

first time, the cursed Turk, conqueror of Arabia since a few years previous, and tyrannizing over the holy City, seeing I was only a poor pilgrim, insulted me struck me and spat in my face. The second time he marked my guilty brow with a red hot iron. The third time he stripped me of my clothing and dragged me on a hurdle the length of the dolorous way lashing me with whips at every step and because I cursed Mahomet threatened to burn me alive on the steps of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre.

When, finally, more dead than alive, I was ransomed with gold, I went and threw myself in the crypt of the Sepulchre with head resting on the very marble where my Saviour had lain. I thought I felt the sacred stone grow soft beneath my penitent kisses. Overcome with surprise and filled with happiness too great for words, I earnestly besought the risen Christ to take pity on me and give me a sign of His mercy ; in my intense longing, I convulsively pressed my lips to the blessed tomb — marvel of God's infinite goodness — a small piece of its pure white marble remained between my blanched lips.

You may imagine my delight as I carefully removed my treasure, hid it close to my heart and joyously took up my staff to return to the Eternal City. A second time I knelt at the feet of Christ's Vicar. Gregory had died during my absence but his successor, Victor III, received me kindly, ratified the divine pardon, gave me this brief of absolution sealed by the effigy of the two Apostles and this silver reliquary inlaid with precious stones where he himself placed the small piece of marble detached from the Holy Sepulchre, a particle of the true cross and other valuable relics, It is my ransom. I bring it to you because the Pope as a last expiation imposed on me the duty of obtaining from you, my victims and the witnesses of my crime, final and enduring pardon.

Good people who listen to me, formerly my vassals, now my judges, you whom I oppressed and tyrannized over for so many years, will you not also pardon and pity me? Have I sufficiently expiated my crime? May I now live among you to repair the scandal I have given you, or must I once more hopelessly retake my way to Jerusalem an outcast forever ?....