

drim gave their opinion. Each one spoke audibly enough to be heard by all present. When all had delivered their opinions, two scribes collected the votes and a simple majority was decisive. If the decision was in favor of the accused, he was immediately liberated, but if a verdict of guilty had been rendered, he was retained in prison and the sentence was set for the next session of the court.

In the meantime the members of the Sanhedrim were bound by the law to meditate on the case and to talk it over with each other. They were not allowed to partake of any but the plainest food, nor of wine, or to indulge in any social enjoyments. On the third day, they re-assembled. Those who previously had voted against the accused could now, if they had changed their minds, cast another vote, but those who had voted for him had not, legally, this opportunity.

When the death sentence finally had been pronounced, the culprit was at once conveyed to the place of execution. The members of the court continued in session. Outside of the courtroom a man was stationed with a red flag. Another accompanied the convict on horseback. If some new testimony should happen to be produced while the convict was on the way to his execution, a sign from the man with the red flag called him back, and he was granted a hearing again. As many as five times such a rehearing was allowed.

On the way to the execution the culprit was preceded by a messenger who at intervals called out: "— convicted of the crime of — is now led out to execution. Witnesses are (here followed the names). If anybody has anything to say in his favor, he must do so without delay."

If the following quotation from Talmud can be relied upon as an expression of the sentiments of the people, it must be admitted that human life was held in high regard. It says: "A court which pronounces one death sentence in seven years may be considered a bloodthirsty court." Rabbi Eliezer thinks once in seventy years is enough, while two other rabbis, Akiba and Tarphon, express themselves against all capital punishment.

The above description of the Sanhedrim is taken chiefly from Jewish writers and is no doubt substantially correct. When compared with the accounts of the condemnation of Christ, as given by the Evangelists,

the fact is very strikingly brought out that the proceedings against Him were illegal from first to last. Caiaphas was at that time the presiding high priest. His father-in-law Annas had, by the Roman rulers, been compelled to vacate the office in favor of Caiaphas. But he was the one that in the estimation of the people still was the real chief of the court. When our Savior, therefore, had been captured, He was hurried off to the house of Annas, where He, in the night, was condemned to death, although no legal session could be held till the morning. Then, to give the proceedings some appearance of legality, the Sanhedrim, in the early morning, was called together under the presidency of Caiaphas, when the sentence was confirmed. The testimony was all contradictory, yet the witnesses were not rejected. Nor was there, from all that can be learned, a quorum present at that early and unusual hour of the day. And then He was hurried off before Pilate and delivered to him on a charge that had never been preferred against Him before the Sanhedrim. Here He had been tried for blasphemy, while before Pilate He was accused of conspiracy against the Roman government.

It is saddening to reflect upon the fact that the purest, the most exalted being that ever dwelt on this earth—the Son of God—had to give his life to a body of men who, under the pretext of law, committed judicial murder.

In the year 1280 an engraved plate was found in the city of Aquila, in the kingdom of Naples, which is held to be the official report of Pilate sent to the emperor of Rome about the crucifixion of our Lord. It has the following text:

"In the seventeenth year of the government of the Emperor Tiberius and on the 25th day of the month Nisan, in the city of Jerusalem, Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea, in the case of the accused, rabbi Jeshua, of Nazareth, states: that he is accused and convinced of having had treacherous connections with a view of putting aside the Roman sovereignty over Judea, which crime, according to Roman law is punishable with death; and he further states, that the same person has been accused and convicted of having dishonored and blasphemed the Mosaic law, which by the Jews is considered holy; to which offense, according to the assertions of the Jews and according to several

during the trial quoted passages of the Thora, their own God, has affixed the penalty of death: I therefore sentence the accused to death by crucifixion; and Commission the centurion Quirilus Cornelius to execute this sentence, and I command him to take the sentenced to the place of execution at once."

This document, which by many writers has been accepted as genuine, mentions as witnesses for Jesus, Elieser, Asterius, Antonius, Jacob, Carus, Samuel, Isaac, Phineas, Erippus, Agrippa, Annas, Judas and Nicodemus, no doubt the one that visited Him during the night and who also was a member of the Sanhedrim. As His accusers are mentioned Caiaphas, Annas, Simeon, Dabbar, Gamaliel, Judas, Levi, Naphthali and Jairus.

#### LIGHT ON THE DARK CONTINENT.

LITTLE is known to the general public concerning the interior of "the dark continent." Livingstone and Baker and Stanley have done much to enlighten the world in regard to the geography, resources and people of Africa, and British and German traders have done their part in furnishing information about portions of the unknown land. But it will be a surprise to most people to learn that the country has so large a population. Recent travelers report towns with from 25,000 to 60,000 inhabitants, their huts extending over large areas, and the increasing trade with central Africa is verifying what were thought once to be highly colored statements as to the large number of people in that mysterious country.

It is now estimated that the population of Africa to the square mile is nearly as great as that of North America, while the equatorial region of the former has a better climate, and one more adapted to a large population, than Central America and other countries in the torrid zone. The reason for this lies in the altitude of equatorial Africa, which is chiefly an elevated plateau and contains many millions of people.

Ravenstein, Levasseur and other statisticians, who are careful in their estimates and do not endorse what they consider the exaggerations of many travelers, place the population of Africa at from 127,000,000 to 150,000,000. Nearly all of the dark continent is habitable, even the Sahara desert containing many thousands of people.