







THE GREAT COUNCIL OF NICE. Letters of Lucius Comnenus, Acolyth of Corduba, to P. Valerius Varro, Sub-Deacon of the same City; with Notes by a Country Parson.

I have already given you, my beloved Varro, such a description of this elegant city of Nice, as my opportunities of observation have allowed me to furnish. To one whose life has been spent in so distant and rude a province of the empire as Spain, the beauty, wealth and splendor of these cities of the East seem almost like the imagery of some gorgeous dream.

I must say something, however, of my own pleasant lodging on the borders of the lake Ascanius. Imagine a broad, beautiful sheet of water, the shores of which are cultivated with the most laborious industry, directed by the taste for which the inhabitants of these provinces have always been celebrated.

But I must not detain you upon these matters of so trifling importance in comparison with the great object of my visit to this city. Every day, my dear Varro, witnesses the arrival of a throng of ecclesiastics, from every portion of the Catholic Church, brought together by the call of our most Christian Emperor, whom may God preserve!

Our munificent Emperor has provided most richly for the support and accommodation of this large body of the clergy during their attendance upon the Council. The stream of bounty which is flowing around us is worthy of the throne of the Caesars even in these its most glorious days.

Such, my Varro, is the glorious sentiment, which the rare beauty of the scene recalled to me this evening beside the waters of the Bithynian Ascanius. I know that thou wilt indulge the luxury of the same thought on the banks of our own Gaudalquivir, so less for thine own sake, than in sympathy with thy friend, who, though absent from thee in the body, is yet present with thee in spirit.

Two hours have not yet elapsed since the departure of the messenger, and I am yet laboring at the pleasant toil of these letters. Since then, indeed, I have suffered a most delightful interruption, which has induced me to send another epistle so speedily upon the heels of the preceding, provided I can finish it by the dim light of the closing day, not much relieved by the lamp that swings in the portico.

The barges, in their construction and arrangements, are every way worthy of the taste and wealth of Messala, of whom, as you recollect, my lord Hosius has often spoken to us. They are constructed for five banks of oars, arranged in the quinque, allowing space for thirty oarsmen, without interfering with the freedom of each other, in their operations.

To-morrow, being the thirteenth of the kalends of July, is appointed for the solemn and public opening of this august assembly. The place of meeting is the central hall of the palace, which, by order of the Emperor, has been duly set in order for the purpose. This magnificent audience-room is ample enough to accommodate all who may come together, and is truly worthy of the holy use to which it has now been set apart.

From the Church Record. Athanasius says that the number of Bishops in attendance at the Council of Nice was three hundred and eighteen. The celebrated Athanasius was then a deacon, and was present at the Council, in attendance on his Bishop. Quoted for substance from Eusebius, Vit. Const. lib. c. 7. The day for the meeting of the Council was fixed by the Emperor, 18 Jul. Jul. Pausanias and Julian, Cons.—answering to 19th June, 325. Tillemont.

Cathedral at Corduba. The walls are of polished marble, and the lofty dome and sculptured ceiling are supported by three ranges of columns, wrought after the most majestic order of Grecian architecture, the Doric. As I lingered, at noon of day, in this vast chamber, I was lost in admiration at the mighty achievements of laborious man. What strength, what patient labor, what skill have been expended upon this noble work! Here are the marbles of Italy, wrought in, in the most beautiful harmony of shade, with the dark blocks of the Egyptian, and the grey sparkling granite of the East.

But the presence of the messenger warns me to close this epistle. To-morrow, if it please God, my Varro, I will resume my stylus, and I trust that I shall be able to give you a satisfactory history of this august and holy council, and of the proceedings, manners and daily life of those who are here assembled. Till then, farewell!

This letter is sent to you by the hands of the first messenger of the road to Cneius Pamphilus, Vice-Prefect of Spain.

LETTER II.

I was obliged, my Varro, to conclude my last epistle in such haste, as prevented me from recalling to your mind a beautiful sentiment of St. Cyprian, of Carthage, over whose animated and fervid epistles to the Churches, we have so often lingered with delight in our pleasant study at Corduba. The passage was forcibly presented to my mind to-day in my conference with the eloquent Athanasius, and the impression it made was deepened by the lovely and brilliant scene in the midst of which my letter was dictated.

They are here—the barges sweep gracefully to the shore, and during the few moments of preparation necessary to their embarkation, let me endeavor to give you some idea of the appearance of some of the principal personages of the group on the deck of the imperial barge.

Constantine harrisen from his seat, and stands gazing upon the band of the chosen fifty on the shore, whose military salute he has just returned. He bears in every feature the impress of greatness, for his person as well as his mind has been enriched by nature with her choicest endowments.

At her side is Crispus, the young and gallant Caesar, whom all hearts love, whom all lips praise. At once the friend and pupil of Lactantius, the most eloquent of the Christians, he seems to have profited most richly by the instructions of that good and great man. His laurels are newly won, indeed, but none the less bright; for the bravery and skill of this youth, in forcing the passage of the Hellespont, so obstinately defended by the fleet of Licinius, have caused his name to be associated with that of the Emperor in the plaudits of his eastern subjects.

At his side, seemingly forgetful of every thing but the standard which he bears, is the Caesar Licinius, the son of Constantia. His brow, to an observing eye, bears premature marks of care, and his eye is anxiously thoughtful in its expression. Promising son of an ill-fated sire, may his destiny be happy, and his life free from turmoil and intrigue!

There are many other personages in that group now descending, amidst peals of music, to the shore, who are worthy of our attention, but of whom, as they are chiefly ecclesiastics, I shall write to you on some other occasion. The Empress Fausta, I understand, confined to the palace by a sudden attack of sickness, which accounts for her absence on this occasion.

I am summoned to the presence of the Bishop, who has just arrived within. Till to-morrow, then, my Varro, farewell!

The reader may gain some idea of the vessels here alluded to from Plutarch, in Marc Anton. The labarum or sacred standard of Constantine, of which more hereafter. The author is aware that the above is a very feeble and a very liberal translation of the little hymn alluded to. Basil says, that it was a custom of the early Christians to return thanks to the three persons of the Godhead by the name when the lamps were lighted in the evening. The words of the hymn are given at full length, from the Alexandrian MSS, in the Distrib. de Symbolis, p. 35. They may be found in Heber's Bampton Lectures (Note to Lecture II.) who adds—"the beauty and devotional spirit of this little hymn, render it more than worthy of being better known." The author thinks that the sense at least has not been perverted in the version, however the beauty of the original may have been marred. Licinius, the rival and the foe of Constantine, who had married Constantia, sister of the Emperor, was subdued and put to death in the previous year, A. D. 325.

tions are such as to accord with the majesty of him, to whose service they are now devoted. The ample decks are covered with the richest Babylonian carpets, and overhung by canopies of purple silk, adorned with gems, and supported by slender columns and rings of gold. A chair for the Emperor, in appearance and splendor resembling a throne, occupies the hinder deck of the principal vessel; and around this are placed couches for the imperial household, of the most costly materials and exquisite finish.

The embarkation took place about an hour ago, and, as I write, I can discern the gleaming cross which surmounts the labarum in the distance, as if returning; and my ear can catch the faint melodies of the flutes, to which the oarsmen keep time—the notes occasionally overpowered by the stirring peal of the trumpet, to which the rocks and green hills beyond, echo joyously. With a rapid and graceful motion, the galleys are now sweeping across the bay of Messala, and lo! the purple signal—lights representing a crown supported by the sword, and surmounted by the cross, are displayed from the upper gallery of the patrician villa. And now I hear, chanted by many voices, the beautiful little Greek hymn *Eis Epiphania*, always sung by Christians in the East, when the lamps are first lighted in the evening.

Mid the balmy close of day: While the twilight fades away; Ere the stars with trembling gleam Cast their image on the stream, Be our praises to these address'd: Father, Son, and Spirit blest.

As we watch the evening light Softly melting into night, On the kindled lamp-light falls, Brightly on the chamber walls, Emblem faint of light divine, God to heaven, the praise be thine!

Thee! Thine glories hymns we praise: Volcanic heart to thee we raise; Thine will we hear our feeble hymn Mid the songs of Cherubim, Ever-rolling round thy throne, Great Jehovah, Three in one.

Bounteous Lord of heavenly light Shine upon our mortal night, Son of God! our soul's life-giver, From the death of sin deliver Us, thy children, while we sing, Praise to thee, eternal King.

How richly the sounds, mellowed by distance, swell over the blue waters, till the whole earth seems vocal with praise. The far and feeble echoes of the mountains, rendered more distant and more feeble as the barges advanced towards me, seem almost like spirit-voices answering in chorus. And now the signal lights are displayed in rapid succession from every villa on the lake, till its entire surface seems studded with brilliant points.

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Constantine harrisen from his seat, and stands gazing upon the band of the chosen fifty on the shore, whose military salute he has just returned. He bears in every feature the impress of greatness, for his person as well as his mind has been enriched by nature with her choicest endowments. In his noble stature, in his strongly marked countenance, in which beauty and majesty are blended, we recognize one worthy to sway the sceptre of the Caesars, and destined, as we believe, to advance the glory of the empire to a position of prosperity and greatness, far beyond any which she has hitherto occupied. How graceful his deportment, as he bends to point out some object worthy of notice to the Lady Constantia beside him—her countenance rendered more touchingly beautiful by the fresh sorrows of her widowhood. In that dark melancholy eye, whose glances ever since the death of her husband, have seemed as if beaming through tears, like the subdued light of the sun, irradiating the bosom of some summer cloud, I think I can trace much of sorrow already endured, much of sorrow yet anticipated. The glance is a timid, trembling one, as if it dared not look into the future, and yet dared not return into the past.

At her side is Crispus, the young and gallant Caesar, whom all hearts love, whom all lips praise. At once the friend and pupil of Lactantius, the most eloquent of the Christians, he seems to have profited most richly by the instructions of that good and great man. His laurels are newly won, indeed, but none the less bright; for the bravery and skill of this youth, in forcing the passage of the Hellespont, so obstinately defended by the fleet of Licinius, have caused his name to be associated with that of the Emperor in the plaudits of his eastern subjects. Evil tongues have vilely insinuated, that the Emperor is envious of the favor which his son has obtained, and on this account forbears to raise him to the rank of Augustus; and indeed, confines him almost a prisoner at the Court, while upon Constantius, his younger brother, has been bestowed, the government of the Gallic provinces. Surely, my Varro, this cannot be. The large and generous mind of the Emperor could never entertain such unworthy sentiments—yet the Caesar Crispus is not content with his position of ignoble ease, for he longs for the sphere of action to which he says that his talents and prowess entitle him. But I shall doubtless have occasion to mention him again, and until then, I forbear further remark.

At his side, seemingly forgetful of every thing but the standard which he bears, is the Caesar Licinius, the son of Constantia. His brow, to an observing eye, bears premature marks of care, and his eye is anxiously thoughtful in its expression. Promising son of an ill-fated sire, may his destiny be happy, and his life free from turmoil and intrigue!

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stained the infant earth with a brother's blood. Who can contemplate the character of sin, and not tremble at the thought of giving it currency by example? Behold its contagion, extending even faster than the human race, rising into such awful profligacy, as in the forcible language of the prophet, to "grieve the Almighty at his heart" that he had created man. What but wickedness the most aggravated and insulting to Jehovah, could have induced him to pour out the vials of his wrath, in that devastating flood which swept away "the world of the ungodly." Sin was the parent of mischief to the Jews. It prompted them to those frequent murmurs, those repeated idolatries and rebellions, which incurred the vengeance of God, which he punished with the severest scourges. It was this that drove them away in painful captivity. It was this that gave dismay to their enemies, which overwhelmed them in despair at the moment of attack, which sharpened those Roman swords by which they were levelled to the dust. Was it not sin that exposed a guilty Sodom to the fury of heaven? What but the most fearful iniquity could have excited that indignation which rolled in torrents of fire and brimstone through its streets? Was it not sin that caused the anguish of the Son of God, that cast woes and woes around him, and pierced him with the arrows of death? Was it not the burden of our sins, which in the abundance of his mercy he consented to take, that oppressed his soul? Did not these expose him to the wrath of divine justice, and suspend him in ignominious death upon the cross? In short, do we not see that sin is the parent of all the mischief we witness in the world? What but this spreads the earth with misery? Is it not this that unsheathes the sword of war, that strews the fields with the mangled bodies of our fellow-men, that encircles rivers with their blood, that fills the world with widows, and drives unnumbered orphans crying through the land? Is it not sin that robs the mother of comfort, by polluting the mind and destroying the virtue and peace of a child? Is it not sin that dissolves the tie of conjugal happiness in the bowl of intemperance? Does not sin enkindle in the human bosom the fires of passion? What but this it that awakens the tormenting fury of anger, the desire of revenge and blood? What but this lights up the lurid flame of envy? What but this excites the unalloyed propensities of lust? What but this arouses the numerous bickerings, the tales of calumny, the sneers of malice, by which the peace of society is perpetually disturbed, by which domestic tranquillity is destroyed, by which the Christian name is polluted; which unites us for the exercises of religion here, and for the presence of God hereafter? Sin, deep ranking in the human heart, is the moving cause, the main-spring of all our sorrows. All our anguish in misfortune, all our pangs in sickness, all the untoward events of life which embitter our peace, must be ascribed to the sin which holds dominion in our bosoms.—Rev. Dr. Rudd.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD. What an awful idea of the holiness of God have we in the death of Jesus! The vengeance of God was centred in the bosom of his Son: what an awful consideration this to the sinner, who is committing the worst of all suicides, the suicide of his immortal soul! "Have I," the Lord might say to such, "wreaked the fury of my vengeance on my own Son, and shall you without repentance escape, you who still continue in open rebellion against me?" Salvation and holiness are synonymous. Rev. W. Howells.

RELIANCE UPON PROVIDENCE. To make our reliance upon Providence both pious and rational, we should, in every great enterprise we take in hand, prepare all things, with that care, diligence and activity, as if there were no such thing as Providence for us to depend upon; and again, when we have done all this, we should as wholly and humbly rely upon it, as if we had made no such preparation at all. And this is a rule of practice, which will never fail; or shame any, who shall venture all that they have or are upon it; for as a man, by exerting his utmost force in any action or business, has all that human strength can do for him therein; so in the next place, by quitting his confidence in the same, and placing it only in God, he is sure of all that Omnipotence can do in his behalf.—Dr. South.

THE JESTER. A common jester, one who is sent for to company to make sport, acts a part much below the character of a man, or a Christian: for jesting, though it may be an innocent diversion, can never be an honest employment; it will not bear being made a profession; and, therefore, when men make it their business, it must needs be an unlawful calling; and the jester will be exposed to the threatening of the text, to be called into judgment for every "idle word" he speaks. And if you again set before you the dignity and character of a Christian, you will easily discern, how suitably and with what a grace a Christian acts, when his whole business is to make himself laughed at. "I said of laughter, it is mad," says the wise king of Israel. This only difference there is, and let the jester have the benefit of it, the madman's folly and extravagance proceed from misfortune, the jester's from choice; and this choice will render him accountable for his extravagancies; and whether he has not the best title to apply the condemnation of the text to himself, you must judge from what has been said. His talent certainly lies in "idle words," and therefore he falls under the letter of the text, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." His business is poor and sordid; he serves to no other purpose in the world than, like the fool in the great house, to make sport; and whether in this he sustains the character of a disciple of Christ, let all who have learnt Christ judge.—Bishop Sherlock.

CATECHISING. If you be seers of Christ's flock, do as Jacob did, that thriving shepherd, look well to your sheep when they are in conceiving. What colour and tincture you give them in that hint, you shall know them by for many years after. Never look that that man should profit at a sermon, whom you have never seasoned in the principles of Christianity. A sermon (saith St. Cyril) is a good thing, but not so conditioned as a Catechism. Some lessons, forgotten in the one, are but loose stones in a wall, which may be fastened again upon a second opportunity; but ignorance in those principles is a certain great stone mislaid in the foundation, which hazards the ruin of the whole building. And again says that Father, the erecting of a Christian is like the planting of a tree; if you give it not earth and rooting at the first, you can never repair it with watering and pruning. Catechism, as St. Basil calls it, is the preparing colours, wherein you must dip the people, without the which, for all your sermons, you shall never find them purple in grain, but pale and wan as long as they live: as ill-grounded colours use to do, ever and anon staining, fading, and decaying. I will conclude this point with an observation of that grave divine Jo. Gerson, in a sermon of his which I find also in a little book of Peter de Alaco, De Reformatione Ecclesie: "If ever you will reform this Church of men, you must begin with that Church of children."—Archbishop Williams.

INCONSISTENT CHURCHMEN. It is almost as sad to see persons halting between two opinions, as to see them choosing at once the wrong one. How often may we hear men praying, in the morning, to be delivered from schism, that is, needless separation from the Church; and see them, in the evening, running into the very mischief from which they thought themselves hastening to a meeting-house, where schism is taught and practised. If they are conscientious Dissenters, why do they come to Church? If conscientious Churchmen, why do they go to a meeting-house? Or, if as some say, it matters not, as far as doctrine is concerned, to which they go, what is there on the other side to weigh against the antiquity, scriptural character, lawful establishment, and general excellence of the Church of England?—Rev. W. Pridden.

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THE PHENIX FIRE ASSURANCE COMPANY OF LONDON. APPLICATIONS for Insurance by this Company are requested to be made to the undersigned, who is also authorized to receive premiums for the renewal of policies. ALEX. MURRAY, Toronto, July 1, 1841.

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STATUTES OF CANADA. COPIES of the Statutes passed in the last Session of the Provincial Parliament, for sale by H. & W. ROWSELL, Toronto. February 16th, 1842.

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