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ANGELA; AN HISTORICAL TALE.

CHAPTER I.—ANGELA AND DOM MICHELE. 'She was Italy's daughter, I knew by her eye— It wore the bright beam that illumines her sky.' —Old Song.

What traveller in the East now-a-days does know the rocky, dirty, commercial island of Syra? Its busy ports, its noisy Eastern market-place, and its extensive semi-circular town, with its narrow streets and dirty lanes, stretching up in picturesque tiers from the margin of the water, till a great part of them are lost behind the hills whose summits they have reached, and are there backed again by another range of hills, rising rocky and barren against the clear blue sky of Greece! Now, as his boat glided along that sparkling blue water which lies between the hissing black steamer that brought him thither and the shore lined with that picturesque, gay-colored multitude, which only Eastern towns can boast, what were his thoughts? Did he know he was looking on ground moistened with the blood of martyrs? Did he dream that busy seaport was once the scene of a bloody death in testimony of the faith of Christ?—that barren rock was once trodden by a wonder-working saint?—I think not.

Perhaps of all the many travellers, even the Catholic, who pass in continual succession by that seemingly most uninteresting of islands, scarcely one knows the traditions that lie, for all that, deeply treasured in the hearts and memories of the still fervent children of the Catholic faith in that island? Let us transport him only forty years back—to the date of the Greek Revolution. All that busy scene has vanished; the port, it is true, lies still in its deep blue beauty, and the sky still wears its calm depth of liquid loveliness—the rocks are as barren as ever, save where some crabbled fig-tree bears its load of luscious fruit, and gives a spot of shade from the noonday glare, but round the silent shore is heard nothing but the splash of a gentle wave, or the sea-bird's cry, or perhaps the oar of some solitary fishing boat. Upon the sandy beach some few magazines are to be seen scattered here and there, but where are the inhabitants? Do you see that conical hill in the distance, with the church of St. George at the top of it—skirted on all sides by flat-roofed houses, looking very like a nightcap? That is old Syra—there dwelt its original inhabitants—all the rest is a modern town, built in honor of the god Mercury, and called Hermopolis by its new inhabitants, who wish to bring back, in vain, the old days of Pericles and Aristotle, even in the names of their streets and children, to what was once, and is still, beautiful Hellas!

But our reader must kindly go back a long way further still, and he will find the island much as it was at the Greek Revolution, in the year when our story begins, A.D., 1617, and so it had been from the time when, in the first ages of Christianity, the faith was planted, and a Bishop appointed there under the Metropolitan Archbishop of Athens. Would he like to row on shore, after rounding the rocky point of the harbor, and finding himself quite sheltered from the waves by the barren island that stands across its mouth, and is now occupied by a lighthouse, and then mount by a winding path, across the fields of budding corn, past the little chapel of St. Mark's, near the sea-shore, to the primitive town? The inhabitants are slowly wending their way through the evening light back from their labors in the fields, the women mounted on the backs of donkeys, with their babies in their arms, while the peasant walks behind, in his picturesque costume, driving on the laden animal. Suddenly the sound of the Angelus is heard from the bells of the Cathedral and other churches, and every hand makes reverently the sign of the cross, and begins repeating the Angelical Salutation.

'Angela,' said a gentle voice within one of the houses near the summit of the hill, 'do you not hear the Ave Maria?'

A young girl who was sitting at the back door of the house, on a terrace that overlooked the whole view of the port and neighboring islands, her dark eyes fixed intently on the magnificent prospect, bathed in the soft coloring of the sunset light that spread itself out before her, slowly rose at this summons, and putting her hands before her face as if to shut out the beauty that so enchanted her, knelt down, and began repeating the beautiful commemoration of the Incarnation, which bows every Catholic heart, three times in the day, in loving adoration of a God made man, and tender homage to His Virgin Mother. She then rose, and re-seated herself, her hands clasped on her knees, her glossy black hair braided round the picturesque Greek head-dress, still drinking in the rich beauty of the scene before her.

'Mother!' said she, at last turning to look into the house, 'what, still on your knees?' The

person addressed brought out a low wooden stool and seated herself beside her, busily occupying herself in spinning some coarse black wool, which was tied on to a distaff primitive enough to have been used in the days of Homer.

'What are you thinking about, my child?' said she, as Angela resumed her former position.

'Father Bonaventura's sermon last Sunday to the school children,' murmured the girl, as if half dreaming still; 'and then I thought I would put it into verse, and the inspiration came over me like yonder rich glow in the west, only it was not in your ugly old Romaic, Mother Francesca,' she added, turning laughingly to her companion, who sat calmly spinning the rough black thread, in her heavy brown frieze habit and cord, and coarse patched white veil, looking certainly a great contrast to the fair, noble-looking young girl beside her, though there was a placid expression of quiet peace to be read in her aged features, which many might think wanting in her companion; 'it was in the tongue of my rich southern land, my Italy!' and the girl sighed again.

'Good even, Sister Francesca,' said a grave but gentle voice behind them, as a middle-aged man in a rustic cassock stepped out on the terrace.

'Good evening, Affendi Pappa!' (Rev. Father) said the old nun, laying aside her distaff, and advancing to kiss the priest's hand, but covering her own with a corner of her veil, while Angela sprang from her seat, performed the same ceremony with evident delight, and ran in to fetch him a homely seat.

'Sit down, Dom Michele; how is the Bishop?'

'Quite well, my child,' returned the good Priest, 'and wants to know how is his adopted daughter; is she quite happy?'

'Angela made no reply; she only turned and looked out again on the now fading coloring.—The Priest glanced at Sister Francesca, then said kindly, 'What's the matter, my child?'

'Nothing, Father,' said the young girl; 'I am as happy as I can be away from my Father; for you know Monsignore has been that and more to me; but sometimes it comes over me that I am a nameless creature. All have fathers, and mothers, and brothers, and sisters; but mine are the rich coloring, and the blue seas, and the gentle winds, and the rugged rocks, and they seem to understand me better than any one else, except one, and him I cannot see now, as I did at Constantinople, every day, though I did make that long voyage only to follow him.'

'And so she has been sitting there making verses,' said Sister Francesca, in her quiet imperturbable tones, evidently to put the good Priest on the track, while she walked into the house to make some little hospitable arrangements quite necessary in the East.

Angela looked after her a moment, then, meeting the Priest's rather compassionate smile, blushed, and said, 'I know I am very ungrateful! and told her too, just now, that I had not been thinking in her ugly old Romaic, but in my rich Italian tongue.'

'Well,' cried the good Priest, 'you know I understand your rich Italian tongue, so let us see what were these verses she was talking of.'

'O Father! I was only thinking of Father Bonaventura's sermon last Sunday to the children, about the islands we see from the windows. You know it was the fourth Sunday after Pentecost, and he told them he would take them out in St. Peter's boat; and that white island which lies just beyond the port was the isle of innocence; and then Naxos, which the ancient Greeks used to call the island of Bacchus, and has such beautiful gardens, was the isle of piety and devotion; and Paros, where the marble quarries are, you know, still to be seen, was learning; and Antiparos, where the beautiful grotto is, humility; and so on, Mycony over there, and Tinos, the isles of silence and peace; till he finished with that little island which crosses the port, and called it faith;—oh, and I forgot, he took them to the 'Holy Isle,' you know—Delos—and what do you think that was, Father? Of course, 'obedience!'—the one virtue they are always preaching to us—so I fancied myself sailing along that beautiful blue sea, till I don't know how long I have been sitting idle here.'

'Well, let us hear them,' insisted the Priest kindly, 'and then I will tell Monsignore what you have been doing, and tell you a story about him.'

'O Father,' said the warm Italian, kindling at once, 'tell me, tell me!'

'When we have heard the verses, or I shall send you at once to Delos,' said Dom Michele, smiling, as Sister Francesca came out with a little tray, on which were some sweetmeats and a cup of steaming coffee, presented them to him, and quietly resumed her distaff, while he sipped the black beverage.

Reluctantly Angela obeyed, but soon looked like an improvisatrice of her own bright land,

while she repeated, what may be translated into English, as follows:

'Come, all ye little children gay, A wondrous bark to sea! Come, and I'll lead you forth to skim The blue waves merrily.'

The setting sun gleams o'er a sea Calm as a silver shield; St. Peter's bark it does not need The merry oar to wield.

The image of the Crucifix Its form on high uprears, The mast, the cross, the swelling sail, Our Lord's own Self appears!

Mary looks out of Heaven's deep blue, Our Star in life's rough sea; Then fear not, little children all, In such blest company.

'Mid 'th' islands of the blest' we'll roam That all around us glow, In those rich hues and golden dyes, Fair Greece alone can show.

But first we'll steer to yon white isle Where a sweet lamb is straying (His silver fleece in lilies wreathed), With white-robed children playing.

The islet's name is 'Innocence,' Ah! little children, dear, All who have stained their robes of white May never linger here.

If we would linger 'mid its joy, Wipe well the dust away, And in the streams of penitence, Wash them from day to day.

Now see yon fair luxuriant isle Where our bright row is turning, Gardens descending to the shore In golden sunlight burning.

See the royal pomegranate banding, With purple grapes to twine, The golden orange, luscious fig, The peach, the nectarine.

Cull them, fair children, at your ease, Nay, taste them merrily; Nought cloy nor harms in this sweet isle, The isle of 'Piety.'

But brightly gleams our onward path, Another meets our view, Radiant with marble pure and white, All, all in store for you.

Light, light the candles, virgin store, Each child shall gaily smile, As we go downward to explore The mines of 'Learning's' isle.

But 'mid these ancient labyrinths Many have gone astray; Keep close behind your kindly guides, Lest ye should lose your way.

Speed on; speed on; another sight More beautiful than this; See how the waves, in silent glee, Yon rocky lowland kiss.

Lightly on shore, nay, lowly bend, Low is the entrance, sea; Steep is the pathway, deep the cave— Its name, 'Humility.'

But glorious visions deep below Meet the entranced sight; Crystal pillars and pinnacles, The glistening stalactite.

Gaze on, gaze on; here treasures lie Untold to human ear, They who would dwell in 'Learning's' isle Safely, must linger here.

Next we'll cross to the 'Holy Isle,' Which ancient poets sing; Zephyrs kissing her anlit slope, 'Obedience' whispering.

Wafting rich odors round, that still From golden tripods rise— O'er a ruined temple fold their wings In sad and mournful guise.

Here Virtue's Queen, from earth to Heaven, Waits, outstaid, to return, Ah, little children, you at least Her Heavenly lessons learn.

Come onward still. What dulcet strains, Break on the charmed air? Eolian harps by spirit hands, Swept in yon islet fair.

Lightly tread, or ye break the spell; 'This is the sweet domain Of hermit spirits, virgin souls, And 'Silence' is its name.

In yonder isle bright gushing streams For ever onward-flow; Rose, carnations, and lily fair, In mingled beauty grow.

But ere we touch the spell-bound shore, All ugly sounds must cease; No word, no look, must ere profane The isle of holy 'Peace.'

Swiftly on, through the bursting foam, Blithely our course is run; Back to the haven when we came Our bark is hastening on.

But as we turn the jutting point, One isle meets us more; The beacon's light shows calm and bright Its pure and radiant shore.

Shedding rays on our homeward path, Ah, in the hour of death, Children of Christ's one Mystic Spouse, Keep by the isle of 'Faith.'

And now we've entered blithe once more The haven, in peace to rest; One Ave for him who led you 'mid 'The Islands of the Blest.'

'Bravo! my child! very pretty!' said the Priest, and even Sister Francesca, though she said nothing, had ceased twirling her eternal spindle for a moment as she looked up at the young speaker.

'And now for my story,' said she, drawing her stool nearer to Dom Michele, and looking up into his face. 'What has Monsignore been doing? Another miracle, I suppose.'

'Exactly,' said the Priest. Angela clapped her hands in delight, and Francesca looked reverentially up, and made the sign of the Cross as she prepared to listen.

CHAPTER II.—THE KNIGHTLY GALLEY.

'Firm was his step and his mien was high, Half softness, half fire, his falcon eye.' Golden Violet.

'You know Lucia Privilegio, Angela?' said Dom Michele.

'To be sure, Father,' she replied. 'It was only yesterday I saw her tumble down in one of her fits, close by this, and I ran into the house and locked the door in such a fright, that I made poor Sister Francesca fancy the Turks were at my heels, or Francesco Commenos himself,' she added, laughing merrily, and eyeing the placid old sister, who did not even smile or raise her eyes from her work.

'Well, we met her in the street this morning, as Monsignore was going down to baptise Baptista's baby. No sooner did she perceive us, than, with fearful contortions, she fell at the Bishop's feet. She had, however, time to cry out 'Help! help!' He put out his hand, and touched her with the medal of his rosary, saying merrily, 'In the name of Jesus Christ, come near her no more!' You should have seen Lucia's face of wonder and thankfulness, as she knelt down almost instantaneously at his feet; the contrast was indeed strange. But a crowd was gathering, all crying out 'A miracle! a miracle!' and he made his escape into Baptista's house.'

'Glory be to God!' ejaculated Sister Francesca, while Angela clasped her hands and exclaimed, 'He is a saint! Don't I tell you he is a saint?'

'I dare say he is,' said a young girl very shrewdly dressed, who had entered unperceived during this conversation; 'but I wish he would not wish every one to be saints like himself.—It is not life to live as he wishes us all to do.'

'Ah, Annetta,' said Dom Michele, shaking his head, 'a year ago you would not have spoken thus?'

The girl slightly blushed, tossed her fair head, adorned by a profusion of light hair, which made one wonder whether it fell from amid the dark forms that surrounded her, and raised her merry blue eyes to his face, retorted at once, 'A year ago I was a child. I did not know what I wanted.'

'Do you know now, my child?' said the good Priest, 'or do you see with the eyes of Francesco Commenos?'

'Well, Affendi Pappa,' replied Annetta, 'it does indeed look as if they were in the right.—Now that Monsignore has changed our liturgy, their churches seem positively as if they were the real old faith. Besides, you know, nobody forbids my having Francesco. The Bishop has given leave, and Francesco has signed all the conditions. His garden at Agros is forfeited to the cathedral the moment any child is baptized a schismatic.'

'Fair terms, easily made before marriage,' said the priest; 'but as easily broken after.—What power has the bishop to enforce this compact, if Francesco chooses to appeal to the Turkish Government, and give them a bribe?—Francesco is rich; he has property in other parts of Greece; he may carry you off there, where no Catholic church exists, and then what will you do my child?'

'I would not go, Affendi Pappa,' replied Annetta; 'besides I am sure Francesco would not do any thing to grieve me, and he knows he would do so were he to take me away from my mother.'

The priest shook his head. 'I know Francesco's character better than you do, Annetta. He has always been, till now, very fanatical; his family are all so, and bitter enemies of Monsignore's. You will say he is changed lately; but, my child, the very facility with which he has promised every thing, so contrary to his usual ways, proves to me that sincerity is lacking; and the well-known Greek character for deceit will appear as soon as he has secured his prizes.'

'I think you are very uncharitable to-night, Affendi Pappa,' said Annetta, coloring this time high between shame and anger. 'I wish I could think I was, my child,' said the good priest; 'but you are blinded by passion, and cannot see things as they are.' Ah,

Annetta, he continued sadly, 'when I think of the days when I used to see you so fervently kneeling at St. Francis's altar, and longing for nothing but to be the spouse of Jesus Christ; when I witnessed then your modesty and humility, and see the change that has taken place in you I cannot but think that Monsignore's words about you are indeed a prophecy.'

'What did he say about me?' said Annetta, her curiosity roused. 'I always thought it very odd he should give his consent to the marriage.'

'He hesitated, as you know; and then—I was standing by him at the time—he closed his eyes, and seemed wrapped in thought. Then suddenly taking the pen he made out the license, saying as he gave it to me, 'Poor Annetta! Better for her to be punished in this world than the next. Her way lies through fire and a sea of tribulation. Let us pray for her and Francesco too; for he himself will punish her for the disobedience she is committing.'

'But my mother has consented,' interrupted Annetta.

'How could she do otherwise,' replied the priest, 'when you had settled it between you without her knowledge, and you told her you had taken off your postulant's dress for the purpose of marrying him, and would disgrace her by leaving her house if she did not give her consent?'

'That was only to frighten her,' murmured the confused girl.

'I will suppose it was,' replied the priest; 'but obedience is following the will of your superiors, not forcing them to give in to yours. Ah, my child, my child, believe me, nothing good ever comes of going against the spirit of the Church.'

'And why may I not convert Francesco,' returned Annetta, 'instead of his forming the punishment of my life?'

'When you say it looks as if they were right, now that Monsignore has changed the liturgy? Why, my child, how often have I heard you in your days of fervor prefer the Latin Offices at St. John's to the United Greek elsewhere; and your mother, being half Venetian, accustomed you early to attend and love them, so the change cannot matter to you. It is only since you have known Francesco that you have admired so much the old rite now extinct among us, and the passage from that to attending the schismatic churches with your husband is not very great.'

'But it is another thing—allowing I have never been baptized, and being obliged to be immersed three times, Affendi Pappa,' said Annetta.

'That is the new doctrine,' said the Priest, 'got up to excite a hatred among the common people, and curry favor with the Turks. They want to show them by this that they hate the followers of their enemy, the Holy Father. That is the reason they call us now by the abominable titles of Frank dogs and unbaptized,—terms I have myself heard Francesco and his parents use over and over again.'

'Indeed, indeed, Affendi Pappa,' said Annetta, earnestly, 'I will never give up my faith; and I only said that about the rite to tease you.'

'You seem to say a great many things to tease and frighten people, my child,' said the good priest; 'and God grant you may keep your faith, if it is only not to bring the gray hairs of your poor aunt with sorrow to the grave,' he added, directing, with a glance, Annetta's attention to the old nun, who was silently wiping away the tears that had fallen unwittingly from her eyes during this conversation, and now, rising, laid her distaff and spindle on the ground, and retired into a little chamber, that adjoined the room leading out on the terrace.

'She prays for you, Annetta,' he rejoined, as the girl stood looking half confused, half sadly, after her; 'and I cannot think, whatever you undergo, you will ultimately be lost, when so holy a soul prays for you. Angela,' he continued, addressing our first acquaintance, who apparently not much interested in what was going on, was standing near the low wall of the terrace, gazing earnestly into the fading light of the distance, 'what are you looking at?'

'A sail, Father,' she replied; 'it looked like a white sea-gull hovering on the horizon, just in between the fair island of Tinos, with its jagged peaks, where one sees the white line of the Borgo glistening as clearly this beautiful evening, as if it was painted on its purple brow, and the low blue line of Mycony, and then it winged its way slowly on, and stood before the island of Delos, which seemed like a speck of gold; and so it passed on before the island that stands in the mouth of the harbor; and there it lies, just now, idly flapping its snowy wings, and cutting the still water into foam with its long rows of oars; while Naxos stands far away above it, looking like an enchanted isle, and Paros not much else, with its rosy and lilac-colored evening dress. The port is so still, the waves so blue,