

His Death

The light continued to return by degrees, and the livid exhausted countenance of our Lord again became visible. His body was become much more white from the quantity of blood he had lost; and I heard him exclaim, 'I am pressed as the grape, which is trodden in the winepress. My blood shall be poured out until water cometh, but wine shall here be made no more.' I

cannot be sure whether he really pronounced these words, so as to be heard by others, or whether they were only an answer given to my interior prayer. I afterwards had a vision relating to these words, and in it I saw Japhet making wine in this place.



Jesus was almost fainting; his tongue was parched, and he said: 'I thirst.' The disciples who were standing round the Cross looked at him with the deepest expression of sorrow, and he added, 'Could you not have given me a little water?' By these words he gave them to understand that no one would have prevented them from doing so during the darkness.

John was filled with remorse, and replied: 'We did not think of doing so, O Lord.' Jesus pronounced a few more words, the import of which was: 'My friends and my neighbours were also to forget me, and not give me to drink, that so what was written concerning me might be fulfilled.' This omission had afflicted him very much. The disciples then offered money to the soldiers to obtain permission to give him a little water: they refused to give it, but dipped a sponge in vinegar and gall, and were about to offer it to Jesus, when the centurion Abenadar, whose heart was touched with compassion, took it from them, squeezed out the gal, poured some fresh vinegar upon it, and fastening it to a reed, put the reed at the end of a lance, and presented it for Jesus to drink. I heard our Lord say several other things, but I only remember these words: 'When my voice shall be silent, the mouths of the dead shall be opened.' Some of the bystanders cried out: 'He blasphemeth again.' But Abenadar compelled them to be silent.

The hour of our Lord was at last come; his death-struggle had commenced; a cold sweat overspread every limb. John stood at the foot of the Cross, and

wiped the feet of Jesus with his scapular. Magdalen was crouched to the ground in a perfect frenzy of grief behind the Cross. The Blessed Virgin stood between Jesus and the good thief, supported by Salome and Mary of Cleophas, with her eyes rivetted on the countenance of her dying Son. Jesus then said: 'It is consummated;' and, raising his head, cried out in a loud voice, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' These words, which he uttered in a clear and thrilling tone, resounded through heaven and earth; and a moment after, he bowed down his head and gave up the ghost. I saw his soul, under the appearance of a bright meteor, penetrate the earth at the foot of the Cross. John and the holy women fell prostrate on the ground. The centurion Abenadar had kept his eyes steadfastly fixed on the disfigured countenance of our Lord, and was perfectly overwhelmed by all that had taken place.

When our Lord pronounced his last words, before expiring, in a loud tone, the earth trembled, and the rock of Calvary burst asunder, forming a deep chasm between the Cross of our Lord and that of Gesmas. The voice of God—that solemn and terrible voice—had re-echoed through the whole universe; it had broken the solemn silence which then pervaded all nature. All was accomplished. The soul of our Lord had left his body: his last cry had filled every breast with terror. The convulsed earth had paid homage to its Creator: the sword of grief had pierced the hearts of those who loved him. This moment was the moment of grace for Abenadar: his horse trembled under him; his heart was touched; it was rent like the hard rock; he threw his lance to a distance, struck his breast, and cried out: 'Blessed be the Most High God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; indeed this Man was the Son of God!' His words convinced many among the soldiers, who followed his example, and were likewise converted.

Abenadar became from this moment a new man; he adored the true God, and would no longer serve his enemies. He gave both his horse and his lance to a subaltern of the name of Longinus, who, having addressed a few words to the soldiers, mounted his horse, and took the command upon himself. Abenadar then left Calvary, and went through the Valley of Gihon to the caves in the Valley of Hinnom, where the disciples were hidden, announced the death of our Lord to them, and then went to the town, in order to see Pilate. No sooner had Abenadar rendered public testimony of his belief in the divinity of Jesus, than a large number of soldiers followed his example, as did also some of the bystanders, and even a few Pharisees. Many struck their breasts, wept, and returned home, while others

rent their

garments, and cast dust on their heads, and all were filled with horror and fear. John arose; and some of the holy women who were at a short distance came up to the Blessed Virgin, and led her away from the foot of the Cross. When Jesus, the Lord of life and death, gave up his soul into the hands of his Father, and allowed death to take possession of his body, this sacred body trembled and turned lividly white; the countless wounds which were covered with congealed blood appeared like dark marks; his cheeks became more sunken, his nose more pointed, and his eyes, which were obscured with blood, remained but half open.

He raised his weary head, which was still crowned with thorns, for a moment, and then dropped it again in agony of pain; while his parched and torn lips, only partially closed, showed his bloody and swollen tongue. At the moment of death his hands, which were at one time contracted round the nails, opened and returned to their natural size, as did also his arms; his body became stiff, and the whole weight was thrown upon the feet, his knees bent, and his feet twisted a little on one side. What words can, alas, express the deep grief of the Blessed Virgin? Her eyes closed, a death-like tint overspread her countenance; unable to stand, she fell to the ground, but was soon lifted up, and supported by John, Magdalen, and the others. She looked once more upon her beloved Son—that Son whom she had conceived by the Holy Ghost, the flesh of her flesh, the bone of her bone, the heart of her heart—hanging on a cross between two thieves; crucified, dishonoured, contemned by those whom he came on earth to save; and well might she at this moment be termed ‘the queen of martyrs.’ The sun still looked dim and suffused with mist; and during the time of the earthquake the air was close and oppressive, but by degrees it became more clear and fresh.

It was about three o’clock when Jesus expired. The Pharisees were at first much alarmed at the earthquake; but when the first shock was over they recovered themselves, began to throw stones into the chasm, and tried to measure its depth with ropes. Finding, however, that they could not fathom its bottom, they became thoughtful, listened anxiously to the groans of the penitents, who were lamenting and striking their breasts, and then left Calvary. Many among the spectators were really converted, and the greatest part returned to Jerusalem perfectly overcome with fear. Roman soldiers were placed at the gates, and in other principal parts of the city, to prevent the possibility of an insurrection. Cassius remained on Calvary with

about fifty soldiers. The friends of Jesus stood round the Cross, contemplated our Lord, and wept; many among the holy women had returned to their homes, and all were silent and overcome with grief.