forth, a trial such as that of Jesus, before the Sanhedrim, became impossible in any other country.

Suppose that to-day one were to bring before our modern tribunals a man accused of calling Himself the Messiah, Son of God; what would the judges do? They would say, "He is a poor, insane creature suffering from hallucinations." If he were harmless, they would let him go; if he created disorder, they would send him to an asylum for the demented. No judge would ever dream of putting him to death; neither would any judge deem it his place to make inquiries as to whether or no he might be the Messiah, Son of God, because to-day no nation on earth expects the coming of a Messiah nor believes in a man-God of the future.

But it was otherwise with the Jewish people at the Messianic epoch. The Sanhedrites had before them an extraordinary Man, Who, for three years had accomplished all manner of miracles and Who had said to the multitude, "I am the Messiah whom you expect. God is my Father, and it is He who sends me, and if you do not believe my word, believe my works."

What judgment should they pass on this Man accused of blasphemy, they who believed in a Messiah and who expected Him, they who were the constituted

authority for the deciding of the Messianic question? Their duty was to examine thoroughly the life of this Man and to explain how, being simply an impostor, He could have worked so many miracles. In their character as ecclesiastical judges, doctors in Israel, versed in the Scriptures, it was their mission to instruct the people on the coming of the Messiah and to tell them when He should appear. It was not only a civil and religious duty; it was also a duty of patriotism, because the failure of the nation to recognize the Messiah would be the greatest misfortune and the greatest crime.

But the Sanhedrim had cast aside this triple duty and would bear forever in the sight of history, a terrible responsibility.

Let us now examine the judgment of Pilate, Roman Procurator and Governor of Judea.

Brought up in the school of scepticism, Pilate believed in nothing. Doubtful of truth, he was doubtful of justice as well, justice which dominates interests, prejudice and passion. But Jesus had all his sympathy, and he would willingly have protected Him against the Jewish priesthood had he not feared its denunciation before Tiberius.

Despite the brevity of the Biblical account, one can easily read between the lines all the peregrinations of the internal combat which took place in the Hall of Justice between Pilate's conscience and his anxiety for his own interest and future.

On two occasions he had tried to draw back; the first time by saying to the Sanhedrites, "Judge Him

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Neither of his attempts to avoid the issue having succeeded, he began the examination of the case and, immediately after questioning Jesus, said frankly to the Sanhedrites, "I find no cause in this man." As he could not convince them, he attempted to soften them by having the Victim chastised. Again he put the accusers in the position of choosing between the scoundrel Barabbas and Jesus, but these malicious people did not hesitate; they chose Barabbas! He was their choice, and had Pilate asked them, they would perhaps have answered that Barabbas was their Messiah.

After having exhausted these expedients, Pilate was forced to pronounce the last word of the law. But of all the accusations heaped upon the head of Jesus, one alone comes within Pilate's jurisdiction, and it appears to be of a nature to cause him grave trouble with Cæsar. It is Jesus' pretension to the royalty of Israel. As Cæsar's representative, Pilate could not allow this crime of high treason imputed to the Prophet, to go unpunished. Did Jesus really wish to shake off the yoke of Rome, to regain His country's independence and have Himself proclaimed king, He would deserve death. But nothing appeared more improbable to Pilate.

It is true, that in answer to the questions the Governor had put to Him, Jesus had said that He was "the King of the Jews," but He had explained that His kingdom was not of this world, and for the three

years that He had preached, never had He denounced Roman domination, never had He counselled disobedience or rebellion, never had He pronounced one word which could be construed as indicating the slightest desire to release His country from the yoke of the stranger.

One day in Peræa, when a great crowd wished to proclaim Him king, He had fled from the dignity that popular enthusiasm would have imposed upon Him and disappeared as if insulted. Another day, the Pharisees had set a trap for Him in this direction and had tried to compromise Him with the Roman authority. But Jesus had made this answer of profound wisdom, which was an epitome of all his politico-religious doctrine, "Render therefore to Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar's, and to God, the things which are God's."

It is also true that several days before, Jesus had returned as a conqueror to Jerusalem, in the midst of the multitude's acclamations. But in this multitude there were neither powerful, ambitious nor influential persons. There were but the humble, the poor, the disinherited, the powerless, simple hearts, not occupied with affairs of state, not even dreaming of overturning the established powers.

Pilate ought to have known all this and had learned enough of Jesus to be convinced that this Man could not be a menace to Roman power. Doubtless he understood or at least suspected that Jesus was a formidable reformer of the Jewish religion, an invincible adversary to the Pharisaical priesthood and the Sad-

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duces. He understood that the new prophet's influence was such as to overthrow the synagogue and thought to himself, "This is why the Sanhedrim desires His death." But of what import to him were the synagogue and the Mosaic law? If the sacerdotal prestige and the influence of the theocratic government of the Jews were threatened with ruin, so much the worse for the chief priests. Neither he nor the Romans had any cause for anxiety. The Governor understood the Sanhedrites when they said to him that Jesus deserved death because He had proclaimed Himself the Son of God. But to him, a Roman magistrate, professing polytheism, it would have been ridiculous to pronounce on this part of the law. To proclaim oneself God, was not a crime in his eyes, but an inoffensive mania. All the sceptics of Rome would have ridiculed him had he ordered the crucifixion of Jesus for such an offense. And he also answered the Sanhedrites by his attitude.

"For whom do you take me? Am I also a Jew? Do I expect a Messiah? And do you imagine that I am going to study your prophets to know if the characteristic traits they have given the Messiah correspond with those of Jesus? It is you who should have done this work before declaring Jesus deserving of death since you believe in the prophecies and in the coming of a Messiah. But do you expect me to do this work that you, yourselves have not done? Certainly not," and Pilate pursuing this interior monologue, said to himself, "On the other side, can I send this Man to His death because He has declared Him-

self king of the Jews? Is not this pretended royalty in itself an inoffensive mania? He Himself told me He was not of this world, and if His kingdom be not of this world, in what way does it interest us? And how could Rome be injured by it? What harm is there in that this gentle Prophet, who for three years has multiplied His good works among His people, should dream of a kingdom in another world? It is a harmless folly, an illusion, a mirage, I know not what; but it is not treason."

But cries of rage answered this testimony, and this judge who spoke in the name of Rome, who had at his command an entire cohort of legionaries, who by a sign could have had all this rabble put to death, trembled before the uprising of the people.

And when he saw that he could not convince the Jews of the innocence of Jesus, he started to argue with his own conscience, to convince himself of the culpability of his prisoner.

"What is truth?" he asked, tossing his head. "Neither I nor anyone else knows. Who knows if this Jesus, who appears to me so innocent, be not guilty? In addition, He does not take the trouble to deny what is said against Him. Why should I take upon myself His defense against the leaders of His nation, who will denounce me in Rome and demand my recall? The Sanhedrites have condemned Him; they affirm that He is guilty and deserves death. I am the only one who believes Him innocent. And the instructions I have received from the Emperor command me to avoid all conflicts with the leaders of

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the Jewish people. I will be of their opinion then; since they absolutely demand His death, I will decree it. He is not a Roman citizen; He is a Jew, and since His nation does not want Him, since it wishes to suppress Him, I should be a fool to cross the will of the people at the risk of being myself—and yet, this Man has committed no crime, and it would be a noble thing to take Him under my protection and make answer to that howling mob, ‘I cannot allow you to spill innocent blood. You, yourselves have brought me this Man. He is under the protection of Rome, and until you shall convince me that He has committed a crime, I shall not deliver Him over to you.’ Yes, but will this great name of Rome under which I shelter my prisoner protect me when the chief priests accuse me before Tiberius of having liberated a man who himself, in my presence, declared he was King of the Jews? ‘The crime of high treason,’ they would say, ‘an acknowledged crime, confessed by the prisoner in open court and allowed through the compliance of the Roman Governor to go unpunished.’ Doubtless, I could answer that the kingdom of this strange King is not of this world, but Tiberius could not understand such language. I, myself, do not understand it, and he would say that all pretenders to the throne of David should be put to death. To find favor with Tiberius, it does not suffice to be innocent; one must likewise appear to be innocent. To all appearances, this unfortunate Man seems guilty, and the high priests, Scribes and elders and all this crowd, vociferate that He is

guilty. Is it my fault that He wishes to reform the religion of His country? And if He is imprudently engaged in mortal combat against adversaries stronger than Himself, is it my fault that He has pronounced before the Sanhedrim and before me, words that compromised His case? I am not bound to sacrifice myself to save Him, but I am bound to guard the public peace; these furious cries which demand His death are sufficient to show me that this peace is threatened and that it can be re-established only by the death of this new Prophet. In any case, an end must be put to it. I will make new efforts to appease His enemies, and if they then persist in demanding His death, I will wash my hands of the whole thing and deliver Him."

Such were, truly, the successive phases of the internal combat of Pilate with his conscience, and they show His sentence to have been an act of unworthy weakness, founded on a shadow of legality. The apparent motive was written on the Cross itself, "King of the Jews," but the real motive was fear of Tiberius.

XI

THE MOURNFUL PROCESSION

A LITTLE after eleven o'clock in the morning, the preparations for the horrible execution were finished. The greatest of crimes was to be consummated. Man was about to kill God.

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priesthood and in particular Caiphas and Annas, who had plotted, organized and ordered everything; in the second place the Jewish people, who had sustained and encouraged the priests and created the uproar which frightened Pilate; in the third place, Pilate, who perhaps was less guilty than the others, since he had made an effort to save the victim.

Caius was crushed, but he had received the order from the Governor, "*Expedi crucem,*" and he was bound to obey, for as yet, he did not believe in the divinity of Jesus.

His heart swelling with grief, he had gone to tell Claudia and Camilla that everything was ready, and he had set in order the mournful procession. The two women climbed to the highest terrace of the Tower of Antonia and leaned through the embrasure of the parapet to see as well as they could, through their tears, the passing of the funeral procession.

Caius led it on horseback, followed by a company of legionaries. After them came Jesus, bearing His Cross, followed by two thieves also carrying their instruments of torture. The rest of the Roman cohort, on horseback, slowly advanced on each side and behind the condemned, to protect the cortège against a possible outbreak on the part of the immense crowd. Friends and enemies of Jesus, strangers come to Jerusalem for the feast and interested in the young Prophet, the indifferent drawn by curiosity for such a spectacle made up a multitude of men, women and children, wearing costumes various in form and color and speaking many different languages. Their

number was more than twenty thousand, without counting those who watched the passing of the procession from the tops of the walls and terraces. This crowd was noisy and tumultuous. It disputed, gesticulated and shouted. The greater number accused Jesus and blasphemed Him; only a few dared take up His defense. "I was an unfortunate leper," said one, "and He cured me." "I was deaf and dumb," said another, "and He restored my speech and hearing." "I was a paralytic, lying on my bed, and it is thanks to Him that my body has become strong and healthy." "I was blind and now I see." "Be quiet," vociferated the others, "He is an impostor and you are like Him."

At the first turn of the road called "The Sorrowful Way," several women attempted to penetrate the ranks of the soldiers that they might approach Jesus, and the soldiers were about to scatter them brutally, when Caius saw them. It was the mother of Jesus, Myriam and two or three others. "Do not touch these women," commanded Caius, "and let them follow. You see their sorrow. They are the relatives of the Condemned."

A little farther on, Jesus fell exhausted under the weight of His cross, and Caius, calling a passer-by, who had entered through the "Gate of Judgment," ordered him to carry the Cross beyond the walls.

Larger and larger grew the crowd; it was like a rising tide, and now that the circuit of the fortifications had been passed, its waves filled the ravines and covered the rocks.

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dreadful spectacle, noticing even the slightest incidents. The Roman cohort always surrounded Jesus, advancing in regular ranks. Men and horses, their bronze accoutrements glittering, could be seen from afar off rising to the summit of Calvary. Columns of white dust shrouded the procession at intervals, hiding it from sight, while heavy clouds covered the sky. But from time to time a ray of sunshine pierced through the cleft of the storm and threw fantastic shadows on the dreary picture. The weather was heavy, damp and dreary, like the sleep of death.

At last, Claudia and Camilla saw the unhappy multitude reach the summit of Golgotha. It was a slightly elevated rocky hill outside the walls, separated from Mt. Moriah by the Valley of the Tyropeon.

The Tower of Antonia which crowned the horizon was the best place of observation from which to watch the scene of Calvary.

A double belt of soldiers surrounded the rock to keep the mob away from it. Suddenly the heavy tent of clouds that veiled the heavens was torn apart and opened like a fiery furnace in the depths of which lay the flaming sun. A great burst of red light shot out of it and flooded the horrible scene of the Crucifixion.

Claudia and Camilla then saw distinctly, in the midst of the circle of soldiers, Jesus divested of His garments, raised up, fastened and nailed to the Cross, which the executioners dropped into a hole in the rock prepared for it.

Their eyes closed with horror, and when they opened them again they could see nothing more. The clouds

had closed together and become perfectly black. Thick shadows enveloped Golgotha, and Jerusalem was plunged into a profound and mysterious night. It was noon, and the two women, overcome with distress, withdrew into their apartments, asking themselves if the sun were not extinguished forever.

XII

ON CALVARY

THE darkness that enveloped Jerusalem increased, and became terrifying. It could not be an eclipse of the sun, because it was the time of the full moon. What was this phenomenon that turned the middle of the day into darkest night?

Oh, you who asked for a sign from heaven that you might believe in Jesus, do you see this sign? If you do not, it is because you have no eyes to see it. However, even the indifferent spectators became terrified and silently returned to their dwellings. Others, not less frightened, began to speak in low voices and asked themselves if this were not the end of the world that the Prophet had predicted. Several of the holy women believed it, for not an hour before, Jesus had repeated this prediction when they had drawn near Him. On the route to Calvary, He had heard their sobs and said to them,

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days shall come wherein they will say,

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'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that have not borne and the breasts that have not given suck.' Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?"

When would these terrible prophecies be accomplished? They did not know, but perhaps this was the beginning. Weeping, they had followed Jesus to the end, and it is to the eternal glory of woman that the gospels written by men mention not one of them who abandoned Jesus in these days of mourning and of treachery.

And now they had gathered together at the foot of the cross. Caius had allowed them to approach after the execution was over.

The mother of Jesus, her eyes dry now, but red from the tears shed since morning, her face pale and drawn in grief, stood erect by the body of her son. From time to time she bent her head and kissed His feet; then she would raise it and looking toward the stormy sky would say in a low voice,

"Oh, Jehovah, have pity! Your Son is my Son, too, and I sacrifice Him to you for the salvation of the world!"

Myriam, on her knees, her head covered with a black veil from which the waves of her abundant hair escaped, wrapped her arms about the foot of the Cross and covered with her kisses and her tears the feet of the Crucified. The other women, seated on the ground, covered with their scarfs of dark colors, their

heads enveloped in long black veils, sighed and lamented, looking at the bleeding body of their well-beloved Master, which stood out from the dark night like a great white phantom.

Standing, but with his head upon his breast, was the disciple whom Jesus loved, keeping close to Mary, absorbed in dumb sorrow. Every fibre of his being was united with the sacrifice that was taking place. His beloved Master was at the same time its Priest and its Victim, and he, erect by the altar of the new law, offered with Mary, the August Victim to Jehovah.

And also there stood on Calvary he whom Jesus had chosen and instituted Head of the Apostles and who had shamefully denied Him. During the twelve hours that had passed, he had wandered, wild with grief, first among the tombs in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, then under the porticoes of the temple and around the Pretorium. In the night, he had met Judas at the tomb of Absalom, and his first thought had been to throw himself upon the traitor and strangle him, but he had said to himself, "I am as guilty as he." And full of horror of himself, as well as for Judas, he had fled toward Gethsemane. There he had remained until day, prostrated in the grotto of the Agony, and, on the earth still soaked in the sweat and blood of his Master, he had shed floods of tears. At break of day, he had not dared return to the palace of the High Priest, where the final trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrim was nearing its close. This scene of his crime filled him with

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horror, but lost in the crowd that filled the court of the Pretorium, he had followed with an ever-increasing grief all the scenes of the great judicial drama and, mingling with the multitude, he had formed part of the sinister procession.

When he saw Jesus on the Cross, he fell, his face to the ground, and believed he might die with Him. But a flood of tears relieved him, and, rising shortly, he glided in between the soldiers, the better to see his Master. Then the divine Victim raised His head and cast upon him a long look. It was no longer the accusing gaze that had pierced his conscience in the court of the high-priest, nor the frown of the judge which fixes itself upon the fleeing form of a traitor. It was a look of sweetness and sympathy, of mercy and pardon. It was the touching expression of the Father on the return of the prodigal son. Jesus appeared to say,

“Poor Peter! I know the full extent of thy sorrow, and I forgive thee. Thy denial is forgotten, and I only remember thy protestations of love and of faith, so ardent, so spontaneous, so sincere.”

Outside the circle formed by the soldiers, was a crowd which seemed composed altogether of Jesus' enemies. There were, however, many of His friends in this multitude. A great number of them had taken part in His triumph and had proclaimed Him five days before. There were also among them many whom He had overwhelmed with benefits, whom He had miraculously fed in the desert, whose sick and infirm He had cured. But among these

would-be friends, how many ungrateful, forgetful, weak and cowardly ones there were! A sufficient number was there, perhaps, but lacking courage, they kept silence through self-interest, fear and weakness and allowed events to take their course. Thus it is in all revolutionary movements. The malicious and violent minority terrorizes and governs the majority.

On Calvary, it was led by men of power, chief priests, Scribes and elders. Nothing is so terrible as religious strife among an excited people. It was like a roaring sea whose waves beat against the slopes of Calvary, and from which rose clamorings, imprecations and blasphemies. "Thou who destroyest the temple of God and in three days buildest it up, save thyself now." "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross!" And these miracles which the blasphemers believed impossible and which they defied Him to do, Jesus without answering was in the act of accomplishing. The destruction of this beautiful temple of God which was His body, was taking place, and He would rebuild it in less than three days! And the other Temple, in which Jehovah had dwelt for centuries, would remain empty. A few hours more, and He would descend from the Cross, sleep for less than three days in the tomb and come out of it alive!

The chief priests, proud of their victory, mingled with the popular imprecations sarcasms which they thought clever. "He saved others," they cried, "Himself He cannot save." How is this, you admit, now, that Jesus saved others, but why did you deny it

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until to-day, and why do you still deny that He can save Himself? Let Him but finish His work. He still has some drops of blood to shed for your salvation, and when He shall have shed them, He will save Himself!

But to sarcasm, abuse, defiance, as well as to the vociferations of the multitude, to the triumphal cries of the Sanhedrites, Jesus answered nothing. "This time," said the leaders, rubbing their hands together, "we have finished with Him. Our victory is complete. He is not only vanquished; He who dared call Himself the Son of God is annihilated! After all His works, His preaching, His journeys, His pretended miracles, what remains to Him? Nothing. What has He founded? Nothing. His end is complete. His ruin is total and definite, and He will return to the emptiness from whence He sprung. Not a corner of the earth belongs to Him. Not a piece of furniture, not a coin, not the slightest token He can bequeath His friends. His friends! No longer has He any. Those who followed have abandoned or betrayed Him."

This was all true, and yet not all. Jesus had, at least, His garments, but He has been robbed even of these. The soldiers divided them among themselves, and as His coat could not be divided, they cast lots for it!

Jesus had had the reputation of being a sage and scholar. He was regarded now as insane. He appeared to have lost the use of speech and had been incapable of defending Himself before the tribunals.

His very fame for sanctity, by a strange miscarriage of justice, had condemned Him as a criminal.

Jesus was such a worker of miracles as the world had never known. He is now reduced to the most complete powerlessness. He has lost all care for his own preservation. He was the most beautiful of the children of men, and now look at Him! Covered with wounds and all disfigured, He is hideous to behold. He had a disciple whom he tenderly loved; He had a mother whom He cherished. Do these loves at least remain to Him? Yes, but He is about to sacrifice them also, and bequeath them to each other.

Listen! Listen! He has recovered speech.

"Woman, behold your Son; John, behold your Mother."

Does anything else remain to Him? His naked body, perhaps? No, it belongs to human justice.

Ah! Satan! How thou must have laughed that day at Him whom thou didst lead up to a mountain three years before, whom thou didst offer all the kingdoms of the earth and who refused them!

Ah! Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, chant your victory. The supreme agony of Jesus is taking place. The terrifying vision which cast Him to earth in the Garden of Gethsemane passes at this moment before His eyes. The great wave of blood rises and falls and comes to beat against the foot of the Cross. In an instant it will submerge everything. His bleeding head has dropped upon His breast. His hair has

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fallen over His eyes, veiling His last looks. His weak voice murmurs this last painful acknowledgment of His powerlessness,

“ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ”

Enemies of Jesus! Shout out your triumph! But hasten, for the hour of your defeat is close at hand! All that you think is lost, is saved! And all that appears to you finished is but begun.

Jesus gives His last sigh, but at this supreme moment, He raises His head and cries out in a voice so powerful that it resounds to the depths of tombs like the clarion call of the Last Judgment. The Temple of Solomon heard it. Its heavy bronze doors open of themselves and the veil of the Holy of Holies is rent from the top even to the bottom. The sacred fire in the great golden candelabra is put out; the earth trembles, the rocks are rent, the graves open and the dead walk forth.

Singular victim in truth is He who thus announces His defeat to the universe! The sun was already plunged into darkness, and here in turn the earth mourns and trembles, and to replace the living who do not recognize the conqueror, the dead arise to proclaim His victory.

Monstrous aberration of human liberty! Reasonable man has remained deaf to the voice of His Creator, but physical nature has heard it! The despairing cry of God had not moved the hearts of men, but had disrupted the bowels of the earth and the utmost heights of the heavens! Nevertheless, after the last cry of Jesus had been heard upon earth and

in the solemn silence which followed, one human voice arose, one voice which had the courage to throw into the face of the persecutors this great avowal of faith, "In truth this Man was the Son of God."

You have recognized the Centurion.

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PART V
TRIUMPH OF THE SON OF GOD

I

LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH

THE victory of death appeared complete, final and definite. Political and sacerdotal power had united to put an end to this man who disturbed its calm, and the nation had been its accomplice. Its innocent victim slept His last sleep under a rocky hill in a tomb which had been closed and sealed.

In the opinion of men, everything was over. Nothing remained of the great Prophet, the great Doctor, the great Thaumaturgist, and His memory as well would soon die in the minds of His feeble disciples.

Deserted on the summit of Calvary, the Cross remained standing. But who, at that time, could ever believe that it would become a sign of victory? Who could have imagined that it would one day be the tree of life for all humanity?

Nevertheless, there were still souls who remained faithful to Jesus of Nazareth, souls that guarded in the inmost depths of their being the three great virtues that constitute supernatural life; Faith, Hope and Love. Death may kill man, but not the feelings, sen-

timents, ideas and doctrines which contain the germ of life.

On Mt. Zion in a humble dwelling, Peter and John wept and prayed. They wept for Him whom they had loved and whom still they loved with all their souls, their Master, Father, Friend. To whom did they pray? They prayed to Him who had told them that He was the Son of God. And if any one had come to say to them, "He to whom you pray is no longer here, He can no longer hear you, you will never see Him again," they would have answered, "We will see Him again, in His kingdom, for there He has gone to prepare a place for us."

For yesterday from the height of his Cross He had again spoken to the good thief of His kingdom, and had promised that on that same day he would be with Him in Paradise.

In the Cenacle, the other disciples and some of the holy women had spent the night in prayer and tears, and now they understood the boundlessness of His love, this Master whom they had followed for three years, and what a void His death would leave in their lives. And over there, in Galilee, the first messengers who had carried the news of the crucifixion had met but the incredulous. "No," they said, "it was impossible. The Master of life and death could not have been killed like an ordinary man, and what would become of Galilee without Him? How could they console themselves for no longer hearing or seeing Him?"

Sorrow was universal and deep, because it was pro-

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portioned to love. Had all these sincere believers forgotten the prophecy of the Master — that He would rise again the third day? No! but everything was still so full of mystery for them. It is He, they thought, who raised Lazarus, and He had given us so many proofs of His power that this great miracle did not astonish us. But now that He is dead, who will bring Him to life, and what will this resurrection really be? Will He take up His life with us as of old? And the three days prophesied? Must we take them literally or as a figure?

These questions crossed their minds but, without dwelling upon them, they put them aside and no longer reflected upon them. Grief absorbed them. It was their love that suffered, and without troubling themselves concerning future mysteries, they persisted in the belief that all was not yet finished; they awaited what was to come — for them, the unknown. The victory of death was not complete. It had killed the beloved Being, but the love He had inspired remained alive in the hearts of men. There it had grown even greater, and a few, such as Gamaliel, Nicodemus, Claudia and Camilla understood only after His death how much their hearts had belonged to the divine Crucified One.

Even the chief priests began to have doubts about their victory. They had imagined that the day after the death of their victim would be a day of public rejoicing, but never had the Sabbath dawned so sad and mournful. Desolation reigned everywhere, the Temple itself being deserted by reason of the terrify-

ing phenomena which had taken place there the evening before and which could not be explained. The crowd of curious who had gone up to Calvary the preceding night had returned overwhelmed, beating their breasts and proclaiming themselves disciples of Jesus now that He was dead.

Along the route to Cæsarea the Procurator fled, deeply troubled at having found himself face to face with the God Man; and at his side rode Caius overcome with grief in his double love, but immovable in his faith in the Crucified, having decided to sacrifice all things to Him, even his most brilliant hopes for the future and the tenderest feelings of his heart. But the better to understand his state of soul, we must go back to the preceding evening and see what had passed between the new disciple of the Son of God and Camilla, his well-beloved.

II

FAITH STRONGER THAN LOVE

NIGHT was falling when the Centurion, returning from Calvary, entered the house of the Procurator and found Camilla and Claudia weeping together. He told them with deep emotion of the last moments of the Crucified.

"And what will be done with His body?" they asked anxiously.

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"Already? But tell us how it was so quickly done?"

"It was in this way; Joseph of Arimathea owns a villa at the northwest of Calvary. One corner of the rock is enclosed in his garden. A few months ago, our friend had a tomb built for himself and his family in the side of this rock. It must have been an inspiration, for hardly had Jesus of Nazareth been nailed to the cross when Joseph of Arimathea said to himself, 'My sepulchre shall be for Him, for Him who is Master of the world and does not own an inch of ground wherein to be buried.' Then he easily obtained from the Procurator permission to take possession of the body and give it suitable burial. Then Nicodemus went into the city to buy the winding-sheet, shroud, bandages and necessary spices. As soon as I could verify the death of Jesus, I permitted Him to be taken down from the Cross, and our two friends, aided by the disciples and holy women, embalmed our Master, and placed Him in the sepulchre. A winding path not more than two hundred feet in length leads from the cross to the door of the sepulchre, and Joseph of Arimathea himself presided over the accomplishment of the last sad duties. On account of the Sabbath quiet which had just begun, they made haste, and before sun had set, the painful ceremony was finished."

"Oh, Caius! What sorrow! And how these events have been hastened. Yesterday He was still full of

life. Three days ago, the Temple resounded to the anathemas He hurled against the Pharisees, and now He is no more. Have you seen the Procurator?"

"Yes; he is all upset and desires to leave without delay for Cæsarea, whither he orders me to follow him."

"And you are going?"

"Alas, yes, Camilla, and it will not be a few days' separation only. I have death in my soul, and have come to say farewell."

"Farewell? what can you mean?"

"Listen to me, dear one. You remember that five days ago, the triumphal entry of Jesus of Nazareth into Jerusalem took place? This triumph was a subject of great rejoicing for us and gave us hope that the prophet would overthrow His enemies. Your father frowned upon our hopes, and the same evening bade me come to his apartments, where he told me plainly his wishes on the subject of our love. 'Your affection for my daughter,' he said, 'at first met with no opposition from me, and perhaps this union would have been the consolation of my old age. But your open and compromising sympathy for Jesus of Nazareth has changed my opinion, and now, remember well what I am about to say, I will never consent that Camilla marry a disciple of this impostor. He is an enemy of my race and of my religion. If you definitely enter this detestable sect, all our association must be broken off, and I warn you, you will lose your social position, your rank and your future career.' I bowed without an answer to this im-

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mutable decree of your father, Camilla. And now I come to tell you that the event he foresaw has taken place. I have become Jesus' disciple. To-day on the summit of Calvary, when He gave forth his last sigh, I proclaimed aloud that He was the Son of God. My new faith, immovable and firm as it is, creates an abyss between your family and mine. All relations between us must in consequence be broken, and I can only say farewell."

"Oh, my dear Caius, have we not had for Jesus of Nazareth the same sympathy? Does His end not afflict me as it does you? Let us weep together for Him, and not forget Him. But now that He is dead, what can we do for Him? What can He do for us? It seems as if death, this terrible juggler, has reduced to human proportions this extraordinary Personage whose power seemed supernatural, and it is hard for me to understand how your faith in Him grows, now His role is ended."

"It is not ended, Camilla. Divinity cannot die, but when its work appears vanquished it has need of defenders."

"Your heart is noble, Caius, and I admire your courage, but in the name of our love, reflect again, and in the enthusiasm of to-day do not lose sight of to-morrow. If you do not hesitate to wound my heart, at least consider your own career and the destruction of so many other ties dear to you. Think of your family whose hope and honor you are, of your friends in Rome, of your country itself which has a claim upon you."

"I have thought of everything, and am in despair when I realize that the first sacrifice demanded by my faith is my love for you; not only will your father never consent to your union with a disciple of the Crucified, but even were he to consent, I myself must now refuse. We do not share the same faith. Farewell, farewell, Camilla."

"Oh, Caius, you will break my heart."

"I can understand that you suffer, dear one, but I suffer more than you. I love you with every atom of my being, but I believe in Jesus of Nazareth. He is my God, and my life hereafter belongs to Him. Some day, perhaps, you will understand that faith is stronger than love and that love without faith has no right to exist. It must be an eternal farewell, if my God never becomes thy God."

III

TWOFOLD SORROW

THE following day Camilla wrote in her journal to her mother: A twofold grief envelopes my soul. I understand now what Myriam of Magdala explained to me the other day, how the human heart is great enough to hold two loves at the same time, a natural love and one that is supernatural.

These two feelings filled all my being, and both of them are torn from me at the same moment. Oh, Sweet Prophet of Nazareth, how dear He was to me. I loved Him with an ideal love, as one loves the

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Good, the True, the Beautiful. I loved Him as I should love God, if I knew Him.

For a long time I had not believed in Jupiter, I felt myself drawn towards Jehovah, but can I believe in Him when I have seen His criminal priests leading the best, the most innocent and the most perfect of men to death? Oh, Mother, if ever God existed upon earth, it was Jesus of Nazareth, but God does not die, and He — is dead.

Oh, grief, oh, hopeless misfortune! The great consolator of all the unfortunate, the healer of all infirmity, the incomparable orator whose speech eclipsed all that is most beautiful in the human mind, the vanquisher of death is dead.

Can you understand that, Mother? He who raised Lazarus is dead. He who commanded the winds, the tempests, the sea, the demons, is dead.

And when I think, oh, my Mother, that it was Pilate, my dear sister Claudia's husband, who ratified the sentence of the priesthood and who caused its execution! What unworthy weakness! He proclaimed Jesus innocent and yet put Him to death! Ah, I understand his trouble now. He no longer dared look us in the face, and left for Cæsarea in the middle of the night, furious with the chief priests who tore the iniquitous sentence from him and cursing with every sort of imprecation this infamous and stupid nation who cried aloud, "Crucify Him!" He left on horseback, accompanied by an escort, without waiting for daybreak. He could no longer endure the sight of Jerusalem and its horrible people.

My noble Caius accompanied him, commanding the Governor's escort. I weep for him too, for he is lost to me. My well-beloved, my only love, is like one dead to me, for he has declared himself a disciple of Jesus, and my father has forbidden all intercourse between us.

Oh, Mother, what a happy woman would she be who could at the same time be a disciple of Jesus and the wife of Caius. You know how he cared for me, and how he had confessed his love. But there was One whom he admired more than he did me, and who better deserved his love. It was the prophet of Nazareth. From afar off and without ever having spoken to Him, he felt himself drawn towards Him and loved Him.

And do you know what moment my noble Caius chose for proclaiming his faith? It was when he saw the Prophet betrayed and abandoned, even by those whom He had chosen—shamed, despised, buffeted by the crowd, accused and condemned by the Sanhedrim and by the Governor. It was then that his noble heart revolted against so much injustice! It was when he saw his hero, so powerful the evening before, reduced to impotence and sighing forth His last sigh. It was when he saw the hopes and the devotion of the friends of yesterday dying away, that he affirmed his belief.

Upright, before the Cross, in the face of the cowardly and insulting, he saluted with his sword the great Victim, and cried, "This Man is in truth the Son of God."

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Oh, my Mother, if Caius be in the wrong, his error is more beautiful than truth.

What will become of me? And my poor Claudia suffers not less than I, for she, too, loved the wonderful Prophet and did all in her power to prevent her husband from condemning Him. But Pilate was afraid of entering into conflict with the Sanhedrites, who would have denounced him in Rome and demanded his recall.

We wander like lost spirits through the vast chambers of the Tower of Antonia. This morning we climbed up to the main parapet where we could see Mt. Calvary. On perceiving the upright Cross with its extended arms, we fell on our knees and wept. Then we went into the Temple; it was deserted. No longer will it echo to the touching sympathetic voice of the Prophet. The great veil of the Holy of Holies is terribly torn from the dome to the pavement, leaving open to all comers the mysterious depths known only to the High Priest. It is said that since yesterday strange voices have been heard there, crying, "Let us leave this place." The earthquake destroyed the east wall of the sanctuary. The altar of Holocausts was cracked by the shaking, and the great bronze doors opened of themselves and were torn from their hinges.

The whole city is plunged in a stupor, as if from remorse for its crimes. One meets no one in the streets, where several risen corpses have been seen, still covered with the winding sheets of the grave from which they came. A breath of crime and death blows

through the little winding, twisting, sombre paths, that lead from the Tyropeon to Gareb.

To-day Claudia read me several lines from the Prophet Jeremias. In them appeared to us the Jerusalem of to-day.

“See how it sits alone, the populous city!

“She who was greatest among the nations has become as a widow.

“She weeps bitterly during the night.

“The streets of Zion are in mourning, because no one comes any more to its feasts.”

Jerusalem has multiplied her iniquities; and that is why she has become an outcast.

No longer knowing what to do with ourselves, an inspiration came to us. “Our sorrow is great,” we said, “but there is a greater one. It is that of the Prophet’s Mother. Let us go to see her. Nothing is so consoling as to comfort those who are more afflicted than one’s self.” We sent for Joseph of Arimathea, and he led us to the residence of the disciple of Jesus named John, situated on Mt. Zion. After a short interview with John, who is plunged into the deepest grief, we were admitted into the presence of this woman whose Son was the greatest of human beings.

“Behold the Mother of Sorrows!” we thought on seeing her. She is not yet fifty years of age, and though broken by the tragedy which has come to her, is still most beautiful. We told her of our admira-

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tion for her incomparable Son and our distress at having seen Him die. She seemed touched, but remained for a long time without speaking. This mute sorrow filled us with such emotion that we began to weep, and it was she whom we had come to console who comforted us.

"Be comforted," she said, "all is not over. My Son predicted that He would rise again the third day, and He has never deceived anyone."

"You believe, then, that He will live again?"

"I am certain of it, since He said so."

This absolute faith in the resurrection of her Son, whom she also proclaims to be her God, gave us courage and hope, and we returned to the palace consoled. But how believe in the unbelievable, oh, Mother? How will the impossible become possible?

IV

THE EMPTY TOMB

(Extract from Camilla's Journal.)

Monday Morning, 3d Hour (9 A. M.),

April 10th, Year of Rome 783.

YES, Mother, this dark tomb sealed and guarded by soldiers is empty. The enormous stone which had closed the entrance was found yesterday, before dawn, to have been mysteriously overturned, and on the marble table where Jesus of Nazareth slept His last sleep were found the winding sheet, the

cloths which covered His head, and the bandages which enveloped His embalmed body.

What has become of Him? and what is this new mystery? Is the prediction of His venerable Mother realized and is her glorious Son risen from the dead? This is the question which agitates the people now and which is feverishly discussed under the porticoes of the Temple.

The priests describe how the soldiers who guarded the tomb fell asleep and how, during this sleep, the apostles went to the sepulchre and carried away the body of their Master. But the apostles energetically deny this story and affirm under oath that Jesus of Nazareth is risen, that He has shown Himself living to several of them as well as to the holy women.

Public feeling is intense; a courier was dispatched to Pilate to inform him of this event, which might cause new trouble. It is thought that the Governor should make an examination to discover the truth of the matter. If the version of the priests be true, the soldiers should be punished for having failed in their duty, and the disciples should be imprisoned for violation of the sepulchre and theft of the body.

Claudia and I believe that Pilate and Caius will return from Cæsarea to-morrow night or Wednesday. While waiting, I myself have tried to gather some information. I went at first to our decurion, Joseph of Arimathea, and together we walked to the sepulchre which this good man had had built for himself and which he gave for the burial of the Prophet. It is reached through his garden, by a path bordered

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with aloes, hyssop and scarlet anemones. It is dug out of the rock which forms the northwest extremity of Golgotha and which is part of our old friend's garden. The place of the Crucifixion is from a hundred and fifty to two hundred feet to the southeast of it. We found this spot exactly as it had been described, the stone overturned but intact, without any trace of violence, and the tomb empty.

Joseph of Arimathea entered it, and when he came out, said, "I will have another sepulchre dug under this same rock for my mortal remains, hereafter this one shall be sacred. It will be the Temple of the new religion, the new Kingdom of Israel and of the risen God Man." Is it a prophecy? I cannot say, but Joseph of Arimathea has not the shadow of a doubt that Jesus is risen again.

And now I am going to Bethany to question Myriam, for it is said that Jesus has appeared to her.

Same day, 6th hour.

Scarcely had I crossed the threshold of Lazarus' house when Myriam, in an ecstasy of joy threw herself into my arms and cried, "Oh, Camilla, what wonderful things have happened since I saw you! He who was dead is living! I saw Him full of life as I see you now, and He spoke to me."

"Be calm, Myriam," I said, "and tell me everything."

Then we sat down on a divan, and Myriam told me the following story:

"Yesterday morning before sunrise, after two days

of weeping and two sleepless nights, Mary, the mother of James, Salome and I left here for the sepulchre where our Master slept in Jerusalem. We carried with us aromatic spices that we had bought Saturday night after the Sabbath, and were going to embalm His body. We did not know then that the sepulchre had been guarded by soldiers since the day before and had in our minds but one anxiety: who would remove for us the stone that closed the tomb? But we went on impulsively where our hearts and our love led us. The closer we approached, the more my soul trembled with impatience, and my companions were so slow that I ran on ahead. I was rounding the Hill of Golgotha, when suddenly the earth shook violently under my feet. I stopped a moment, overcome, and saw some frightened soldiers running past me where I stood. But I continued on my way to the sepulchre and, when I reached it, saw that the stone which closed the entrance had been thrown down and that the tomb was empty.

"Imagine my sorrow, Camilla, and that of my companions, who arrived after me and who penetrated into the sepulchre. I left them there and ran as fast as I could to John's house on Mt. Zion. Peter was there, and I told him they had taken away the body of the Divine Master. Peter and John started running to the sepulchre; I followed quickly as I could.

"But as soon as they realized the tomb was empty, they turned in great affliction and preoccupation to tell the other disciples.

"I stayed there alone to weep, kneeling in the door

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of the sepulchre, my eyes fixed on the dark interior where my Master had slept for the last time, when suddenly I saw two angels dressed in white sitting on the stone.

“‘Woman, why weepst thou?’ they asked me.

“‘They have taken away my Lord,’ I said, ‘and I know not where they have laid Him.’

“‘But behold, as I turned, I saw a man standing near me. I thought it was Joseph’s gardener, and I said to him,

“‘If it is you who have taken Him away, tell me where you have put Him, so that I may take care of Him.’

“‘And then the face of the Unknown changed, and the gentle voice I knew so well, said,

“‘Myriam!’

“‘Raboni,’ I cried, throwing myself at His feet, for it was He, my Jesus, well beloved, who was there, alive and near me. I wanted to kiss His feet, but He said to me, ‘Do not touch Me. I have not yet returned to My Father.

“‘Go take this message to my brothers; I go to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.’

“‘And He disappeared.

“‘Judge of my emotion, Camilla! I melted into tears of joy and of love and was almost fainting. I could not tear myself away from the blessed spot where I had just seen my well Beloved alive, but suddenly remembering His message and hastening to fulfill it, I took my way toward the Cenacle where I sup-

posed the disciples were gathered. Peter and John were not yet there, but I found the others. I told them all and gave them the Master's message. They did not believe me.

"This grieved me and I was turning away, when Johanna, wife of Chusa, and several other women arrived, and described how Jesus had appeared to them, giving them this other message,

"Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, there they shall see Me."

"The disciples remained incredulous, but they will be so no longer when they have seen Him as I, Camilla, full of life looking at me and speaking as He did before the terrible day of His death."

Myriam started to weep.

"But why do you weep," I said.

"It is from joy and happiness! My heart is swelling and these tears relieve me."

Oh, my Mother, I am certain that Myriam speaks the truth and that she is not laboring under an hallucination. Jesus of Nazareth has really risen as He promised.

The same day, 9th hour.

Nicodemus has just left the palace. He confirmed the unbelievable but true report of the resurrection of this Jesus whom I no longer know what to call.

One can no longer doubt. Yesterday He showed Himself alive to Myriam, Johanna and to other women, to Simon, to two disciples who conversed for a long time and had supper with Him at Emmaus,

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and lastly in the evening to the reunited apostles. He spoke to them, He showed them His wounded hands and feet which they touched. He ate with them and after having conferred upon them extraordinary powers and a mission which Nicodemus could not explain clearly to me, said to them, "*Pax vobis,*" and disappeared.

What extraordinary happenings, dear Mother. Our poet made a great mistake when he wrote, "*Nil novum sub sole!*" Behold, here are marvels that the sun had never before seen. What other wonders shall we see?

V

PILATE'S LAST ACT

IT will be remembered that the Roman Governor believed that the question of the Messiah would, in the death of Jesus of Nazareth, receive its brutal and final solution. He was very certain at that time that all the excitement raised by the Prophet of Galilee would absolutely cease from the moment of His death.

Despite the looks Jesus had cast upon him during the trial, His noble and dignified bearing, His unusual words, His serenity in the face of sacerdotal hatred and the popular uproar had greatly troubled him, and it was to gain a little quiet that he had gone to Cæsarea.

Scarcely had he arrived, when messengers ran from

Jerusalem to bring him this strange news; that Jesus had come out of His tomb and a new strife was imminent between the chief priests and the disciples of the Crucified, or even the Crucified Himself who, it was said, had risen again.

Death then had not finally solved the Messianic question? Since when had death allowed itself to be vanquished? And if Jesus had really risen, what would follow? It would be a solution of the Messianic question, but very different from that which Pilate had predicted. It would be the definite triumph of Jesus of Nazareth. But a reversal of all the laws of nature and of history was not possible. And therefore among the different messages brought from Jerusalem that of the priests was the only apparently true one, that the disciples had carried away the body of their Master, while the guards slept. It was strange however, that these soldiers who were numerous, should all have slept in contempt of their discipline, and that not one of them should have been awakened by the noise the disciples must have made in opening the sepulchre and carrying the body away; and what had they done with that body? Could it not be found?

Evidently, if the soldiers slept, they did not see the carrying away of the body, and their testimony would only prove that they were asleep.

"But," say the priests, "one must presume it was the disciples who carried the body away, for they alone had any interest in so doing, to noise the fact abroad that their Master had risen of Himself."

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This is true; nevertheless, it would be a very stupid falsehood that no one would believe. A resurrection can only be proved by showing the risen being alive, and all those to whom the apostles would say their Master had risen, would answer, "Show Him to us; if He be living, you must have seen Him. Where? When? And to how many people has He appeared? What does He do and what does He expect to do with this life which He has won from death?" And what good would this absurd lie do the disciples? Why should they expose themselves to the same persecution and death their Master had suffered? What victory could they expect in a combat where their powerful Master had been overcome? Would they be ready to die to prove the truth of a falsehood? Certainly not, unless they were victims of hallucination.

Pilate was puzzled; but in any event, his presence in Jerusalem was absolutely necessary, not only to prevent disorder but to inquire exactly into what had happened. There had been a failure of discipline, violation of the sepulchre and robbery of the body; these offenses could not remain unpunished. He called Caius and said,

"Prepare an escort; we will return to Jerusalem."

"But we have just arrived, Governor, and I thought that you would at least take several days' rest."

"I really have need of it, but strange things are happening in Jerusalem; it appears that we have not finished with Jesus of Nazareth. His sepulchre has been violated and His body carried away by the disciples. At least that is what the chief priests suppose."

But the disciples hold that their Master is risen."

"You know, Governor, that He predicted it."

"No, I know nothing about it, but it matters very little. I suppose you do not believe in His resurrection?"

"I believe in it."

"It is unheard of," said Pilate in an angry tone. "If the dead are allowed to come out of their graves, the earth will become uninhabitable."

"This danger is not a great one, for the dead would not abuse their permission if you gave it to them. But Jesus of Nazareth had a habit of doing a great many things without permission."

Caius did not wait for Pilate's answer but went out to prepare the escort.

Hardly had Pilate entered his palace in the Tower of Antonia, when Caiphas and his brother-in-law Eleazer, oldest son of Annas, begged an audience. He received them under one of the porticoes. After the customary salutations, Pilate said to them,

"Your messenger reached me in Cæsarea, and you see I have not delayed in coming, for I hold that the violators of the sepulchre and the robbers of the body should be severely punished, as well as the sentinels who slept instead of watching."

"Permit me, Governor," said Caiphas, in a suave tone, "to bring to your notice that the soldiers who guarded the tomb are not Romans but Jews; they are the guardians of our Temple."

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"In that case, their punishment belongs to us, should we judge fit."

"Delinquent Jews are under my authority as well as Romans, because I represent Cæsar and they are Cæsar's subjects."

"I do not contest your authority over the Jews, Governor, nor your right to punish them for all common crimes and delinquencies. But it is a question here of a light offense against discipline by our own guards under our authority. It was by our order that they went to guard the tomb, and it is to us they should render an account of the accomplishment of their duty."

Pilate was not convinced, but he was alarmed at the prospect of a fresh conflict with the priests and said,

"You wish me then to examine and punish offenses committed by the disciples of the Nazarene alone?"

"No, Governor, despite the gravity of their offense, we wish them neither condemned nor chastised. They are poor, ignorant men, fanaticised by their Master and merit pity."

"But, then," said Pilate, astonished, "what do you come to ask of me?"

"We come to ask you to do nothing that might renew or prolong this Messianic agitation from which we have all suffered. Let us keep silence and forget these events that have so excited the people. It was necessary for Jesus of Nazareth to die, but it is not

at all necessary for us to know what has become of His body."

A long silence followed. Pilate no longer recognized the vindictive and hateful Sanhedrites of the preceding days, and asked himself what could be the reason of this new change of ground on the part of the priests. At last, he told his visitors their advice would be remembered in the decision he would make, and they both retired.

Early the next day he received much information on the great event. Camilla told him all she had learned from Myriam, Nicodemus and other sources. On his part Caius, anxious to know everything, had seen the disciples, believed what they said and made a report of all to Pilate. Lastly, Nicodemus had interrogated the guards who had circulated the fable of their sleep by the tomb, and several of them had confidentially told him how the priests had bribed them. Two of them were secretly brought by Caius and Nicodemus before the Governor, and they declared, under his formal promise to protect them against the priests, that they had not slept, but had been thrown down by an earthquake and struck with fear at the sight of a personage whose garments shone like the snow and whose face was as bright as the sun.

"Who was it," asked Pilate.

"We do not know," said the guards, "but we saw him overturn the stone of the sepulchre and seat himself upon it. Then we fled away and went to tell the Priests of the Temple what had happened."

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"What did they say to you?"

"They gave us a great sum of money and made us promise to declare that we were asleep and that the Prophet's disciples had carried His body away."

"But did you not know that you were confessing to a grave infraction of discipline?"

"Yes, but they said, 'If the Governor hears of this, we will win him over and shelter you from all danger of punishment.'"

"Wretches!" breathed the Governor. And when he was alone, Pilate said to himself, "Now, I understand their false attitude and pretended benevolence. They are vile informers, and I ought to punish them; they fear now that their fraud will be divulged. Ah, if only I did not dread information and denunciation in Rome, if my powers were more extensive and gave me larger immunity. . . . But why create for myself new embarrassments? Everything considered, I had better close my eyes and let events take their course. But I will address to Tiberius Cæsar a detailed account of all that has happened in connection with Jesus of Nazareth, and all that I have done to prevent popular agitation in this colony. It is my duty to account to the Emperor, not only for my administration, but for every important event."

Eventually, Pilate made his report to Tiberius, and though he did not believe in the divinity of Jesus, he made known to his Emperor what had been told him of the miracles accomplished. He rehearsed the Prophet's trial, and justified as well as he could the condemnation pronounced against Him in the interest

of peace, to conciliate the priesthood and to prevent all rebellion against Roman authority. Lastly, he related the final events accomplished in Jerusalem and stated that Jesus of Nazareth had left numberless disciples who firmly believed that their Master was risen from the dead.

This report produced such an effect upon Tiberius that he for a time thought of placing Jesus of Nazareth among the other gods of the empire.

VI

THE FIRST NEOPHYTES

CONTRARY to men, whose influence and activity ends with death, Jesus of Nazareth had said, "When I shall be lifted above the earth — (that is to say, crucified), I shall draw all things to myself." This prophecy was about to begin its accomplishment, slowly at first, and then with a rapidity that would astonish the ages. The divine attraction of the Crucified had manifested itself even upon the Cross. On each side of the dying Saviour, two robbers were also to die. One of them used the remnant of his strength in blaspheming and united his imprecations with those of the Messiah's enemies. The other suffered in silence. He who was guilty tried to imitate the resignation of the Innocent, and throwing upon Jesus a supplicating look, the good thief said,

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Thy Kingdom." Jesus immediately rewarded his faith by addressing to him these consoling words: "Amen, Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

A moment later it was the Centurion whom Jesus drew to Him and whose solemn act of faith was followed by that of great numbers. But it was now, in the present, that He would draw all men to Himself, now that His resurrection had come in such a glorious way to prove His divinity.

Already the news of the great event had spread throughout Judea. Vainly the chief priests attempted conspiracies to hush it. They had only succeeded in silencing Pilate. Even in the Governor's palace, Caius had made converts. All the Roman soldiers who had assisted with him at the Crucifixion like him had confessed the divinity of Jesus, and the news of His resurrection had confirmed them in their faith.

Claudia and Camilla no longer doubted and tried to inculcate their belief into their father's mind, but the old patrician resisted. "At my age," he said, "one does not abandon the beliefs of one's whole life." On each new apparition of Jesus, Camilla came to tell him of the news she had heard and of the growing number of witnesses who attested to the resurrection. "Not only the apostles and the disciples believe," she said, "but a great number of pious and unprejudiced Jews have taken their places among the neophytes." There were even believers among the Scribes and elders, and she named Gamaliel, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea.

"For a long time these have been inclined to believe," objected Claudius.

"It is true," answered Camilla, "but you remember that they did not wish to recognize the divinity of Christ."

"And how have they been convinced of it?"

"Listen to their story, Father. At the moment when Jesus died, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were on Calvary, and Gamaliel in the Temple. The two former heard the great cry that the Crucified sent vibrating throughout the earth as He breathed His last sigh. They felt the mountain shake violently under their feet; they saw the rocks broken apart; sepulchres open, and the dead arise and walk. They ran to the Temple, where they found Gamaliel in an extraordinary state of agitation. He had seen the bronze doors swing out of themselves and the veil of the Temple rent, and phantoms, or rather the risen dead pass under the porticoes. When all three met they pronounced the same words, 'He was, indeed, the Son of God.' Two days later they were confirmed in their faith when they saw the open grave and interrogated those to whom Jesus of Nazareth had deigned to show Himself living."

The old Senator was silent.

Then Camilla spoke to him of her love for Caius. She told him how noble and generous he had been; how his faith had been stronger than his love which nevertheless was very great.

"Ah, Father, if you knew with what a sword you pierced his heart when you told him you would never

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consent to our marriage should he become the Prophet's disciple! But that did not prevent his manifesting his faith on the great day. When he came to bid me farewell and showed me the strength of his conviction, he said,

"'You know, Camilla, the depth of my love for you, yet, I could not wish to join my future with yours did you remain faithful to the worship of Jupiter.'"

"Is this the reason," interrupted the father, "that now you believe in the Prophet's divinity?"

"Oh, Father, I beg you to be a better judge of your daughter's character; do not attribute her faith to such an unworthy motive. I will never marry Caius without your consent, but let me believe in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. If you had known Him as I knew Him! If you had heard His wonderful words, if you had been present at the resurrection of Lazarus, if you had but questioned those who saw Him risen again, you too would believe."

"Where are His disciples now?"

"They have left for Galilee, where their Master sent them to meet Him."

"Galilee? Caius, who spent two years there, told me it was a very interesting country to visit. I should like to go into Galilee before we start back to Rome. It is the season for it, why should we not go there together now?"

"Oh, yes, Father, Claudia and I have spoken of it."

"That is well. I will arrange everything with Pilate. Caius could serve as our guide and escort us with a few legionaries."

Several days later, the joyous caravan set their horses galloping down the sinuous slope leading from Jerusalem to the banks of the Jordan.

VII

THE SUPREMACY OF PETER

OBEDIENT to the message received from their risen Master, the apostles had returned into Galilee. How long the route had seemed from Jerusalem to Capharnaum, and what sad memories it awakened of their last Passover in the Holy City.

It was not yet three weeks since they had gone up to Jerusalem following their beloved Master, who was in all the flower of His sacred humanity, in all His virile strength, in all the power of His divinity. And now they were coming back alone, perhaps alone forever, for He whom they had followed for three years was no more. He had, indeed, warned them of His death a long time before, but they had never understood why this death was necessary. Most probably He was risen again now, as He had predicted to them and none of them had any doubt of it. But what would be the new life of their risen Jesus?

Would He take up with them again the life of former days, going about through the cities and villages curing all infirmities and human suffering, announcing to the people the establishment of God's Kingdom? They did not know.

This life together, partaking somewhat of the

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nomad character, had had great charm, by their beautiful lake and along the Jordan, in the midst of a wondering population astonished by the numberless miracles the Master accomplished. Oh, how sweet it was every day to hear His gentle voice, His eloquent words and to see Him always, to travel with Him, to pitch their leafy tents with His, to gather miraculous draughts of fishes with Him, to see Him surrounded by admiring crowds, ready to proclaim Him King. Was it really all at an end?

Already on several occasions, they had seen Him again, as He suddenly appeared before them, disappearing in the same way, after having spoken words to calm their fears and to console them. And after these visits, which were all too short, solitude had again encompassed them, and when they had said to the curious who questioned them that their Master had risen, they were not believed. What would become of them now and what would they do without Him? It was especially now, coming back to their native country, that the immensity of their loss and the uncertainty of their future overwhelmed them. They felt themselves orphans; their hearthstone was deserted and their dwelling empty. Like unto their exiled ancestors, on the banks of the rivers of Babylon, they were seated on the shore of their beloved lake, and some of them wept in silence. Night was coming and they were hungry. In the happy days that would never return it was Judas of Kerioth who had furnished them with provisions. But the unfortunate man, whose very name they tried to forget, him whom

they cursed among themselves had disappeared forever, like a millstone thrown into the depths of the sea.

Peter was motionless and silent like the others; nevertheless, was he not to be hereafter head of the little disorganized community? Was it not his part to revive their energy and courage and show them, while waiting to become fishers of men, what they must do? Then he rose and stepping toward the boat, said, "I am going to fish."

"And we, too, will go with thee," answered the six other apostles with him.

All night long they drifted over the lake in every direction, stopping at all the good fishing places and patiently casting their nets. But the lake seemed as empty as their solitary dwelling, and when dawn broke, they tried a last chance not far from the shore, barely distinguishable through the morning fog. Suddenly, a cry arose from the beach.

"Children, have you nothing to eat?"

"No," they answered.

"Throw your nets to the right of the boat," continued the unknown voice, "and you will find."

John leaned over towards Peter and said, "It is the Lord." Always impulsive, under the stimulus of his ardent faith Peter flung himself into the sea and swam ashore, while the others cast the net over the right side of the boat. Instantly it was filled with fish, and it was with difficulty they hauled it to land.

Oh, great and beautiful day! Their adored Master had come back to them, and the wonder and sweet-

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ness of their former life was about to begin again. Admiration, love, and all the holy joys of friendship filled the hearts of the guests at this frugal breakfast, lighted by the rosy sweetness of an early spring morning. Peter alone resumed his anxiety when the meal was over. He had not forgotten his three denials in the court of the high-priest and was tormented by remorse. How could he ask pardon? What proof of love could he give to make his Master forget them? This was what he asked himself while he looked sadly at his Saviour without speaking. It was Jesus who first broke silence.

“Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?”

Peter started and looked down.

He puts this question to me, he thought, and not to the others, because He is certain of the others' love and He doubts mine. And how shall I dare answer that I love him more than the others, who remained faithful to Him whilst I denied Him.

All the while his heart was overflowing with love and he could not silence it.

“Yes, Lord,” he answered, “Thou knowest that I love Thee,” and he looked tenderly at the Master.

Jesus repeated His question, as if He did not accept His disciple's answer.

“Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?”

The apostle in consternation dropped his head. “He no longer calls me Peter,” he thought, “He gives me the name I bore when I was a stranger to Him.

And nevertheless my faith and love are greater to-day than on the day when He gave me the name of Peter, and He Himself knows far better than I how much I do love Him."

"Lord," he answered anew, raising his head and fixing his eyes bathed in tears upon those of His Master, "Thou knowest that I love Thee."

And for the third time, Jesus put to him the same question.

Peter understood that three protestations of love springing from the depths of his heart were needed to efface those three denials already so many times washed away in his tears. Overcome with sorrow, he threw himself at the feet of Jesus, crying to Him from the depths of his soul,

"Lord, thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

To the first two answers of His apostle, Jesus had said,

"Feed My lambs," but to the third affirmation of love and adoration, Peter heard his Master say, "Feed My sheep."

Thus was established the supremacy of Peter.

All the flock was thus confided to him throughout all time! It was he who should be the universal pastor, supreme head of the new kingdom founded by Jesus Christ. What a dignity! But what sacrifices, what sufferings! What persecutions this dignity would impose upon him!

"Amen, Amen, I say to thee, Peter, when thou wert young, thou didst follow thy own path and went

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where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old thou shalt hold out thy hands and another shall lead thee and shall conduct thee where thou wouldst not."

The days of freedom and independence had passed and would return no more. Hereafter, he would be the servant of servants, the slave of slaves; chained to the heaviest and most painful offices, bearing his cross like his Master, up to that time when, like unto Him, he should be crucified.

Such were the attributes of his new and lofty dignity — slavery, combat, persecution and martyrdom.

For a long time Jesus conversed with His apostles, and having told them to meet Him upon that mountain, since known as the "Mount of the Beatitudes," He disappeared from their sight.

VIII

ADVENT OF JESUS TO THE THRONE OF THE NATIONS

SEVERAL days later, on the mountain which He had indicated to them, apostles and disciples numbering more than five hundred were once more united to hear the words of the divine Master. It was there that two years before He had delivered His wonderful sermon on the happiness awaiting those who suffer, and the misfortune of those who but rejoice.

What great things had been accomplished during these two years. Humanity had been regenerated and

and did not know it. The world had been redeemed and ignored it. The kingdom of God was definitely established upon the earth, and the kings of the earth had not been told of it. To accomplish this great work, the death of a God had been necessary, and it was only understood by a few pure and righteous souls.

And now the august Victim had risen again.

No longer would He be submissive to the powers of darkness and death. From the modest throne of Juda, the Son of David would rise to the throne of all nations. The day of His royal coming had arrived. The faithful disciples, their eyes fixed upon the summit from which He had spoken to them so eloquently in former days, awaited His coming.

Suddenly, in the full light of day, the Sacred Humanity of the Son of God showed itself, just as the crowd had so often seen Him on all the roads of Galilee. And when He spoke, they recognized that voice which had grown so familiar. It was, indeed, Jesus of Nazareth whose name had re-echoed for three years. It was, indeed, He whom the princes of the priests and Pilate had put to death and who was now full of life, speaking and moving before the multitudes. But how great and how sovereign were the words He pronounced. No longer was it the Doctor teaching man truth, interpreting the Scriptures, confounding the Pharisees by His marvelous learning. It was the Conqueror announcing to all nations His final victory over His enemies and death. It was the King of Kings taking possession of the uni-

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verse and proclaiming His universal domination over the world and throughout the heavens.

“All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth,” His powerful voice proclaimed. “Go, then, throughout the entire world, preach the gospel to all creatures, teach all nations, baptize them in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teach them to observe absolutely all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.”

What a superhuman proclamation!

Oh, Princes of the priests! oh, Pilate! oh, Tiberius! what are your torches of power by the side of this universal sovereignty whose empire embraces all worlds, earth and heaven!

The Voice had become silent, the Divine Apparition had disappeared, and the disciples remained motionless, kneeling, their hands raised towards Heaven, in the ideal contemplation of the Master who was no longer visible to their eyes of flesh, but who had promised to be always with them.

IX

THE FIRST DISCIPLES AMONG THE GENTILES

THIS great manifestation of the supreme and universal royalty of the Son of David had had other witnesses who were not Jews, but who had shared the profound emotion of the disciples.

On the edge of the crowd, at the foot of the hill,

holding themselves apart in silence and stupefaction, were several persons on horseback. They were the Centurion, Camilla, Claudia and the old Senator Claudius, with their escort. On the road which led them to Tiberias, they had met the group of disciples, hastening to the mountain where Jesus was to show Himself to them, and they had followed, in the hope of perhaps witnessing some new prodigy. But not only had they seen with their own eyes the Divine Apparition and heard with their ears His wonderful speech, but another miracle had been accomplished in the soul of the old Claudius.

He had felt throughout his entire being the greatest emotion of his life, and said to Camilla before she pronounced even a word, "I have seen, I have heard, I believe." Tears flowed from his eyes, great sobs rose from his breast, and not finding words to express what he felt, he cried out in admiration: "Oh, Wonderful! oh, Mysterious! oh, Sovereign Master of earth and heaven!"

Slowly the multitude went down to the shores of the Lake of Galilee, and the Centurion's little caravan followed it. Camilla and Claudia were full of wonder; their hearts overflowed with joy on hearing their father's profession of faith. Soon they arrived at the border of the lake whose waves they had seen shining from afar off, and after having visited Tiberias, rode along the coast towards Magdala. How beautiful was Galilee, in the splendor of spring-time, with the shining lake reflecting its beauty; but it was

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not only the festival of nature, it was the feast of the new faith uniting all these souls of good-will. It was the festival day of two hearts whose destiny hereafter would be sealed by an undying love.

Old Claudius was in a state of rapture, and when they partook of their evening meal under a green arbor on the banks of the lake, taking Camilla's hand and putting it in that of Caius, said to them, "Be united, my children, and glory to the Son of David, Son of God."

From Magdala the voyage became a real pilgrimage to the spots sanctified by the earthly life of the Man God. The four pilgrims who now formed but one family went to visit the humble city where Jesus had spent thirty years of His life.

Nazareth, whose name signifies "Flower" and "Offspring," was in its fullest beauty. The trees were already covered with leaves and the air sweet with fragrance, and in the hearts of the betrothed the flower of love expanded before the enchanted eyes of the old Patrician. Never had a journey been more beautiful, nor the aspirations of each more perfectly fulfilled.

These new disciples of Jesus never wearied of asking the Nazareans about the childhood years and early days of the Prophet, and marvelled at all that was told them. They wanted also to see Naim and to know the widow whose only son had been

brought back to life, and their emotion was deep on hearing from this mother and son of the great miracle worked by Jesus in their favor!

By little journeys, their hearts overflowing with ideal happiness, they returned to Jerusalem, passing through Samaria to see Shechem and Jacob's wells, and to hear the touching story of Photina, the Samaritan woman.

In Jerusalem, again they found scepticism, incredulity and the hatred of priests and Scribes. But nothing now could shake their faith in the resurrection and in the divinity of Jesus. The marvelous events which followed confirmed them even more in their belief. From the Cenacle to the summit of the Mount of Olives, they accompanied the risen Christ, followed by His numerous disciples and saw Him rise majestically to Heaven. Witnesses of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, they heard the first preaching of Peter, who converted thousands of Jews. And finally, they were the first among the Gentiles to receive baptism. Later on, in the Cenacle, became the first Christian Church, the chief of the apostles celebrated the marriage of the betrothed couple of Magdala.

THE END