

MYSTERIES.

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They were never denied though misconstrued by his envious and mortal enemies, as if wrought by the power of Satan; absurdly advancing that Satan would thus humble himself and ruin his own cause and usurped credit among sinful mortals. He wrought them as the Lord himself of nature, who but willed, and they were done; who commanded, and nature obeyed. In the sight of many he stilled the storm at sea; and called Lazarus up from his grave. In his absence or presence, his will was proved omnipotent; JOHN iv., 53. His miracles in every instance bore the stamp of the Deity. The inhabitants of the watery deep crowded instantly where he willed them to be; LUKE v. 6. 'The fig tree withered at his frown; MAT. xvi., 10. The water grew firm beneath his steps. The inanimate as well as animate creation, felt the presence of the Lord. He read into the innermost recesses of the human heart; MAT. ix., 4; and revealed in characters traced upon the ground with his Almighty finger, the sins of all, and each of those who had come deceitfully to accuse before him the woman taken in adultery, JOHN iii., 68.— With what ease did he solve the captious query of his enemies, the Pharisees and Herodians; MATT. xxii., 19. They thought they had devised the unavoidable alternative of his either granting or denying it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. Had he granted it lawful, the Jews from their hatred to that tribute, would have abhorred and stoned him, as an enemy to their law and country and a friend to strangers and idolaters. Had he denied it to be lawful; the Romans would have put him to death, as a preacher up of sedition. Even had he declined answering them at all they would then have held him out to the public as one whom they had puzzled, and as a mean and truckling temporiser. But there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord; Prov. xxi., 30. By these and numberless other prodigies, did he prove himself to be the long expected EMANUEL, or God with us, prophesied from the beginning, and pre-figured in the many emblems, rites and sacrifices of the Jewish religion. He began and ended his ministry by transubstantiation; first, by changing water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee; and last, by changing bread and wine into his own flesh and blood, to be united with ours in that spiritual marriage feast, which the eternal Father had made for his Son become man; and to which if duly prepared, we are all invited; MAT. xxii., 2, 3. That downright infidels, in their wild, unprincipled and conjectural surmises, should profanely scoff at so sublime and inconceivable a mystery at this, is not at all to be wondered at.— But that professed Christians owning Jesus Christ to be God, should meet with the flattest negative, his repeated, unequivocal and most positive affirmations on the subject recorded in that very Scripture, which they hold alone as their rule of faith, is truly astonishing; and this, because it is to them an incomprehensible mystery. With as good reason may they reject all the other revealed mysteries; nay, and all the other incomprehensible prodigies of nature, as well as of religion, till they arrive at last, as others in our day have done to that extreme degree of uncertainty and ne plus ultra of scepticism, so as to doubt of every thing, even of their own existence.— Abyssus abyssum invocat in voce cataractarum tuarum.—Ps. xli., 8.

PETER THE HERMIT.

Peter, called 'the Hermit,' was a French gentleman of Amiens in Picardy, who quitted the profession of arms, to embrace the heremitical life, which he subsequently enlarged for that of a pilgrim. About the year 1093, having visited the Holy Land, he was afflicted at beholding the deplorable condition of the Christians of those parts, and on his return spoke to Urban II, in so strong a manner, and drew such touching pictures of their destitution, that the Pontiff sent envoys from province to province, to excite the Christian princes to deliver the faithful from the oppression that weighed them down to earth. This was the occasion and origin of the first crusade. Nothing short of philosophical (that is, infidel) insensibility can pretend that Christians should have abandoned their brethren, and given over the empire of Constantine and of Theodosius to sanguinary tyrants and usurpers; and it would be a strange injustice to condemn the policy of these expeditions, because they were unsuccessful. This manner of judging of events is most objectionable, as according to the maxim of Fabius Maximus—*oventis stultorum magister*—'experience is the teacher of fools.' 'Perhaps,' says a judicious author, 'religious zeal may have caused the crusaders to act imprudently; but it is not the prudence, but the justice of their conduct we are to examine. When the flame of war and the enthusiasm of the crusaders, are dispassionately examined by the facts which their history presents, and not by vague reproaches of fanaticism, or the unjust declamations of a philosophical, more fanatical and intolerant than what it stigmatises as such; this exhibition of facts of itself dispels every shadow of injustice in these celebrated wars. Legitimate, although perhaps, defective views of policy; the necessity of self defence, and the propriety of changing the theatre of war, were additional motives for these wars, and furnish new light to justify them to the satisfaction of every one that is acquainted with the rights of war and peace. Remember, for a moment, what was the genius of Islamism at its rise, and what a system of oppression it ceased not to pursue with fanatic fury, as long as it had force to oppress, and a predominance of power. The constant object of the first author of that absurd religion, was to subject to it the three parts of the known world, not by the way of persuasion, which it could not bear, but by the murderous weight of the scimitar, by the abrogation of laws, the degradation of human nature, and by trampling under foot every principle of humanity. Everything was sanctified by zeal for the Koran, and provided that this object was sought, there was no means, seditious, sanguinary, or barbaric as they might be, which were not regarded as lawful. The people who voluntarily embraced the yoke, who looked on insurrection and apostasy as meritorious, enjoyed a community of national privileges with the monstrous sect. They daily augmented in number. Those who did not imitate this baseness were mercilessly hewed down by the sword, or by a more deplorable lot, reduced to the condition of slaves. No people, no empire, no privilege, none of those primitive and sacred laws which even hostile nations observe, were revered by these fanatical violators of all law and of all religion. Would not then those brutal violators of every social bond, be the objects of philosophic (infidel) censure, were it not that the vague names of fanatic and fanaticism are applied by them to the followers of the Gospel and the practice of virtue. The philosophers sought, at first, to disguise their hatred of all that is connected with religion, under the veil of a concern for the public good. They asserted that the crusades had produced effect detrimental to the whole of Europe; but this imagination was soon dissipated. It is now known, that great advantages resulted from them, that navigation and commerce are indebted for their first impulse, or rather for their creation and existence, to these perpetual transigrations from the west to the east; that by means of them the arts passed over into Europe, and that private wars and intestine divisions which preyed on the vitals of the same state were abolished by them. They assert, however, that these advantages were accidental results, and did not enter into the contemplation of the crusaders;—an absurd manner of reasoning, which only shows the torpidity of falsehood.— Are we called upon to judge of the thing itself, or of the intention? and if the thing be good and useful, what right have we to assume that it was not such in the views of its promoters? The grand results of the crusades did not certainly escape the chiefs of those distant expeditions. They well knew that the surest means of preserving Europe from Mahometan invasion, was to carry the war into Asia. 'Who can then cry out 'injustice,' says the writer already quoted, 'against leagues formed by Christian nations, for the purpose of parrying off the unconcealed hostility of their natural enemy? Who can make it a crime in them to have carried the war into the enemy's country, in order to occupy him at home, and prevent him from distant machinations? Who does not show his partiality for these sworn enemies of Christendom, or judging of their adversaries, (the Christians) according to the dictates of an unwarrantable severity, not only when there is question of the most just reprisals, but of the most indispensable defence, according to all the maxims of

prudence and sound policy? Now that these considerations directed the chiefs of the Christian republics cannot appear doubtful to any one who has heard Pope Urban II, in the Council of Clermont, and his successors, on so many other occasions exhorting the princes and people of Christendom, to repress the insults of the Mahometans, and alledging in express terms, the desires of these infidels to subjugate all kingdoms and empires, and to annihilate every Christian power.' Peter appeared at first eight but badly adapted to conduct so important a movement. He was a little man, whose physiognomy was repulsive. He had a long beard, and wore a very coarse habit, but under this humble exterior, he concealed great magnanimity, eloquence and enthusiasm. He was a man of heroic courage, of an elevated mind, of a vivacity and energy of sentiment which enabled him to communicate his own feelings in an irresistible manner to those whom he addressed. His poor and austere life conferred on him a new degree of authority. He distributed among the poor the donations he received; his food was bread and water, but his austerity was without affectation, and was accompanied by that judicious piety which became a genius of his order. He was soon followed by an innumerable multitude. Godfroi de Bouillon, leader of the most important division of the crusaders, confided to his direction the other division. The warrior-hermit put himself at their head; he was clothed in a tunic of cloth, he had no cincture, his feet were bare, and over his tunic he wore the loose habit of a monk, and the short cloak of a pilgrim. He divided his army into two parts, he gave the first to Gauthier, a poor gentleman, and led on the other himself. The solitary commanded 40,000 infantry and a numerous troop of cavalry, but this undisciplined multitude was defeated on several occasions by the Turks, and the remains of the army, 3000 in number, took refuge in Constantinople. Peter subsequently united his forces with those of Godfroi de Bouillon and other crusade chiefs. He was present at the siege of Antioch, in 1097, and as this was long protracted, he had time to reflect on his little success in the government of an army, whereas he had experienced such extraordinary success in forming the crusade; and he hence concluded that he had fulfilled the part which Providence had marked out for him, and that it would be a delusion to retain any longer the office of general. He resolved to retire; but Tancred, foreseeing the effect his departure would have on the crusaders, made him swear never to abandon an enterprise he had been the first to propose. He accordingly continued to signalize his zeal for the conquest of the Holy Land, and performed prodigies at the siege of Jerusalem, in 1099. After the capture of this city, the new Patriarch made him Vicar General, while he was abroad with Godfroi de Bouillon, who went to meet the sultan of Egypt, to give him battle, near Ascalon. He died in the Abbey of Neu Montier, near Huy, which he himself had founded. His tomb, which was in a grotto under the tower, has been in latter years covered in, when the church was undergoing repairs, without any precaution having been given to preserve the sepulchral stone that contained the epitaph of this illustrious man. His body had been previously transferred into the sacristy of the church, where it was preserved in a wooden urn. 'Such of our moderns,' says M. Moreau, 'for whom every religious enterprise is an object of railery, and those who have been more struck by the disorders of which the crusaders were guilty in the East, than by the sublimity and importance of the object that brought them together, have represented Peter the Hermit as an absurd enthusiast, who ought to have been confined in a mad-house.— These who reflect more coolly, and who, before they judge of actions, endeavour to transport themselves to the times that produced them, have been forced to form quite a different opinion of this extraordinary man. As for my part I confess that his genius astonishes me, and that his courage seems closely allied to that which we call heroic. I see him pass from Jerusalem to Rome, and subsequently through Italy, France, and Germany, and nowhere does he fail to attain the object he had in view. How great must have been the elevation of ideas, the force of magery in which he clothed them; the rapidity of his motions, and the fire of his expressions! He had not, indeed, the talents of a general, and accordingly, we do not find that he ever buckled on a cuirass. He was guilty of some imprudent actions; that need not surprise us; but who is there that was not equally culpable in those distant wars? But alone he excited all Europe; he gathered multitudes around him; he convinced, determined, and hurried along with him kings with their nobles and ministers; he produced in the world an unexpected revolution. At his voice tyrants ceased to oppress their country, and the warlike ardour that could not be repressed, and which was the scourge of enslaved and unhappy Europe, was stayed by him, and carried into Asia, where it was employed against the enemies of their faith,—*scourges*, who, for fifty years had persecuted men whom our ancestors regarded as brothers. Was it not better for the Christians to be scourged to contend with these Asiatic brigands, than, as was then unfortunately the case, to impale their hands in the blood of friends and countrymen? No; the solitary of Amiens was not a

mad man; on the contrary he deserves a place among those who are justly celebrated.—*Discours sur l'histoire de France*, t. 12. Malley has depicted the character of Peter the Hermit in the blackest colors, in his *Esprit des croisades*—The spirit of the crusades;—which, however, contains the spirit of its author, rather than that of these celebrated expeditions, and which, under the appearance of great erudition, is nothing more than a collection of false declamations, erroneous judgments, and malignant calumnies, against many illustrious characters.—M. Michaud has much more truly and honorably sketched the character of Peter the Hermit, in his *Histoire des croisades*.—*Feller Dictionnaire Historique* Paris, 1833.—*Catholic Herald*.

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It is confidently hoped that the following Reverend gentlemen will act as zealous agents for the Catholic paper, and do all in their power among their people to prevent its being a failure, to our final shame and the triumph of our enemies.

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