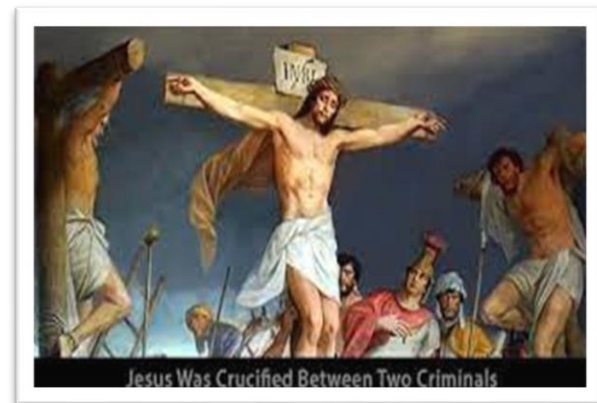


Jesus hanging on the Cross between two Thieves

The tremendous concussion caused by the fall of the cross into the hole prepared for it drove the sharp points of the crown of thorns, which was still upon the head of our dear Saviour, still deeper into his sacred flesh, and blood ran down again in streams, both from it and from his hands and feet. The archers then placed ladders against the sides of the cross, mounted them and unfastened the ropes with which they had bound our Lord to the cross, previous to lifting it up, fearing that the shock might tear open the wounds in his hands and feet, and that then the nails would no longer support his body. His blood had become, in a certain degree, stagnated by his horizontal position and the pressure of the cords, but when these were withdrawn, it resumed its usual course, and caused such agonising sensations throughout his countless wounds, that he bowed his head, and remained as if dead for more than seven minutes. A pause ensued; the executioners were occupied with the division of his garments; the trumpets in the Temple no longer resounded; and all the actors in this fearful tragedy appeared to be exhausted, some by grief, and others by the efforts they had made to compass their wicked ends, and by the joy which they felt now at having at last succeeded in bringing about the death of him whom they had so long envied. With mixed feelings of fear and compassion I cast my eyes upon Jesus,—Jesus my Redeemer,—the Redeemer of the world.

I beheld him motionless, and almost lifeless. I felt as if I myself must expire; my heart was overwhelmed between grief, love, and horror; my mind was half wandering, my hands and feet burning with a feverish heat; each vein, nerve, and limb was racked with inexpressible pain; I saw nothing distinctly, excepting my beloved Spouse hanging on the cross. I contemplated his disfigured countenance, his head encircled with that terrible crown of thorns, which prevented his raising it even for a moment without the most intense suffering, his mouth parched and half open from exhaustion, and his hair and beard clotted with blood. His chest was torn with stripes and wounds, and his elbows, wrists, and shoulders so violently distended as to be almost dislocated; blood constantly trickled down from the gaping wounds in his hands, and the flesh was so torn from his ribs that you might almost count them.



His legs and thighs, as also his arms, were stretched out almost to dislocation, the flesh and muscles so completely laid bare that every bone was visible, and his whole body covered with black, green, and reeking wounds. The blood which flowed from his wounds was at first red, but it became by degrees light and watery, and the whole appearance of his body was that of a corpse ready for interment. And yet, notwithstanding the horrible wounds with which he was covered, notwithstanding the state of ignominy to which he was reduced, there still remained that inexpressible look of dignity and goodness which had ever filled all beholders with awe.

The complexion of our Lord was fair, like that of Mary, and slightly tinted with red; but his exposure to the weather during the last three years had tanned him considerably. His chest was wide, but not hairy like that of St. John Baptist; his shoulders broad, and his arms and thighs sinewy; his knees were strong and hardened, as is usually the case with those who have either walked or knelt much, and his legs long, with very strong muscles; his feet were well formed, and his hands beautiful, the fingers being long and tapering, and although not delicate like those of a woman, still not resembling those of a man who had laboured hard. His neck was rather long, with a well-set and finely proportioned head; his forehead large and high; his face oval; his hair, which was far from thick, was of a golden brown colour, parted in the middle and falling over his shoulders; his beard was not any great length, but pointed and divided under the chin. When I contemplated him on the cross, his hair was almost all torn off, and what remained was matted and clotted with blood; his body was one wound, and every limb seemed as if dislocated.

The crosses of the two thieves were placed, the one to the right and the other to the left of Jesus; there was sufficient space left for a horseman to ride between them. Nothing can be imagined more distressing than the appearance of the thieves on their crosses; they suffered terribly, and the one on the left-hand side never ceased cursing and swearing. The cords with which they were tied were very tight, and caused great pain; their countenances were livid, and their eyes enflamed and ready to start from the sockets. The height of the crosses of the two thieves was much less than that of our Lord.