

A Doctor At Calvary

Crown of Thorns

By Pierre Barbet, M.D.

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There are two executioners, one on each side of Him. They alternate their strokes, with great zest. At first, the strokes leave long livid marks, long blue bruises beneath the skin. Remember that the skin has already been affected, that it is sore owing to the millions of little intra-dermic haemorrhages brought about by the sweat of blood.

Further marks are made by the balls of lead. Then the skin, into which blood has crept, becomes tender and breaks under fresh blows. The blood pours out; shreds of skin become detached and hang down.

The whole of the back is now no more than a red surface, on which great furrows stand out like marble; and here and there, everywhere, there are deeper wounds caused by the balls of lead.

AT EACH STROKE the body gives a painful shudder. But He has not opened His mouth, and His silence redoubles the Satanic rage of His executioners. It is no longer a cold-blooded, judicial execution; it is the unchaining of demons; the blood flows from His shoulders down to the earth and is scattered like rain by the lifted whips, as far as the red cloaks of the onlookers.

But the strength of the Victim soon begins to fail; sweat breaks out on His forehead; His head whirrs with giddiness and nausea; shivers run down His spine; His legs give way into the pool of blood.

They have completed the count, even though they have not counted. After all, they have not received the order that He should die under the lash. Let Him recover a bit; there will be further chances for amusement.

And this great Fool claims to be a king, to be King of the Jews, of all ridiculous things! He has had some trouble with His subjects; what matter, we will be His faithful supporters. Quick, a robe, a scepter! He has been put to sit at the base of the column—not a very secure place for His Majesty! An old legionary's coat, thrown over His shoulders confers on Him the royal purple; a red in His right hand, and everything is complete, except for the crown. (For nineteen centuries, He will be known by this crown, which no other crucified being has worn.)

In the corner there is a bundle of faggots, cut from those little trees which thrive on the outskirts of the city. The wood is flexible and covered with long thorns, much longer and sharper and harder than those of the acacia. They plait with caution (ugh! it hurts!) something like the bottom of a basket, which they place on His head. They beat down the edges and with a hand of twisted rushes bind it on the head from the nape of the neck to the forehead.

THE THORNS DIG into the scalp and it bleeds. (We surgeons know how much a scalp can bleed.) The top of the head is already clotted with blood; long

Only 217 Missionaries

In Red China

Hong Kong—(NC)—Only 217 foreign missionaries remained in communist China at the end of February, according to statistics released here.

The total at the beginning of the year stood at 265. Twenty-four were ousted in January, and another 24 in February. It was pointed out that if this rate of expulsions continues, almost all the foreign missionaries will have been ousted by the end of this year. Foreign Catholic missionaries totaled over 5,000 in China before the communists seized power.

streams of blood have flown down to the forehead, under the band of rushes, have soaked into the tangled hair and into the beard. The comedy of adoration has begun.

Each in turn comes forward and bows the knee before Him, with a horrible grimace, followed by a great bow: "Hail, King of the Jews!" But He answers nothing His poor face, so ravaged and pale, displays no movement. It really is not funny! In their exasperation, His faithful subjects spit in His face. A blow on the crown of thorns makes it sink further in, and then fresh blows.

A blow from a stick delivered from the side has made a horrible bruise on His face; His fine well-shaped nose has been disfigured owing to the septum being broken. The blood is flowing from His nostrils.

BUT NOW PILATE is back, rather worried about the prisoner—what have these brutes been doing to Him? Well, they have dealt with Him all right. If the Jews are not satisfied now! He will show Him to them from the balcony, in His royal robes. But he has underestimated their hatred.

"Away with Him, crucify Him!" And then they put forward the argument that terrifies Pilate: "If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar." The coward then surrenders completely and washes his hands.

They tear off the cloak which has already stuck to His wounds; the blood starts to flow once more; He gives a great shudder. They replace His own clothes, which become stained with red. The robes are ready. They place it on His shoulders.

NEXT WEEK: Calvary.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

Christ Is Shunned In His Own World

(Continued from Page 1)

ly why men are apt to miss Him—Divinity is always where we least expect to find it.

CHAPTER IV
If the artist is at home in his studio, because the paintings are the creation of his own mind; if the sculptor is at home amongst his statues, for they were begotten of his brain; if a husbandman is at home among his vines, for he planted them; if the father is at home in his family, because they are his own, then surely, argues the world, He



Divinity is always where we least expect to find it.

everlasting hills would one day be too weak to walk; that the Eternal Word would be dumb; that Omnipotence would be wrapped in swaddling clothes; that Salvation would lie in a manger; that the mirth of Heaven would weep; that the bird that built the nest would be hatched therein—no one would ever have suspected that God coming to this earth would ever be so helpless. But that is precise-

ly why men are apt to miss Him—Divinity is always where we least expect to find it.

Sticks nearby were told by the angels:

"This is the sign by which you are to know Him; You will find a child still in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

He was already bearing His Cross—the only cross a Babe could bear; that of poverty, exile and limitation—His sacrificial intent already shines forth in the message the angels are singing to the hills of Bethlehem.

"This day in the city of David, A Saviour has been born for you. No other than the Lord Christ."

Covetousness is already challenged by poverty, while pride is confronted with the humiliation of a stable. The swathing of Divine Power which otherwise knows no bounds, is often too great a tax upon minds which think only of power in terms of atomic energy. They cannot grasp the idea of Divine condescension, or of the "rich becoming poor that through His poverty, we might be rich." Men shall have no other sign of Divinity than the absence of power as they expect it the spectacle of a Babe Who said He would come in the clouds of heaven, now being wrapped in the clouds of earth.

Goes Into Eclipse

He Whom the angels call the "Son of the most High" descends into the red dust from which we all were born, to be one with weak, fallen man in all things, save sin. And yet it is the swaddling cloths which constitute the "sign." If He Who is Omnipotence had come with thunderbolts there would have been no sign. There is no "sign", unless something is contrary to nature.

The brightness of the sun is no "sign", but an eclipse is.

He said that on the last day, His coming will be characterized by "signs in the sun" such as the sun refusing to give its light. Here the Divine Son goes into an eclipse, that only the humble of spirit may recognize Him.

Only two classes of people found the Babe: the Shepherds and the Wise Men; the simple and the learned; they who know and they who do not know everything—never the man with one book; never the man who thinks he knows. Not even God can tell the proud anything! It takes good will to find God, and this truth the angels proclaimed from the heavens:

"Peace on earth to men that are God's friends."

(Continued Next Week)

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