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THE POOR SCHOLAR. HIS LEGENDS AND TALES. BY WILLIAM BERNARD MAC GABE.

CHAPTER VI. In a few hours afterwards the fugitives were wandering through the deserted and lovely streets of Rheims, but advancing still towards the church, and as they came in view of the venerable edifice they heard the bells ring out the hours of matins, and seeing a person proceeding towards the open doors of the church to perform his devotions, they were directed by him to the small wooden edifice in which the priest Paululus dwelt.

They hurried to the priest's humble abode, where they obtained instant admittance, and found themselves in the presence of a nice-looking, white-haired old man, clothed from head to foot in a long, loose, flowing, dark woollen robe, fastened on the right shoulder by a buckle, and having at the back a hood, which in those times was known as the caracalla—the model of that garment which is now worn by various orders of monks.

Attalus was instantly recognized by the old priest, and as he told to his host his past adventures and his present dangers, Paululus looked at his pale features with compassion, and then gazed with admiration at the bold bearing and the dark manly form of Leo, he exclaimed, 'Heaven, my children, has in its goodness manifestly sent you to my care. Your coming has been typified by a vision that I have had this very night; for I have but risen from my pallet, when I have dreamed that there came flying to me two doves—the one white and the other black, and that both when they flew perched at last upon my hand, as their most pleasing resting place. By me then you shall be protected, and by me saved—but the bell has ceased. I must to church to say my matins. It is the Sunday; would that I could with safety to yourselves take you with me.'

'But pardon me, father,' said Leo, 'if before you go I venture to make a request of you.—Notwithstanding the sanctity of this day, and though neither of us has heard Mass, I entreat of you to bestow upon us some nourishment, for four days have now passed away and neither of us has tasted bread or meat.'

'Assuredly, assuredly,' said the humane priest, 'in a case of desperate necessity like yours a dispensation is permissible. Here, take all the food I have in the house: it consists but of bread and wine—and when you have eaten of it conceal yourselves in that closet, so that no one but myself may see you.'

So speaking he gave the two starving men bread saturated with wine, and then hastened to the church.

A few hours afterwards Leo and Attalus were informed by the priest Paululus, that Nantin, with a large band of military retainers, had posted themselves at the gates of Rheims and secured all the roads approaching to the city, so that there was no chance of any one entering or leaving it without their knowledge. Hearing this, they resolved to be concealed in the house of the priest, and there they had remained for two days when they were informed that the impatient Nantin had come to the conclusion that they be concealed in Rheims, and having heard that Paululus was the friend of Bishop Gregory, was resolved upon searching his house.

'God alone can be our helper,' said the old priest, as he presented to Leo and Attalus two caracallas like to his own. 'Here, cover yourselves with these, and thus disguised seek to make your way out of Rheims. There, my children,' he said, as he arranged the dark robes around both—'conceal your faces with the hoods. Leo, stoop so that you may appear smaller than you are—and do you, Attalus, walk more erect than is your wont. Very well, very well; that will do. Now, bid ye from the house before Nantin reaches this place.'

Both the young men knelt to receive the priest's blessing, and then hurried from his presence. They had descended to the open space or square of small houses around the church, and had not passed many yards from the door of the priest's abode when they perceived that they were in the midst of Nantin's soldiers, that he himself had dismounted, and ordering a strict watch to be kept on the house, had rushed into the presence of the priest, and to his great disappointment found him alone.

'Are you,' asked Nantin, 'the priest Paululus?'

'I am.'

'Am I rightly informed, when I am told that you are the friend of Bishop Gregory, for many years?'

'You are.'

'And that if you could render a service to him or any one of his family you would do so?'

'And that if his nephew Attalus fled from my vengeance you would aid him to escape from it?'

'That I would conceive to be my duty.' 'Has any citizen of Rheims told you that Attalus has been assigned to me as a slave by the king, and that, aided by another slave, he has escaped from me, and that he now lies concealed in Rheims?'

'No citizen of Rheims has mentioned any such circumstance to me.' 'Indeed!' said Nantin, not perceiving that the priest had baffled him by the manner in which he had put his question. 'But notwithstanding your marvellous ignorance, I have reason to suspect they are now concealed in this house.'

'They are not now concealed in the house.—Search it, and I can answer for it you will discover no trace of the fugitives.'

We must change the scene to Langres. A week has nearly passed away since Nantin was in the house of Paululus, searching for his two slaves. The sabbath evening has come. The Blessed Sacrament has been exposed for the adoration of the faithful upon the high altar beneath which, it is the ancient tradition, are deposited the relics of the three valiant youths, Nidrac, Sidrac, and Abednego, who exposed themselves to the burning furnace of Nabuchodonosor, rather than pollute themselves with idolatry. The saintly Bishop Gregory stands upon that altar, and has pronounced the words of benediction over his flock, when he perceives two strangers clothed with the caracalla hastening up the church and passing within the precincts of the sanctuary; one of them ascends to his side, whilst the other casts himself prostrate on the steps.

The stranger who stands by his side flings back the hood which hitherto had concealed his face, and a shout of joy fills the church, as the bishop bursting into tears flings his arms around his neck, and hails him as, 'Attalus! my beloved nephew, my prayers have been heard and you are restored to me.'

'Yes, uncle,' said Attalus, 'restored to you, and to the church; but I should still have pined in slavery but for the brave man who now lies on your altar steps, and who at the risk of his own life has saved me from a life worse than death.'

'What, Leo! my brave Leo! rise up Leo, that I may bestow the kiss of peace upon thee.'

'A slave,' answered Leo, 'is not worthy of the embrace of a free man.'

'A slave thou shalt not one moment longer remain,' replied the bishop. 'Arise, Leo, come to my side—give me thy hand.'

Leo did as he was directed. The bishop clasping one hand of Leo in his own, cried aloud—'I call on all here to witness that it is my desire to manumit my slave. Take notice then, all you who see and hear what passes, that I wish this man to be a free man, and with this I lose my hold upon him.' And so speaking the bishop turned Leo completely round, so that all might behold what he did, and then letting go his grasp said:

'Leo, you are now a free man. Now embrace me.'

As he spoke these words he placed his hands upon the shoulders of the young man, and the withered cheek of the bishop touched the dark cheek of Leo.

'My wife, my chief,' whispered Leo.

'Both safe, both well. They are now under the care of Adrian, and he pines to see you and to greet you as his son,' replied the bishop.

'Go, Leo—go, my friend,' added Attalus, 'to see your wife and child; but tell them that you are not only a free man, but a man possessing an independent property; for, with my uncle's leave, I mean to bestow upon you and your family forever, one hundred acres of the most productive land on my estate.'

'I approve of my nephew's gift,' said the bishop, 'and I confirm it with my blessing.'

The old chronicler to whom we are indebted for the most of the incidents in this tale adds, that 'Leo, the free man, with his wife and children, passed on the lands thus bestowed, a happy and prosperous time, all the days of his life.'

THE MAGICIAN—A LEGEND.—THE MONKS' RECREATION HOUR.—CHAPTER I.

The hoarse blustering winds on a cold winter's evening, were heard roaring around the thick walls of the monastery of Aschaffenburg, and occasionally bursting in with a freezing gust through the covered cloisters, whenever the postern-gate was hospitably opened to afford to the humble wayfarer and poor stranger food and shelter for the coming night. It was the hour for relaxation; and all the habitual dwellers in the monastery were collected together and formed a wide circle around the huge pile of blazing wood that crackled and sparkled before them, and diffused a genial heat to the most remote corner of the vast apartment in which they were assembled.

Directly opposite this fire, and the only person in the room that was accommodated with cushions and an arm-chair, was an old—a very old monk—upon whose head there was not a single hair, and whose thin nose and sharp chin, nearly meeting together, showed that he had long since lost all his teeth. A skinny, fragile neck, which rose uncovered out of a dark, close-fitting cassock, looked as if it were no longer capable of bearing up the huge bony head which was placed on it, and that head which, from its absence of flesh, might be considered as the head of a skeleton, but that there shot forth, when the old monk spoke, from his huge, gray goggle-eyes, bright flashes of intelligence. The long, bony fingers of the old man rested on his knees, and his head was stooped down so low on his breast, that he seemed to be gazing on the earth, whilst the sparkling flames of the fire were reflected back from the polished skull on which they seemed to play. To look at the old man in this moveless, apparently helpless, attitude, he might be mistaken for one whose faculties of mind and body had both been exhausted, and who now clung to existence with so slight a thread, that the smallest insignificant accident might break it forever. So at least seemed to feel and to think a youth about seventeen years of age, who stood partly at the back of the old man's chair, but with one foot advanced to the monk's side, was in such an attitude, that he could, without stirring a step, aid the aged man in moving, or in ascertaining, by leaning down to him, whatever might be his wishes. This youth—his name was Frederick—whose whole heart and thoughts seemed to be absorbed in the affectionate care of the aged monk, wore the black robe and girdle of a Brother who had not yet received the tonsure, for his dark hairs flowed down upon his back, and served as a contrast to his fair and almost feminine throat; whilst his large black eyes, that now and again gleamed forth a glance as of fire; his quick changing complexion as he spoke, and his suddenness of movement, combined, with his sweet voice, and his ready smile, seemed to show that he was of an impulsive nature, of a lively sensibility, and a generous disposition.

By the side of the old monk, and so as that he, too, might attend to his wants and his wishes, sat upon a stool, like that of the rest of the community, the Lord Abbot of the monastery—the gentle, the tender, and the pious Father Baptist; the writer of many fine homilies, and a man, in whose face, even an infidel would not look without being convinced that whatever the devout Abbot of Aschaffenburg advised others to do for the salvation of their souls, he himself practised. Between the knees of the father there stood, with the little arms clasped around his waist, and the rosy cheek resting on his breast, a boy about seven years of age. The dark eyes, the long silken eye-lashes, the features, and especially the mouth, marked him unmistakably as the brother of Frederick, whose whole attention was riveted on the old monk. It was curious to mark the likeness and the difference between those two young persons. The dark eye of the elder flashed with zeal and with affection; the dark eye of the younger bore the steady light of determination, softened by the warm glances of love and devotion. In the manner of this infant boy—his name was Gratian—it was amusing to note what a contrast there was in his bearing towards the Lord Abbot, and his elder brother. With the abbot his caresses and his talk were as little checked by any thought of fear, or notion of reserve, as if the abbot were not a day older than himself; whilst, as to his brother, he looked up to him with love, but at the same time with as much reverence as if he were a being of a superior order. Gratian, in whose silken ringlets the fingers of the Abbot were unconsciously playing, as the boy lay with his head on the good man's heart, never expected a reproof from one that he loved as a child loves its mother; but he watched, with a sedulous care, the eye of his brother, lest he should do any thing to displease him.

Such, then, was the centre group that sat opposite the refectory fire in the monastery of Aschaffenburg, whilst around them were priests and monks, chatting in a low tone of voice together.

A perfect silence had fallen upon the center group. It had continued for a few minutes, when the boy, Gratian, suddenly changing his attitude, jumped up on the right leg of the abbot, and jolting himself on it, as if he were riding his horse, he put his lips to the abbot's cheek, and, kissing him, said, 'I wish father abbot, you would ask Father Lambert to tell me a story.'

The moment the merry voice of the young boy rang with the utterance of his name, the benumbed faculties of the old monk seemed to have infused into them all the vigor of a new life. He sat at once erect, and fixing his large staring eye on the laughing child, and grasping the boy's hand within his long bony fingers, and gazing a grim smile with his toothless mouth, he said, 'What is it that the poor old Lambert can

do to make our good little Gratian more happy than he is?'

'I wish you would tell me a story, Father Lambert,' answered the boy, stooping down to the bony fingers that clasped his hand, and kissing them with a reverence and a love far greater than sovereign ever yet received in return for the highest honor bestowed on a favorite courtier.

'For shame! Gratian,' said Frederick, 'to think of troubling our dear Father Lambert, by asking him for a story to amuse thy idleness.'

'Nay, brother Frederick,' said the little Gratian, with all the gravity and humility of a man, 'do not chide me by asking Father Lambert for a story. Remember he has been all over the world—in Jerusalem and in Flanders, in France and in Syria, and in Constantinople, and Bohemia; that he has seen kings and queens, and even the Prince Archbishop of Mayence himself, and that he has been, for years and years, writing a history of all Germany, and of the world besides, and yet of all he knows, I only ask him for a story—one little story. I wish, brother Frederick, you would let Father Lambert tell me one story.'

'Well, my guardian, my caretaker, my friend and my nurse,' said Father Lambert, looking up at Frederick, 'what reason have you to give why I should not tell a story to this young Gratian, who may yet reward me for it, by saying a mass for the repose of my soul?'

'Aye, that I will, if I am ever a priest. I wish to be a priest—shall I not be a priest, Father abbot?' asked Gratian.

'Heaven grant you grace to be so,' answered the abbot, laying his hand reverently on the boy's head, and his lips moving as if he were pronouncing a blessing upon the child. 'But come, let us hear what answer Frederick can give to the question put by Father Lambert.'

'For myself I have no objection. On the contrary, there is nothing I love so much as to hear Father Lambert tell one of his old-world stories, but I fear to worry him,' replied Frederick.

'Fear me not, fear me not, my gentle Frederick. The very idea of giving pleasure to you and to your brother will be a gratification and not a toil to me. Come,' continued Father Lambert, 'I leave to you and to Gratian to decide what sort of a story it shall be.'

'Oh,' exclaimed Gratian jumping away from the abbot, and throwing himself on his knees before Father Lambert, 'Oh may two bended knees I pray you, good father, that it may be a story about a wicked magician.'

The refractory room resounded with laughter at the earnestness of the little boy; and Frederick, as if he desired to heighten the sport, also knelt before Father Lambert, and in a half-serious, half-joking tone, said, 'And I pray you, on my two bended knees, that you tell us some story about that man, whoever he may have been that you consider the most extraordinary you have ever known.'

The laughter was renewed by this serio-comic petition, and the old monk, laying his hands on the heads of both the brothers, and drawing them gently together, kissed the forehead of each, and said,

'God bless you, my good children! The request of both is granted. I mean to do what each asks; but, Frederick, your request, I must tell you, is the harder of the two to comply with. More of that, however, anon. The first story I must tell you is that which Gratian has asked for the story of a magician. Gratian would you like him to be a wicked magician?'

'Oh, yes,' answered Gratian, returning to the Father abbot, seating himself comfortably in his lap. 'I would like to be a horridly wicked magician. And, mind you, begin with the words "Once upon a time." No story, in my opinion, is worth listening to that does not begin "Once upon a time."'

'Your suggestion, Gratian,' said Father Lambert, smiling, 'shall be strictly attended to.—Listen to my story.'

CHAPTER II.—THE MAGICIAN—TEMPTATION.

Once upon a time there lived at Catania, a city in Sicily, a very good Bishop, named Leo, who, having been aware that there was no part of the world in which the wicked arts of magic had been so much practiced as in Sicily, and that all the efforts of all his Christian predecessors had not been able to extirpate it, did his utmost by his virtuous example, and his pious admonitions, to induce the people to abominate it as a grievous sin.

Leo, the good bishop, was well aware that those who practiced magic were persons who sought, in the midst of their sins, to have that same miraculous power of working wonders of which God has alone reserved for the greatest of his saints. He knew that to obtain that power men brought down upon themselves perdition here and hereafter. In all his discourses, then, he warned his flock against the practices of magic; and with such good effect did he do this,

that hundreds became converted: and Catania, which had, at one time, seemed to be a foul gulch of sin was changed into a smiling garden of virtue.

The Sunday evenings were especially appropriated by Bishop Leo to sermons against magic, and each succeeding Sunday his congregation was becoming more crowded, until at last he believed, so densely filled was every part of the church, that there was not an inhabitant of Catania but was listening to him. It was at this very time, and when he thought that all his pious labors were about to be crowned with complete success, that he was in the middle of his Sunday evening sermon, when he and those who listened to him were astonished to hear outside of the church doors the sounds of music. It appeared to the bishop and his congregation that there must be at least a thousand trumpeters, and a hundred cymbal-players, with an innumerable body of flute-players assembled together. The bishop's words could scarcely be heard with the noise, and it had not continued many minutes until one of the congregation, urged by a vain curiosity, should go out to see what was the matter, and the moment one went others followed, until at last the bishop found that he and his clergy were left alone in the church, so that for that Sunday he had to break off his sermon in the middle, and return sad and sorrowful to his own home.

The bishop Leo regarded the interruption as an accident to be deplored, and so thought no more of it, until the following Sunday evening, when he was again preaching; and when, instead of sweet music, such as had broken in upon his former exhortation, he and his congregation were alarmed by hearing outside the clash and clang of arms, the cries and groans as of persons wounded, and the shouts and hurrahs of men, as if they were waiting a victory in a hard-fought battle. This time the behavior of the congregation was most indecent; for, instead of stealing out one by one, or in groups of two or three together, as they had done on the previous Sunday they all, as with one accord, rushed from the church, and in such haste, that several had their legs and arms broken, in trying to crush their way out of the door, so that there were shouts and groans inside the church as well as outside of it.

Bishop Leo saw that it would be useless to attempt proceeding with his sermon under such circumstances, and therefore he again returned to his home; but this time twice as sad, and ten times more full of sorrow than he had been on the previous Sunday.

So grieved was the good bishop that when his faithful servant, Francis, brought him his supper that evening, the bishop bade him take it away; for he was so heart-broken that he could not touch a morsel.

'I know what is afflicting you,' said his servant, Francis. 'It is because you have been prevented from finishing your two sermons; but what astonishes me is that you have never thought of the cause of those interruptions.'

'And can you guess it, Francis?' asked the bishop. 'I but regard these interruptions as unforeseen circumstances which no wisdom can guard against.'

'It is your simplicity of heart that misleads you,' replied Francis. 'I have no doubt but your sermons have been broken off by the vile arts of some magician.'

'Of a magician? said the bishop in surprise.

'What makes you think so?'

'Because,' answered Francis, 'I was, I confess, so ill-behaved on both occasions as to imitate the example of the congregation. I went out with them to see who were the players of the music, and who were the fighters in the battle the clamor of which had reached our ears; and when I got outside the church door, on both occasions, I saw nothing in the square before me but a little black and white dog that seemed to be amusing itself by running after its own tail.—It was the same thing that I twice saw. That black and white dog, I am sure, was some magician who by his incantations was thus grieving you, and deluding your congregation.'

'Alas! it may be as you say, Francis,' sighed the bishop; 'but how is it possible for me to discover who this wicked man is?'

'I will tell you,' replied Francis. 'Proceed on next Sunday as usual to preach your sermon against magic and magicians; as if you had no suspicion of being molested by any malignant enemy; whilst I meanwhile, concealed in the square, and being protected by your benediction, which you will bestow upon me in going, and armed with a relic of the blessed Pope Gregory the Great, shall be able to detect the magician, who, on such an occasion, must appear in his visible form, before he commences his diabolical arts.'

'Let it be as you say,' observed the bishop. 'Evil cannot ensue, and good may follow from the proposition you make to me.'

The next Sunday evening the bishop was in