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ANGELA; AN HISTORICAL TALE.

CHAPTER VII.—THE MARTYR'S PRISON.

"Thou, Lord, where'er we die, canst aid;
But He, who taught His own
To live as one, will not upbraid
The dread to die alone."

Lyra Apostolica.

We must now lead our readers to a very different scene. It was dark night. The wind was still howling fearfully round the island; the billows dashed madly against the wall of rock that sheltered the port, even making a good deal of movement visible in the middle of the harbor, where Ali Pasha's vessel was lying at anchor, not daring to venture nearer the shore for fear of falling on the shallows. All through that dark night the storm raged loud and long; bitterly felt by the poor fugitive inhabitants, driven from their houses and forced to take shelter in rocks and caves and stray huts, built for the preservation of the vineyards on different parts of the island. They thanked God, however; for they felt that the very pitiless pelting of the rain and frantic violence of the wind would preserve them from the marauding assaults of their still more pitiless and violent foes. Down in the hold of that rocking galley knelt the faithful pastor. Dom Michele, pale and sea-sick, lay in one corner, a dim oil-lamp lighting up the grim horrors of their low and offensive prison; but the very sight of Monsignore Carga took away every temptation to despond or complain. His pectoral cross was taken off and hung up before him, on a projecting nail, beneath the lamp; and there, his fettered hands lifted up to Heaven, or crossed wearily on his breast, the venerable Bishop waited the approach of morning. At times he would turn and offer every assistance in his power to his suffering companion, who, exhausted at last by the violence of his exertions, physical and mental, fell into a troubled sleep. He dreamed; and his dream was the echo of his waking thoughts. He stood again before the Turkish governor, dragged in by the ruffian soldier; and in his dream went over anew the scene that had ensued. He heard the rough question addressed to his beloved Bishop, where his flock had escaped to; and the peremptory order to bid them all return and present themselves before their prosecutors. Then came the declaration of Monsignore de Rigo's being a Venetian by birth, and his instant release; and lastly, their own manacled forms being cast into the hold of the galley. The scene changed, and they were led forth to die, when a sudden calm seemed to be breathed over the spirit of his dream; heavenly music seemed lingering on the foul, heated air of their prison-hole, and odors of Paradise embalming his enraptured senses. The roaring of the waves and the rocking of the galley were no longer heard dimly, even amid his troubled slumbers, and the good priest slept a quiet and refreshing sleep. He needed it; worn out in body and mind, he could not have stood the horrors of the coming day without this interval of rest, doubtless obtained by his Bishop's prayers. The day was not yet beginning to dawn in the horizon when he awoke; he had been cradled on angels' wings, lulled by seraphic songs, and he could scarcely imagine where he was when his senses returned. The hold, in which they were, seemed still really to be filled with the rich odors and dulcet strains of his dream; the pale reflection of a soft light gleamed on the black rafters above him; and turning round his bewildered head, he endeavored to recollect himself. The lamp was extinguished, but still the Bishop knelt before its smoking remains. An ethereal light played round his kneeling figure, which appeared to float in mid-air, raised somewhat above the ground, and the strains Dom Michele and many others had heard night after night proceeding from his chamber in the Palace now swept round the hold of the Turkish galley, filling every crevice with harmony, inundating the soul with delight and awe unspeakable. Slowly the chaplain rose, and threw himself on his knees, as he gazed on the countenance of the future martyr, so still and motionless in its ecstatic expression, that it was like the very reflection of the Heaven that he was beholding. His aged hands were clasped on his breast, his eyes raised, and the light that trembled round his silvery beard, and kissed the white cassock and rochet in which he had come down to meet the Pasha, seemed again to light up like rubies, and linger more distinctly than ever round the miraculous signs God had impressed upon him from childhood, now that they were about to be fulfilled. On and on he knelt, till the brightening light of day glimmered even into that dark hole; the music died away; and with a deep sigh the martyr returned to the world he had not yet left, from the home the enjoyment of which had thus for a time been forestalled to him.

At this moment the creaking of the boards was heard, the entrance to the hold roughly opened, and the Turkish guards entered. Even they seemed astonished, for something of the heavenly light yet lingered round his face, and gave such an untold majesty to his venerable form, that they stood back one moment in amazement, but, quickly recovering, intimated to their prisoners that they were to appear instantaneously before the Pasha.

"We are ready," replied the Bishop; "come, Dom Michele, courage; the bridal approaches, and we must play the man to-day before men and angels. To-day, all will be consummated."

"Lead on, Monsignore," replied the priest; "only lead on, and Dom Michele, with the help of his namesake, the Prince of the Legions of the Most High, will not flinch before an army of unbelievers."

They were led forth on the deck of the galley; and there standing at the gangway awaiting them, was Monsignore de Rigo. He threw himself into his brother Bishop's arms. "I am to be again questioned," said he; "and your turn comes next."

"Live, Brother," replied Monsignore Carga, "for the sake of your flock. God does not require of you the sacrifice of your life; attempt it not."

There was no time for more, for the trumpets sounded the approach of the Pasha; and seating himself in great state at the further end of the deck, he summoned the Bishop of Tinos before him. We give the examination as it occurred, and was handed down to posterity in the life of the martyr Bishop.

"Know you, Giaour," said the Pasha, "whence came that fleet that anchored some time ago in this port? Wherefore was it called to the island? and who summoned it hither?"

"I know nothing," replied Monsignore de Rigo, "of what you ask me. I came hither but a short time ago, and know nothing of the affairs of Syria."

"But is it possible," returned Ali, "that you know nothing of what this perfidious Bishop of Syria has been trammeling against the Grand Sultan of Constantinople? Is he not your friend?"

"Yes, he is my friend," replied the Bishop; "but I know nothing about what you ask me."

"Go, then," returned the Pasha; "your answer is an excuse; but I pass it over as a good exculpation, because you are the subject of the Venetian Prince, my faithful and kind correspondent. Let this man go free, and call hither the other Giaour," he added, addressing his soldiers; "not that perfidious traitor, but his companion, and keep him out of hearing."

Monsignore de Rigo was led off, and throwing himself on his knees before the martyr as he passed, whispered, "Brother and Father, your blessing and your prayers; for you are already among the confessors of Jesus Christ."

"God bless thee, my Brother," returned the martyr, embracing him, hastily forming the sign of the cross over him, for the Turks were showing impatience; "tarry not, but take the first boat to Tinos, for presently other work awaits us all."

In another moment Dom Michele stood before the Pasha, calm and intrepid; for angels' voices were still ringing in his ears, and he heeded neither the scowl that rested on the face of Ali, nor his menacing tones, shouting, "Giaour, who are you?"

"I am the chaplain of the Bishop," was the calm reply; "my name is Michael, and by profession I am a Catholic priest."

"Where do you live?" was the next question.

"In the Episcopal palace of Syria, with my Bishop," returned the chaplain.

Ali's brow grew dark as midnight.

"Then you are the Bishop's confidant," he continued, "and you must, in consequence, be privy to his iniquitous devices and evil doings.—What did he do when the Neapolitan and Maltese galleys were anchored in this port? Did he not call them to the island? Did he and his people not give them supplies of food and money? You must be well aware of all this, and, by the beard of the Prophet, you shall rue it if you conceal anything from me. Up, speak, and explain yourself."

"My Bishop," replied the priest, "is a holy man; poor in earthly possessions, incapable of intrigue, and cares for nothing, but the affairs of his pastoral rule. I know nothing of what you impute to him; and if others accuse him of such things, they are dark calumnies."

"I understand," replied Ali; "you are his accomplice, and the tool of his wicked machinations. Go back to prison, and, by the Prophet, you shall pay me for it along with him." Guards, put him into confinement, and bring the Bishop here before me."

In a few minutes the exchange was made;—Dom Michele had been hurried back to his prison-

son-hold, and Monsignore Carga stood before the Pasha.

"Who are you?" inquired Ali once more, in his fiercest and most menacing voice.

"I am the Bishop of Syria," calmly replied the Prelate.

"Who sent you to play the Bishop in this island?" returned the infidel.

"The Pope," was the firm and quiet rejoinder.

"Then you and the Pope," retorted the Pasha, "have conspired together with the enemies of the Grand Sultan of Constantinople to bring hither spies, discoverers, usurpers of land and islands belonging to his imperial domain."

"No," replied the good Bishop; "neither I nor the Pope are capable of such things; whereas, by the laws of justice and religion, engraven on our hearts, we are very far from taking part in such iniquitous plots, conspiracies, and deceits."

"Wherefore, then," returned the Pasha, "did you invite the Neapolitan and Maltese galleys to anchor in this port with the idea that they should take possession of the island for the Viceroy of Naples, in the name of the Pope? Why did you give them supplies of victuals and money?"

"These are calumnies," replied the Bishop, "heaped upon us by evil intentioned and malignant persons. No, never has it entered my head, nor the heads of my flock, to perpetrate such deeds or such conspiracies; and you may be convinced there is no design of usurping the island by looking yourself at the port. Not only is it free from Neapolitan and Maltese vessels, but from every other ship of powers with which you are at war."

"This is true," replied the Pasha; "but if it is so at present, it was not a short time ago, when the Neapolitan and Maltese fleets were anchored here, and you gave them provisions of food and money, and invited them here for your own traitorous and iniquitous end. Sure and detailed accounts of your villainy have reached the ears of the Great Sultan of Constantinople. Now, summon before me your Christians of the island. I choose them, too, to give an account of their actions."

For a moment the martyr stood in deep thought; the expression of inspiration usual to him crossed his venerable features. If he consented, and the islanders were brought into the presence of the enraged Pasha, the spoliation of life and goods, nay, even postasy, might ensue; and, on the other hand, a voice seemed whispering to him, "the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep"—words uttered again, not many years ago, by another Prelate, the worthy rival of the virtues and death of Monsignore Carga.

It was the hesitation but for a moment, more to catch the fresh inspiration of God than to determine himself to the sacrifice of life in the cause of Christ. He turned to the Pasha, and replied,—

"I cannot consent to what you ask of me. My flock, panic-struck, not by remorse, but by your hostile and menacing appearance here, have fled and are dispersed all over the mountains;—and even if I would, I could not bring them together before you."

"Giaour! villain!" retorted the Pasha; "let us have done with this mockery! All this is but fiction and deceit. Your Christians shall pay the price of their traitorous proceedings by a good sum of money, and you and your chaplain shall pay it at the hangman's rope. I give you but one alternative of escape. Either embrace the faith of Islam, or you die, hung up, like traitors, to the yard-arm of this vessel. Think what you are about, and I shall wait till to-morrow your resolution."

"Here," replied the intrepid Prelate; "I have not a moment's hesitation. Useless is it to give me time to decide on this point, for neither torments nor death shall ever make me renounce the faith of Christ. I only have to repeat that we shall die innocent, for neither my chaplain, nor my people, nor I, have had any thing to do with the iniquitous understanding imputed to us by our enemies with the foes of the Grand Sultan."

"Infidel dog!" shouted the Pasha, "dost thou defy me? I give thee one hour for recollection; and at the end of that time, if you do not come to your senses and profess the true faith, your carcasses shall be hung up to feed the crows at the yard-arm of my galley, as a warning to your traitorous followers."

"An hour is too long," replied the Bishop;—"again I say, that nothing will make me desert the faith of Christ."

"Guards, away with him," shouted the Pasha. "Thrust him down with his infidel companion into the hold; chain him well, and prepare instantly the ropes on the yard-arm."

The soldiers obeyed, and calmly the holy Prelate was led off, hurried down the companion ladder, the door of the hold was thrown open, and in an instant the Bishop and his chaplain were once more alone.

Dom Michele was on his knees, and now

turned round as Monsignore Carga approached him.

"One hour more!" said the Prelate. "Dom Michele, the bridal train approacheth! One hour more, and we shall see our God!"

"Is it, then, sure?" returned the priest; "is the sentence pronounced?"

"It is, Dom Michele," he replied. "The Pasha gave me to choose between the Koran and the faith of the false Prophet, or Jesus Christ, with a halter here and Paradise hereafter."

"A halter!" replied Dom Michele, involuntarily turning pale; "in an hour?"

"Yes, my son," returned the Bishop; "our cross will be the mast of this galley: our nails, the hangman's rope. The gibbet is more honorable, the sufferings more speedy, than those which Jesus Christ endured for us. A few moments of agony, and the glories of Heaven are ours."

Thus encouraged, Dom Michele's fear was over. The rapture of his Prelate's countenance inspired him with fervor at once.

"Lead on, as thou wert ever wont, my Father; and thy son will follow thee, even unto death."

Shall we describe the scene that followed? Kneeling lowly before his Bishop, the humble and faithful priest began the confession of his sins—his last confession—which purifying the victim was to present it without spot for the sacrifice, meet offering for a God made man crucified on the hill of Calvary. The last words were spoken, the absolving hand raised, and the forgiveness of any human frailty committed, which was so soon to be sealed in blood, written in Heaven. And then, in his turn, the absolver became the penitent; the venerable form of the Bishop knelt down in the dim light at the feet of the priest, who now became his judge, and he who was to pronounce upon him the remission of his sins. Little need had that pure soul for the consoling rite; for daily before the celebration of Mass his confessor received the acknowledgment of faults which in others of lower sanctity would have been thought virtues, and the Mass of the day before had been his Viaticum. The King of Glory was not there in Person to console and fortify his servants for the approaching fight; they were not to go forth to Heaven borne on the very Bosom of their Lord; the holy oils, too, were wanting; but soon they were to see Him face to face, and the blood of their sacrifice was the extreme Unction of the Martyrs.—Shall we tell of the last words of comfort and consolation that fell from the lips of the Bishop, or the promises of fidelity that trembled on the tongue of the priest?—the final benediction bestowed by the saintly Prelate?—the last embrace?—as the sound of footsteps were heard, and the door opened. These things are indescribable; they are only to be imagined, and meditated on in silence and tears.

CHAPTER VIII.—FERDINAND DI MENDOZA.

"She flung her arms about his neck, and cried, My God! Thou has restored me all; All in one hour!"—*Southey's Roderick.*

We must now return to Angela, whom we left just escaped from the clutches of Francesco. Rapidly she darted over bush and stone, little heeding the bruises inflicted on her delicate feet by the rough ground and her rapid pace; nor did she pause to look around till, arrived at the entrance of the cave we have mentioned, she perceived that she was unpursued. Breathless, she hurried in, and throwing herself on her knees in one corner, faltered a prayer of thankfulness to God. This first duty performed, she rose to look around her. It was a small circular grotto on the seashore, well known to Angela, so low that she could scarcely stand upright within it, and blackened by the smoke of fires that had been lighted by fishermen cooking their homely meals when returned from their night-toils on the ocean. The waves were dashing madly up against the rocks at the entrance, and covering her with their cold spray; the rain, too, began to fall; and, cold and hungry, the courageous girl felt her high heart almost failing her, as thought after thought came crowding upon her mind. Her first idea was one almost of self-reproach of having abandoned Sister Francesca, aged and fainting, to the tender mercies of her brutal nephew. But could she do otherwise!—At any rate, Sister Francesca's age guarded her from insult; and besides, could she have helped her in any way? Then came the thought of the Bishop's capture and imprisonment, the threat of her vile persecutor, and the certainty she felt of his sending the Turkish soldiery on her track. The very memory was madness; and she started hurriedly to her feet, and flew to the entrance of the cave. Night had gathered deeply round, and nothing was to be seen but the heavy clouds that gathered darkly over the heavens; and ever and anon the low muttering of the distant thunder could be heard in the distance. But just above the horizon before her shone one solitary star, the only one to be seen in the lowering

heavens, like the ray of hope that just then shone across her soul.

"Mary! Star of the Sea!" murmured the poor girl, as the thought of the galley seen that day from the mountain-height returned to her mind; "guide my path! Thou art indeed the hope of the wanderer, the light of the blind, the help of Christians."

If she could but get round to the other side of the island and obtain a sight of the galley, she might possibly yet save her protector, by bringing timely interference. But how arrive there? The direct path lay by the chapel through the town, and so over the hills at the back; and in the night-time, amid the pelting storm, which now gathered thicker and thicker around, and burst at last in tremendous fury over the island, how could she attempt to skirt the seashore and try an unknown route, at the risk of falling over precipices and being washed away by the waves? There she stood, watching each flash of forked lightning illuminating for a moment the billows tumbling one over another on the rocky beach, no longer blue in their azure brightness, but a dull, heavy lead color; listening to each peal of thunder re-echoing through the hills, and only seeming to vie with one another in their terrific loudness; shuddering as the blast wheeled round her delicate, unprotected frame, and yet stirring not from her post at the entrance of the cavern. Hours might have passed away; she knew not, cared not. Her bodily strength was fast failing; for, tired out by following the long procession of the morning, amid the rain, and the mental and bodily exertions of the few succeeding hours, joined to the want of food and sleep, she was scarcely conscious any longer where she was. A sickening feeling came over her heart, a thick film before her eyes; and just staggering back into the cave, Angela fell insensible on the sandy floor.

The morning dawned gray in the horizon, and a red streak announced the approach of the rising sun; the troubled sea began to resume its peaceful murmurs on the sparkling beach; for the storm had died away towards morning, and was now succeeded by the calm brilliancy of a Grecian autumn-day. So rose the 17th of October. The benumbed and insensible Angela began to show signs of returning life. Bewildered, she first raised her head and looked around her. As the first rays of the sun entered the cavern and struck on her pale features and dishevelled locks, the stern rocks, the glistening water, the rising sun, told the same tale; recollection began to return; and, starting into a half recumbent position, she gazed wonderingly. On a projecting ledge of rock, some way off, lay the recumbent form of a Knight in armor; his knees crossed, his hands, one resting on the hilt of his sword, the other pillowing his sleeping head. His helmet had fallen off, and displayed his open countenance full to Angela's bewildered view.

"Good God! what has happened?" she murmured, passing her hands over her brow to gather her scattered faculties, and instinctively arranging her disordered vestment. "Where am I?" One by one the scenes of the preceding day dawned over her mind; but the presence of the Knight was the only enigma; and were he only erect at the entrance, she might have mistaken him for St. George come to protect her against her foes.

"See, he smiles, he is dreaming," thought she, as she looked at the beautiful youthful face of the Knight, who seemed reposing as peacefully on his rocky couch as if a downy pillow were his resting-place, and no foes were near to threaten his life. Her heart beat fast, for she could not but recognise the Knight of St. John she had seen down the fountain to some time before; but it beat faster still when she distinctly heard him murmur in his sleep her own name. A blush covered her features; but she could not mistake for it was twice repeated; and then a third time the sleeping Knight apostrophised his unknown companion.

"Angela, my sister, where art thou?"

The young girl placed her hand on her heart to still its wild beatings; she gazed one moment more on the sleeping Knight; then rising and following an impulse that seemed irresistible, laid her hand on his mailed shoulder, and uttered the one word "Ferdinand!"

It was the echo of a half-remembered name that had lived in memory's cells, when all else had faded away, the name of something beloved in her childhood; and as she stooped over him, the reliquary given her by the Bishop some short time before, and which she ever wore round her neck, fell out of her bosom. The eyes of the slumbering Knight slowly opened, and fixed themselves in astonishment on the fair, shining form of the beautiful girl who hung over him, while he almost unconsciously replied, "Angela, where art thou, maiden, that thus accostest me?"

"Knight of St. John?"

Angela shrunk back; her face and brow be-