

Leo and Attila. Consider the characters and rôles of these two men; the one, the champion of religion and civilization, the counsellor of kings, the arbiter of nations, the father of Christendom, the Vicar of Christ; the other, a fierce ruler of barbarian hordes, knowing no law but the law of might, a pitiless mower of men, and yet moved by a spirit of divine origin, as he dimly felt in that wild strong soul of his, proclaiming himself the avenger of a God. They were not wholly enemies, this priest and this pagan; he who came to destroy, and he who tried to save. Call them rather co-workers in a sense. Leo, divinely ordained to save all that was good and fair in the civilization of a corrupted world; Attila divinely led to destroy the abuses of a power that had turned to tyranny and a luxury to lust. And so face to face they stood one day, the warrior Hun in full armour of battle, the Roman prelate in robes of peace. Might not heaven itself be conceived as growing silent to hear what these two might have to say?

History tells us that Attila was at the gates of Rome. The last hour of the empire was at hand. The panic-stricken people were seeking refuge in the marshes of Venice from the anticipated violence of their dread invaders. Resistance were worse than useless as the stoutest-hearted knew. Hope was dead in every breast. But no! There was one among the trembling nation who had not lost a hair's breadth of his manhood under the shadow of impending annihilation. St. Leo, with sublimest courage, goes forth in the name of God, and fearlessly confronting the formidable barbarian, boldly offers him propositions of peace.

The sequel is common matter of history, but who, looking through other medium than the light of faith shall attempt to furnish an explanation thereof? A mighty duel was fought without shedding of blood. Was it with the "cross-lightnings" of their eyes, or the magic power of words, or the still more mysterious clashing of soul on soul which comes when two mighty natures meet, striving for mastery, and the greater, in a breath's time shows forth its power over the less without making any sign. Who shall say? We only know that the lion in Attila crouched as before his keeper in the calm majesty of Leo's presence. Italy was saved. Attila withdrew his troops across the Danube and there, shortly afterwards met his death.