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A NIGHT IN JUNE.

Poem titled 'A NIGHT IN JUNE' by Alfred Austin, describing a romantic evening in a garden.

DIMITRIOS AND IRENE, OR THE CONQUEST OF CONSTANTINOPLE

A HISTORICAL ROMANCE

By CHARLES WARREN CURRIER

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CHAPTER II.—(Continued)

Continuation of the story 'Dimitrios and Irene', starting with 'I did not, my lord; in my pre-occupation I forgot to enquire...'.

Continuation of the story 'Dimitrios and Irene', starting with 'trios. With an astonished expression on his countenance, he exclaimed: "My lord, my father, rather, what has occurred? Why ask that question?"'

Continuation of the story 'Dimitrios and Irene', starting with 'Dimitrios gazed, bewildered, at the speaker, who continued: "Had I not a right to expect from you, gratitude, at least fidelity, in return?"'

Continuation of the story 'Dimitrios and Irene', starting with 'With this, the master of the house arose and pointed to the door. Dimitrios, with tottering limbs, withdrew. In a few moments he was in the street. The door of the house he loved so well, where he had spent so many happy moments, was closed upon him—closed forever. Silence reigned supremely, not a sound disturbed the stillness of the night save the gentle murmur of the waletails, as they broke upon the shore, or the wind, as it swept past the forlorn youth, causing his locks to rise and fall in graceful ringlets on his shoulders. The stars looked silently down from the heavens, seeming to sympathize with the poor, suffering heart on earth, and reminding it that there is nothing steadfast, nothing true, but Heaven. For a long time Dimitrios stood, fixed in the same spot, with his eyes raised heavenward, as if unconscious of his own existence. His illusions had vanished, the earth seemed as naught, his spirit flew far away, and he exclaimed to himself: "Could I but share the solitude of Father Gregorios in his monastery of Agios Kyriani! I will seek him; to-morrow he leaves for Athens."

CHAPTER III.

Continuation of the story 'Dimitrios and Irene', starting with 'The sun had risen high in the heavens, casting its rays upon the placid waters of the harbor which, in appearance, was converted into a sheet of polished silver, studded with diamonds. The light fell through the colored windows of St. Sophia, scattering itself in various hues over all the objects in the vast edifice. A ray of violet, darting in a straight line from above the sanctuary, fell upon the face of a youth who knelt, absorbed in prayer upon the marble floor. Dimitrios had spent a sleepless night and, before the dawn of day, had hastened to St. Sophia, for his heart in its utter loneliness, had turned instinctively to the companionship of Him who calls the weary to Himself and invites to come to Him all who labor and are heavily burdened.' For three hours he had been kneeling unconscious of his surroundings, when a manly hand was laid upon his shoulders and the monk Gregorios stood beside him. Dimitrios arose with a smile upon his countenance and the monk beckoned him to follow. They both left the temple at the western door and stood beside the covered passage built on arches and leading to the Imperial palace. "Dimitrios," said the monk, "I had hardly expected to see you again, but I am delighted to find you in the house of God. I suppose you were recommending your afflicted country to the Almighty. I am also pleased to notice that you do not share in the fanaticism of the populace, who have abandoned St. Sophia since the patriarch has been reconciled to Rome. After all, my son, for centuries we have been in communion with the See of Rome and our greatest men, the Chrysostoms, the Gregories, the Cyrils and the Basils, looked up with reverence to the Bishop of old Rome. If we do not share in the communion of the Latin Church, nor take part in the services of those who have submitted to the Pope, there is no reason why our veneration for this ancient and venerable edifice should cease. Think you not so, Dimitrios?" The latter, lost in reverie, had scarcely understood the words of the monk. Suddenly startled in the midst of his thoughts, he could not conceal his embarrassment.

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"You seem preoccupied," said the venerable man, "has anything occurred to disturb your tranquility?" "Father, I will accompany you to Athens."

"Accompany me to Athens, and why, what unexpected business calls you thither?" "I have resolved to become a monk, to bury myself in your solitude of Agios Kyriani."

"To become a monk! Dimitrios, you are jesting, what sudden resolution is this?" "I am in earnest, thoroughly in earnest. Disgusted with a world I can no longer love, I wish to leave it."

"But you spoke not thus yesterday. Have my words alarmed you, are you afraid of the Turks, will you fly from the enemy?" "No, father, there is no fear in my heart, another motive power impels me."

"Confide in me, my son, you know I am your friend, what ails you?" "Father, you are aware that I was betrothed to Irene Diogenes."

"Alas! I suspected there was a love affair in this matter. Well, have you had a disagreement?" "Not in the least, but her father—"

"Does her father object?" "Most emphatically, Hear me," Dimitrios here related the occurrences of the previous evening, the monk listened attentively. When the former paused, he thus began: "I understand your situation. I sound the depths of your feelings, but believe me, all will be well in the end. This thought of becoming a monk is only the impulse of a moment, it comes not from God. You would wrong Irene were you to abandon her now, she is perfectly innocent of the whole affair, and who knows? she may need your assistance in the perilous days that are impending. Take my advice, my son, and for the present, stay where you are. Remember your sister Helena, she has no one to depend upon but you, she was entrusted to you by your dying mother, would you abandon her in the hour of peril?"

The youth was silent, the image of his sister arose before him; and Irene, he could not forget Irene. "If after six months," the monk continued, "you still persevere in your resolution to abandon the world and Helena has been provided for, come to me, I will see that the doors of Agios Kyriani be opened to receive you, and I, myself, will gladly sympathize with the poor, suffering heart on earth, and reminding it that there is nothing steadfast, nothing true, but Heaven. For a long time Dimitrios stood, fixed in the same spot, with his eyes raised heavenward, as if unconscious of his own existence. His illusions had vanished, the earth seemed as naught, his spirit flew far away, and he exclaimed to himself: "Could I but share the solitude of Father Gregorios in his monastery of Agios Kyriani! I will seek him; to-morrow he leaves for Athens."

With these words he departed from the spot most loved on earth, a spot to which he had so frequently retreated, but which he was never to tread again. A moment, and Dimitrios had vanished into the gloom.

At the foot of the first pillar to the left of the altar, knelt one with whom we have been, rendered acquainted, it is Dimitrios Phocas. The service is familiar to him, for it has undergone no change since the reconciliation with Rome, and the Latin Church has respected the venerable liturgies as well as the discipline of the Greek. In his hand he holds a copy of the "Eucology," which contains the service.

At the end of the office, when the Emperor and his suite had left the church, Dimitrios arose to take his departure. He was reached the door, he was brought face to face with the man who, the evening before, had been his informant concerning the riots on the great square, called the Augusteum. Dimitrios recognizing him, bowed, when the stranger, smiling, exclaimed: "Ah! the young gentleman whom I had the honor of meeting last night!"

"The same," replied Dimitrios with a bow, and he added: "Can you tell me the name of him who ordered his name to be put on such a list?" "I can," was the answer, "he bears the name of Nicolaus Lecapenos, but I think that he has been rendered harmless for a time, for an order has been issued for his arrest."

"I suspected as much," replied Dimitrios. "Are you a Greek?" "I am a Venetian; my name is Vincent Morosini."

"It is a great honor to me to form your acquaintance. I am Dimitrios Phocas."

"An illustrious name," said the Venetian, with a somewhat sarcastic smile. Dimitrios noticed it and replied: "I think not that the blood of the usurper and tyrant Phocas flows in my veins, and, if it did, I repudiate the deeds of my inglorious ancestor."

"Well said you are a true Greek. May I have the pleasure of your company this morning, if you are not otherwise engaged?" "Dimitrios bowed his thanks. As they moved onward, Morosini spoke: "I would be inclined to say that, like most Greeks, you will not wield the sword in defense of Constantinople, but of your assisting office in St. Sophia, has caused me to doubt."

"Sir," replied Dimitrios, reddening. "I am a Greek, and, as a Greek, I will remember my duty to my country; danger shall find me at my post."

"Bravo! give me your hand; henceforth we will be brothers. I go now to the Palace of the Emperor; of course, you accompany me." "Will I be admitted to the Imperial presence?" "Undoubtedly. You will be my companion. I have free access to the Emperor."

They had been moving in a northern direction, in front of the Church, when, turning to the right, they walked toward east, between St. Sophia and the hospice of Sampson, until they reached the Chalcostraton, or Brassmarket, whence they turned around St. Sophia, and walking in a southeastern direction, came to the Royal Gate, which gives admission to the enclosure in the southern portion of which the Palace is situated.

Ionians and Persians, belonged to this class. Others there are who still live on, either in a decrepit old age, as the remnant of the ancient Egyptians, or in the full strength and vigor that belonged to youthful days, like the inhabitants of Schybia. When we follow the history of nations, either those which exist, or those that still exist, we find that their prosperity, as well as their decay, is generally attributable to similar causes. This is true, not of separate nations alone, but also of an entire class of nations that form an existing state of society.

Of man, before the Deluge, we know comparatively little; our investigations are limited to the nations that followed the great Catastrophe. The peoples of the earth foraged, after the Deluge, with the exception, perhaps, of the Assyrians, we find living in a barbarous, semi-barbarous or nomadic condition. Then, after many struggles, they attain to a period of great prosperity, in which the annals of their history seems to have reached its meridian. Finally, their glory declines; the very greatness of their civilization becomes the cause of their ruin. Weakened by internal dissension, or excess of luxury, they easily fall a prey to strong, and often barbarous, nations; they are swept out of existence, or they mingle with their conquerors.

"Ancient Babylon, developed, probably, from Turanian, Acaean and Semitic tribes, had reached a high degree of civilization in times most remote. Being conquered by Assyria, it retained its independence in the seventh century before Christ, and reached the height of its glory under Nebuchadnezzar II. The Babylonians were noted for their effeminacy, luxury and licentiousness, and, no doubt, paved the way for the Persians, when Babylon was conquered by Cyrus in 539 B. C.

Assyria, as it appears, originally an offshoot of the Babylonian monarchy, it attained to a high degree of power, and, after the reign of Sennacherib, in the eighth century before Christ, gradually decayed, until it was destroyed about 606 B. C.

"Egypt, over the origin and the duration of which a veil of mystery hangs, was, after a succession of dynasties, and a series of conquests and defeats, subjugated by the Persians in 340 B. C., and it finally fell under the dominion of Alexander the Great, and, later, of the Ptolemies, in whose possession it remained until it was incorporated into the Roman Empire.

"The Medes and Persians, first separate peoples, were united by conquest, and they became one nation under Cyrus. Under Darius Hyaspes, the Persian Empire had reached its highest period of prosperity, but the reverses of fortune sustained in the struggle with Greece, under Xerxes, began its decline. Under Darius III, it fell into the possession of Alexander the Great.

"This monarch, son of Philip of Macedonia, conquered the world, and founded the short-lived Macedonian Empire. Most of the civilized countries of the world fell under his sceptre, and he pushed his conquests beyond the Indus. His return march from India was fatal. After his death, in 323 B. C., his vast empire, too vast to continue, was split up and divided among his Generals. Thus ended the power of Greece, that now made room for another and more lasting power, that of Rome.

Rome, from its humble beginning upon the banks of the Tiber, gradually grew to be the mistress of the world. The Roman eagle soared above almost all the nations of the earth, and overshadowed them with its wings. Under Augustus, it was at the very zenith of its glory, but, like the nations that had preceded it, the height of its prosperity was the beginning of its adversity. The course of luxury began to grow at the root of its civilization until the huge tree fell. When in the fifth century of our era, the barbarians from the north closed in around, and the steppes of Asia let loose their horde upon it, the sturdy Romans of the days of the Republic no longer existed, and their degenerate descendants possessed neither the skill, the strength, nor the valor to resist the savaders. Centuries of licentiousness had rendered them completely powerless, and the Empire of the West disappeared in its turn from among the nations. Does it not seem to you that the turn of Byzantium has arrived? (turn of Byzantium has arrived?)

Constantinople is in a state of irreparable decay, the barbarous Turks are before the walls, Byzantium shall fall, as Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Macedonia and Rome fell, and I hold it for certain that the century which began with a Constantinian, shall end with a Constantinian. Is there not a singular coincidence here? The founder of Rome was Romulus, and the founder of the Roman empire was Augustus. The last sovereign of Imperial Rome was another Romulus, with the diminutive name of Augustulus. The founder of Constantinople was Constantine, and it may be that his last successor will bear his name.

(To be continued.) A manuscript of Josephus of the thirteenth century was sold for a thousand dollars at the recent Jackson sale in London, and a "Pontifical Romanum," made in 1530, for Cardinal Macantonio Colonna, librarian of the Vatican, was sold for one thousand and twenty dollars.—True Witness.

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