

that all would occur according to the received account—that the patriarch would issue flambeau in hand, and be carried on the shoulders of the people down the nave of his own church. But either he is too old for this operation, or the general excitement of the present day would not be satisfied with so slow a propagation of the flame. However that may be, the fire comes forth in a very different way. During the seven minutes that the Patriarch was closeted with the angel, who, many say, brings the flame, I observed a number of men in white aprons and dresses, and with white scull caps, exactly like cooks. These, I learnt, were ardent devotees, anxious to be the first to seize the living fire, and that the object of the dress was to prevent the burning of their hair and their persons. They crowded round a little low aperture communicating with the angel's ante-room. All of a sudden one of these men gave an unearthly howl, and, springing to his feet, rushed forth with a flambeau, the flame of which was certainly as big as a guardman's bearskin. The noise and the motion, and the figure combined, it seemed to those above much more as if the fire had ascended from below by means of a scullion than that it had descended from above by means of a bishop. The fortunate possessor of the light was immediately knocked down, and half-a dozen flambeaux lit from the Holy One, when he was allowed to proceed, and, not daring to come up the main passage, he went round to the altar by another way, and in less time than I can write the flame was communicated from hand to hand, it spread from circle to circle, it rose from tier to tier, it sprang from mass to mass, it swept from gallery to gallery up to the roof, and in exactly two and a half minutes from its first appearance the entire building was one mass of flame. So close were the people packed, that the flambeaux looked like one continued fire. Then the delight of all was at its highest. Everybody wallowed in the Divine element. Men bared their arms, and necks, and breasts, and bathed themselves all over. Women washed their faces and arms in liquid flame, and passed it round and under their children till the children shrieked again. They said the fire would not hurt though it would burn, and they certainly acted as if their words were true. That it would burn was proved next day by a woman, who produced her child to the authorities with both its eyes out. Messengers were laid on from the door of the church, who carried the sacred fire to all the villages around. When any man wanted to carry his flambeau to another part or to leave the church, he raised himself on the shoulders of those near him, and he actually ran rather than walked over the heads of all. Numbers were constantly running about in this way. Hair was on fire, beards were on fire, dresses on fire, the only wonder is that the whole place is not burnt down. The heat was intense, the smoke and dirt were fearful, the shrieking and the noise the most horrible I have ever heard. It is the Saturnalia revived—a Pandemonium in the name of God. The two Patriarchs skulked out with two flambeaux apiece a quarter of an hour after, and were evidently anxious to get to their altars unseen. The rage was at its highest, and they were unnoticed. After about forty minutes, and just as those who possessed sensitive organs began to appreciate the smell of roast human flesh, the fires began to pale. Everyone put out the flame of their thirty-three candles with a cloth, which is kept to be wrapt round them when dead—a pretty object to keep for life, a napkin covered with the snuff of thirty-three tallow candles. What gave such effect to the show was the extreme darkness of the day. Just as the fires were being put out, the sun shone forth for the first time, and through the broken roof and dome a flood of light poured down on our Saviour's tomb and all around. 'Ah!' said a lady near me, 'what little heed they take of the real fire from Heaven!' It was refreshing to find that the Latins, though they give up their part of the building for the purposes of the show, have no faith in the holy fire. I went to see the Latin Patriarch, a noble specimen of a gentleman and a Christian, if half reported of him be true. After the interview I left with his chancellor, and, as the latter walked with me some way, I mentioned the Greek Fire. He lifted his hands and his eyes to heaven, and uttered these words:—*Per l'anima di San Gennajo!*—by the soul of St. Januarius!—an awful imposture."