

Do they not tell of the feverish excitement inflamed by the political and religious passion of the Jews, of the chafing Roman yoke, of the racking hate of the foreigner, of the galling helplessness of the Israelites, of the "waiting for the consolation of Israel?" Revolt hung over all like a thunderbolt, ready to burst at any time and send destruction and dismay along its merciless track. Religious fanaticism turned the heads of men and made them demons. It was not the lack of desire for "Messiah to come" which causes men to dwell in tombs, cut themselves with stones and cry out "I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not." It was the leper without the leper's faith. So things went on balancing up and down from outbreak to riot, from deeds of violence to horrid massacre, from the blood of the sacrificed brutes to that of the ill-fated slaves of Rome, from the charge of the Sanhedrim to the Cross of Calvary. Thereafter, on and on, until all "their synagogues throughout all Galilee" lay ruined and deserted.

History tells us that the age in which Jesus Christ lived was a transitory one—an age of doubt and uncertainty. Jesus Himself called it "a wicked and adulterous generation." The broken columns and half buried capitals which one stumbles over when walking round about Nazareth tell how the Idumean tetrarch robbed the Jew of his sceptre, how the Roman procurator tampered with the priesthood, how the Sanhedrim fell into the toils of the subtle Herodian and heartless Sadducee. The shrines of Cæsarea, Philippi and elsewhere prove how Jesus, as was His custom, drew upon facts for His assertions; how paganism misled the faithful by its hideous excesses. All along the line of the Jordan and the Dead Sea are the caves where the waried and worn Essenes hid and waited for Messiah to come. Atheism wrestled with philosophy; crime captured remorse and blind-folded it; hearts grew so stony that even the heathen began to feel that the second flood was impending. Insolence, cruelty, extortion, massacre, the destruction of the synagogues and the erection of heathen temples in their places, maddened a people already wild with fanaticism. The sects were subdivided until there was no hope for any. It was a dark day for the children of Israel, and they caught at any straw which offered them the least hope of freedom. Among their subdivisions, the strictest sect was the Essenes. They seemed to supply the only sound segment in the whole rotten Jewish circle. Sadducees they were not, of course, neither were they content with the loose observance of the law winked at by the Pharisees. To them the synagogue became "the world"—of the earth, earthy; to be avoided. Therefore they built convents and became monks. They abandoned sacrifices, for they detested them. They never went up to Jerusalem, but held themselves aloof from all who were not "pure" like themselves. They were the extreme religionists—the "perfectionists" of

their day; "perfect" Jews, fulfilling the whole law. They were communists. If one was sick, the others cared for him at the common expense. All were supported from the general purse. Sober, virtuous and unselfish, their conduct was exemplary. They went out from each other only to heal and to help.

Jesus was not an Essene, but He evidently knew of them and met them. If John was not an Essene, he was moved by similar desires to be free from the world, and when the time came he spoke. Then suddenly a ray of light came to Israel—"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." The frantic people came like an avalanche to catch the warning of the "voice." The Roman tax-gatherer trembled, and the hired soldiers called upon their gods for protection. Pharisees and Sadducees listened and threatened, and thousands of the populace found rest in a new hope.

"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth to Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan." Then began the healing of the blind, the restoration of the palsied, the cessation of the leper's cry, the blessing of little children, the driving out of the money-changers, the preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, and the denunciation of the "wicked and adulterous generation." The corrupt rulers and the wicked priests who perverted the law grew afraid, and the roaring voices of the Pharisees were lowered in the market places. But these changes were followed by evil machinations to make the "blasphemer" unpopular and to kill him. They knew that their downfall would follow if sincerity, contentment, gentleness, chastity, and kindness ruled and Jesus reigned. They wished wars and contentions, and the followers of Jesus also began to waver. The seed had fallen among thorns. They had followed Jesus long enough, and they had seen miracles enough to be assured of His goodness and of His fitness to be their King. But He was not the sort of king they wanted. The Christ of God He might be, but He was not the Jesus to out-Herod Herod. Worse than all, He did not seem to agree with the prophets. They would not receive Him as a Redeemer of mankind from sin. They wanted a king to reign over them on the throne of Israel. So they gave Him up to His enemies and He was destroyed. It was an age of strange contrasts, and the strangeness is not all over with. Every year hundreds go to Palestine to end their days so that they may be buried in the scanty soil; hundreds go down into the "wilderness" to see the place whence came the "voice;" and each year thousands and tens of thousands of pilgrims come from all lands to bathe where "Jesus * * * was baptized of John in Jordan."

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OUR CHICAGO LETTER.

Where there is much smoke, there certainly must be some fire. Where there is a great deal of angry discussion, there must be some heated feelings underneath. In Chicago at present we are in the midst of a vast quantity of smoke and clamor, and whatever is underneath cannot very well remain long suppressed. Even the bowels of the earth beneath us are uneasy. Not very many miles from Chicago a very perceptible shock of earthquake was felt a few days ago. This is anything but reassuring to dwellers in seventeen-story buildings. It will make Pan-Americans feel that they are not far from home, but it will also make them sigh for bamboo-houses and open-air slestas. It will have a depressing effect on "world's fair" stock for 1892.

Goodness knows there is excitement enough above ground without going below for some. One of our Illinois preachers caused a lively time last week in Kansas. His name is Rev. J. J. White. He visited a settlement largely composed of Roman Catholics. He preached on the infamy of the religion of the majority. He was torn from his pulpit and thrown outside the building. The governor of the State was called on, and the militia was ordered to the scene of the trouble. Now, if this preacher harangued in a church dedicated for services by his own people and owned by them, it was a most unwise proceeding for Roman Catholics to enter it and treat him as reported. But if he spoke in a public highway, or entered a Roman edifice to proclaim his mission, then indeed he richly deserved what he got. But though richly deserving it, that was still an unwise proceeding to resort to riot. There must be some constituted authority in that town, and if that authority could not take cognizance of disorder, then it is small wonder that riot was king.

Sometimes constituted authority itself is not courteously treated by the average citizen. In our city a few days ago, Thomas Burns, a promising young man, joined the police, and was duly invested with his badge and baton of office. He wore a brand new uniform, the buttons of which shone and glittered brilliantly in the fierce electric light. He was clean shaved, and his mustache was waxed and pointed at the ends. He walked out to his beat, feeling that serene sense of equanimity and good nature which only a new policeman can feel. He was about two hours on duty when approached by the traditionally frank, plausible young man, who saluted him as Officer, and was particularly solicitous about the health and so on. Finally this great young man invited Mr. Officer Burns to take a drink. The Officer, fearing lest he should demean his honor of his cloth by refusing, consented. Officers usually go into saloons by rear entrance. Burns, though but two hours on duty, knew this much. There was a dark alley leading to the rear entrance, and when in the