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## THE SIEGE OF DAMASCUS.

BY MARIA J. BISHOP.

Damascus had surrendered, and the frightened Christians, long deprived of help, had reluctantly lowered the Cross, as the Crescent flashed along the walls. The richer merchants and citizens had left the place, under a safe conductor from Saladin, and those who remained—chiefly the poorer classes and women—sought in vain to escape through the strongly-barricaded and guarded portals.

It was the evening of the conquest, when an Emir, whose jewelled turban and the rich baldric which bound his breast, proclaimed him a leader in the Saracen host, entered the pavilion of the Moslem monarch. His dark, flashing eye, and the perfect symmetry of his form and features were not unlike those of the former, while the restless glance and proud curl of the lip told of ambition more eager, if not more boundless than his brother's.

"How, Melek?" said the sultan, without lifting his eyes from the dispatches before him. "Do the Christians rally, or has the success which the Prophet hath granted subdued, at length, their proud spirit?"

"They sue for mercy, my Lord," replied the Emir; "and sooth to say, it pities me to see the poor and trembling to remain, yet unable to pay the tribute gold. I would give Damietta as their ransom?"

"Go Melek; let them take oath they have not the required gold; give them a drachma, and dismiss them at the gate."

The Emir bowed till his glittering turban touched the hand of his brother, and hastened to fulfil his errand.

All night the wretched fugitives poured through the city gate; old men tottering on the arm of some son or daughter; women, whose pale cheeks and unbound tresses told their distress; children, hand in hand, bowed their lips to the cross, and passed the heathen guard, receiving a piece of silver at the gate, until at length the tall spires of minarets began to glitter with the coming dawn.

"Back! back!" cried the guard, as the fugitives still pressed on, "the ransom is ended."

A wild shriek rose in concert from the throng, as, wild with terror, they saw themselves hemmed in by the scimitars of the troops.

As the sun rose clear, banners were seen advancing, and hearing his splen-