

beneath him is free from flaw. Perhaps you have heard the rumour, and therefore hesitate."

"I have not heard it heretofore, but having heard it, do not hesitate." Saying which, the ambassador stepped upon the stone. Instantly, the marble turned under him, and falling, he clutched its polished surface in vain, dropping helplessly into the reservoir beneath. The air under his cloak bore him up and kept him from sinking. The reservoir into which he had fallen proved to be as large as the Temple itself, circular in form, as was the edifice above it. Steps rose from the water in unbroken rings around it, but even if he could have reached the edge of the huge tank in which he found himself, ascent by the steps was impossible, for upon the first three burned vigorously some chemical substance, which luridly illuminated the surface of this subterranean lake. He was surrounded immediately by water, and beyond that by rising rings of flame, and he rightly surmised that this substance was Greek fire, for where it dripped into the water it still burned, floating on the surface. A moment later the Prince appeared on the upper steps, outside the flaming circumference.

"Ambassador," he cried, "I told you that if you stepped on the marble slab, you would be informed truly of the fate of your master. I now announce to you that he dies to-night, being a prisoner in my hands. His army was annihilated in the Pass of El-Zaid, while he was on his way to capture this city through your treachery. In your last communication to him you said that you would investigate our water storage, and learn how it was discharged. This secret I shall proceed to put you in possession of, but before doing so, I beg to tell you that Damascus has fallen and is in my