

A Glance at Jerusalem

The customary prayers and preparations for the celebration of the festival being completed, the greatest part of the inhabitants of the densely-populated city of Jerusalem, as also the strangers congregated there, were plunged in sleep after the fatigues of the day, when, all at once, the arrest of Jesus was announced, and everyone was aroused, both his friends and foes, and numbers immediately responded to the summons of



the High Priest, and left their dwellings to assemble at his court. In some parts the light of the moon enabled them to grope their way in safety along the dark and gloomy streets, but in other parts they were obliged to make use of torches. Very few of the houses were built with their windows looking on the street, and, generally speaking, their doors were in inner courts, which gave the streets a still more gloomy appearance than is usual at this hour. The steps of all were directed towards Sion, and an attentive listener might have heard persons stop at the doors of their friends, and knock, in order to awaken them—then hurry on, then again stop to question others, and, finally, set off anew in haste towards Sion.

Newsmongers and servants were hurrying forward to ascertain what was going on; in order that they might return and give the account to those who remained at home; and the bolting and barricading of doors might be plainly heard, as many persons were much alarmed and feared an insurrection, while a thousand different propositions were made and opinions given, such as the following:—‘Lazarus and his sisters will soon know who is this man in whom they have placed such firm reliance. Johanna Chusa, Susannah, Mary the mother of Mark, and Salome will repent, but too late, the imprudence of their conduct; Seraphia, the wife of Sirach, will be compelled to make an apology to her husband now, for he has so often reproached her with her partiality for the Galilean. The partisans of this fanatical man, this inciter of rebellion, pretended to be filled with compassion for all who looked upon things in a different light from themselves, and now they will not know where to hide their heads. He will find no one now to cast garments and strew olive-branches at his feet. Those hypocrites who pretended to be so much better than other persons will receive their deserts, for they are all implicated with the Galilean. It is a much more

serious business than was at first thought. I should like to know how Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea will get out of it; the High Priests have mistrusted them for some time; they made common cause with Lazarus: but they are extremely cunning. All will now, however, be brought to light.’

Speeches such as these were uttered by persons who were exasperated, not only against the disciples of Jesus, but likewise with the holy women who had supplied his temporal wants, and had publicly and fearlessly expressed their veneration for his doctrines, and their belief in his Divine mission. But although many persons spoke of Jesus and his followers in this contemptuous manner, yet there were others who held very different opinions, and of these some were frightened, and others, being overcome with sorrow, sought friends to whom they might unburden their hearts, and before whom they could, without fear, give vent to their feelings; but the number of those sufficiently daring openly to avow their admiration for Jesus was but small. Nevertheless, it was in parts only of Jerusalem that these disturbances took place—in those parts where the messengers had been sent by the High Priests and the Pharisees, to convoke the members of the Council and to call together the witnesses. It appeared to me that I saw feelings of hatred and fury burst forth in different parts of the city, under the form of flames, which flames traversed the streets, united with others which they met, and proceeded in the direction of Sion, increasing every moment, and at last came to a stop beneath the tribunal of Caiphas, where they remained, forming together a perfect whirlwind of fire. The Roman soldiers took no part in what was going on; they did not understand the excited feelings of the people, but their sentinels were doubled, their cohorts drawn up, and they kept a strict look out; this, indeed, was customary at the time of the Paschal solemnity, on account of the vast number of strangers who were then assembled together. The Pharisees endeavoured to avoid the neighbourhood of the sentinels, for fear of being questioned by them, and of contracting defilement by answering their questions. The High Priests had sent a message to Pilate intimating their reasons for stationing soldiers round Ophel and Sion; but he mistrusted their intentions, as much ill-feeling existed between the Romans and the Jews. He could not sleep, but walked about during the greatest part of the night, hearkening to the different reports and issuing orders consequent on what he heard; his wife slept, but her sleep was disturbed by frightful dreams, and she groaned and wept alternately.

In no part of Jerusalem did the arrest of Jesus produce more touching demonstrations of grief than among the poor inhabitants of Ophel, the greatest part of whom were daylabourers, and the rest principally employed in menial offices in the service of the Temple.

The news came unexpectedly upon them; for some time they doubted the truth of the report, and wavered between hope and fear; but the sight of their Master, their Benefactor, their Consoler, dragged through the streets, torn, bruised, and ill-treated in every imaginable way, filled them with horror; and their grief was still farther increased by beholding his afflicted Mother wandering about from street to street, accompanied by the holy women, and endeavouring to obtain some intelligence concerning her Divine Son. These holy women were often obliged to hide in corners and under door-ways for fear of being seen by the enemies of Jesus; but even with these precautions they were oftentimes insulted, and taken for women of bad character—their feelings were frequently harrowed by hearing the malignant words and triumphant expressions of the cruel Jews, and seldom, very seldom, did a word of kindness or pity strike their ears. They were completely exhausted before reaching their place of refuge, but they endeavoured to console and support one another, and wrapped thick veils over their heads. When at last seated, they heard a sudden knock at the door, and listened breathlessly—the knock was repeated, but softly, therefore they made certain that it was no enemy, and yet they opened the door cautiously, fearing a stratagem.

It was indeed a friend, and they issued forth and walked about for a time, and then again returned to their place of refuge—still more heartbroken than before. The majority of the Apostles, overcome with terror, were wandering about among the valleys which surround Jerusalem, and at times took refuge in the caverns beneath Mount Olivet. They started if they came in contact with one another, spoke in trembling tones, and separated on the least noise being heard. First they concealed themselves in one cave and then in another, next they endeavoured to return to the town, while some of their number climbed to the top of Mount Olivet and cast anxious glances at the torches, the light of which they could see glimmering at and about Sion; they listened to every distant sound, made a thousand different conjectures, and then returned to the valley, in hopes of getting some certain intelligence. The streets in the vicinity of Caiphas's tribunal were brightly illuminated with lamps and torches, but, as the crowds gathered around it, the noise and confusion continued to increase. Mingling with these discordant sounds might be heard the bellowing of the beasts which were tethered on the outside of the walls of Jerusalem, and the plaintive bleating of the lambs. There was something most touching in the bleating of these lambs, which were to be sacrificed on the following day in the Temple,—the one Lamb alone who was about to be offered a willing sacrifice opened not his mouth, like a sheep in the hands of the butcher, which resists not, or the

lamb which is silent before the shearer; and that Lamb was the Lamb of God—the Lamb without spot—the true Paschal Lamb—Jesus Christ himself. The sky looked dark, gloomy, and threatening—the moon was red, and covered with livid spots; it appeared as if dreading to reach its full, because its Creator was then to die. Next I cast a glance outside the town, and, near the south gate, I beheld the traitor, Judas Iscariot, wandering about, alone, and a prey to the tortures of his guilty conscience; he feared even his own shadow, and was followed by many devils, who endeavoured to turn his feelings of remorse into black despair. Thousands of evil spirits were busying themselves in all parts, tempting men first to one sin and then to another. It appeared as if the gates of hell were flung open, and Satan madly striving and exerting his whole energies to increase the heavy load of iniquities which the Lamb without spot had taken upon himself. The angels wavered between joy and grief; they desired ardently to fall prostrate before the throne of God, and to obtain permission to assist Jesus; but at the same time they were filled with astonishment, and could only adore that miracle of Divine justice and mercy which had existed in Heaven for all eternity, and was now about to be accomplished; for the angels believe, like us, in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, who began on this night to suffer under Pontius Pilate, and the next day was to be crucified; to die, and be buried; descend into hell, rise again on the third day, ascent into Heaven, be seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and from thence come to judge the living and the dead; they likewise believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.