

The Relation which was given by the Sentinels

Who were placed around the Sepulchre.

Cassius hastened to the house of Pilate about an hour after the Resurrection, in order to give him an account of the stupendous events which had taken place. He was not yet risen, but Cassius was allowed to enter his bedroom. He related all that had happened, and expressed his feelings in the most forcible language.

He described how the rock had been

rent, and how an angel had descended from Heaven and pushed aside the stone; he also spoke of the empty winding-sheet, and added that most certainly Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, and that he was truly risen. Pilate listened to this account; he trembled and quivered with terror, but concealed his agitation to the best of his power, and answered Cassius in these words: 'Thou art exceedingly superstitious; it was very foolish to go to the Galilean's tomb; his gods took advantage of thy weakness, and displayed all these ridiculous visions to alarm thee. I recommend thee to keep silence, and not recount such silly tales to the priests, for thou wouldst get the worst of it from them.' He pretended to believe that the body of Jesus had been carried away by his disciples, and that the sentinels, who had been bribed, and had fallen asleep, or perhaps been deceived by witchcraft, had fabricated these accounts in order to justify their conduct. When Pilate had said all he could on the subject, Cassius left him, and he went to offer sacrifice to his gods.



The four soldiers who had guarded the tomb arrived shortly after at Pilate's palace, and began to tell him all that he had already heard from Cassius; but he would listen to nothing more, and sent them to Caiphas. The rest of the guards were assembled in a large court near the Temple which was filled with aged Jews, who, after some previous consultation, took the soldiers on one side, and by dint of bribes and threats endeavoured to persuade them to say that they fell asleep, and that while they were asleep the disciples came and carried away the body of our Lord. The soldiers, however, demurred, because the statement which their comrades were gone to make to Pilate would contradict any account which they could now fabricate, but the Pharisees promised to arrange everything with the governor. Whilst they were still disputing, the four guards returned from their interview with

Pilate, and the Pharisees endeavoured to persuade them to conceal the truth; but this they refused to do, and declared firmly that they would not vary their first statement in the smallest degree.

The miraculous deliverance of Joseph of Arimathea from prison was become public, and when the Pharisees accused the soldiers of having allowed the Apostles to carry off the body of Jesus, and threatened them with the infliction of the most severe punishment if they did not produce the body, they replied, that it would be as utterly impossible for them to produce the body of Jesus, as it was for the soldiers who had charge of Joseph of Arimathea to bring him back into his prison again. They spoke with the greatest firmness and courage; promises and menaces were equally ineffectual. They declared that they would speak the truth and nothing but the truth; that the sentence of death which had been passed upon Jesus was both unjust and iniquitous; and that the crime which was perpetrated in putting him to death was the sole cause of the interruption in the Paschal solemnity. The Pharisees, being perfectly furious, caused the four soldiers to be arrested and thrown into prison, and the others, who had accepted the bribes they offered, then affirmed that the body of Jesus had been carried off by the disciples while they slept; and the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians endeavoured to disseminate this lie to the utmost of their power, not only in the synagogue but also among the people; and they accompanied this false statement by the most slanderous lies concerning Jesus.

All these precautions, however, availed but little, for, after the Resurrection, many persons who had been long dead arose from their graves, and appeared to those among their descendants who were not sufficiently hardened to be impervious to grace, and exhorted them to be converted. These dead persons were likewise seen by many of the disciples, who, overcome with terror, and shaken in faith, had fled into the country. They both exhorted and encouraged them to return, and restored their drooping courage. The resurrection of these dead persons did not in the slightest degree resemble the Resurrection of Jesus.

He arose with a glorified body, which was no longer susceptible of either corruption or death, and ascended into heaven with this glorified body in the sight of all his disciples; but the dead bodies of which we spoke above were motionless corpses, and the souls which once inhabited them were only allowed to enter and reanimate them for a time, and after performing the mission given them, the souls again quitted these bodies, which returned to

their original state in the bowels of the earth, where they will remain until the resurrection at the day of judgment. Neither could their return to life be compared to the raising of Lazarus from the dead; for he really returned to a new life, and died a second time.