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MADONNA.

O Mary Mother, full of grace, Above all other women blest, Through whose pure womb our erring race Beholds its sin-born doom redeemed.

DIMITRIOS AND IRENE, OR The Conquest of Constantinople

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CHAPTER XIV.

With great anxiety, Dimitrios had waited for the end of the long, monotonous day which had been unusually warm, and which he hoped would bring him an answer to his letter.

anxious expression upon his countenance, advanced to meet his benefactor. "Be of good cheer, my boy," said Selim, "I have an answer to your letter. I knew it would arrive in due season."

"Dearest Brother! It is impossible to describe the feelings of gladness that took possession of my soul, when I learned that you were alive. I have been ill, very ill, but thank God, this most acceptable news has greatly revived me. Still I shudder when I think that you are among the Turks, although it is with the deepest feelings of gratitude towards God that I learn that even there you have found a friend and protector. Heaven grant that Nicolaus may be discovered, and that I may soon embrace my brother again! I cease not to pray for you, and to invoke the intercession of Holy Mary that you may return to me. Our friend, Morosini, does all in his power to console me. The Emperor is, also, very concerned about your safety, and he will spare no sacrifice to obtain your release. Have confidence, brother, and place your trust in God, we shall soon meet again."

"Your Sister, "HELENA."

The countenance of Dimitrios brightened, as his eyes ran quickly over the lines. Handing the letter to Selim, he said: "Read, father. Thank God she feels consoled."

"Selim took the letter and read it. "God is good, my dear son," he said, "I feel that all will well yet. To-morrow I will see you again, rest well, may the Holy Angels guard you!"

"With these words he left the tent of Dimitrios and retired to his own. He found a soldier awaiting him.

"Selim," said the military, "to-morrow the army is to move onward, towards the city. Constantinople is doomed. It may take a long time, for there is much vitality still left in the old ruin, but it is surely ours. I am rejoiced that we are to approach nearer to the old walls, its beginning to be tedious; it is like wasting powder. Moreover, I am anxious for a little sport."

"You may have more than you expect," replied Selim, "and, besides, you may be badly scorched before you reach the city, if you ever succeed in getting so far. Don't forget the Greek fire."

"It is the only thing I am afraid of," answered the soldier, "but tell me, Selim (you seem to know all), where did they ever get that infernal thing from?"

"The Greek fire was invented about the year 667, by a certain Callinicus, of Heliopolis, and brought by him to Constantinople."

"The fiends devour him! what is the accused stuff made of?"

"It is a composition of naphtha pitch and sulphur."

"By Mahomet! they say that nothing resists it."

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CHAPTER XV. Long ere the day dawned, the Turkish army had moved nearer to the city, so that when the first rays of the sun broke upon the astonished eyes of the Greeks beheld the change that had taken place noiselessly, and as if by magic.

"Do not flatter too much, Father Gregorio. I do what I can. But let us now speak of more agreeable matters. I know that you are very abstemious, but I have an elastic stomach. I have concealed under my jacket a flask of delightful Spanish wine. Ah! when I look at the sparkling liquid, I seem to sit in the shade of La Virgen del Pilar, at Zaragoza, where I lived for many years; it is home again in Barcelona, on the blue waters of the Mediterranean, when I quaff the delightful fluid."

"For heaven's sake, Fortuny, what are you doing? If a Turk should happen to come in at this moment and find you drinking wine, we would be ruined. It would be as bad as to find you eating pork."

"No fear! Father, they will never find me eating pork, whenever I have anything else, but, as for wine, they quaff it themselves occasionally on the sly, when they think the Prophet in paradise is looking in another direction, and he has not his eyes upon them."

"That makes no difference. As a rule the Turks observe this law of the Koran with scrupulous exactitude, and you will surely draw upon yourself their enmity if they find you transgressing it."

"But it only takes a second, Father Gregorio," and before the priest could interpose, Fortuny had brought the bottle to his lips and taken a strong draught.

"Now, Father, I am ready to go to the end of the world, yes, to fight Mahomet himself if he were to come on earth. But you know, I must have my wine as much as the German must have his beer."

"You said you wanted to speak of something agreeable; what had you to say?"

"O yes, I had mentioned the word Antipodes, do you believe in the existence of that country?"

"A strange question, Fortuny."

"You know, Father, I delight in those questions. I have sailed down the African coast on one of the ships sent out by Prince Henry, the Navigator, and it is natural that my mind should occasionally revert to a topic which, at present, occupies much attention."

which is dearest to me on earth: the love of Irene, and of my sister, Helena. "You are a brave boy, but let us hope that such a sacrifice will not be required. Did you ever pray that the holy spirit might enlighten you?"

"It is my constant prayer."

"You shall have that light, my child; doubt it not. In this matter there is really only one thing to settle, only one vital question, and that is this: Is the Pope of Rome the Vicar of Christ; are all Christians bound to live in communion with him, and submit to his decrees? All else is secondary. If this question be proved, all has been proved."

"You know father that I have been taught to look upon the Pope as a usurper and tyrant."

"I know it my son but it is not too late to be undeceived."

"Well I am willing to be enlightened."

"Thus far, Dimitrios, you have studied from only one standpoint, that of the Greek Church; but, in this matter, we must go back to the time before the schism, when we were all one, when we all believed the same, when we were all subject to the Pope. We must see what all believed then, why they believed it, and why some changed their belief and broke with the Pope."

"As Selim finished the last words, loud shouts and cries of joy were heard on the outside. He rushed to the door and enquired for the reason of the tumult."

"We have hit the mark," cried a veteran; "the tough old walls are beginning to yield."

"Is there a breach?" asked Selim.

"No, not yet, but large pieces are falling. See! there it goes," and, as he spoke he pointed towards the city.

Selim gazed and saw that pieces of the wall between the Palace of the Hebdomon, in the suburb of Blachernae, and the gate of Zolysandron, were flying in splinters.

"This looks serious," he said. Again he re-entered the tent and addressing Dimitrios said: "It was only a better shot than the ordinary ones. I thought the whole wall was coming down. If you desire, I will proceed."

"You will oblige me greatly, Father, but will you first allow me to ask you a question?"

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