

The Supper-Room

On the southern side of Mount Sion, not far from the ruined Castle of David, and the market held on the ascent leading to that Castle, there stood, towards the east, an ancient and solid building, between rows of thick trees, in the midst of a spacious court surrounded by strong walls. To the right and left of the entrance, other buildings were to be seen adjoining the wall, particularly to the right, where stood the dwelling of



the major-domo, and close to it the house in which the Blessed Virgin and the holy women spent most of their time after the death of Jesus. The supper-room, which was originally larger, had formerly been inhabited by David's brave captains, who had there learned the use of arms.

Previous to the building of the Temple, the Ark of the Covenant had been deposited there for a considerable length of time, and traces of its presence were still to be found in an underground room. I have also seen the Prophet Malachy hidden beneath this same roof: he there wrote his prophecies concerning the Blessed Sacrament and the Sacrifice of the New Law. Solomon held this house in honour, and performed within its walls some figurative and symbolical action, which I have forgotten. When a great part of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, this house was spared. I have seen many other things concerning this same house, but I only remember what I have now told. This building was in a very dilapidated state when it became the property of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who arranged the principal building in a very suitable manner, and let it as a supper-room to strangers coming to Jerusalem for the purpose of celebrating the festival of the Pasch. Thus it was that our Lord had made use of it the previous year.

Moreover, the house and surrounding buildings served as warehouses for monuments and other stones, and as workshops for the labourers; for Joseph of Arimathea possessed valuable quarries in his own country, from which he had large blocks of stone brought, that his workmen might fashion them, under his own eye, into tombs, architectural ornaments, and columns, for sale. Nicodemus had a share in this business, and used to spend many leisure hours himself in sculpturing. He worked in the room, or in a

subterraneous apartment which saw beneath it, excepting at the times of the festivals; and this occupation having brought him into connection with Joseph of Arimathea, they had become friends, and often joined together in various transactions. This morning, whilst Peter and John were conversing with the man who had hired the supper-room, I saw Nicodemus in the buildings to the left of the court, where a great many stones which filled up the passages leading to the supper-room had been placed. A week before, I had seen several persons engaged in putting the stones on one side, cleaning the court, and preparing the supper-room for the celebration of the Pasch; it even appears to me that there were among them some disciples of our Lord, perhaps Aram and Themein, the cousins of Joseph of Arimathea. The supper-room, properly so called, was nearly in the centre of the court; its length was greater than its width; it was surrounded by a row of low pillars, and if the spaces between the pillars had been cleared, would have formed a part of the large inner room, for the whole edifice was, as it were, transparent; only it was usual, except on special occasions, for the passages to be closed up. The room was lighted by apertures at the top of the walls. In front, there was first a vestibule, into which three doors gave entrance; next, the large inner room, where several lamps hung from the platform; the walls were ornamented for the festival, half way up, with beautiful matting or tapestry, and an aperture had been made in the roof, and covered over with transparent blue gauze. The back part of this room was separated from the rest by a curtain, also of blue transparent gauze. This division of the supper-room into three parts gave a resemblance to the Temple—thus forming the outer Court, the Holy, and the Holy of Holies. In the last of these divisions, on both sides, the dresses and other things necessary for the celebration of the feast were placed. In the centre there was a species of altar. A stone bench raised on three steps, and of a rectangular triangular shape, came out of the wall; it must have constituted the upper part of the oven used for roasting the Paschal Lamb, for to-day the steps were quite heated during the repast. I cannot describe in detail all that there was in this part of the room, but all kinds of arrangements were being made there for preparing the Paschal Supper. Above this hearth of altar, there was a species of niche in the wall, in front of which I saw an image of the Paschal Lamb, with a knife in its throat, and the blood appearing to flow drop by drop upon the altar; but I do not remember distinctly how that was done. In a niche in the wall there were three cupboards of various colours, which turned like our tabernacles, for opening or closing. A number of vessels used in the celebration of the Pasch were kept in them; later, the Blessed Sacrament was placed there.

In the rooms at the sides of the supper-room, there were some couches, on which thick coverlids rolled up were placed, and which could be used as beds. There were spacious cellars beneath the whole of this building. The Ark of the Covenant was formerly deposited under the very spot where the hearth was afterwards built. Five gutters, under the house, served to convey the refuse to the slope of the hill, on the upper part of which the house was built. I had preciously seen Jesus preach and perform miraculous cures there, and the disciples frequently passed the night in the side rooms.