

# DION AND THE SYBILS

By Miles Gerald Keon

A CLASSIC CHRISTIAN NOVEL.

Christianity in the interim grew from month to month and from year to year, and our wanderers had but just arrived at last in Athens in time to hear, near the statue of "the unknown God," while Damarais, the friend of Aglais, and Dion, the friend of them all, stood near a majestic stranger, a Roman citizen, him who had sat at the feet of Gama Iel, the glorious Apostle of the Gentiles, who had been "faithful to the heavenly Vision," though he had not seen the Resurrection, explain to the Athenians "him whom they had ignorantly worshipped." And when the sublime messenger of glad tidings related the circumstances of the Passion, the scenes which had been enacted in Pilate's house (so well remembered by them), the next day's dread event, and when he touched upon the preternatural accompaniments of that final catastrophe, and described the darkness which had overspread the earth from the sixth hour of that day, Dionysius, turning pale, drew out the tablets which he carried habitually, examined the date of which, at Heliopolis, he and Apollophanes had jointly made note, and showed symptoms of an emotion such as he had never before experienced.

He and Damarais as is well known were among the converts of Saint Paul on that great occasion. How our other characters felt we need not describe. Yielding to the entreaties of their beloved Dionysius, they actually loitered in Greece for a few years during which Christianity had outstripped them and penetrated to Rome, where it was soon welcomed with fire and sword, and where "the blood of martyrs became the seed of Christians." Esther shuddered as she heard names dear to her in the murmured accounts of dreadful torments.

Resuming their westward course, how Paulus rejoiced that he had in time sold everything in Italy, and was armed with opulence in the midst of new and strange trials! They gave Italy a wide offing, and passing round by the south of Germany, with an armed escort which Thellus (who had also become a Christian, and had, while they were in Greece, sent for Prudentia) commanded, they never ceased their travels till they reached the banks of the Seine; and there, undiscernible to the vision of Roman tyranny in the distance, they obtained by means of the treasures they had brought hundreds of stout Gaulish hands to do their bidding, and soon founded a peaceful home amid a happy colony. Hence they sent letters to Agatha and Paterculus.

Two arrivals from the realms of civilization waked into excitement the peaceful tenor of their days. Paulus himself, hearing of the death of Paterculus, ventured quickly back to Italy in the horrible short reign of Caligula, and fetched his sister Agatha, now a widow to live with them. Later still, they were surprised to behold arrive among them one whom they had often mourned as lost to them for ever. It was Dionysius. He came to found Christianity in Gaul, and settled amidst the friends of his youth on the banks of the Seine. Often they reverted, with a clear light, to the favorite themes of their boyhood; and often the principal personages who throughout this story have, we hope interested the reader, gathered around that same Dionysius who is indeed the St. Denis of France and listened, near the place where Notre Dame now towers, to the first Bishop of Paris, correcting the theories which he had propounded to the Areopagus of Athens as the last of the Greek philosophers.

One other arrival greeted, indeed, the expatriated but happy settlement. Longinus found his way among them and as the proud ideas of a social system upon which they had turned their back no longer tyrannized over Aglais or Paulus, the brave man, biding his time and watching opportunities, found no insurmountable obstacles in obtaining a fair reward for twenty years and more of patient and unalterable love. He and Agatha were married.

Note.—The Roman Breviary thus speaks of St. Dionysius.

"Dionysius of Athens, one of the judges of the Areopagus, was versed in every kind of learning. It is said that, while yet in the errors of paganism, having noticed on the day on which Christ the Lord was crucified that the sun was eclipsed out of the regular course, he exclaimed: 'Either the God of nature is suffering, or the universe is on the point of dissolution.' When

afterward the Apostle Paul came to Athens, and, being led to the Areopagus, explained the doctrine which he preached, teaching that Christ the Lord had risen, and that the dead would all return to life, Dionysius believed with many others. He was then baptized by the Apostle and placed over the church in Athens. He afterwards came to Rome, whence he was sent to Gaul by Pope Clement to preach the Gospel. Rusticus, a priest and Eleuther a deacon, followed him to Paris. Here he was scourged, together with his companions by the Prefect Fescennius, because he had converted many to Christianity, and, as he continued with the greatest constancy to preach the faith, he was afterwards stretched upon a gridiron over a fire, and tortured in many other ways; as were likewise his companions. After bearing all these sufferings courageously and gladly, on the ninth of October, Dionysius, now more than a hundred years of age, together with the others was beheaded. There is a tradition that he took up his head after it had been cut off, and walked with it in his hands a distance of two Roman miles. He wrote admirable and most beautiful books on the divine names, on the heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchy, on mystical theology; and a number of others."

The Abbe Darras has published a work on the question of the identity of Dionysius of Athens with Dionysius first Bishop of Paris, sustaining, with great strength and cogency of argument the affirmative side. The authenticity of the works which pass under his name, although denied by nearly all modern critics, have been defended by Mgr. Darboy, Archbishop of Paris—Ed. C. W.

THE END

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