

SAUL AND STEPHEN

A SACRED DRAMA

BY

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*Uniform with this Play, by the
same Author*

PASSOVER NIGHT. 6d.

THE LAST PASSOVER-NIGHT. 6d.

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS: An
Old Testament Passion Play. 1s. 6d.

TO MY SISTER
AILSA

EASTERTIDE,
Spring of 1921.

PREFACE

THE only liberty taken with the New Testament narrative in this dramatization of "the Conversion of St. Paul" may be defended as being ideally and dramatically, if not chronologically, exact. The death of Stephen, followed by Saul's persecution and conversion, though it occurred in a very early year of the history of the Church, could hardly have taken place in the *first* year of that history. But *dramatically* this construction is not untrue: for the announcement to Saul of the Christian assertion of the Resurrection, and of Stephen's preaching, made part of the history of the *infancy* of the Church; as obviously the extirpation of a community could only have been contemplated at the very earliest stage of its career. In the same way, the martyrdom of Holy Innocents is always connected, ideally, with the *Christmas* narrative, though chronologically it may have been somewhat later.

Otherwise, every incident is either justified by imaginative necessity or by direct references in the Acts and the Epistles, some of the minutest of which are also the most significant.

In particular it may be said that, ghastly-though this portrayal of Saul's persecution is, not one horrible detail of action or verbal description but is simply the trans-

cript of something which Saul himself, or his friend Luke, has written about his deed. Persecution by inquisition is a dreadful business in any period or at any time. How smoothly we glide over the familiar texts which describe that first Inquisition when it forms part of "the passage appointed for the Epistle" or "the Second Lesson"! It is not until some occasion like a dramatization forces us to interrogate those texts that they yield up to us their terrible reality. But may we not for that very reason add that it is just *thus* that we may come more fully to realize the length, breadth, height, and depth of the grace which purged such guilt away, and which made out of the fanatical and cruel Inquisitor the Apostle of Faith, Hope, and Love?

May this play, then, whether it is acted or read, be the means of assisting some to a fuller grasp of the narrative, a deeper study of the New Testament text, and a livelier apprehension of the "Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Love of God; and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

CAIRO,
Easter Eve, 1921.

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Two years separate Acts II. and III.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SAUL OF TARSUS, a young graduate of GAMALIEL'S school.

CHRISTIANS.

STEPHEN, the first Martyr.
PETER, the Chief Apostle.
JAMES, Ruler of the Church at Jerusalem.
BARNABAS, an Apostle.
MARK, his nephew.
PHILIP the Deacon.
ANANIAS, ruler of the Church at Damascus.
JUSTUS, a young Disciple.
TIMON, a Disciple.
ANNA, his wife.
Their SISTER and CHILDREN.
Other DISCIPLES.

NON-CHRISTIAN JEWS.

CAIAPHAS, the High-Priest.
GAMALIEL, a celebrated Doctor and Teacher of the Law.
The CHIEF RABBI and RULER of the Tarsus Synagogues.
The RULER of the Synagogue of Hellenist Jews at Jerusalem.
A TRAVELLER.
TWO FALSE-WITNESSES.
TWO ATTENDANTS.
Other JEWS.

PAGANS.

TWO GREEKS.
TWO ROMANS.
TWO SYRIANS.
TWO ARABS.
THREE PHILOSOPHERS.

SAUL AND STEPHEN

PROLOGUE

The court of the Jewish synagogue at Tarsus. SAUL, a young graduate of GAMALIEL'S school at Jerusalem, seated among the Rabbis and his friends.

CHIEF RABBI. Praise be to Him who hath given thee such wisdom, Rabbi Saul! Undoubtedly this opinion which thou hast given is correct. The case, truly, baffled me; and to whom should I have gone but to the pupil of the most glorious of our Doctors, the Rabbi Gamaliel? Lo, the learning of the master hath passed unto him who sat at his feet!

SAUL. It is thy kindness that speaks for me, not my merit.

CHIEF RABBI. Thy merit. I am an old man, and my time is o'er. I and all these brethren look to *thee* as Tarsus' hope and glory in the years—who knows, the centuries!—to come. Oh, Saul! who shall set limit to what thou mayest do, or become? Birth and training, gifts natural and acquired, all are thine. Of the stock of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law, a Pharisee; as touching the interpretation of the Law, a Rabbi with Gamaliel's licence to teach; as touching righteousness in the keeping of that Law—yea, to its last jot and tittle—blameless! Behold an Israelite indeed! These things, then, are thy gain, and ours. On these things we put our trust; and do thou boldly put thine also.

SAUL. I do so, thanks be to the Lord. The Law! It is my one desire, my one plea. Verily, the multitude which knows not the Law is accursed; daily I thank my God that I am not as others are, ignorant of it, breakers of it. Oh for the righteousness which is after the Law of God! Thou art ambitious for me, my father! Believe me, if I could but establish my righteousness before God, my ambition would be reached.

CHIEF RABBI. Then it hath been reached; who could doubt it? Hath not this fame gone about in every place of thee, "Touching the righteousness that is in the Law, blameless"?

SAUL (*sighing*). I have striven indeed, and do strive; yet my soul knows no rest and no satisfaction. I tell thee, my father, I was happier when I was a little child. Ah, I was alive without the Law once! Aye, in those days I lived! But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died—I died!

CHIEF RABBI. Thou speakest strangely, my son; was that which is good made death unto thee?

SAUL. God forbid! But apart from the Law sin was dead and I was alive; but, when the commandment came, sin came to life and killed me!

CHIEF RABBI. What commandment? Always thou sayest "the commandment."

SAUL. I think it was the last that found me out. Yes! it was no difficult matter to be approved just in respect of the nine. But ah! that day when the word "Thou shalt not covet" came home to my soul! Oh, my father! it revealed to my heart that lust was there! Before, I knew not that. And sin, taking its opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all manner of lust. Oh, wretched man that I am! (*A silence, during which SAUL struggles to master his emotion. All are greatly amazed.*) It was the Law that be-

trayed me; nevertheless, to it I return again and yet again. One day, perhaps, I shall attain, and establish my righteousness before God!

(Two or three friends rise and quiet his agitation; they seem to reason with him, and he acquiesces.)

CHIEF RABBI. Our son is not himself. Too much studying hath strained him overmuch.

A RABBI. Rabbi Saul errs through excess of humility, methinks. But a little, and he would have become one of the disciples of the mad Baptist of the deserts, who, not content with giving baths to the unwashed and accursed multitude which knows not the Law,—*that* did no harm!—must needs insolently invite our holy Scribes and Pharisees, our Doctors and Rabbis, to pass through baptismal waters, as if, forsooth, they were no better than proselytes from the unclean Gentiles. God's curse on him! He deserved his fate.

SAUL. Pooh! he was mad. But at least he kept the Law. He was presumptuous, indeed, in prescribing fasts and penances whereof Moses is silent; but what hath made my blood boil, these last three years of my course at the Holy City, has been the conduct of that successor of his, the deceiver from Nazareth—*Nazareth*, whence cometh neither prophet nor any other good thing. He is a breaker of the Sabbath and of the Law; he came eating and drinking; a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber; a friend of outlaw publicans and outcast sinners; a deceiver of the people, whom he bewitches by his signs and wonders; a blasphemer of Moses—aye, a blasphemer against the Holy One Himself! . . .

ALL. How sayest thou?

SAUL. It was beginning to come to our ears that he gives himself out in Galilee to be the Christ, the Son of God.

ALL. God forbid ! *(Consternation and horror.)*

A YOUNG JEW. 'Tis said that his life is wondrous fair and good. Didst thou never see him ?

SAUL. By the mercy of God, no ! else had I surely done him a violence. He was for the more part in Galilee, save for a few feasts when he came up to the city. But our leaders are not asleep; already when I left had the word gone out from them against him; they were taking counsel together how they might lay hands on him and destroy him. Let him have a care to himself !

THE YOUNG JEW. Destroy him ! For what cause ?

SAUL. For what cause ! For blasphemy against God ; for being a danger to the commonwealth of Israel ; for bringing our holy national hope into contempt in the eyes of Jew and Gentile. As though the glorious Messiah, the King of Israel, the Restorer of the Nation, the Subduer of all peoples—aye, of Rome herself—to the holy yoke of the daughter of Zion, should be a carpenter from Nazareth, altogether born in sin, law-ignorant and law-breaker ! God's curse on him ! *(All cry " Amen !")* Ah, if I could but have stayed to put nerve into Caiaphas's weak arm ! . . .

Enter a TRAVELLER, who is greeted by some of the party.

CHIEF RABBI. My son, thou art right, but too much thou dost perturb thyself. The God of our fathers knows how miserably to bring such miserables to a miserable end. In good time comes this interruption; for it may chance to bring us news to divert from these troublous themes.

(The newcomer is brought forward to salute the CHIEF RABBI.)

CHIEF RABBI. Thou art very welcome, my son. From whence comest thou ?

TRAVELLER. From the Holy City, my father.

CHIEF RABBI. As our son Saul himself. But thou hast later news.

TRAVELLER. Truly, my father, for I left instantly after the Passover—that is, as soon as the Sabbath in the week of unleavened bread was over. It was a strange feast; the minds of men were troubled as I never saw them troubled before.

CHIEF RABBI. And wherefore?

TRAVELLER. That which befell the Nazarene moved all the city.

SAUL. Ha! we were talking of this even as thou didst enter. What befell him?

TRAVELLER. His day is over. (*Great movement of interest.*) Much our rulers had to bear. But what say you to his entering the city after the Sabbath before the Feast in mock array, escorted by his mad Galilean faction, as though he were Messiah-King—I ask the mercy of God for uttering that word! That settled it. I say naught of the dishonour he fastened on our Doctors time and again that week, silencing them by sophistries, and demeaning them in the esteem of the people. His cup was full and overflowed. His doom was decreed. What perplexed our rulers was to detach him from his following; for they were numerous, and, it must be confessed, fanatically bound to his cause. But we knew that if only we could take him privily and bring him swiftly to judgment the heat of his rabble would chill soon enough; with your false Messiahs nothing fails like failure! And this they accomplished through the agency of a man of Cherioth—I forget his name—one of his elect Twelve, please you! who ratted at the last; I think he had found the prospects of Nazarene-Messianic rule less to his taste than he had hoped! He sold him to us—

nay, it is too rich!—I ask our reverend Father's forgiveness for the jest; I relate but the pitiful fact—he sold him for . . . for thirty pieces of silver! (*Loud laughter.*) Nay, it is *true*. The Messiah for the price of an Abyssinian slave! (*Loud laughter again.*) And truly, this was the just summing-up of his matter; truly was his worth rightly there apprized. To conclude: on the very night of the Passover they fell on him suddenly in a dark grove between the Sheep Gate and the Mount of Olives. He was taken alive, his followers fled like hares—cowards and traitors to a man were these, his best! He was haled before the High Priest. Some trouble they had with the hired witnesses—the fools were nigh bungling it; but by good fortune the deceiver opened his mouth in time, and what could issue from such a mouth save the blasphemy on which his whole pretension hinged? He said before them all with a loud voice that he was the Christ, the Son of . . .

SAUL (*springing up, vociferating*). Silence! Profane not our ears (*putting his fingers in his ears*).

MANY OTHERS. Ah, the blasphemer! No more of that! Finish thy tale!

TRAVELLER. Ye are right, brethren; and verily I marvel that the heavens did not fall as he spoke that word. The Chief Priest rent his robe when he heard it. At dawn the Council met, and he was sentenced to death. But what death? Stoning? The accursed Romans have taken even that right from us. To Pilate then! We had trouble with *him*, and some bitter morsels did he make us eat, which he will rue full bitterly, Gentile dog! But in the end it was well. Stoning was verily too good for that man, and the Lord brought good from our shame in having to beg the boon of his death from a heathen. For it brought him to a heathen end, a dog's death, my masters!

Pilate proved but a bully and coward after all. The bare mention of Tiberius Cæsar cowed him. What! a king in Syria! The gloomy ruffian at Caprææ was not likely to let the rumour of *that* pass, and our dear Pontius felt his head loosen on his shoulders. Oh, he made haste *then* to clear the Galilean out of his path! By the third hour the order had been given; the convict was led forth beyond the city gate. And there and then—— I see you guess the rest!

(The excitement, which has been steadily growing, now reaches its climax. SAUL, in particular, is nearly beside himself.)

SAUL. Nay, speak the word! Oh, worthy fate! Let our ears hear the word!

TRAVELLER. Aye, a worthy fate; not even the death of an Israelite: a criminal's fate, a dog's death! There, between the carrion of two damned and dying highwaymen, he was . . . *(He raises his arms horizontally.)*

ALL *(shouting)*. Crucified! Ha!

SAUL *(beside himself, leaping on to the steps and flinging high his arms)*. Crucified! Praise to the God of Heaven! The Lord hath Himself spoken. The Lord hath ended the matter with His curse. For what saith the Scripture? "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." He is anathema; JESUS IS ACCURST!

ALL *(leaping to their feet and shouting)*. Jesus is accurst!

(The scene closes swiftly.)

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Jerusalem. The synagogue of the Greek-speaking Jews. Not unlike a mosque, but with seats on the dais in front for the chief members of the synagogue. The roll of the Law is kept in a special casket at the same end. A large number of members, Greek-speaking Jews from Libya, Cyrene, Alexandria, Tarsus, and Anatolia, are present. A discussion, not prayer, is going on. All are seated in a circle on the mats which cover the floor of the synagogue, only the RULER sitting cross-legged on a low chair.*

RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE. We are agreed, then, that this Stephen is no longer worthy to be a member of this honourable synagogue?

ALL (*loudly*). Agreed!

RULER. And that he be cast forth from this synagogue by solemn excommunication?

ALL. Amen! Amen!

1ST JEW. He hath blackened our faces. In the dispute last night we were not able to get even with him.

2ND JEW. He spake with the wisdom of the serpent and the spirit of Beelzebub. Away with him!

3RD JEW. Since his new appointment in the accursed sect of the Nazarenes he hath become intolerable!

A JEW OF TARSUS. Would that Rabbi Saul had been with us last night! We needed that tongue in which moves the wisdom of Gamaliel, and something to boot. The Nazarene would have been put to shame.

ANOTHER JEW OF TARSUS. He will be here anon. A courier bearing the Imperial mail told me he saw him disembarking at Cæsarea.

1ST JEW OF TARSUS. Aha, victory! But, honourable Ruler, to what purpose is this excommunication?

Stephen it will concern not, for even now these Nazarenes have formed their own synagogue, in which they teach and from which they propagate their thrice-accursed heresy. Such ongoings as never man saw! New prayers with the old, new rites with the old ordinances, new readings with the Law and the Prophets. I ask refuge in God! And the black shame is that the people hear them gladly; they have bewitched them! And the blacker shame is that the Elders and the Rulers of the synagogue—save *our* worthy chief—are feeble of knee; their hands hang down; they have shot their bolt, it seems, and it has miscarried. Excommunicate him from this synagogue? Amen! But the work that truly calls to be done is once more to set the nation on fire, our rulers and the people alike.

RULER. Thou speakest too truly, my son. Their sleep of death must be broken, or the nation dies. Myself was ashamed to the heart at the meeting of the Sanhedrin last week to see how their Twelve—the truth must be admitted—made our Rulers fools; insomuch that the great Rabbi Gamaliel himself gave an opinion that angered me. I would have countered it, but that I was younger than he. He said, “Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do touching these men.” . . .

THE ATTENDANT. Hist! Here he comes.

Enter RABBI GAMALIEL. *All rise.*

GAMALIEL. Peace be to you!

RULER. And on thee peace! The synagogue of the Hellenist Jews is honoured by the presence of the Rabbi of Rabbis.

GAMALIEL. It seems that I have interrupted some stern debate. I see your faces set and dark. As for me, I but came for news about a countryman of some

of you; for where, if not in this synagogue, should I have tidings of my son Saul, the pupil of my heart, the pride of Tarsus, my successor, if it please the Lord, when I sleep with my fathers?

RULER. This brother hath reported his landing at Ptolemais—

JEW. Cæsarea!

RULER. Cæsarea, truly! and without doubt he will shortly be sitting once more where we all sit—at thy feet, O most learned Doctor of the Law.

GAMALIEL. The Lord bless thee and him! And what are you disputing, O most learned Alexandrians, Cyrenians, Libyans, and you, sirs, from the Asiatic dispersion? Some heavy case it should seem!

RULER (*significantly*). The case of how the synagogue of the Hellenist Jews may accomplish a duty wherein we of the holy Sanhedrin itself failed, and something shamefully, as I think.

GAMALIEL. Ha! How meanest thou?

RULER. I mean the Nazarenes. We slew the serpent, but spared to crush the serpent's eggs, the result whereof thou knowest. The eggs have hatched out, and the matter is now to slay the young serpents.

GAMALIEL. Ye men of Israel, I repeat unto you that which I was moved to say to the High Priest and the Sanhedrin at their assembly. Take heed to yourselves, lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God!

RULER. Fighting against God! Who fights against God?

ATTENDANT (*at the door, in a loud voice*). Rabbi Saul!

Enter SAUL.

SAUL. Peace to you, brethren all! (*He perceives GAMALIEL. All have risen save he and the RULER; SAUL hurries to them and kisses each on the hand.*) Rabboni!

my beloved master! my honoured chief! dear brethren all, peace!

ALL. Peace to thy spirit!

GAMALIEL. Mine own pupil-son!

SAUL. I have had a prosperous voyage, my father, by the grace of the God of Israel. I could not stay at Tarsus. Fire was in my bowels, and I burned to come and exult together with you on the news which reached me from the Holy City: that God hath not wholly left His people; that, when it was expedient that one man should die for the people and the whole people perish not, then perished that man. Even so perish the enemies of the Lord, and let them that hate Him flee before Him.

RULER. Of whom speakest thou, my son?

SAUL. Of the accursed Nazarene; whom else? (*All look on each other.*) Oh, my fathers! when I saw to what his affair had grown my heart burned with fire; and when Zacharias came to us and told us the story of his end, and of the noble deeds of the rulers of our nation, how it cooled my burning heart! Hosanna! But, fathers and brethren, I expected joy, not sorrow. Wherefore see I you heavy and sad? Why look ye one upon the other?

RULER. Would that we could welcome thee with brighter news! It is a tale that shames me to tell and thee to hear. Nevertheless, it may be that thou hast been brought to the Holy City for even such a time as this.

SAUL. What meanest thou? Tell me all, my father.

RULER. We were talking of it ere thou enteredst, and I said, "We have killed the serpent, but spared the serpent's eggs. And now the eggs are hatched out."

SAUL. What evil-ominous riddle is this?

RULER. Tell me; he that informed thee—Zacharias—when left he Jerusalem?

SAUL. After the Sabbath in the days of unleavened bread.

RULER. Now I understand. Hear then and grieve, my son. On that very day—for thou sayest he left on the first day of the week—some of the Nazarenes, it would seem, compassed the theft of the body of the deceiver. The tomb was found rifled. The remainder of their synagogue was persuaded that he had risen from the dead! The old madness, quenched on the Sixth day, revived again on the First. The cowards seemed to gain new courage. This was bad, but it might have been borne, for they but sinned against their own souls. But on the fiftieth day—on the day of the Feast—Beelzebub himself with a legion of devils must have entered into them; for from that day they have stood forth preaching this man, and none can silence them; no, not the rulers; no, not the holy Sanhedrin itself! It is truly Satan himself who is giving them utterance, for these unlettered men, how could they, unaided, make orations? Worse still, they have bewitched the people. They are not in their disfavour: in their favour rather. Worst of all, many have been carried away by this madness—aye, of the priests not a few. Their synagogue grows; it is too strait for them. And the wretches continue John's intolerable rite; *they* also pass true-born sons of Abraham through the baptismal waters.

SAUL (*who has been listening to the above with rising horror and indignation*). But—but—what madness, what infamy is this? Thou sayest that many have been "carried away." Carried away to what? "Have believed." Believed what? What is the substance of their discourse? What is their message?

RULER. They preach the Nazarene, who, they say, is risen from Hades in the flesh, glorified and exalted. Oh, how shall I say it, for I see I make thee beside thyself? They declare that . . . that this Jesus, whom we crucified, is Lord and Messiah!

SAUL (*leaping up in terrible frenzy, stopping his ears*). Blasphemy! Oh, blasphemy! (*He rends his outer robe with uttermost violence.*) Ha! Hearest thou, O God of Heaven, and lettest not Thy firmament break over our heads! A CRUCIFIED MESSIAH! (*He spits.*) Ah-h!

GAMALIEL. Support him; I fear for him; he swoons!

(*Uproar. Many tend SAUL.*)

SAUL (*opening his eyes*). And now, what do we? Why prate we here? (*He staggers to his feet.*) Not a day, not one, must we longer wait. This sect must be cut off; the eggs have hatched out, thou sayest, Ruler! Then we must crush the young serpents, lest they, too, grow up and breed.

GAMALIEL. My son, thou dost well to be angry; but better still to restrain thy wrath by wisdom. Hath not the holy Sanhedrin agreed to my words when I said, "Ye men of Israel, take heed unto yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody. To him a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves. Yet he was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to naught. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him. He also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot over-

throw it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”
(Slight assent from some.)

SAUL. Ha! those were the words I heard as I was entering. Oh, my father, these words, and from thee!

GAMALIEL. From me, my son. Why lookest thou so upon me? Thou art young and I am old; accept my counsel.

SAUL. Oh, my father! I ne'er thought that we should come to this hour. Command me aught else, but not this. I know and am sure that this counsel, though it cometh not from a coward, is as injurious as if it so came. *(Great assent from those present.)* It is zeal we need, zeal! Oh for a zealot!

THE TARSUS JEW. Thou hast said! Saul is our leader! As touching the law a Pharisee, and now concerning zeal, persecuting that Way until no man walks it more! Is it not so, my masters?

(Great assent.)

GAMALIEL. Nay, if ye are obstinate! Hearken to me, foolish hot-heads! Ye are young and I am very old. . . .

SAUL *(starting up)*. Foolish! Well said Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, "Days should speak and a multitude of years should teach wisdom. But great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment."

GAMALIEL *(starting up)*. And this to me, who was teaching in Jerusalem before thy father begat thee in Tarsus among the Gentiles?

SAUL *(holly)*. The Gentiles! What have I to do with the Gentiles? *(He controls himself.)* Forgive me, my father; it breaks my heart to break with thee. But "there is a spirit with men, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Therefore I

said, Harken to me, and I also will show you my opinion."

GAMALIEL (*bitterly.*) Right well did I teach thee thy Scriptures. But it is ill for the hoary counsellor to stay where his counsel is contemned. Saul, thou hast shamed me; never shalt thou speak to me again.

(*He hides his face in his mantle and turns to the door.*)

SAUL. Nay, my father! (*He bursts into tears and tries to seize GAMALIEL'S robe. The latter tears himself clear and hurries forth. Several accompany him, trying to entreat him.*) Oh, hath it come to this? Yet dearer must my nation and the hope of Israel be to Saul than even the dearest tie.

RULER. Tush, heed it not! For in very truth his counsel was our undoing. Thou hast dared what we feared to do. (SAUL *groans. Re-enter those who went forth with GAMALIEL.*) Well, is he reconciled?

1ST JEW. He is incensed. He will not be entreated.

SAUL. And thus have I with my own hand struck at mine own natural affection! Well, let it die! Affectionless be Saul! Then woe, woe from henceforth to the Nazarenes for Gamaliel's sake!

ALL. Woe to them! Woe!

RULER. The hour is come, and with the hour the man. It is a chance for young blood. Only lead these my children, Saul, my son, and they will follow thee. My work shall be with the Sanhedrin.

SAUL. Listen, then. Who is the natural leader of these Nazarenes? I strike at *him*, and straightway.

RULER. Their Cephas is a coward—a loose "stone"!—and, besides, his authority hath doubtless been shaken by his denial. John saith nothing; and, moreover, he is of the kindred of the High Priest, and to him we may leave him. The rest are ciphers. James? He is new

to the work and still suspect. Nay, their hero of the hour is a member of this very synagogue; the Lord curse him! Rememberest thou not Stephen?

SAUL. What, Stephen the Alexandrian? *He!* Our former friend!

RULER. The same.

SAUL. His blood be on his own head, then. This affection also must I devote and sacrifice? Amen, so be it! (*He is moved again.*) Behold, then, we strike straight at *him*, as they struck straight at the Nazarene that night. And in the same way: we must stir up the people and the elders and scribes against him; *then* can we come upon him and catch him and bring him to the council.

RULER. Where he will speedily undo himself, or else I will undo him: leave that to me.

SAUL. It remains only to separate betwixt him and the people, for, as I understand, they hear him gladly. But so did they the Nazarene; yea, even till that last day. How, then, did ye separate between *him* and them?

1ST JEW. Rabbi, thou hast struck the mark. What shook the crucified Nazarene with the mob was some wild words which we brought up against him, that he would "destroy the temple." And what set the rulers against him was his words against Moses. Now Moses is very well; but it is this glorious holy place that is as the apple of the eye to all dwellers in Jerusalem, *and* (what weighs equally with all these sons of Jacob) is the plenisser of their purses! For what were Jerusalem without us, her sons, who come to her from the four corners of the earth to worship at her temple? The children of Jerusalem live off us, the Lord knoweth—and we know too, to our loss, for at the feasts they fleece us most unmercifully! Now then, Stephen hath

verily delivered himself into our hands. For what the Crucified used to say in the ear, he preaches on the housetops. He interprets the Law in a fashion that we can full easily turn to an accusation of lawlessness; and his sermons, that Adonai dispensed with a temple made with hands from the call of Abraham even unto Solomon, and that He can so dispense again, may easily be wrested into a blasphemy against our holy place. So now, Micaiah, and thou, Jehoshaphat, can ye not spread among the people, and afterwards witness before the council, that "this man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the Law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us"? Can ye not swear this?

THE TWO JEWS OF TARSUS. That can we, and swear it by the holy Temple itself—though not by the gold thereof!

(All laugh. SAUL has become abstracted; he is sitting somewhat apart, sunk in heavy thought.)

1ST JEW. Bravely! That, then, is your part, and thou shalt see, Ruler, how soon the favour of the mob will turn to frenzy; touch their pockets and their pride, and straight they forget him who has touched their hearts.

2ND JEW. Most true. On us also be it to suborn others to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

RULER. And leave the rest to me. Nay, only set the *people* howling, and the Sanhedrin will find a way fast enough. Gamaliel himself will then see who is fighting for God and who against Him.

SAUL (*rousing himself*). Ye see the way through, then, brethren? Up, then; we lose not a moment. Kindle

the fire, and heat the iron in it; and remember we strike when it is red-hot—not leave it to cool again. Aye, strike, and continue striking, and not like Joash, King of Israel, strike but thrice and stay. So shall we smite the enemies of God till we have consumed them. Blasphemy will he certainly talk before the council; and *then*, brethren, no running to the uncircumcised Roman, but a blasphemer's death according to our law! You take me?

THE TWO JEWS (*springing up*). Ours, therefore, to cast the first stone! Blessed be God, and blessed be His servant Saul of Tarsus! Oh, fellow-countryman, at *thy* feet shall we not cast our robes?

SAUL. So be it! Yet the honour is too great. And now despatch. Convince the multitude to-day, and the arrest shall be for the morning as he enters the Temple. And then woe to him and the synagogue of Satan!

RULER. Woe to the followers of the crucified Messiah!
(*Uproar.*)

JEWS. A stumbling-block! A reproach! Away with it!
(*Disorderly departure.*)

SAUL (*alone*). A crucified Messiah! (*He shudders.*) The reproach of the Cross! (*With a terrible gesture.*) Oh, God!

SCENE II.—*An open space outside one of the gates of Jerusalem. The passers-by and the salesmen at their stalls are all intently looking up the street within the gate. A crowd is approaching amid a formidable uproar.*

1ST CITIZEN. A Jerusalem crowd, and it means mischief.

2ND CITIZEN. What a terrible growling noise; it strikes chill to the heart!

(The noise increases fearfully, and suddenly the crowd bursts through the gate. STEPHEN is being hustled along by his captors. Close behind him are SAUL and the two WITNESSES, with stern, set faces. Clubs are brandished and imprecations rend the air.)

SAUL (*mounting on to a stone seat*). Come, make an end. His own lips condemned him. His defence before the Fathers was verily his own prosecution. He belittled the Temple and this holy City from which he is now cast forth. What! Heard ye not his conclusion, when he called us stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart, resisters of the Holy Ghost, persecutors of the prophets, slayers of the messengers of God, because of our righteous act in slaying the blasphemous Nazarene, Jesus? . . .

(Every sentence is punctuated with groans, terribly increasing with intensity. At the last word a veritable howl arises. They gesticulate at STEPHEN, gnashing on him with their teeth. STEPHEN, who the whole time has been looking in front of him with wide-open, intent eyes, suddenly looks up at SAUL's last word.)

STEPHEN. JESUS! (*An effulgence of light seems to fill his eyes and his countenance.*) Ah! Ah! There! . . . Behold, I see the heavens opened! I see the glory of GOD! and JESUS standing on the right hand of God! (*He raises his arms in an ecstasy.*)

(A terrible cry. All stop their ears with their fingers as they rush at STEPHEN. SAUL, still standing on the stone bench, is gazing with terrible fixity at STEPHEN.)

1ST WITNESS (*to those guarding STEPHEN*). Keep the crowd off, you there! Keep them off him till we begin.

Let this deed be done according to the prescription of the Law.

(They rapidly divest themselves of their upper garments.)

1ST AND 2ND WITNESSES (to SAUL). There, honoured master; guard these as thou art guarding the religion of God.

(They deposit their garments at his feet; then start forward, each catching up a large piece of building-stone from a heap lying near the wall.)

1ST AND 2ND WITNESSES (with stones poised). "THE HANDS OF THE WITNESSES SHALL BE FIRST ON HIM TO PUT HIM TO DEATH." Take that! *(hurling the stones with all their force).*

STEPHEN *(reeling and tottering forward)*. My God! *(With loudest voice.)* Lord Jesus! receive my spirit!

(He sinks on to his knees; his eyes are still directed upwards.)

1ST AND 2ND WITNESSES. "AND AFTERWARD THE HANDS OF ALL THE PEOPLE. SO SHALT THOU PUT THE EVIL AWAY FROM YOU." Have on!

THE CROWD. Take that! And that! . . .

(A shower of stones. STEPHEN sinks lower and lower.)

STEPHEN *(faintly, with closing eyes)*. Lord Jesus! lay not this sin to their charge! *(He dies.)*

A JEW. Take that to thy Jesus! *(precipitating on to the head of the prostrate body a heavy stone from closest range.)*

1ST WITNESS. Enough, man. Death hath him. Enough, I say!

(The crowd suddenly falls silent and begins to melt away. The two WITNESSES return and begin to resume their garments. SAUL has never once moved, and his gaze is still fixed and remote.)

1ST WITNESS. Hosanna! Did we well, master?

SAUL. "Jesus!" . . . (*He starts from his reverie and looks wildly round.*) Where are we? What do we? Ha! he is dead. 'Tis well. Yet 'tis but a beginning. The cancer must *all* be cut out or burned away.

2ND WITNESS. We have a list of all their houses, and brethren are told off to search them all. We two go to their synagogue. And thou?

SAUL. "Jesus!"

2ND WITNESS. Rabbi?

SAUL. Did I speak? What thou sayest is most true. Come, no delay! Death to the worshippers of the crucified Messiah! Compel them to blaspheme him by the test, "Jesus is Accurst"; or arrest them, women as well as men. Away!

ALL. Woe to them! Have on! Haste! [*Exeunt.*

(The body of STEPHEN is left alone. A dreadful hush has fallen on the sellers and customers. By-passers pass wide and with averted looks. From among them all a number of persons of grave mien, who were cowed during the murder, silently and slowly surround the body. They reverently straighten it, and, wiping away the blood, stretch over it a mantle, then sit around it, bowed and silent.)

1ST PROSELYTE. Ah, Stephen! Is it for us only to bury thee?

THE OTHERS. Ah, our brother!

(A great lamentation breaks forth from them all.)

SCENE III.—*The synagogue of the Christians.* PETER, JAMES, and certain of the Apostles and disciples, on their knees.

ALL. "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings. And grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may

Speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy child Jesus. Amen." (Silence. They rise.)

Enter PHILIP the Deacon in haste.

PHILIP. 'Tis over. Stephen, my fellow-deacon, is dead. The Lord's will be done!

PETER. The first martyr, but not the last. Ah, too happy!

PHILIP. A storm is bursting over us. The word has gone out for our extinction. They are on their way hither. Let our leader give commands.

PETER. Listen. This thing shall turn to the glory of God. Pass we the word round that all who can must escape. Scatter abroad. Disperse to the villages of Judea, to Samaria—aye, and farther afield, if need so be—wherever the Spirit doth lead, until this storm be overpast. Only we Apostles must remain here at our posts. Is not this thy sentence, James, my brother?

JAMES. 'Tis well.

PHILIP. But ye, our heads, the Church needs you! You must not give yourselves unto them for a prey!

PETER. We shall be in hiding until the first violence of the storm be past. Fear not. God will bring it to naught. From here we shall guide and rule the Church of God. Haste, John, brother mine; bring away the Blessed Mother to where thou wottest of.

[Exit JOHN.]

A YOUNG DISCIPLE NAMED JUSTUS (*at the window*). Oh, haste! Disperse! They come! I go down to secure the street door. Escape ye—the lane at the back!

[All go out. A minute later is heard the noise of the street door being battered down.]

Enter SAUL, the two WITNESSES, and others tumultuously, with the young DISCIPLE.

SAUL. Ha! they have flown. Whither have they gone, traitor? No reply? Beat him, men; make him smart for his foul treason. (*The DISCIPLE is beaten with rods.*) Still silent?

THE DISCIPLE (*groaning*). The Lord forgive thee!

SAUL. Bind him and take him to the prison. Propose to every man and every woman the test, "Jesus is Accurst"; he may then go free.

THE DISCIPLE (*with ecstatic face*). Jesus is Lord!

SAUL (*vociferating*). Silence! Wilt make me mad (*striking him on the mouth*)? Away with him! (*They leap on him and force him out.*) Some to the houses, some to the city synagogues! Away!

[*Exeunt violently.*]

SCENE IV.—*A house in Jerusalem. The evening meal is over. TIMON and two CHILDREN; ANNA, their mother, with infant at the breast; her sister, a young woman.*

TIMON (*to his children*). Now, chicks, to your beds! Say your evening hymn to your mother; then pray we to the Lord.

CHILDREN. "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servants depart in peace, according to Thy word . . ."

(*A battering at the outside door, and a great noise of voices. The room is suddenly entered without warning, violently.*)

MOTHER. Lord Jesus, have mercy on us!

SAUL. Lord Jesus again! More of the serpent brood? Bind them, friends, and hale them to prison.

1ST WITNESS. The test! Compel them to blaspheme!

SAUL (*to the father*). I come with authority from the High Priest. Say, "Jesus of Nazareth is Accurst!"

TIMON. Silence, blasphemer! Jesus is Lord!

SAUL. Away with him! (*He is hurled out of the door.*)

MOTHER. Ah! rescue, Lord Jesus!

SAUL. What, still? Thou maddenest me. That word thou must and shalt eat again. Say, "Jesus of Nazareth is Accurst!" Come, say it! Nay, thou shalt!

MOTHER. Rather die first!

SAUL. Blaspheme! Nay, tear from her these babes; we must save *them* at least for the God of Israel.

MOTHER. Oh, spare them! Have mercy!

SAUL. "Jesus is Accurst!"

MOTHER. Oh, oh, He is my Lord and Saviour!

(*The children are torn, screaming, from her. With a long wail she is dragged to the door.*)

MOTHER. Jesus! (*She is forced out.*)

SAUL. See to these children of Abraham. Have them cared for.

1ST WITNESS. The babe is still at the breast. Were it not better to let the woman have it with her in the gaol?

SAUL. 'Tis one. (*The infant is taken out.*) Will no one stop that screaming? It will make me mad. Whither next?

1ST WITNESS (*to another*). Remove them to the street till I descend. (*The two elder children are taken out.*) To the sixth house in this same lane (*looking at a paper*). How now, mistress (*to the younger woman who, since the beginning of the violence, has been cowering in a corner, and now groans*)? Art thou of the Jesus heresy, too? Come hither!

WOMAN. Mercy! I am afraid!

(*She is dragged to the centre.*)

SAUL. Thou, too? Come, blaspheme! The evening wears on and our work halts. Come, quickly blaspheme!

WOMAN. Oh, I cannot!

SAUL. Nay, then! (*He seizes her suddenly.*) Blasphe-
 mepheme!

WOMAN. Mercy! I cannot!

SAUL. Sawest thou thy sister's fate? 'Twill be
 thine.

WOMAN. I will give them up. I will go away. I
 will no more . . .

SAUL. That is naught. Give *him* up. Say the
 word!

WOMAN. Oh, agony! Masters, I am so afraid (*burst-
 ing into tears*).

1ST WITNESS (*threatening her terribly from behind*
 SAUL). "Jesus is Accurst!"

WOMAN (*wincing, aghast*). Jesus is . . .

SAUL. Finish!

WOMAN. . . . Accurst! (*SAUL releases her. There is
 a moment's pause, and then a terrible gesture of despair.*)
 Woe's me, woe (*shrieking*)! I am undone!

(*She collapses on to the floor.*)

SAUL. Whither next? Oh, God, send an end!

(*He staggers to the door, where he supports himself.*)

1ST WITNESS. I will send back those brats; let the
 wench rear them in that same godly opinion!

WOMAN (*collapsed*). Undone!

1ST WITNESS. That's all one. Remember thy last
 testimony, mistress, and abide by it! (*To SAUL.*)
 Come, Rabbi, the work waits.

(*He goes out with the other Jews. The two
 CHILDREN run in crying to the young WOMAN,
 who remains motionless.*)

CHILDREN. Kinswoman! take us to father! Oh,
 mother, mother! (*They wail.*)

WOMAN. Undone!

(*SAUL stares at the group for a moment.*)

SAUL. Lord God of Israel, 'tis for Thee! Strengthen me yet!

(He hurries forth. The wailing CHILDREN sit by the WOMAN'S tense, prostrate, motionless form in the centre of the desolated room.)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Sanhedrin. A council under the presidency of CAIAPHAS.*

CAIAPHAS. Gamaliel's pupil hath excelled himself, and his master too, hey, Rabbi? "He hath more understanding than his teacher—" how runs the blessed Scripture? Well, what saith the learned Rabbi now?

GAMALIEL. What I said before. This policy is not of God.

CAIAPHAS. We'll risk that. Well, to work! Give me the list of those who have been apprehended and now await our sentences in the Temple cells. But Saul must be our assessor. Call him. *(SAUL is called. He is haggard and white of face, with burning eyes.)* Hail, true zealot for God and His people Israel! Come, sit by me here.

GAMALIEL *(rising)*. Farewell.

(He passes SAUL without a word and goes out.)

CAIAPHAS. Whom to bring in first? Cephas and young John, our very misguided young friend? Tut, tut; we must try what a Family Council of Discipline will do for him. Question thou them, my son; for methinks I remember that last time we made but sorry work of it with these same twain.

SAUL. Alas! my father, they and all the leaders were given the alarm, and escaped us. They are being sought out. But we have him fast who wrought their escape. I pray thee, let example be made of him.

(JUSTUS is brought in in chains.)

CAIAPHAS (*scowling at him*). Thou sorry knave! how liketh thee the cell, the bonds, the beatings? (*Silence.*) How now! Know'st thou that in yon dark dungeon we can compass thy DEATH lightly enough? . . . Thy gaoler will perchance be more diligent to make thee eat blows than bread (takest thou me?) . . . and our admired Pilatus will hardly concern himself with the regretted demise of—ha!—(*ironically consulting his list*) Justus, the son of . . . Nemo (*with bitterest contempt*).

JUSTUS. I am ready.

CAIAPHAS (*raging*). Waste no more time on him. 'Tis an arrant knave, a wretch, a scurvy, pestilential fellow. Truly, to rid the land of thee and thy like were a virtuous deed. Thy voices, fathers and brethren! What is thine, my son?

SAUL. For death.

ALL. Well said!

CAIAPHAS. Away with him from the light! Who comes next? (JUSTUS is taken out.)

SAUL. Oh, father of our people, I crave thy leave. I may not stay for this whole session, but ask that I may instantly give thee my report. There is a matter admits not of delay.

CAIAPHAS. My son, say on! (SAUL rises.) But what is thine opinion concerning those who shall prove obstinate, both men and women?

SAUL. I give my voice against them beforehand. Let them be as Justus. But what of that? Hear, my father. We have destroyed Stephen the Alexandrian, their true leader and chief preacher. We have turned

from the sect the hearts of all the people. We searched the houses, and on the next day, being a Sabbath, we sifted the synagogues of the Jews in Jerusalem and the country round about; and oft in every synagogue we have beaten and punished them, compelling them to blaspheme. Those many who after our inquisition remained recusant we have haled to the common prisons and shut them up, awaiting the sentence of this council. But many have fled, and among them their Twelve—known to your Sanctity—and others who seem to be of reputation. These we are persecuting to the places beyond, even, if need be, unto strange cities. For now it hath been revealed that the blasphemers have at Damascus a strong following—nay, after Jerusalem, it is their chief synagogue. A boon, O shepherd of our people! Give me, I pray thee, letters to the rulers of the Damascus synagogues, that if I find any of that Way, whether they be men or women, I may bring them bound to Jerusalem. If all these measures be taken, it may be that the God of our fathers will roll away from us this reproach for ever.

CAIAPHAS. We praise thy zeal, my son, and approve thy plan. *(To a scribe.)* Get the warrant made out immediately. *(Exit scribe.)* But we bid thee rest, were it only for this day, my son. Methinks thou needest repose most sorely.

SAUL. Rest! for such as me, and with this fire in my bowels? Perhaps at Damascus I may find rest, but not here, not now. Rest!

(Re-enter the scribe with warrant.)

CAIAPHAS *(as he signs and seals)*. Would that thou wouldst tarry awhile, if only to report to us more fully thine exploits. We would know more of Stephen.

SAUL. Of Stephen! Ah, Stephen! . . . *(He remains a long while silent as if immersed in his own*

thoughts. Then, as if speaking to himself rather than to CAIAPHAS:) Shall I ever be able to forget it? . . . He looked up! What was that he saw? What was that he said? I *will* not repeat it, nor name that name! . . . But that look! And he prayed. . . . (*Rousing himself—*) Of Stephen, said your Sanctity? Yes, truly, he died. Farewell! (*To the scribe—*) The warrant, friend!

CAIAPHAS (*while SAUL turns to the scribe*). Bring in the next accused.

(TIMON and ANNA are brought in in chains. As SAUL is departing their eyes meet his. His face darkens. He goes out.)

CAIAPHAS (*gazing thoughtfully after him*). When and how shall we see our Tarsus youth again?

(*He turns suddenly and savagely to the accused. The scene closes quickly.*)

SCENE II. — *The Jerusalem-Damascus road near Damascus. Noonday. Travellers, pedestrians, etc., passing in both directions.*

Enter two GREEKS.

1ST GREEK. I dispute your contention, friend, altogether, wholly, and entirely. The ancients of the Athenian period did not so grievously surpass the men of latter days. I hold the contrary, that in all things they have been excelled by their successors.

2ND GREEK. You jest. Look at Pheidias and his Parthenon.

1ST GREEK. The Parthenon is as much excelled by the temple of Artemis at Ephesus as the moon is excelled by the sun.

2ND GREEK. You are luckless in your comparison, friend! Seeing that the Parthenon is the origin and

the perfect model, clearly *it* must be figured by the sun; and it is your temple of Artemis, as the derived, that must be compared to the moon with her borrowed light. And by the gods! Artemis *is* the Moon-goddess. Ha! ha! ha! Truly, friend Democritus, I thank you for your simile! The temple of Artemis, who is the Moon, must be the moon of your comparison; and now you will hardly deny that the temple of the bright Athene must equally be—the sun! Ha! ha! ha! You have given me a good laugh, so neatly to prove my case and refute your own!

1ST GREEK. You have been sharpening your wits at the logic schools, methinks. Well, who shall judge? Were it a contest, now, between Chloe and Rhoda, our dancing-girls, that were more compassable!

(They pass, laughing.)

Enter two ROMANS.

1ST ROMAN. They say it grows worse and worse. The tyrant spends wellnigh all his time at Capreæ in grottoes of infamous delights. He is sunken in foul sensuality like any king of this vile Orient—like a Herod, say. Oh, shame that he should be a Roman and bear a Cæsar's name!

2ND ROMAN. Shame indeed! Where are the philosophers? Where are the poets? Where? Oh, monster! oh, Tiberius! . . .

1ST ROMAN. Hush, man, for your life; the very birds of the air carry such words to Capreæ. How can we know that those two supple Greeklings in front there are not Government informers? *(They pass.)*

Enter two SYRIANS.

1ST SYRIAN. This Syrian question is verily an inextricable tangle. What, in the name of Zeus, Tammuz,

and all the gods which do or do not exist, ails the Occupying Power that it permits this Arab Prince to lord it in Damascus and all the country east of Jordan? I prefer Rome to al-Hârith.* Although I hate Rome sore, I hate these bare-legged Arabs yet sorer. What would they, barbarians, with us civilized Syrians? Let their bare shanks take them back to their bare deserts, say I!

2ND SYRIAN. Truly Rome is weakening, and no man knoweth her policy. Behold the Jewish question in Palestine! These Herods are but broken reeds; doth Rome think that *they* will save her from the fanatic Jews of Jerusalem?

1ST SYRIAN. Before al-Hârith, Rome; and before Rome, Alexander; and before Alexander, the Empires of the East. It is long since poor Arâm was free. Ah, when shall Syria be independent and glorious once again? The gods know.

2ND SYRIAN. The gods! I think we know as much as they! See now. . . . *(They pass.)*

Enter two ARABS.

1ST ARAB. Long live al-Hârith! Haste we to meet his Governor! Down with the tyrannous Roman, the false Greek, the greedy Jew, the cowardly Syrian, say I! Arabia's day is still to come!

2ND ARAB. Thou hast hit the mark. But, I pray you, answer me: as touching religion, are our gods their gods, think you, with other names? They have Zeus, we Allâhu Taâla. Zeus had daughters, Athene and what-not? And Allâhu Taâla, are not his daughters the exalted maidens Manât, Allât, and Uzza?

* Al-Hârith (called by the Greeks Aretas) was an Arab chief who occupied Damascus at this time.

1ST ARAB. What! had Zeus no sons, that Alláhu should have only daughters? Or what if he neither begat nor were begotten?

2ND ARAB. Villain! I will break thy head for this at Mekka! Where, then, would our Kaaba be? I will tell this to the poets at the Fair of Ukâz. They will thee scarify! Thou wilt scarce escape a flaying! (*They pass.*)

Enter three PHILOSOPHERS.

1ST PHIL. I tell you, Lucretius has said the last word. The world is atoms and an attracting force, that is all. The gods, if gods there be, fled from their world after setting it a-going. (*He sighs.*)

2ND PHIL. I hold with those of the Porch rather, who say that God is diffused as Spirit throughout this frame of things. Yet little comfort enough I derive therefrom; for that near Spirit is as silent to me as your remote gods. And if you say that I myself am He, I tell you that I do not desire to hear *my* voice, but His. And after death, what? Your spirit, you think, is extinguished as a light blown out; mine, as I hold, is merged in the world-spirit. But it might (I do confess) just as well be extinguished; for the drop that unites with the ocean is, as hypostasis, just as surely destroyed as if it were annihilated. Ah, Cleon, small comfort do we get us from our philosophies.

3RD PHIL. If there were a God, He would speak to us a Word, as the divine Plato reasoned in his dialogue—a word that we could not mistake, and that would guide us to Himself. But He has not spoken it, and we are left floundering in our ocean of doubt, without even a raft on which a half-drowned wretch or two might make the farther shore.

1ST PHIL. Too true. 'Tis very bright, brighter than even a Syrian noon. Yet I heard a sound as of thunder.

2ND PHIL. Thunder from a clear sky, Cleon! An omen, is it not?

3RD PHIL. An omen of good, may it be! (*They pass.*)

Enter two JEWS.

1ST JEW. Yes, I heard a sound. And, as thou sayest, it is strangely bright, even for noontide. I shall rejoice to find myself under the apricot-trees of Damascus. We go direct to the Chief Rabbi?

2ND JEW. Yes, to prepare for him a lodging. He will present his warrant this very day.

1ST JEW. And doubtless begin his work in the evening. Sawest thou ever the like of this man? I feared to look at him as he rode. Not once, not one single time hath he opened his lips since we left Jerusalem, save when he put the wretched Nazarenes to the test in the synagogues of Galilee and Pentapolis on the way.

2ND JEW. His countenance was often as we saw it that hour when he watched Stephen die.

1ST JEW. And anon darkened as the thunder-cloud, while his eyes flashed as the lightning flashes.

2ND JEW. Lo now! Who is that rushing hitherwards on the highway?

1ST JEW. By my life, one of our company. Lo! he staggers! He brings news of something untoward. . . .

Enter one of the WITNESSES, reeling.

WITNESS. Hither! Come quick! A strange thing, an awful thing hath befallen!

BOTH. What, what? Oh, say!

WITNESS. Ask me not. I myself am as a drunken man. Rabbi Saul is struck mad or blind, or both.

BOTH. How? How?

WITNESS. On a sudden a terrible light shone round us, making the brightness of the noonday sun no more

than a rush-light, and a sound as the thunder of many waters thundered in our ears. Dazzled and deafened, we fell to the ground. Then heard I Saul's voice—his alone. I looked up. How shall I describe his face, lit in the glare of that terrible light? His eyes were straining, as if he saw something, where I saw but empty air and light. Then he spoke. . . .

BOTH. Oh, what said he?

WITNESS, "WHO ART THOU, LORD?"—as one horror-struck.

BOTH. What! did he see someone?

WITNESS. How else? And then, trembling, "LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?" . . . I think I swooned then. When I came to myself I found the others standing round Saul. He was stone-blind, though his eyes were wide open! They are leading him by the hand to Damascus, he walking the while as the sleep-walker walks.

1ST JEW. Oh, hush! here he comes. Oh, my God! Is that Saul?

(A pause. Then very slowly SAUL enters, led by both hands. He advances very slowly. The others follow, amazed.)

1ST WITNESS *(to the 2nd, aside)*. Hath he spoken again?

2ND WITNESS *(to the 1st)*. Not once.

(SAUL advances a pace or two more. Then, very suddenly, in an awful voice:)

SAUL. STEPHEN!

2ND JEW *(to the 1st, aside)*. Hist! What did I say?

SAUL. STEPHEN! *(He stops; the others stop also.)*

SAUL. Stephen right! and I wrong!

2ND WITNESS. Oh, speak not to him!

SAUL. In glory . . . "JESUS OF NAZARETH!" "SAUL, SAUL, WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?"

(*He strikes his head violently with both hands, and so remains, then begins to walk forward again, hands to head.*)

2ND WITNESS (*with the other JEW, gently resuming his hands*). Whither, master ?

SAUL (*gazing at him vacantly for a long while without speaking*). Whither ? "ARISE AND ENTER THE CITY, AND IT SHALL BE TOLD THEE WHAT THOU SHALT DO."

[*Exeunt slowly and in intensest silence.*]

SCENE III.—*A room in Straight Street, Damascus.* SAUL, *blind, tossing on a pallet bed.* The two JEWS of the previous scene stand at a distance watching.

SAUL (*bursting out with a loud cry*). Oh, miserable man that I am !

1ST ATTENDANT (*aside to 2nd*). Thus hath he been all this day; yesterday he was praying, but to-day the darkness hath him.

SAUL. "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me ?*" To have persecuted the Christ of Glory ; to have risen up against the Lord ; to have conspired against His Anointed ; to have rebelled against the Messiah-King ! Oh, sin never to be forgiven—never, never, never ! Eternal sin !

2ND ATTENDANT. He is on fire. Oh, it is dreadful.

SAUL. Blasphemer ! Persecutor ! Injurious ! I thought it a zeal for God, but I was ignorant of God's righteousness. Oh, ignorant Rabbi—ignorant ! I was but going about to establish my own righteousness. Pride, pride, pride ! full of wickedness, maliciousness, envy, murder, malignity ! The way of peace I knew not, and there was no fear of God before mine eyes. Oh, misery !

1ST ATTENDANT. Oh, master, dear master ! (*To 2ND ATTENDANT—*) Who is that Ananias he cried on, that we might find him ?

2ND ATTENDANT. Alas ! I know not.

SAUL. Pride, and covetousness too. Oh, ancient enemy, thou hast killed Saul ! Thou wroughtest in me all manner of concupiscence—ambition, the praise of man, the pride of the world and of the flesh, the pride of hell. Thou hast deceived me ! Oh, serpent, serpent ! Covetousness, which is idolatry ! Idolatrous Saul, idolatrous Israelite ! And what an idol ! Myself (*wriking*) ! Help ! I perish !

2ND ATTENDANT. I cannot bear it (*they rush to either side of the pallet*). Master, we are here.

SAUL (*sitting up with outstretched arms, and blind eyes directed upwards*). “ Lord, lay not this sin to his charge ! ” He said it, he said it ! Hear him in the glory supernal ; hear him, hear him, and spare this miserable one in nethermost hell ! Stephen, thou saidst it ! Ah, that look again ! Oh, terrible in its beauty ! Yet its beauty saves me not ; it but damns me deeper. And those men and women ! . . . Ah-h ! that mother ! I tear from her her babes ! Her face ! Ah, for pity’s sake, turn it away, as thou art a woman (*striking his hands over his eyes*) ! “ Lord Jesus ! ” she said . . . And thine, whom I compelled to curse Him—ah-h ! “ Undone, undone, undone ! ” ’Tis I, I, I am undone ! Have pity, pity, ye daughters of Jerusalem, and turn away your faces ! See ye not what I suffer ? No ! no mercy for him who showed no mercy ! Wast thou a beast, Saul, that thou didst devour these innocents ? Wast thou a wild boar from the wood that thou didst waste them ? My sin, my great sin, my foul and grievous sin ! Sin working in me ! Oh, bitter wages of sin—death, death, death, death, death ! Have mercy ! Rescue ! Oh, miserable man that I am, who shall deliver Saul from the body of this death ?

(*He falls back in despair, exhausted. ANANIAS has entered silently. He is regarding him.*)

ANANIAS. I thank God, through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. *He shall deliver.*

(The two ATTENDANTS, who, absorbed in contemplating their master, had not noticed ANANIAS'S entrance, spring to him.)

ATTENDANTS. Who art thou? What doest thou here?

ANANIAS. Ananias, from the synagogue of the Nazarenes.

1ST ATTENDANT. God be praised! He hath named thee oft-times in his ravings. If thou canst do aught, oh, do it now! *(ANANIAS goes to the bedside.)*

ANANIAS. Brother Saul. . . .

SAUL *(faintly)*. Brother! Who calls "brother" him who is a wild beast, and no man?

ANANIAS. It is I, Ananias.

SAUL *(starting up, but with eyes still closed)*. Ananias, I saw thee in a vision. Thou didst seem to come . . .

ANANIAS. I know it all! *(Then, putting his hands on SAUL, slowly—)* Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, be whole!

1ST ATTENDANT *(at the other side of the bed, whispering to 2ND)*. A marvel! Lo, there fall from his eyes as it were scales!

(SAUL slowly opens his eyes and looks up on

ANANIAS. A long pause.)

SAUL. "The Lord, even Jesus," whom I persecuted! Healing, and from HIM? Say, in God's name, art thou one of the Nazarenes?

ANANIAS. The least of them.

SAUL. "Brother Saul"!

[ANANIAS. Aye, in Jesus, who hath given thee the

earnest of His tender mercy by this sign of healing, as in the days of His flesh, and made thee our brother, and us thy brethren.

SAUL. I prayed and hoped; but the darkness of Sheol compassed me, and I despaired. Oh, finish thy word according to this His sign. He said, "Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Behold, here am I; what is the word of my Lord to the slave whom He hath spared?

(He crosses his arms on his breast.)

ANANIAS. This is His word. The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the word of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard, that in thee first Jesus Christ might show forth all His loving-kindness for a pattern to them which shall hereafter believe unto life eternal.

SAUL. I cannot bear it. Unto me which am the chiefest of sinners, this grace? Grace, all grace, grace abounding! *(He pauses long.)* No, it is too much. It cannot be true.

ANANIAS. Let thy sight, restored by His name, be to thee His sign that it is true indeed.

SAUL. Oh, wonderful! thy words prevail. His sign! How doubt that? But oh, my father, my father, thou dost not know all! I persecuted the Way unto the death. I breathed fire and slaughter. I ravined like an evil beast. I sacked and desolated the Church of the Holy One. I beat them off in every synagogue. I was binding and delivering to the death men—yes, and women *(he shudders)*—mothers, oh, my father, from whose arms I tore even their innocent babes *(shuddering again)*. Blood, innocent blood is on my head! And when the blood of His martyr Stephen was shed, I also was

standing by and consenting unto his death, and I kept the raiment of them that slew him. How shall He be just, yet merciful to this most foul offence? . . . Nay, listen yet—how shall my tongue utter it?—intolerable burden whereunder I sink into the abyss of hell!—I compelled His saints—in every house, in every synagogue—I was compelling them (*in a terrible whisper*) . . . to blaspheme! Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from Saul until he die!

(He again falls forward on the bed.)

ANANIAS. Listen, my brother. Was not the Cross a stumbling-block? Was it not foul in thine eyes; aye, was it not *indeed* foul? (SAUL *shudders*.) In that foulness (*speaking slowly and with intensest emphasis*) see the foulness of those thine offences.

SAUL (*starting up as a light dawns in his face*). Light, light! After mine eyes, my soul! My foulness—there! Lo, the light dawns! That death—it was not for Himself, then! For others—for me! Come down from the Cross, O Christ; that was Saul's place! In Thy death, then, I died. . . . Thy death my death!

ANANIAS. And therefore in the life that He now lives thou mayest live. His life thy life! Yea, thou shalt live it henceforth, not unto thyself, but unto Him that died for thee and rose again.

SAUL. Restrain Thy hand of mercy from me, great, holy God. Slay me not out of hand with Thy love! I understand now—yet it passeth understanding. The love of the Christ! . . . who loved me . . . and gave Himself for me. . . .

(He slowly lets his head fall forward. He breaks into a passion of silent weeping.)

ANANIAS. A broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, Thou shalt not despise! Sanctify, Lord, these tears to his baptism! Can any forbid water that this man

should not be baptised? (To SAUL.) And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord!

(ANANIAS signs to the two ATTENDANTS to assist SAUL to rise. As they tend him, he goes to the door and opens it. Enter some CHRISTIANS very softly.)

ANANIAS. Enter, brethren; our prayers are heard. The Lord hath wrought a great salvation, and it hasteneth to its appointed end, you helping in prayer and supplication. Hast thou brought the robe, brother?

(They kneel silently; two of them go to SAUL, who is now standing by the side of the pallet, and array him in a white robe.)

ANANIAS (to the ATTENDANTS). And now leave us alone with him. The Lord be with you! Go in peace!

1ST ATTENDANT. Oh, the Lord reward thee for this!
[Exeunt.]

ANANIAS (to the two BRETHREN). Bring water.

(They bring forth a bronze basin for hand-washing, and a tall bronze ewer. ANANIAS leads SAUL slowly to the centre of the room, where the two BRETHREN are standing.)

ANANIAS. Saul of Tarsus, with the heart dost thou believe, and with thy mouth wilt thou confess the Lord Jesus crucified, and risen, and living?

SAUL. I do believe. I will confess.

ANANIAS. Wilt thou be baptised with water and the Spirit?

SAUL. Ananias, I was crucified; I am dead. Bury me, that I may be quickened again, and live.

(He crosses his hands on his heart and bows his head.)

ANANIAS (to 1ST CHRISTIAN). Pour forth.

(One pours water into the basin which the other holds. ANANIAS with a scallop pours water over the head of SAUL.)

ANANIAS. Saul, I baptise thee into the NAME of the LORD JESUS.

THE BRETHREN. Amen, Amen, Amen !

(SAUL sinks on his knees upon the floor. He prostrates himself. ANANIAS and the two BRETHREN likewise kneel. A deep silence ensues. As they kneel, the following prayers seem to come like the low rustling of wind from that company:)

“ When the great Lord wills, he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. . . . On His servant shall He pour out this day of His Spirit, and he shall prophesy. . . . Prophecy ye unto the wind, prophesy, O ye children of God, and say to the wind: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon this slain, that he may live.”

(A sense of Presence seems to fill the whole room. The worshippers are rapt. ANANIAS rises, as if inspired, and lays his hands upon the head of SAUL.)

ANANIAS *(with upward gaze)*. Let Thy Spirit, O Lord God, be upon him; let the Spirit of the Lord rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord: the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, THE SPIRIT OF JESUS.

(SAUL leaps to his feet in an ecstasy.)

SAUL *(arms outstretched and face irradiated, with a shout of ecstasy)*. JESUS IS LORD !

(He remains rapt, speechless.)

THE BRETHREN. Hallelujah ! No man can say that word save by the Holy Spirit ! Immanuel !

SAUL AND STEPHEN

SAUL (*in an ineffable voice*). ABBA! FATHER!

(*He falls on his knees and stretches forth open palms. His gaze is continually upwards.*)

ANANIAS. It is finished. It is the voice of JESUS Himself, as in the days of His flesh! Lo! God hath sent into his heart the Spirit of His Son. Immanuel! GOD in our midst!

(*He adores, bowed to the ground. All the CHRISTIANS likewise adore, whispering, HOLY! HOLY! HOLY! SAUL remains motionless in the midst with transfigured face heavenward . . . when, suddenly, it is lit . . . by a smile.*)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.*—*Damascus. BARNABAS'S lodging. BARNABAS sitting reading.*

ANANIAS (*entering quietly*). Barnabas! Peace be to thee!

BARNABAS (*looking up*). And to thy spirit! (*He springs up.*) Ananias! father and brother in one! Right early hast thou found me, for I arrived but this hour. And thou too, I have heard, hadst disappeared from Damascus, and art not long returned. Whither didst thou go, and from whence returnedst?

ANANIAS. From my son Saul. From the deserts of Arabia.

BARNABAS. Saul! (*He stares.*) Before whose murderous attacks the brethren, and I myself, were scattered into all parts, like sheep broken up by a wolf! Is it then indeed true, as I have heard of him, that even *he*

* If necessary this scene may be omitted, and the former scene be immediately succeeded by the final one.

hath found mercy, and that he believed and was baptised at thy hands in this place? The story's everywhere, yet none believe it. It beats credence.

ANANIAS. It is true. These eyes saw the miracle wrought. *Then*, Barnabas, had I fain said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have now seen Thy salvation."

BARNABAS. In very truth. But his sudden disappearance! He conferred with no brethren; he reported the matter to none of the Jews. And now none knoweth where he is, or if he even lives. Such strangeness has confirmed their unbelief.

ANANIAS. It is not so. When the Spirit of Jesus fell upon him, as on us at the first, Saul seemed as one caught up into another world, into the heavenlies. He would not—nay, he could not—confer with flesh and blood. The Spirit drove him into the wilderness, as the Lord Jesus was driven, and he bowed to His will, and went. His soul was over-full; it must overflow—but not before man: before God. The ineffable riches of his sudden possession were all unexplored. Oh! eternity were too short to make them yield their meaning, how much less two short years.

BARNABAS. Two years!

ANANIAS. Even so. Deep, and even deeper, into the deserts of Arabia, travelling, it seems, along the road east of Jordan, even to the Mount of God, Saul went.

BARNABAS. The Mount of God! A new Elias listening for the still small voice.

ANANIAS. Even so, *and hearing it!* A new Moses, maybe, waiting to receive a new and abiding law—the law of the Spirit of Life, as said Jeremias the prophet. Yes, in the deep still deserts of Sinai I found him. My spirit within me constrained me to seek him out and see how he fared. I tracked him with the help

of the Arabs who had guided him thither. Barnabas, it was passing wonderful. I came upon him first kneeling in an ecstasy of deep meditation in the shadow of mighty rocks in that lonely land. The sun had risen, and the precipices above were steeped with richest light. The world was bright, but very still. The air was bleached, so clean, so clear it was. All around and above was the total stillness of the desert—a stillness that could be felt, a soundlessness which could be heard. Long I watched him. His eyes were not closed; they were open and full of light. Yet they were watching no earthly object. Sometimes his lips moved. Once he said, "*A crucified Messiah,*" and smiled; it was like that one smile of his when the Spirit of sonship came to him at the first, beautiful as a child's, ineffable, heartrending to see. When my eyes cleared of the blinding tears I saw him murmur, "*God's grace to men's faith,*" and then, "*No difference then!*" I know not how long he knelt or I stood. It was like approaching the sanctuary of God. Didst thou compare him with Moses? That afternoon in Horeb I was like Moses when he came nigh the bush that flamed with God. Moses saw a bush, but I a man, alight and afire with the Spirit of living Deity, "yet not consumed." . . . When he saw me it was as though we had never parted. My presence in that wilderness caused him no amaze. He smiled and made me seat myself by him. I cannot tell thee, Barnabas, the things he told me; the coming years must declare it, and the beginning of that declaration must be soon, for shortly he will return hither—here, where the light first dawned to his eyes and to his soul. And then to Jerusalem. For his reconciliation with the Lord's Church hath still to be.

BARNABAS. He is reconciled with the Lord!

ANANIAS. Aye: so the Lord's brethren will not tarry. But his soul yet hath anguish till this be accomplished. Moreover, he desires to see our leaders, for he would compare "his Good-news," as he calls it, with the message committed by the Lord to them. The substance cannot be different, he says. But beyond doubt the Spirit has revealed to that man the spirit of the meaning of that substance, all that the Lord Jesus said, and did, and suffered. Words I myself knew, yet had missed their speaking message, have *spoken* to Saul. We heard the Lord say that "to the ends of the earth"; yet to which of us did it *speak*? Saul never heard those words; yet the Spirit of the Lord has revealed its essence to his soul. He told me that he knows that nothing now can stop this Gospel from running to the ends of the world. In a vision he had seen all the barriers crash that divide nation from nation, and man from man, and Jew from all. He was as one in an agony, in travail. It was, as it were, that hour when the flesh of the Son of Man was pierced and broken. In that hour, when the veil of the Temple was rent, Saul saw in the Spirit yon barrier-fence between Jew and Gentile in the Temple precincts, reared like a mountain even to the door of heaven, crumble suddenly into dust! Beside *that* barrier what were the others? He looked, and lo! they too were gone; and he heard a great voice saying, "ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS." Nay, ask me not, Barnabas. He himself can hardly speak of it, and I but begin to understand. The years shall declare it—until HE come. Maran-atha!

BARNABAS. Amen! Thou hast told me marvellous things, and thou art right. They are matter for prayer and meditation, not for words. (*He is silent a space.*) Thou dost expect him here shortly?

ANANIAS. He said he thought that his coming would

not now be long delayed. He said he must witness to the Jews first, and *here* first, and wherever he is known—Jerusalem, Tarsus. Afterwards, as the Lord wills and leads.

BARNABAS. It is passing marvellous. Who knows . . .
(*They both fall into a reverie.*)

Enter JOHN MARK.

BARNABAS (*looking up*). Peace be to thee, nephew. Thou art agitated.

MARK. Oh, sir—and to thy spirit!—Saul hath returned, and came not to our company! He went straight to the synagogue of the Jews, and the Chief Rabbi is there also. What does not this portend?

(BARNABAS and ANANIAS look at each other and smile.)

ANANIAS. Already it works. Come, to prayer!

SCENE II.—*Jerusalem. The synagogue of the Christians. The same room as formerly. PETER, JAMES, and some other DISCIPLES, among them TIMON.*

PETER. Praise be to Him who is able to bring from evil good! It is as thou sayest, my brother (*to JAMES.*) "Out of the eater hath come forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness." Saul descended on us like a whirlwind, and the brethren were scattered; but not as chaff—rather as life-giving seeds, which, borne by the wind itself, fall in distant fields, and take root and spring up, bearing flower to delight men's eyes and fruit to sustain his life.

JAMES. Well said David in the Psalms: "Surely the wrath of men shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

PETER. Truly the wrath of Saul hath praised God.

And shall God not also restrain the remainder of Saul's wrath?

A DISCIPLE. I have heard that the Lord has done this also already.

TIMON. What! by his *death*, the reward of his iniquity? These two—nay, three—years he has been lost from man's view. He has surely perished.

1ST DISCIPLE. Nay; but the Lord has had mercy on him.

TIMON. What! thou believest that tale? Methinks the Damascus brethren were strangely deceived. Saul a Nazarene! Never shall I believe it. Oh, that these walls had tongues to tell the sight they saw! *Thou* heardest not the fell story from Justus, my friend and brother, who kept the door here, and, saving thus your lives, was torn by the ravening wolf that day. But I heard it! I had it from Justus ere he died. My own torment in their dungeon was naught; but the mothers, our sisters—aye, mine own poor wife, from whom he wrenched her shrieking babes as she called upon the name of the Lord Jesus. (*He groans.*) Saul a Nazarene! It is only in these latter days that we have dared to show ourselves in Jerusalem, or meet in this upper room, or come out of the holes in which even the Lord's Apostles had to hide themselves like . . . Yes, by the Lord's mercy, I say, we can meet here now, but with ranks how thinned, with what dear, dear faces missing! Stephen, and thou, O Justus! oh, my lost friend—murdered, foully murdered! And my wife, oh, villain! (*He breaks down.*) Saul! O Lord, how long!

PETER (*going over to him*). Nay, brother, brother; grieve not. Those martyrs are to-day most blest; and they shall precede us in the day of the Lord's return. Nay, be comforted! (*After a pause—*) For Saul, he but

sinned against his own soul. And I had it from Ananias, the brother . . .

TIMON. Ananias! What does *he* know of men; bemused, I ween, by excess of fasting and of prayer! And he too is gone, no man knows whither, these many months. Did our persecution cease when Saul disappeared? Nay, it raged like fire in the stubble. Be sure, then, the arch-persecutor directed it from behind the veil!

DISCIPLES. Aye, he speaks truth. Saul! . . .

(They shake their heads, murmuring to themselves and to each other.)

PETER *(sternly)*. Brother, doest thou well to be angry?

(The DISCIPLE remains with head buried in his arms.)

JAMES. Nay, be swift, brother, to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

TIMON *(looking up)*. My fathers, ye are right. We have no concern with him. "Let him be unto you as a heathen man and a publican." "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The Lord therefore judge him of Tarsus.

THE DISCIPLES. Amen! The Lord judge Saul, the enemy of the Lord!

Enter SAUL. His face is appealing, as one between hope and apprehension.

SAUL. Brothers!

(Most of the brethren recoil. TIMON springs up, tense and agitated. PETER restrains TIMON and takes a step nearer SAUL. JAMES alone remains seated, gazing intently at him.)

SAUL. My brothers! (*Dead silence.*) Oh, I have dreamed of this hour and longed for it; and is it *thus*? Oh, bitter! (*He struggles for self-control.*)

A DISCIPLE (*from behind*). Have a care!

ANOTHER. Ah, persecutor!

TIMON. These walls, these walls, what did they see? Oh, murderer, answer!

SAUL (*looks round and shudders*). Ah, too true. That young man— He was first, too, before the council . . .

TIMON. Justus, the friend of my soul.

SAUL. Ah, say—what came to him? Often I . . .

TIMON. He died.

SAUL (*groaning*). Oh, chief of sinners!

(*He turns away.*)

PETER. Nay, then, if thou repentest . . .

1ST DISCIPLE (*quickly*). Have a care, my father, we beseech thee; hold thy speech. Were it not better? We have suffered from the tricks of their informers; he will wrest thy words against thee with the Sanhedrin.

DISCIPLES (*muttering*). The Lord Jesus said: "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing!"

1ST DISCIPLE. The sheep's clothing we see. And these eyes—these eyes saw the ravening wolf.

TIMON. My wife and babes! "Blaspheme—nay, blaspheme!" he shouted; and—oh, Lord God, my wife's sister!

SAUL. Oh, spare me! . . . My God! Thou art just! Yet I have arisen and come to my Father, and said unto Him, "Father, I sinned before heaven and in Thy sight, and am neither worthy to be called Thy son, nor the brother of these Thy little ones." Therefore, O my brethren, make me as one of your hired servants. Oh, receive me! I believe (*with a loud, heartrending voice*)!

JAMES (*to PETER*). Brother, shall we not remember

what was said to the Elder Brother in the Lord's parable? Shall we be even as he? If he believes . . .

PETER. Well said, my brother! But I owe it to these sheep to prove that "if." The Lord help me with wisdom. . . .

Enter PHILIP THE DEACON.

PHILIP (*going impulsively to JAMES and PETER, and not noticing SAUL*). Oh, my fathers, glorious tidings! New triumphs daily! My friend and fellow, Stephen, the blessed martyr, is gone; but the Lord of His grace has granted a double portion of his spirit to me, unworthy! What say you of an *Ethiopian* believer and baptised? It was too wonderful, too marvellous. Even till now I am in a muse, a dream. But, fathers and brethren, why look ye the one on the other? why are you downcast? (*He suddenly perceives SAUL; he staggers back.*) Merciful God! His betrayer and murderer, whom I saw in the judgment-hall, and outside that gate!

SAUL (*bursting forward and catching him by the knees*). Oh, friend of Stephen, do not by thy damnation send me back to despair; by *thy* forgiveness seal to me the Lord Jesu's! Say the word. Oh, my heart will break! Friend of Stephen, be to me Stephen; speak with Stephen's lips my forgiveness upon earth! Be to me Stephen! Thee, Stephen, I hold here by thy knees; I look into thy blessed face, beautiful as an angel of God's. . . . Forgive me! . . . Or else behold in *me* Stephen; for verily to him I owe my very soul. And I have vowed to the Lord Jesus that Saul shall finish Stephen's work. Receive me! Call me brother! Call me friend! Call me Stephen's friend! I am Christ's! I believe! Jesus is Lord!

(*With right hand raised to PHILIP'S face, while embracing his knees with his left.*)

PHILIP (*with far-away look*). And he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to his charge." And shall *I* do so?

(*He slowly bends down and kisses SAUL on the forehead.*)

SAUL. Loosed on earth, loosed in heaven! Oh, grace abounding, overflowing!

(*He slides to the ground, still holding PHILIP by the feet. PHILIP kneels to speak to him.*)

Enter BARNABAS.

BARNABAS. The Lord's peace be to you. (*Silence*). Brethren, what is this? You are all amazed. Peter! James! Thou Timon! Who is that—my brother Philip! Is that brother ill? Have you seen my brother Saul?

PHILIP (*regarding him quietly, without changing his posture*). This is he. Tell these brethren why and how he is your brother. As for me, God has told me he is mine. (*SAUL feels for his hand and holds it fast.*)

PETER. I asked for wisdom, and God sends now the answer.

JAMES. Who giveth liberally and upbraideth not. Brother, if thou canst certify us and these disciples, say on.

BARNABAS. The tale which Ananias communicated to you was true, and it has remained true. Yes, he saw the Lord in the way, and the Lord spake unto him. Need I say more, Peter, my father?

PETER. To me, who thrice— Oh, mine was the greater sin! Finish thy word.

BARNABAS. Then he conferred not with flesh and blood. He was in Arabia until these days. There met he with God.

JAMES. His disappearance— this, then, was the cause?

BARNABAS. Aye, Ananias was with him there, and told me this. And then with mine own eyes have I beheld him witnessing boldly in the synagogue of the Jews of Damascus that He is the Son of God, so that all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is this not he who destroyed them that called on His name in Jerusalem, and came hither with that intent, that he might bring them bound to the High Priests?" And I have seen him increasing more and more in strength, confounding the Jews, and his former friend the Chief Rabbi of that synagogue, proving that He, Jesus, is very Messiah. And after many days were fulfilled they took counsel to kill him, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. For they cozened the governor of Al Hârith, the Arab king, and he to do them a pleasure kept the city of Damascus with a garrison, desirous to apprehend him, and through a window in a basket was he let down by the wall and escaped his hands. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth I lie not.

JAMES. It is enough. Barnabas, we thank thee. Thou hast gained us a new brother, a brother beloved. Philip, raise him, speak kindly to him, for his heart is broken; and bring him to me.

(PHILIP gently raises SAUL.)

JAMES *(rising)*. Take, brother, the right hand of fellowship. Truly this day we have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy!

PETER *(taking his other hand)*. We knew His power divine; but to-day, in thee, we know that it hath no bounds. Joy unspeakable and full of glory!

JAMES. Receive him, brothers. *(PETER seats himself.)*

THE OTHERS. In His name, and for His sake!

(They give him their hands one by one.)

JAMES (*seating himself*). And thou too, Timon. Thou must forgive him—aye, as thou hopest to be forgiven.

(TIMON, *who has been standing apart, comes over slowly.*)

SAUL (*to JAMES*). Oh, my brother, I know him—that horrible night! (*In a lamentable voice.*) Forgive me thou also! Seal to me the Lord's forgiveness in heaven by thine on earth—thine also, even thine! Then bring me to *her* that I may lie at her feet.

JAMES (*in a low voice to SAUL*). Thou canst not. She died . . . in prison. And her babe!

(SAUL *sinks on his knees with a groan.* TIMON *turns away convulsed.*)

JAMES (*in a low tone to TIMON*). She is with Him who said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" What is *her* message to-day to the man who knew not what he did? It must be delivered by thee: but see thou deliver it aright.

TIMON (*after a long pause, turning slowly round*). For Anna . . . and from me . . . take—this.

(*He kisses SAUL upon the forehead. SAUL, wholly overcome, holds TIMON by one of his hands, while his eyes close, and his lips move in silent prayer. A sudden ecstasy seizes simultaneously upon the company. Only TIMON remains very still.*)

ALL. Glory to God in the Highest! (*raising their arms*).

JAMES. And in the Church, Peace!

SAUL (*in a whisper*). That passeth all understanding.
(*The scene closes very quietly.*)

THE END

NOTES ON THE TEXT IN ITS RELATION
TO THE TEXTS

THE PROLOGUE.

PAGE

- I. *Gamaliel*, Acts xxii. 3.
1. For this recital of Saul's *gain* by the Chief Rabbi, see his own account in Phil. iii. 5-7.
2. *The multitude that knows not the Law is accursed*—apparently a common doctorial sentiment (John vii. 49).
2. *Establish my righteousness*. See his own comment on this in Rom. x. 2, 3.
2. *I was happier when I was a child*. For this whole passage, see Rom. vii. 7 to end. It is pretty well agreed that in the latter passage the sudden use of the first person singular, the historic aorists, and the passionate agitation of the whole, point clearly to *autobiography*. The "tenth" commandment, as hardly less penetrating than Christ's in Matt. v. 28, may well have been the one that started the ethical war in the heart of the youthful Saul (see Rom. vii. 7).
3. A form of baptism was imposed on proselytes to the Judaic religion, and it is probable that here lay one cause of the learned classes' inveterate opposition to John's message (see Luke vii. 29-35).
7. For the special accursedness of crucifixion see Gal. iii. 13 (*now* how differently applied!). See also 1 Cor. xii. 3, where *anathema* (a thing "devoted" to a curse) and *accurst* are synonymous.

ACT I.—SCENE I.

8. This Synagogue is that mentioned in Acts vi. 9. It is to be noted that "Cilicia" included *Tarsus*, and so Saul would be a member of that Synagogue when residing at Jerusalem. Stephen is also represented here as a member, in virtue of his being a "Grecian" (vi. 1), and very likely an Alexandrian (see vi. 9).
8. *Since his new appointment*, etc., see Acts vi. 5 and 8.
10. *The pupil of my heart*, see Acts xxii. 3.
10. Gamaliel's speech to the Sanhedrin, Acts v. 34-39.
12. *Of the priests not a few*, Acts vi. 7.
16. *The plensher of their purses*, cp. Acts xix. 27.
17. *That Adonai dispensed with a temple*, etc. This is the central thought of Stephen's sermon in Acts viii.
17. *A blasphemy against our holy place*, Acts vi. 13. See the whole passage, 11-14.
17. *Though not by the gold thereof*, Matt. xxiii. 16.
18. The (two) witnesses, Acts vi. 13, vii. 58; cp. Deut. xvii. 6.

SCENE 2.

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20. *The hands of the witnesses, etc.*, Deut. xvii. 7.
 20. *Enough, man! Barbarity on these occasions was strictly forbidden.*
 21. *Persons of grave mien, the "devout men" (proselytes?) of Acts viii. 2.*

SCENE 3.

21. *And now, Lord . . .*, Acts iv. 29.
 22. *Disperse . . .*, etc., Acts viii. 1.
 23. *The DISCIPLE is beaten*, Acts xxii. 19.
 23. *And every woman*, Acts viii. 3, xxii. 4.
 23. *Houses, Synagogues*, Acts viii. 3, xxii. 19.

SCENE 4.

23. *Compel them to blaspheme*, Acts xxvi. 11.

ACT II.—SCENE I.

27. *The cell*, Acts viii. 3, xxii. 4, xxvi. 10.
 27. *Thy voices, fathers and brethren! What is thine, my son?* see Acts xxvi. 10.
 28. *A boon, etc.*, see Acts ix. 2.

SCENE 2.

31. *That it permits this Arab prince, etc.*, see 2 Cor. xi. 32.

SCENE 3.

35. *Blasphemer! Persecutor! Injurious!* 1 Tim. i. 13.
 35. *I thought it a zeal for God, etc.*, Rom. x. 2, 3.
 35. *Full of wickedness, etc.*, Rom. i. 29, iii. 17, 18.
 36. *Thou wroughtest in me all manner of concupiscence*, Rom. vii. 8.
 36. *Covetousness, which is idolatry*, Eph. v. 5.
 37. *Saul . . . looks up on Ananias*, see Acts xxii. 13.
 38. *I ravined like an evil beast.* See the Greek of Acts viii. 3 ("made havock"), and compare the same word in Ps. lxxx. 13. It has been seen that *all* these terrible details and descriptions of Saul's murderous deeds are taken direct from his own, or St. Luke's, accounts of them: see the notes to Act I., Scenes 3 and 4.
 39. *In Thy death, then, I died, etc.*, see 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.
 40. *And now, why tarriest thou, etc.*, Acts xxii. 16.
 40. *With the heart dost thou believe, etc.*, see Rom. x. 9, 10.
 40. *Bury me . . .*, Rom. vi. 4.

41. *Let thy Spirit, O Lord God, be upon him . . . the Spirit of Jesus.* For this scene the following passages should be compared and considered in all their bearings: Gal. iv. 6 ("sent forth," historic-aorist tense in the Greek); Eph. i. 13 (where "believed" means "were baptised," and is also in the historic-aorist tense); Rom. viii. 15; 1 Cor. xii. 3.
42. The point of the word "ABBA" is that this was the word associated by the Christians with the prayers of the Lord Jesus (Mark xiv. 36), and that, though it was a Syriac word, it was heard on the lips of even Gentile converts, specially in the hour of the laying-on-of-hands after baptism (Gal. iv. 6); with which experience Paul associates himself in Rom. viii. 15. The inference is that this *inspired* cry was commonly, or frequently, heard on the lips of neophytes at that time of their personal Pentecost, the laying-on-of-hands ("Confirmation"), after their baptism. And, similarly, the cry "JESUS IS LORD" was an inspired one (1 Cor. xii. 3), and was, surely, heard also at that supreme moment.

ACT III.

43. *He would not, nay he could not, confer with flesh and blood . . .*, Gal. i. 16, 17.
45. *Saul saw in the Spirit that barrier-fence between Jew and Gentile.* For this passage see and weigh Eph. ii. 14, reading the whole passage 13 to 18. In the next few verses (Eph. iii. 3 and 6) he pointedly says that this feature of his preaching was a "mystery," given him by "revelation." It is therefore hardly a stretch of imagination to suppose that it formed part of the communications and meditations of those long months "in Arabia," alone with the Lord. For the "barrier-fence" in the temple court, the "middle wall of partition," see Acts xxi. 28, 29: it was this barrier between the Court of the Gentiles and the Precinct proper that Paul was suspected of having passed with the Greek Trophimus. On it were placarded notices threatening immediate death to every Gentile who should pass the barrier into the consecrated courts within.
46. *The brethren were scattered,* Acts viii. 1, xi. 19.
50. PHILIP. *My friend and fellow, Stephen,* Acts vi. 5.
52. *Al Harith, the Arab King, etc.,* 2 Cor. xi. 31-33.