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I am an old man now; the burden of fourscore years is resting upon me. But the events of a certain April day in the year 783 A.U.C. – full half a century ago – are as fresh in my memory as if they had happened yesterday.

At that time I was stationed with my Hundred on garrison duty at the Castle of Antonia, in Jerusalem. I had been ordered to take charge of the execution of a malefactor who had just been sentenced to death. Accordingly, on the morning of the day mentioned, I selected twelve of my men, such as were hardened to bloody deeds, and with them I proceeded to the Prætorium. All was hurry and excitement there. As it was the time of the Jewish Passover, the city was thronged with strangers. A multitude of people had assembled and were clamoring for the death of this man. On our arrival he was brought forth. He proved to be that Prophet of Nazareth whose oracular wisdom and wonder-working power had been everywhere noised abroad. I had heard much about him.

He claimed to be the Messiah for whose advent the Jews had been looking from time immemorial; and his disciples believed it. They called him by such well-known Messianic titles as "Son of Man," "Son of David" and "Son of God." He spoke of himself as "the only-begotten Son of God," declaring that he had been

"in the bosom of the Father before the world was," and that he was now manifest in human form to expiate the world's sin. This was regarded by the religious leaders as rank blasphemy and they clamored for his death. He was tried before the Roman court, which refused to consider the charge, inasmuch as it involved a religious question not lying within its jurisdiction; but the prisoner, being turned over to the Sanhedrin, was found worthy of death for "making himself equal with God."

I remember him well as he appeared that day. From what I had heard I was prepared to see a hard-faced impostor or a fanatic with frenzy in his eyes. He was a man of middle stature, with a face of striking beauty and benignity, eyes of mingled light and warmth, and auburn hair falling over his shoulders. It was not strange that he looked pale and haggard; for he had passed through three judicial ordeals since the last sunset, besides being scourged with the *flagellum horrible* and exposed to the rude buffeting of the midnight guard. He had been clothed in the cast-off purple of the Roman procurator and wore a derisive crown of thorns. But, as he issued from the Hall of Judgment, such was his commanding presence that the multitude was hushed and separated to make way.

The cross, constructed of transverse beams of sycamore, was brought and laid upon his shoulders. About his neck was suspended a titulum on which was inscribed, *Jesu Nazaret, Rex Judæorum*. I was told that the Jewish leaders had objected to his being called their King; but Pilate, by whose orders the titulum

was prepared, was for some reason insistent and answered them shortly, "What I have written, I have written." It was easy to see, however, that they bitterly resented it.

At the accustomed signal my quaternions fell into the line and the procession moved on. I rode before, clearing the way. The people thronged the narrow streets, crying more and more loudly as we proceeded, "*Staurosate! Staurosate!* Crucify him!"

The Nazarene, weak from long vigils and suffering, bowed low under his burden. A woman in the company, by name Veronica, pressed near and wiped the dust and blood from his haggard face. It was reported that the napkin when withdrawn bore the impress of his face, marred, but divinely beautiful. Whether this be true or not I cannot say.

As the multitude surged onward toward the Jaffa gate, a cobbler named Ahasuerus, as if moved by a malignant spirit, thrust his foot before the prisoner, who stumbled thereat and fell. In punishment for that cruel deed he is said to be still a wanderer upon the earth with no rest for his weary feet. This, too, is a mere legend; but certainly I have found, even in the grim business of a soldier, that retribution like a fury pursues all pitiless men.

We passed through the Jaffa gate and entered upon the steep road leading to the place of execution. The sun flamed down upon us; we were enveloped in a cloud of dust. The prisoner at length, overborne by his cross, fell beneath it. We seized upon an Ethiopian who chanced to be in the throng and placed the burden upon him. Strange to tell, he assumed it without a

murmur; insomuch that by many he was suspected of being a secret follower of Jesus.

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