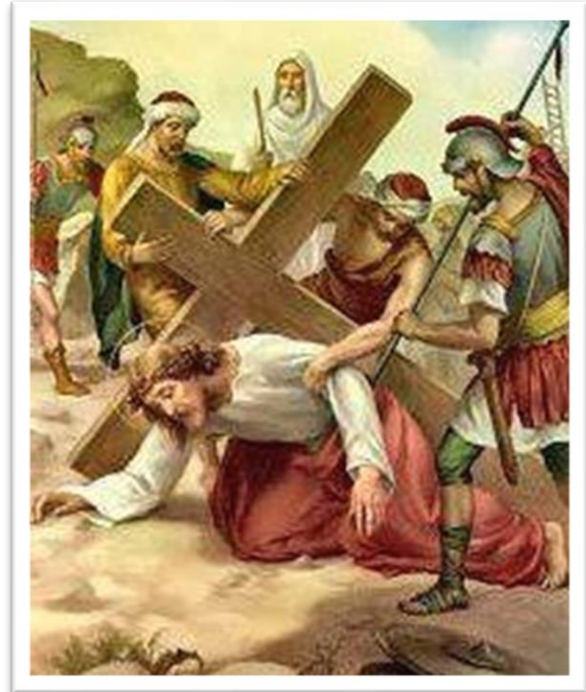


## **The Second Fall of Jesus**

The afflicted Mother of Jesus had left the forum, accompanied by John and some other women, immediately after the unjust sentence was pronounced. She had employed herself in walking to many of the spots sanctified by our Lord and watering them with her tears; but when the sound of the trumpet, the rush of people, and the clang of the horsemen announced that the procession was about to start for Calvary, she could not resist her longing desire to behold her beloved Son once more, and she begged John to take her to some place through which he must pass. John conducted her to a palace, which had an entrance in that street which Jesus traversed after his first fall; it was, I believe, the residence of the high priest Caiphas, whose tribunal was in the division called Sion. John asked and obtained leave from a kind-hearted servant to stand at the entrance mentioned above, with Mary and her companions. The Mother of God was pale, her eyes were red with weeping, and she was closely wrapped in a cloak of a bluish-grey colour. The clamour and insulting speeches of the enraged multitude might be plainly heard; and a herald at that moment proclaimed in a loud voice, that three criminals were about to be crucified. The servant opened the door; the dreadful sounds became more distinct every moment; and Mary threw herself on her knees. After praying fervently, she turned to John and said, 'Shall I remain? Ought I to go away? Shall I have strength to support such a sight?' John made answer, 'If you do not remain to see him pass, you will grieve afterwards.' They remained therefore near the door, with their eyes fixed on the procession, which was still distant, but advancing by slow degrees. When those who were carrying the instruments for the execution approached, and the Mother of Jesus saw their insolent and triumphant looks, she could not control her feelings, but joined her hands as if to implore the help of heaven; upon which one among them said to his companions: 'What woman is that who is uttering such lamentations?' Another answered: 'She is the Mother of the Galilean.' When the cruel men heard this, far from being moved to compassion, they began to make game of the grief of



this most afflicted Mother: they pointed at her, and one of them took the nails which were to be used for fastening Jesus to the cross, and presented them to her in an insulting manner; but she turned away, fixed her eyes upon Jesus, who was drawing near, and leant against the pillar for support, lest she should again faint from grief, for her cheeks were as pale as death, and her lips almost blue. The Pharisees on horseback passed by first, followed by the boy who carried the inscription. Then came her beloved Son. He was almost sinking under the heavy weight of his cross, and his head, still crowned with thorns, was drooping in agony on his shoulder. He cast a look of compassion and sorrow upon his Mother, staggered, and fell for the second time upon his hands and knees. Mary was perfectly agonised at this sight; she forgot all else; she saw neither soldiers nor executioners; she saw nothing but her dearly-loved Son; and, springing from the doorway into the midst of the group who were insulting and abusing him, she threw herself on her knees by his side and embraced him. The only words I heard were, 'Beloved Son!' and 'Mother!' but I do not know whether these words were really uttered, or whether they were only in my own mind. A momentary confusion ensued. John and the holy women endeavoured to raise Mary from the ground, and the archers reproached her, one of them saying, 'What hast thou to do her, woman? He would not have been in our hands if he had been better brought up.' A few of the soldiers looked touched; and, although they obliged the Blessed Virgin to retire to the doorway, not one laid hands upon her. John and the women surrounded her as she fell half fainting against a stone, which was near the doorway, and upon which the impression of her hands remained. This stone was very hard, and was afterwards removed to the first Catholic church built in Jerusalem, near the Pool of Bethesda, during the time that St. James the Less was Bishop of that city. The two disciples who were with the Mother of Jesus carried her into the house, and the door was shut. In the mean time the archers had raised Jesus, and obliged him to carry the cross in a different manner. Its arm being unfastened from the centre, and entangled in the ropes with which he was bound, he supported them on his arm, and by this means the weight of the body of the cross was a little taken off, as it dragged more on the ground. I saw numbers of persons standing about in groups, the greatest part amusing themselves by insulting our Lord in different ways, but a few veiled females were weeping.