

The Resurrection Morn -

When the darkness that followed the earthquake attending the death of Jesus had lifted from the land, the Nazarene was dead. "Strange," they said, "that He should so soon lose His mortal life." For among those who had watched His suffering, there were some who were actually offended because His sensitive and exhausted frame could no longer support His torture. Even in death He robbed His tormentors of much of their frenzied satisfaction. Taking the quickest possible steps to make sure that He was really dead, they hurried to Pilate with their urgent request, "Give us a guard for the tomb."

they said, "for this Galilean made strange statements that He would rise from the dead on the 3rd day. So give us guards," they demanded, "that His friends may not steal away His body, thereby saving His reputation as a prophet."

And Pilate, already disgusted and weary of the subject because of the chiding of his wife, granted their request; gave them guards and ordered that His tomb be sealed with the imperial seal of Rome.

As soon as His persecutors departed, then Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent Jew who had always ^{worshipped} the Rabbi in silence, pushed his influential claims demanding the dead body of the Nazarene and offered his own new tomb which had never been occupied as a burial

place. This eminent citizen
achieved what his lowly disciples
could not have accomplished.

With trembling fingers His
chosen friends hurriedly drew the
spikes out of his hands and feet,
and with winding sheets lowered
His bruised and bleeding body to the
ground. The tears of the woman
who loved Him dashed upon His
face as His head rested for a
moment in the lap of His mother;
while others of the more venturesome
women lifted His bruised hands to
their lips. But His brow was so
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the dying day, they bore His body to the tomb with His beloved disciples as bearers and a few of the women following. Rudely they embalmed His body in such spices as could hastily be procured and folding it into sweet, clean linen, they left it in the outer chamber of the new tomb, because there was not time for the final interment.

Hurriedly, they rolled the entry-stone into its place as the sun sank, and departed for their lonely and sad observance of the High Sabbath of Holy week, just as the Roman guard supplied by Pilate came up to seal the tomb and begin their all-night vigil of this dead King of the Jews.

The night watchers were here

new and accustomed to grave duties, but they were uncomfortable, for strange rumors about this Nazarene had come to their ears. The night was long but no unforeseen event occurred. The Sabbath day passed uneventfully. Another night came and through its long hours the guards talked quietly of His hurried trial and crucifixion, while, within the vault, Jesus of Nazareth lay in state, awaiting the resurrection morn.

When the night died away and the 1st streak of dawn began to pale the Eastern sky, the watchmen passed to and fro, as was their custom, coming together at the mouth of the Tomb where they stood guard. Suddenly, the

face of one of the watchers blanched in terror as he pointed with his spear and then fell. The stone that closed the tomb was moving!

The other guard sprang with an oath and struck at the stone, but it missed. The great disk continued to move in its groove and rolled slowly off to one side.

The moon was gone - the sun was not yet risen, yet the garden glowed with a strange, transcendent light as if aflame with a sky-born glory. The bodies of the guards turned faint and dropped beside his mate, as a regal form in glowing white emerged from the tomb into the garden and --- disappeared ~~into~~ in the misty light of that first Easter morn'g.

Mary, the Magdalene, came to the garden at Sunday's dawn. She had not slept — she wondered why she could no longer weep. She remembered what the Master had done for her. Others had loved Him — but, somehow in that hour, she felt that she had outloved them all — as, indeed, she had outrun them all in the desire to come first to the garden of his tomb.

She crept up on tiptoe — as one does who hesitates to disturb a loved one asleep. But she stopped abruptly. The guards were nowhere to be seen. The stone was rolled away — the gaping sepulchre seemed open and empty. With her

hands upon her heart, Mary gave
one glance, then sped out of the
garden and off to the lodgings of
Peter and the other disciples whom
Jesus loved with her tragic message.
"Our Lord is stolen from the tomb and
there are none to tell where He is
borne away."

Her breath was gone and, with
it, her courage also. She came
back falteringly. She could not
keep up with John and Peter. When
she reached the tomb again they had
already been and had gone to share
the tragic news with others. But
having no heart to go elsewhere,
she lingered sadly about the deserted
garden. ~~Meanwhile other~~
Meanwhile other women

came with myrror and spices, thinking to finish the burial preparations which the Sabbath had interrupted. When they saw the great stone had been rolled away, they crept into the open tomb and with shaking hands examined the grave clothes and went away sadly, saying, "He is not here."

Mary Magdalene who had been weeping silently in the garden was left alone. Wearily she approached the open sepulchre and gathering her courage and strength stooped down and looked in for herself. The marble slab, on which his body had been laid, was bare. The sepulchre seemed empty.

But was it? Look again, Mary
Magdalene! At the head and foot of
that marble slab brilliant forms
began to appear and she saw two heavenly
messengers clad in raiment of white.

Her tears ran into a sudden
child-like smile as she said to them
"They have taken my Lord away - I
know not where they have laid Him."
Suddenly a shadow fell over her
shoulder - the shadowy figure of
a man: She thought it was the
~~the~~ keeper of the burial garden and
she began to explain to him how
and why she was there.

She racked her body now
so that her words were hardly
coherent or articulate and her
eyes were blinded by tears she

could not restrain. She did not recognize the stranger while she tried to tell Him of her heart-breaking disappointment in finding the tomb empty until --
-- He said, "Mary!"

Then a cry of wild joy went up to the morning skies -- a cry of joy that has rung its radiant message down thru the centuries.

"Rabboni, Lord, my Lord, dear dear Lord!"

She sprang toward Him -- crying and laughing and her words fell from her lips in hysterical joy. "It is my dear Lord! He is alive."

She fell at His feet and

stretched up her arms to clasp
him, but He motioned her back,
saying,

"Touch me not - I am not
yet ascended to my Father; but
go to my brethren and say unto
them that I ascend unto my
Father and your Father and unto my
God and your God."

With unspeakable joy, Mary
Magdalene hurried away to bring
her reassuring message to His
disciples and the world.

"He is alive, forevermore."