

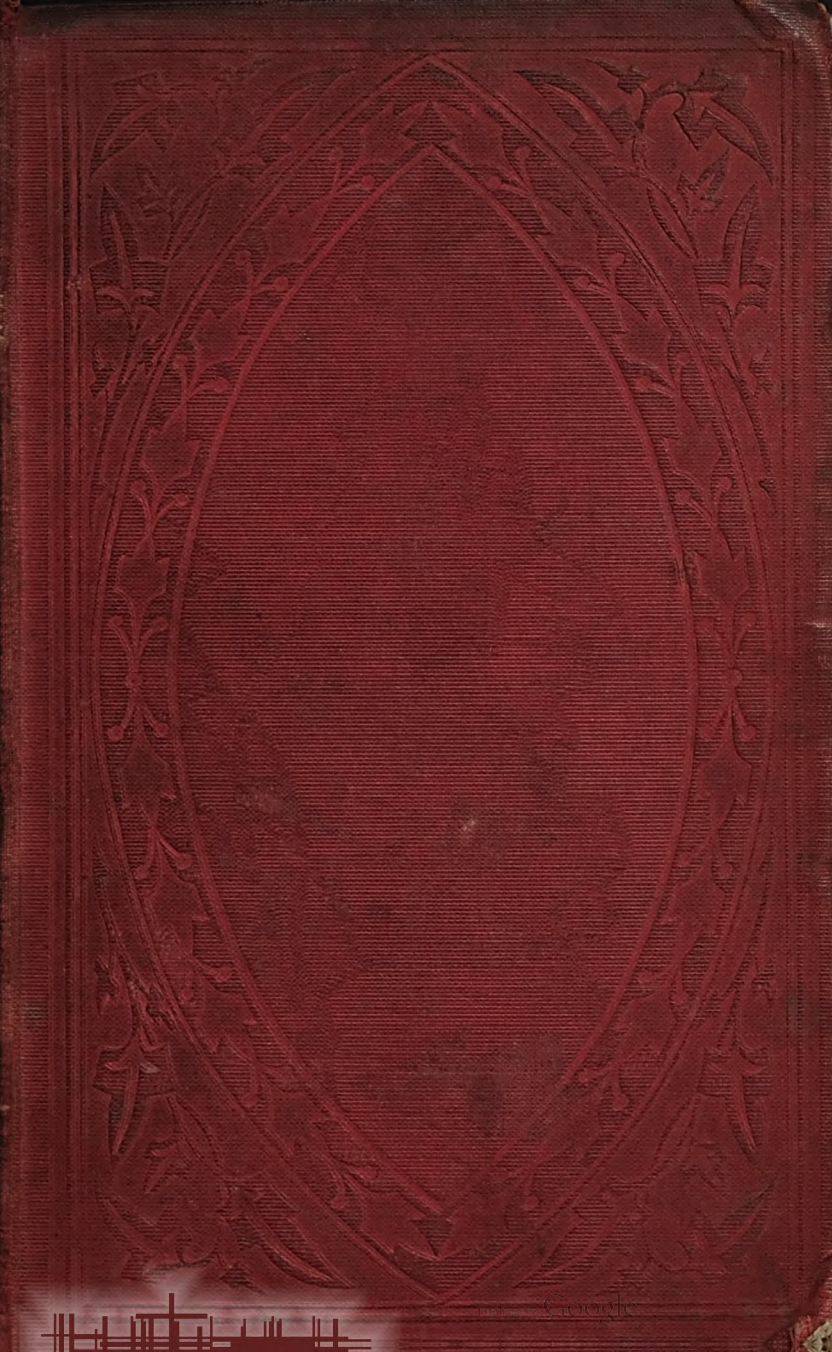
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THEODORA PHRANZA ;

OR,

THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE.



X

THEODORA PHRANZA ;

OR,

The Fall of Constantinople.

BY THE

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TO THE  
REV. EUGENE POPOFF,  
CHAPLAIN TO THE RUSSIAN EMBASSY IN LONDON,  
THE FOLLOWING STORY  
IS DEDICATED,  
AS A MARK OF GRATITUDE,  
FOR MUCH KIND AND REPEATED ASSISTANCE.



## P R E F A C E.

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THE following story was written nine years ago, and has since appeared in a periodical. If it has no other merit, it gives, I hope, a fair view of the manners and feeling of the period when the Eastern and Western Churches were for the last time brought into a formal alliance.

I might easily have given references to the Byzantine Historians for most of the facts and details contained in the following pages, but I have thought it sufficient to add here and there a note, with an explanation of the terms likely to be most strange to the ordinary reader.

The prophecy that the Ottoman possession of Constantinople should not extend beyond four hundred years was widely circulated and implicitly believed before the fall of that city. That the late war has to a certain extent fulfilled it, no one can doubt who, like myself, is convinced that, let whatever dynasty succeed to the possession of the Byzantine Empire, the sands of the Turkish domination are now very fast running out.

SACKVILLE COLLEGE,  
*Lady Day, 1857.*





# THEODORA PHRANZA;

OR,

## *The Fall of Constantinople.*

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### CHAPTER I.

“ A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it ;  
A feeble government, eluded laws,  
A factious populace, luxurious nobles,  
And all the maladies of sinking states.”

IRENE.

HIGH was the revel and loud the clamour in one of the gorgeous palaces of Constantinople, on a stormy evening, at the end of November, 1452. In the great hall, paved and vaulted with pure Parian marble, and supported on fair columns of pale green Carystian stone, the banquet was spread for some twenty guests, the flower of Byzantine aristocracy. The cedar-wood tables groaned under the gold and silver that glittered in the blaze of chandeliers and tapers; lamps, fed with the sweetest oils of the East, flashed gloriously on jewels and precious hangings; the costliest viands were served in the costliest style,—for the head of the Imperial kitchen had condescended to lend his services for the occasion; and ever and anon wind instruments

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breathed out soft melodies from the gallery, as the wine circulated more freely, and the mirth grew more boisterous, and the cheek more flushed.

Inside the hall, then, all was revelry ; outside, the southern wind was driving a mingled tempest of hail and rain on roof, battlement, and buttress. The marble terraces that sloped up from the Bosphorus to the palace, were slippery with wet ; the withered foliage of chesnut or plane was torn off, and swept round by the gusty eddies ; while, through the great hall windows, (for the house had been built during the Frank domination of Constantinople,) a misty brightness shot forth ; and between the long-drawn howls of the wind, the tempered sweetness of flutes and hautboys stole out into the garden.

“ A health, noble Protovestiare,” cried the lord of the banquet ; “ a health, with your permission, worthy friends ! a prosperous embassy to George Phranza, and a fair bride to the ever august Emperor !”

Goblets sparkled, and Chian foamed ; and the toast was duly honoured. When the confusion had a little subsided, George Phranza, the intimate friend of the last of the Augusti, and Great Protovestiare<sup>1</sup> of the Empire, rose to speak.

“ So be it,” said he ; “ and I thank you, noble friends, for the wish. True it is that my last embassy was neither pleasant to me, nor profitable to my master ; but, with the blessing of God and S. Demetrius, we shall hail an Augusta in early summer. And now, let us pledge the Great Duke ! This to the health of our excellent host, Leontius !”

He spoke cheerfully, and even gaily ; but yet one glance might have been sufficient to show that he was no mere reveller,—one moment’s reflection, to give

<sup>1</sup> Protovestiare : literally the first of the vestment-keepers. It was the sixth dignity in the Palace of Constantinople. He was one of those who had the privilege of wearing a red hat ; or as one of the describers of that court phrases it, he was adorned *σκιαδίοις ἐρυθροῖς χρυσῷ κεκοσμημένοις*.

rise to wonder that he was to be found in such a scene. Tall, stern, and grave, it seemed that only by an effort he adapted himself to the occasion; and when he had returned the compliment that had been paid him, he sat down to resume a conversation (of great importance, it seemed) which he had been carrying on with the guest who sat next to him. That guest, by his habit, manner, and language, was a Frank; by his fresh, fair complexion, well-made, though somewhat athletic, figure, and light, crisp hair circling round his high forehead, you would not have been mistaken in supposing him of English descent. He was, in truth, Sir Edward de Rushton, Great Acolyth<sup>1</sup> of the Empire, and head of the Varangians<sup>2</sup> or English body-guard, of the Augustus.

<sup>1</sup> Great Acolyth. This was the name of the officer in the Byzantine Court who had the command of the Varangian guards. Codinus thus explains the reason of the title: The Acolyth is responsible for the Varangians, and *follows* (*ἀκολουθεῖ*) the Emperor before them, wherefore, also, he is called Acolyth.

<sup>2</sup> The Varangians, Varagians, or Virangoi, for by all these, and several other names were they called,—the title originally signified Corsairs,—were the Norman adventurers who, by degrees, were promoted to be the Lifeguards of the Byzantine Emperor. Gibbon says well of them,—“The first Vladimir had the merit of delivering Russia from these foreign mercenaries. They had seated him on the throne; his riches were insufficient to satisfy their demands; but they listened to his pleasing advice, that they should seek, not a more grateful, but a more wealthy, master; that they should embark for Greece, when, instead of the skins of squirrels, silk and gold would be the recompense of their service. At the same time the Russian Prince admonished his Byzantine ally to disperse and employ, to recompense and restrain, these impetuous children of the north. Contemporary writers have recorded the introduction, name, and character of the Varangians; each day they rose in confidence and esteem; the whole body was assembled at Constantinople to perform the duty of guards, and their strength was recruited by a numerous band of their countrymen from the island Thule. On this occasion, the vague appellation of Thule is applied to England, and the new Varangians were a colony of English and Danes, who fled from the yoke of the Norman conqueror. These exiles were entertained in the Byzantine Court; and they preserved, till the last age of the Empire, the



"Now," said he, "that these fools will leave us in peace, and will see nothing but their wine so long as they have eyes to see anything, let me hear more. So lately as I have returned, and such innumerable visits of compliment as I have had to receive and to make, I have not had a fair opportunity of learning what ought to be done, and what is to be feared. Now tell me the worst, if there be a worst, beyond common report."

"Why, truly, my lord," replied Sir Edward, "to look at this scene, who would fancy that only just across the strait there is the fortress of Amurath, and now, at the Asomatoi,<sup>1</sup> but five short miles from the city, Mahomet has erected such a work as will stand for ages? He commands the Bosphorus; he commands the ground up to the very gates. Why he has allowed us this last year he knows best; but how we are to expect another, GOD only knows!"

"Ay," said Phranza; "and yet the flatterers at the palace represent the Asomatoi as a mere temporary arrangement. When there is a better understanding between the two nations, they say, it will be removed; and so they go on disputing about titles and precedence, and all in this parody of an empire."

"You must have help from the Latins," returned De Rushton, "or an unconditional surrender will be all that can be hoped for. And that reminds me,—is it true that Cardinal Isidore is so near as Selymbria?"

"A courier brought the news to-day. There will be an Union, of course: he will say Mass at S. Sophia; and there will be the end. As to any real help from Nicolas, I should as soon expect it from Prester John."

"The fault is on your side more than on his," said

inheritance of spotless loyalty, and the use of the Danish or English tongue." That they spoke Danish is asserted only by Saxo Grammaticus, who could have had no intimate acquaintance with the subject: Codinus, who must have known positively, affirms that they spoke English.

<sup>1</sup> *Asomatoi*. Literally, the *Bodiless Ones*: that is, as it would have been called in the West, the Church of all Angels.

his companion, boldly. "I myself heard the Great Duke say, only three days ago, that he had rather see the Sultan's turban than the Cardinal's hat, in the great Church."

"Don't let us dispute about the degree of fault," said Phranza, earnestly. "You are a Latin; do your best to persuade this Cardinal to respect the prejudices of the people. What his conscience obliges him to insist on, that, of course, he must do; but nothing immaterial,—no innovation that he can possibly help. We are the weakest, and must of course yield; but persuade him, for the sake of our common Christianity, and our common cause, to use his power mercifully."

"I will try," said De Rushton; "but he is not one to lose an opportunity, or to neglect stretching a point. But the fact is,—you will not accuse me of vanity in saying so,—you have not a single native soldier that you can depend on in danger. For reviews and processions to S. Sophia they do indifferently well; but once let the Turkish troops be seen under the walls, and your very women would fight as bravely."

"More so," said Phranza, with a bitter smile; "and of all this cowardly rubbish, the most cowardly, the most lost to everything like a sense of shame or honour, would be these same banqueters, on whose brains our host's excellent wine is beginning to act."

"Noble Protovestiare, you do small credit to the banquet," cried Leontius. "Taste this wine,—it is from Lemnos; I have a vineyard there. Demetrius, carry me this flask to the most noble Phranza."

"I thank you," replied Phranza, tasting the proffered beverage; "it is choice indeed.—Ha! what is that?" he cried, as the heavy boom of a gun came rolling over the Bosphorus.

"Only the new Turkish cannon," cried one or two of the guests.

"At the Asomatoi," explained Sir Edward de Rushton. "The infidel dogs are going to prayer. I never hear it, without fancying it the death knell of the city."

Why, it was but the other day that one shot sank a Venetian vessel up the strait yonder ; the master and some twelve or fifteen of the sailors made a shift to get to land, and there the Aga had them impaled for their pains : so they might as well have let the thing alone."

"I wonder," said Phranza, "that no attempt was made to hinder the erection of this fort. There is but one man of sense,—there is but one man of courage,—among us, but that man, thank God, is the Emperor. I wonder he did not rather die sword in hand than submit to this."

"So he would have done," replied De Rushton, "if he could have had his own way. But all the Domestics were against him ; I could not be heard ; and the Protopope next Sunday preached from the text, 'the king is not he that can do anything against you.'"

"Would I had been here !" said Phranza : "things might not have come to this pass ! What tidings have you from Hadrianople ? Mahomet is not one to spend the winter in idleness."

"They say that he is building a palace," answered Sir Edward ; "and we hear a good deal of his trying new experiments with artillery. But it is almost impossible to obtain certain information."

"Certain information I must have, though," said Phranza, "if I go for it myself. Is there no one among the Varangians who could go as a spy there ? I would rather trust them than a Greek."

"I will try to find such a man," replied his friend. "Yes, I do know one who might do. His father was an Englishman, but his mother was a Smyrniot, and he takes more after her ; he might pass for a Turk anywhere, and a likely fellow he is. The best part of him is, that if he happens to be taken, they may tear him to pieces before they would tear his secret out of him."

"That is well indeed," said Phranza ; "what is the fellow's name ?"

"Richard Burstow," replied Sir Edward.

"Ricardos Mpurstos," repeated Phranza. "Could you bring him to me to-morrow?"

"At what time?"

"Why, not too early: for there is a Synod of Bishops about this union at the Studium. I hope the Emperor will be there; and if so, I must attend him. But come you to me at about two of the clock in the afternoon, and wait for me if I am not returned."

"Young Chrysolaras, there, looks as weary of this banquet as I am," said De Rushton. "The Great Duke is getting past the notice of anything by this time: could we not slip out?"

"Wait a moment," said Phranza; "I will catch Chrysolaras' eye, and he shall go too. I should have excepted him just now, when I said that we had only one man of courage amongst us; he is as brave as a lion."

"Him and one or two others you should have excepted," said Sir Edward, with rather a melancholy smile. "Things are bad enough, but not quite at such a pitch."

"Not far off," rejoined the Great Protovestiare. "But I love that young man as if he were my own son; and so, please the Panaghia, he shall be before many weeks are over. There!—he sees!—now, excellent Acolyth, as quickly as we can."

The manœuvre was successful; and the three friends were presently standing in the portico of the palace. The night had cleared, though the wind still blew fitfully from the south. The moon, now nearly at her zenith, shed a flood of glory on the dome of S. Sophia, that rose immediately behind, on the palace of the Emperor, on the innumerable domes of Constantinople's countless churches; the marble terraces glittered like snow among the dark green shade of laurel and cypress; the Bosphorus rolled on in the path of brightness that lay on its waters; while across the strait, the yellow glow of torches showed that some outpost of the Turks was stationed close to the beach.

The friends stood still to enjoy the beauty of the scene, and the freshness of the evening breeze after the heated apartments of the revel. Chrysolaras was the first to speak.

"It is a city worth dying for, noble Phranza," said he; "and yet I suppose that out of all the crowd yonder, we three are the only men that think so,—or, at least, that would do so."

"I fear you are not far wrong, Manuel," answered the nobleman addressed. "Well, it is time to be separating: you are for the palace, Sir Edward de Rushton?"

"By your good leave, I will walk with you to the gate," said Manuel Chrysolaras. "So the Cardinal is to make his entry to-morrow."

"You are no friend of his, I know," said Phranza; "but I do trust that now at last you will see the necessity of submitting to this Union. I speak openly before the Acolyth; he will excuse it, I know. I do not believe that he would press it upon us in this unseemly—I might well say, this unholy—manner."

"You only do me justice," replied De Rushton.

"But it is so forced upon us; and the question is, how we are to meet it. Have we a single hope of defending the city without the aid of the Latins?"

"Have we with it?" in his turn inquired Chrysolaras.

"That, as God pleases," replied Phranza. "If the difference seems so irreconcilable to any one,—if the Latins seem so thoroughly to have apostatized, that death without them is better than union with them,—act as your conscience tells you: only then leave the city. We have no such scruples; have them for yourself, if you will, but do not weaken our arms by spreading them amongst us."

"For me,—" said Chrysolaras, "my mind is made up. If the Union is carried, I submit to it; but only as to a necessary evil. Hark! what is that?" he added, as, in turning the corner of a street, a sound was heard as of one haranguing.

"It is by the church of S. Irene," said Sir Edward de Rushton; "let us go and see."

Late as it was, at the west end of the little church he had named a crowd had assembled, and was listening with excited attention to a monk, who, on the highest step of the western façade, was preaching in the most fiery strain against the Union.

"Trust to GOD, men and brethren," he was saying, "trust to GOD, and to your own good swords, and to the saintly patrons of this city. But do not ruin your cause, do not profane your faith, do not alienate your GOD, by accepting the assistance of these Azymites.<sup>1</sup> Perish they, and all that trust in them! Let not Nicolas, by a few smooth words,—let not this firebrand of a Cardinal, whom he has sent to tempt us,—beguile you from your crown of orthodoxy. Let Mahomet do his worst; leave the defence of the city to GOD; He will appear when there is no other helper.—Know—even as I know, who have received it by revelation—that the Turks will encamp against Constantinople; they will bend their engines against it; they will open great breaches in its walls; there will be, as the prophet speaks, the noise of a whip, and the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots; they will prevail against the city; they will enter into it; they will advance as far as the great Place of Constantine;—but there their triumph will end. The Angel of the LORD will descend from heaven, with a sword drawn in his hand; he will give it to a poor man that shall be seated at the foot of the Column; he will say, 'Take this sword, and deliver the people of GOD from the stranger.' Then the Turks will turn; the men of Constantinople will pursue them from the city; victory after victory shall declare for us, till we have driven the circumcised dogs across the Bosphorus; and even then the

<sup>1</sup> *Azymites*. That is, those who do not use leaven in the Holy Eucharist; one of the bitterest causes of dispute between the two Churches.

Cæsar shall go conqueringly onward till all Anatolia shall bow itself to the Roman sway."

"This is intolerable," said Phranza, as the vehemence of the orator compelled him to pause for breath. "This man will be the ruin of the scheme: I must try what can be done.—Friends and fellow-countrymen," he began, in a louder voice, "it were surely meeter that, instead of listening to these untimely midnight harangues, ye were content to leave the question to them that can best decide it, namely, your Bishops. To-morrow they meet in synod to discuss the Union; and, if they find it unfit—"

"Anathema on thee also, George Phranza!" cried the monk; "anathema on thee, and on thy time-serving counsels! These are the men that have brought us to this depth of humiliation; these are the counsels that have drawn down God's anger upon us." And the little crowd, as with one man's voice, shouted "Anathema to the Azymites!"

"Most noble Phranza," cried Chrysolaras, "it is but waste of breath to persuade the mob. This Genadius is their idol; God send he be an honest one! If he incited them against the palace to-night, to-morrow it would be a smoking ruin!"

"I believe you are right," answered the Proto-vestiare. "But we must take order against the recurrence of these meetings: a man that shall have the ear of the mob, like this monk, is the engine of incalculable mischief. I am glad I have seen this.—Come, friends—." And with some difficulty,—for the mob seemed well disposed to deny them passage,—they forced their way from the square of S. Irene.

"May I inquire," asked Sir Edward de Rushton, when they had passed a little way in silence, "what is the exact number, as nearly as it can be told, of the Roman soldiers to whom we are to look in the siege?"

"Will you both swear not to reveal it, if I trust you with the secret?" inquired Phranza.

"Certainly we will," cried his two companions.

“The best account, then, that I have been able to procure makes them—I almost fear that, when you hear the sum, you will regard all idea of defence as hopeless.”

“Let us know the worst,” said the Acolyth.

“Four thousand nine hundred and seventy.”

“Impossible!” cried Chrysolaras. “Why, I looked for ten times that number, at the very least!”

“Too possible,” replied Phranza; “for it is only too true.”

“And does the Emperor know this?” demanded Sir Edward de Rushton.

“He does.”

“And what did he say?”

“He spoke like himself. ‘If they are cowards,’ he said, ‘four thousand are as good as forty thousand; and if they are brave men, four thousand lives such as theirs are enough to throw away in so hopeless a cause.’”

“But the other Domestics—they surely have no idea of the forces we can muster?” inquired Chrysolaras.

“No; we must keep them in ignorance till the siege is formed, or they would compel a surrender. Still, we may look to Europe for some help, if this unhappy Union can but be brought about; and whether it be or not, I have certain advices that Genoa will help us.”

“Why, the Genoese merchants have almost as great a stake in the city as we have, for Galata is their town,” said Sir Edward; “but it is something, nevertheless, to look for such stout hearts and skilful hands as theirs.”

By this time the party had reached the gate of the palace. Four Varangians stood sentinels on the outside, and a strong party kept guard in the guard-house, which opened by one door on the porch of entrance, by another on to the court. Two huge resin torches flared in stands of brass before the great



gate ; and as the three friends approached, the sentinels changed their listless watch into quick attention.

“ Who goes there ? ” cried one, presenting his partizan.

“ Peace, fool ! ” cried another ; “ it is the Acolyth and the Protovestiare. ” And the soldiers paid the usual compliment to two such distinguished officers of the court.

“ Good night, Manuel, ” said Phranza ; “ I shall probably see you to-morrow. Good night, friends ; has it been quiet watch ? ”

“ Quite quiet, your Augustness, ” replied one of the men, in broken Greek.

“ Ah ! you on guard, Richard Burstow ? ” cried Sir Edward de Rushton. “ That is well. Bid one of your comrades take your place, and then follow me. I may have an errand for you. Good night, my lord Phranza ; I will not fail you at two of the clock to-morrow. ”

So saying, the English chief proceeded up the broad marbled staircase that led to his *metœcia*, or as we should call it now, his suite of apartments. With a pass-key he opened the door that was entered from the landing ; for he loved not at all the pomp of Oriental life, and had desired that no one, not even his page, should shorten their night by waiting for his arrival. The room, into which we must follow him, was floored with the finest cedar ; the walls were concealed by Peloponnesian hangings of cloth, for the Great Acolyth had vigorously opposed the introduction of silk into his apartments. A lamp was burning on the table of citron-wood ; and by its faint light might be seen various pieces of armour, disposed with no small degree of taste about the room ;—some, the actual appurtenances of Sir Edward de Rushton, somewhat earlier in their form than those in use at the time in Europe,—for nothing changed its fashion more quickly, and fashion travelled but slowly to Constantinople. A few moments, and the heavy step of Rich-

ard Burstow was heard on the staircase. He came in his sentinel's suit of half-armor, only having left his partizan in the porch, and showed a well-set, well-compacted frame, such as did not belie his descent from English yeomanry; while his dark, sallow face, piercing black eye, and well-chiselled nose, were all from his mother. When his countenance was at rest, it maintained something of the sullen look of his English ancestors; when he spoke or smiled, it lighted up into a gleam of exquisite shrewdness, and sly, good-natured humour.

"Well, Richard," said the Great Acolyth, who, however exalted a personage at court, maintained, and was forced to maintain, no small affability with his own men,—“the nights are getting long now, and rainy and windy enough to remind one of England. A cup of Lesbian will do you no harm, man; you will find a tankard on yonder shelf,—and here is the beaker.”

“Your lordship's good health,” said Burstow. “Very reasonable good wine,” he added, setting down the glass, “though not quite like Burgundy.”

“Very true, comrade. I told you I had a piece of business in hand for you, and no time like the present for talking of it: if you succeed, your fortune is made.”

“And if I fail, my lord?”

Sir Edward shrugged his shoulders, and added, “But if I know you, you are not the man to turn back for that.”

“Not I, by S. George! out with it, my lord!”

“It is easily told. The Emperor wants some certain intelligence of what is doing at Hadrianople; he can trust no one so well as his Varangians, and of his body-guard I can trust none so well as you: so you must e'en run the venture.”

“I'll go confess, my lord,” returned the soldier; “pray heaven I fall not into mortal sin on the road.”

“Pooh! it is not so bad as that,” said the Acolyth.

“ You can make as good a Turk as the Sultan himself ; you can speak their language like ours, or, by'r Lady ! something better ; and you have wit enough to match the foul fiend himself.”

“ I am not going to prove that last character, my lord, I take it : however, what must be, must. And when is it your lordship's pleasure that I hold me ready ?”

“ Nay,” returned Sir Edward de Rushton, “ I have no pleasure in the matter : it depends on the Emperor, or rather, on the Lord Phranza, who will see you before you depart. I am to visit him at two of the clock to-morrow, and you were best to go with me.”

“ Very well, my lord,” replied Burstow. And so they parted.

## CHAPTER II.

“ To pass further  
Were not alone impertinent, but dangerous.  
We are not distant from the Turkish Camp  
Above five leagues ; and who knows but some party  
Of his Timariots, that scour the country,  
May fall upon us ?”

*The Picture : MASSINGER.*

WE must leave the splendour and confusion of the Imperial City for a little while, for a quieter, but perhaps far lovelier, scene.

Some half mile to the east of Silivri, on a down that sloped steeply to the sea of Marmora, there stood—and its ruins still stand—a summer mansion of one of the luxurious nobles of Constantinople, in the days of John Cantacuzene. Since its erection, the family that had built it had become extinct, and it had passed into less wealthy hands. Its present owner, Nicetas Choniates, called himself Exarch of Silivri, and might hold a position of the same social importance that the mayoralty of a flourishing town might now-a-days confer, if made perpetual in the same person. There was the house, then, with its marble entrance hall, its spacious rooms branching right and left, so as to form three sides of a quadrangle, and the cool colonnade, catching all the southern breezes, that made the fourth. Late as it was in the year, roses, and heliotrope, and jessamine were entwining the pillars of this cloister with autumnal beauty ; the garden, curtailed in extent, and deprived of many of the curious exotics that

it once had possessed, still was laid out in fair terraces ; and in the midst two fountains threw up their waters to the November sun. A small chapel, curiously covered on the outside with Mosaics, stood at the end of one of these terraces ; and the whole place, though no longer possessing its former splendour, was still kept up with neatness, and showed equal good taste and good feeling on the part of the worthy owner.

The morning was warm, and the cheerful rays of the sun had called out a diligent swarm of bees round the colonnade. Tempted it would seem, by the lingering appearance of summer, two ladies had also taken their place in the same cloister ; and the view was sufficiently lovely to justify their choice. They looked down on the blue waters of the Propontis, studded here and there with a passing sail, like a snow-flake ; beyond rose the gentle hills of Bithynia, like a grey cloud ; while from the many coves and creeks of the European shore, all along as far as Erekli, fishermen were launching out their little skiffs, or repairing them after the last night's storm.

Of the two ladies who occupied that pleasant colonnade, one might have seen seventeen, the other five or six and thirty summers ; and their likeness told at once that they could only be mother and daughter. The elder, brought up in all the simplicity and old fashion of Silivri, was employed with the spinning-wheel, the buzz of which seemed to respond to the hum of the bees ; the younger was engaged with her silk work, intended as a hanging for the little chapel we have mentioned above. Her rich *toga prætexta*, though it had long lost the title, still retained its primitive simplicity : of pure white silk it was, with the purple band at its lowest border ; and her dark palla floated carelessly over her shoulders as she plied her work. Just as we now look at her, her face is so pertinaciously turned to the ground, that it is impossible to distinguish its features ; and yet, if we could,

we should find it as sweet an one as that bright sun was looking down upon in the Emperor's dominions. There, she has raised it,—and now you may see the long, dark hair, braided so tightly back from the white, marble forehead, and presenting that contrast with the full, blue eye, which is so rare, and yet so lovely. A little more pensive than one might have expected; for what could have given her, whose father and mother still survived, and who had never known, and so never lost, brother or sister,—what could have given her a sorrow to shade her brow? Nothing, save that it was a time of sorrow: the great Empire was coming to an end, and there fell on men's minds the horror and dread that presages the turning events of the world's history. The agony of the dissolving State was shared, in some small degree, by its individual members: it could not but be sad to see churches that would be defiled, houses that must be possessed, gardens that must be tended, by Turkish owners; and to know that it needed little more than the will of the Sultan to make their country a name, and themselves the slaves of infidels. If the fair girl of whom we are writing had another momentary cause of anxiety, let her own words explain it.

“Mother, do not say so,”—she was pleading,—“he is so good, so true,—you know he is, dearest mother,—that I would trust him were the thing to be trusted ten times as difficult of belief. He will be here soon; speak to him, if you will, yourself, but do not grieve me by doubting him.”

“My dear child,” replied the elder lady, “I do not doubt him. I can trust you to him, when the time shall come, and your father, who has seen more of men than I have, will as willingly give you to him. But this is a temptation for him, and an unfair requisition for you. Why should he wish to conceal his betrothal with you from the Court? If he is so unworthy of you as to be ashamed of the laugh that may follow, when it is known that he has matched himself with one

who is in rank his inferior, I for one, should be only thankful never to see him more."

"It is not that, I am sure, mother," replied her daughter. "That I should resent as much as you,—not for my own sake, for the Panaghia knows I feel not worthy of him, but for my father's,—whose alliance is an honour to any man, even to Manuel. No ; he has some good reason, depend on it ; and I doubt not he will tell it you himself."

"I am not needlessly curious, Euphrasia : but this it is your mother's duty to inquire. I doubt not the answer will be satisfactory. But you know, my dear child, that you, brought up at Silivri here all your life, cannot pretend to compete with the ladies of the Court ; and you know, or if you do not, I do, that the best men have sometimes been led away by a pretty face or pretty form ; and though I mistrust Chrysolaras as little as any one, I own that I should wish his betrothal to be known, and there will be an end of doubt."

"Well, you may soon tell him so yourself," answered Euphrasia, giving her little head the slightest possible toss, "for look !" and she pointed in the direction of Constantinople. A single rider came rapidly over the brow of the hill,—the silver trappings of his charger even at that distance glittering in the sun : and though an uninterested person could not have so soon discovered that it was Manuel Chrysolaras, Euphrasia knew that it was his time, and felt that it must be he:

Five minutes brought the superb horse to the colonnade : and Manuel, leaping down, and throwing the bridle over the bough of a laurel which seemed to have answered that purpose before, held out his right hand to Maria Choniatis, at the same time that, throwing his left round Euphrasia, he drew her to him, and affectionately embraced her. For, by the solemn rite of his Church, she was half his wife ; and it needed only the Bridal 'Coronation' ere he carried her to his own home.

After the first few joyful words of salutation were over, the elder lady fulfilled her resolution. "Lord Manuel," she said, "I have ever dealt openly with you,—and openly I will deal now. I do not like this concealment at Court of your betrothal to my Euphrasia; and I think that her mother has a right to ask, either that the concealment shall exist no longer,—or, why it has already existed so long."

"Dear lady, you have," replied Chrysolaras: "and if you had not asked me, I think I should have told you to-day,—or, at furthest, next time. Thus then it is. You know the Lord George Phranza, as well from his high character, as from having heard me so often speak of him."

"Right well," replied the lady Choniatis.

"He was my earliest,—and has always been my kindest, friend," pursued Manuel: "and there was a kind of understanding between him and my father,—the blessed one—that, in due time, I was to wed his daughter. Much I have always seen of Theodora, and much I have always liked her; but never, even before I knew you, dear Euphrasia, so liked her as to wish that she should ever become my wife. And if I did, she, I much misdoubt me, has no heart to give me."

"But whereto tends this?" asked his companion, rather gravely.

"A moment," he answered. "Thus. The Lord Phranza, as you know, went on a two years' embassy to seek a bride for our Augustus, from which he has but just returned. To write to him while travelling over Iberia, with any chance of the epistle reaching its destination, was impossible: and I was anxious that neither in his absence, nor on his return, should he learn the tidings of my betrothal from any but myself. For I knew that out of love to my dear father, he had looked forward to my receiving the hand of his daughter. To-day, immediately on my return, I tell him: and then the whole Court shall know how much I glory in my choice."



“ Well,” said the lady Choniatis, with a well pleased smile,—“ I am satisfied : and I am sure that Euphrasia’s father will be equally so. But you will not go, however, without taking something to eat ; and I will have your horse tended also.”

“ And you too, dear Euphrasia, did you doubt me ?” continued Chrysolaras, as soon as they were left alone.

“ Not for a moment,” she answered ;—“ but I am glad the mystery is over ; and only so far sorry, if your love to me should be the means of alienating you from so old and tried a friend as the Lord Phranza.”

“ Never fear that, dearest,” answered Manuel. “ He may not love you at first so well as I shall hope that hereafter he will ; but he is too just a man, and too well tried a friend, to bear any resentment because our houses are not to be united. But come ; let us talk of something nearer my heart. This place is becoming no safe home for you, Euphrasia, or for your parents. The Turks are constantly scouring the country ; and, ere long, they will reach the gates of Constantinople itself. You have promised, very soon, to give me a right to take you to another home ; but your father and mother must not be left here. In Silivri, they would be safer : but there is no real safety, depend upon it, outside the walls of Constantinople.”

“ Are things really so bad ?” inquired Euphrasia, anxiously. “ I know how my father will pine in a city : he has been used to the free hills and the breezes of the Propontis all his life ; and how he will brook imprisonment in Constantinople I know not.”

“ Better that,” said Chrysolaras, “ than imprisonment in Hadrianople. But you—how will you bear the change ?”

“ I shall bear it with you, Manuel,” replied Euphrasia, with a smile. “ There is a wide difference between my father and myself.” And so the conversation continued till just as the sun was beginning to cast the shadows slightly westward, the owner of the house made his appearance. He was a well made, good-

humoured looking man, some fifty years of age; somewhat tanned by constant exposure to the sun, but with the clear, brown complexion, rather portly, though not corpulent, form, and muscular limbs, that evinced unusual strength, and seemed to give fair promise of length of days. He wore the picturesque Roumelian costume, the loose trowsers, the fantastical cap, the richly wrought waistcoat, and embroidered shoes.

"Well, my lord Chrysolaras," he cried, in a loud clear voice, "wasting my girl's time and your own! I did so once myself: men must be men, I suppose. At all events, there is a poor refection awaiting your Lordship within; you must not return before breaking your fast."

The young nobleman made some kindly answer, and then said,—“Will you go on first, dear Euphrasia? I would fain speak a few moments to your father alone. Now, worthy Nicetas,” he continued, “what I would say respects our marriage. It is now four months since God and the Church gave Euphrasia to me; and what need is there for any long deferring of the Coronation? Nay, there is every reason why it should take place as soon as may be; and why you yourself should, for a while at least, leave this house.”

“Much reason in your Lordship's eyes, I doubt not,” returned Choniates, “for hurrying on the Coronation; but what cause for our removing from this house passes my comprehension.”

“You know not,” replied Chrysolaras earnestly, “what apprehensions are entertained at Constantinople with respect to these constant inroads of the Turks. It is firmly believed that they will ravage the country to the very gates of the city this winter, and give us a foretaste of what, undoubtedly, we shall suffer in the spring. Now, if one of these parties should pass here, nothing could save you. Silivri itself would be but of doubtful security. I should earnestly recommend you to take refuge in Constantinople: my house, as

soon as the marriage is completed, shall be at your service ; and there you will be as free from immediate danger as in these evil times it is possible to be. But, howsoever you decide about yourself, which the Panaghia grant be wisely, let me remove Euphrasia from the peril, and that soon."

"I am bounden to you, lord Chrysolaras," returned Nicetas, "for your warning of this hazard ; and for your offer to me. It may be that love exaggerates the danger to your eyes ; but neither do I deny that there may be some. Yet it could hardly take us so suddenly as not to give us time to retire into Silivri, where also, as you know, I have a house. I will think of this matter. Now let us speak of yours."

The time for the coronation of the bridal pair was forthwith discussed ; and finally, that day fortnight was fixed for the wedding.

"And now," said Nicetas, "let us in ; for, by S. Demetrius, talking is hungry work."

"And dinner over," answered Chrysolaras, "I will lose no time in making to Constantinople, and telling my friend the Great Protovestiare all that has been arranged."

## CHAPTER III.

“ Sir, my love to you has proclaim'd you one  
Whose word was still led by a noble thought,  
And that thought followed by as fair a deed :  
Deceive not that opinion.”

WEBSTER.

MUCH at the same time that Manuel Chrysolaras was turning his horse's head towards Constantinople, Sir Edward de Rushton, in pursuance of his engagement, was entering the hall of Phranza's series of apartments : Richard Burstow followed, but he alone.

The metœcia of the Great Protovestiare occupied the larger part of one side in the second quadrangle of the palace. Thus, in front, it overlooked a court, laid down with the finest turf, in the middle of which three large plane trees threw up their heads far above the ranges of building ; and now, stripped and sere, made ghostly music to the southern breeze. The rest of the quadrangle was formed by the lodgings of the principal Domestics,—all built of white marble, all wrought with the highest excellence of Byzantine art, all surpassed only by the great quadrangle, of which we shall presently have to speak. In the hall Sir Edward was met by five or six of the attendants of Phranza, and greeted by them with the deference due to his office, and to his known intimacy with their lord.

“The most noble Protovestiare has not yet returned from the Council,” said the Camerarius, or, as we should now call him, the groom of the chambers ;

“but he left word that if your lordship should come before his return, I should pray you to wait. The Augustus was to return by two hours past noon, and it is now half an hour more than that.”

“I will wait,” said Sir Edward. And he was accordingly ushered with no small ceremony into a smaller apartment, where Phranza usually received confidential visitors. It was richly hung with silk; the ceiling and furniture were of satin-wood. A curiously wrought brazier stood in the middle, where charcoal of cedar, with perfumes, were burnt in the now chilly mornings and evenings. There were one or two pictures of Byzantine saints, in their conventional—but somewhat barbaric—figures; and before the Icon of our Lady the lamp was burning, which no good orthodox Greek would pass without making the sign of the Cross, and doing reverence. Through a kind of colonnade, this room opened on a garden, deeply shaded with trees, and, at that season of the year, somewhat dark and damp. The sun was shining brightly on the tops of the cedars, that raised themselves up above the under foliage; but on the thick mossy lawn not a hue of his rays could find its way. All was as green, as quiet, as deserted, as if in an uninhabited region, rather than in the heart of a great city.

Sir Edward de Rushton paced up and down this room for some minutes with a hurried step, for his heart was ill at ease within itself. He thought of the many happy hours he had spent in that same mansion; he thought of the frankness and openness with which, in former times, before his embassy, Phranza had always welcomed him; how, to a degree which approximated more to the openhearted trust of Franks, than to the more secluded—even then—habits of Oriental family arrangement, he had almost seemed to form one of the household; how he had watched Theodora Phranza, as she grew up from childhood to girlhood, and how fondly he had hoped to perform some chivalrous action for the empire or the Emperor, which might justify

the Western stranger in asking the Oriental heiress to be his bride. Then came the absence of Phranza, and his own necessary exclusion from that palace; then the rumour, whispered at first, but gradually spoken without any secrecy, that the hand of Theodora was destined for Manuel Chrysolaras,—till, on the last evening, Phranza himself had put an end, as we have seen, to uncertainty, by declaring that such was his intention. Theodora herself Sir Edward de Rushton had not seen, except in court, and in the Great Church, for than more two years; what were her feelings with respect to this intended marriage, he had no means of guessing. What his own earlier hopes might have been it was worse than bootless now to remember. The marriage would doubtless be solemnized at no distant period, and with it his own brightest visions would be at an end for ever. Yet there were not wanting thoughts of a less generous nature, that sometimes kindled a feverish joy in his mind. What, if he should make the hand of Theodora the price of his continued service with the Emperor? Constantinople could ill spare the services of one Frank, much less of one who, by the confession of all, was the pride of Western chivalry. The objections of Phranza must give way to the advantage of the Empire. Chrysolaras, brave and chivalrous as he was, had no pretensions like his own to oppose; Theodora might still be won. But then, again, her heart might be in the match; and what right had he to embitter the old age of one who had been so generous a friend as Phranza, and to dash the cup of happiness from the lips of Chrysolaras, just as he thought it secure? If, indeed, he could by any means learn the sentiments of Theodora, by them he would be entirely guided. To win her with her own consent would, he thought, justify any honourable means that he could employ; and, at all events, he would not throw away all chance of happiness, while the possibility of obtaining an interview with her still lay open to him.

He had just arrived at this conclusion, when a bustle in the great hall made him imagine that Phranza must have returned; and he was accordingly preparing to welcome him, when Manuel Chrysolaras, who had not spared the spur in his ride from Silivri, was ushered into the reception chamber.

"Good morrow, noble Acolyth," said he, advancing frankly towards Sir Edward. "So the Protovestiare, they tell me, is not yet returned."

"They tell you truly, Lord Chrysolaras," replied the other, somewhat stiffly; "he has not, I suppose, been able to leave the Council at the Studium."

"I am sorry for that," said Manuel, "for I am here on business of some moment."

"He will hardly be long," returned Sir Edward; "for I am here by his own appointment on a matter of State. Yours, perchance, may be of the same nature?"

"By the Unmercenary ones, no!" cried Chrysolaras, laughing; "I can plead no such reason for being heard. Mine is of vast importance to me—and one other person—but to us only; so it can wait."

"By S. George, it can!" said De Rushton, rather bitterly; for he was somewhat nettled at Chrysolaras's coolness in asserting—as he understood him—that the proposal for Theodora's hand, which he believed him to have come for the purpose of making to her father, was of vast importance to Theodora herself.

"The Protovestiare does not seem to think too well of our affairs," observed Chrysolaras, noticing that Sir Edward appeared to possess less than his usual courtesy, and attributing it to the harassing cares of his office.

"At all events, they will be the better for his return," said the Great Acolyth; "I know no man whom the Empire can worse spare."

"And whom the Emperor more fully trusts. Will your errand with him take much time?"

"Nay," said the other, "I should imagine it will be

easily despatched. It is but touching that same Varrangian whom Phranza wishes to send to Hadrianople."

"Perhaps, then, I had better defer my own errand till later," remarked Chrysolaras. "Yet I must ask you to wish me joy, for my secret need be one no longer."

"Your lordship must first tell me wherefore," returned De Rushton, coldly.

"I am glad," replied Chrysolaras, smiling, "that my absence from Constantinople has not been more remarked."

"Is it possible," cried Sir Edward de Rushton, a new light beginning to break in upon him, "that—"

"That I have wooed and won a bride, Lord Acolyth? Even so. And though the world may perchance say that her rank equals not that of my house, Constantinople must own that it has rarely seen her equal, when I present her at Court."

"I congratulate you with all my heart," said his friend, warmly, extending his hand to him. "And may I ask her name?"

"Her name is Euphrasia Choniatis,—her father dwells at Silivri."

"What, the Exarch?" inquired Sir Edward. "I know him: he is a right honest and a brave man. I have had occasion to confer with him touching the fortification of that town. I congratulate you again, Chrysolaras. But common fame, you know, has long given you another bride."

"What—the fair Theodora? Some such talk there was between our fathers; but you, of all the world, Sir Edward de Rushton, should have given the least credence thereto."

"Why, my lord?"

"Nay, then, I am not the only man that can keep a secret," returned Chrysolaras, laughing. "All success attend you, Lord Acolyth! no one deserves it more."

"I will not affect to conceal that, so far as my



wishes are concerned, you have guessed aright," replied Sir Edward, "though how, I can hardly divine. But further than wishes, I have as yet essayed nothing."

"Well, rest contented," said Manuel. "I doubt not your success with Theodora; and, for her father, he must have seen too much of the hollowness of the pretensions of our courtiers, to mate his daughter among them. Our aristocracy is worn out, Sir Edward; just as I have heard gardeners affirm, that trees, in the course of years, lack virtue to propagate their race, and dwindle away for no manifest reason, till the stock is extinct."

"I own," said Sir Edward de Rushton, "that I have been fortunate beyond my deserts; also my family is as good as Phranza's. But my post depends on the favour of the Emperor; and, failing that, I have but my sword and my honour."

"Pray heaven your post outlasts not the city," said Chrysolaras. "And then, what is Phranza?"

"Remember, too," said his friend, "I am a Latin; and not even to win such a bride will I peril my soul. Remember the bigotry of hatred with which you regard us here."

"Nay, by S. Procopius," cried Manuel, "I think the bigotry is about equal on both sides. But who can say what this Union will do?—Hark! there are the Emperor's trumpets; he is returning from the Studium. Phranza is no doubt with him. Now may I pray you of your charity to let me have speech with him first? It is on my mind to let him know how matters stand with me, for he has been as a guardian to me; and I were loath to vex the old man, by letting him discover the truth from any one else."

"Willingly," returned De Rushton; "but where shall I bestow myself? And will he not think it strange that I kept not my appointment?"

"I will explain to him that you gave me precedence," replied Chrysolaras. "You might walk in

the garden some little space: a quarter of an hour would be fully enough."

"I will go, then," said his friend. And stepping out into the colonnade, he passed on into one of the dark alleys of the garden. Manuel Chrysolaras remained, listening to the louder blast of the trumpets, as the royal cavalcade approached the palace. One loud burst of melody gave notice that the Emperor had dismounted at the great gate of the further quadrangle; and in a few minutes Phranza, with a splendid retinue, was seen crossing the court.

"The Panaghia guard you, noble Chrysolaras!" he said, as he entered the room. "I had not expected the pleasure of seeing you so soon; though, in good faith, I want some words with you. They told me that the Acolyth was here."

"So he was, noble Protovestiare; but I, too, was anxious to speak to your lordship, and I persuaded him to let me have an interview first. If his business can wait, perhaps you will permit it so to be."

"It can wait," returned Phranza: "the Emperor will not see him for an hour. And now, Lord Chrysolaras, I would fain—before we speak of aught else—ease my mind, by coming to an understanding on one matter which has long pressed upon it. You know, partly by hearing, and partly, I should think, from remembrance, how great love I bore to your father, the blessed one."

"I do know it, my Lord Protovestiare. To you I have always looked as a second father; but if you would let me say—"

"Presently," said Phranza. "There was an understanding between us, when Theodora was born, that if—"

"But, my lord,—"

"Nay, nay, let me have my say out," interrupted the Protovestiare, who thought he saw only his young friend's eagerness to thank him for the gift that he was about to bestow on him. "There was, I say, an

understanding between us, that if, when the due time should come, no other obstacle should have presented itself, and the Emperor's consent should be given, the hand of Theodora should be yours."

"My lord,—"

"Still a moment," said Phranza. "Since your youth, I have watched you closely and narrowly; for I would not trust my daughter to one whom I could feel no confidence in myself. Since my absence, others have done so for me; and all that I have seen, and that I have heard, has confirmed me in my resolution. To-day I have asked the Emperor's consent, and the Augustus signified his pleasure that so it should be. Now, then, you may speak, if you will."

"My lord," replied Chrysolaras, "in the first place, I must thank your Splendour for such intentions to me. I know well that the hand of your daughter is a prize for which monarchs might contend,—for which you might have chosen many a Byzantine noble, who in wealth and fame, and even in rank, should have been my superior. But I would that you had let me speak before, to explain to you why it is that, feeling all your love to my father, and your kindness to myself, I yet may not become a candidate for that which would make me the envy of Constantinople."

"I hardly comprehend you, Lord Chrysolaras," replied Phranza, with an effort to be calm. "Do I understand that you decline my offer?"

"Hear first, my lord, why it is necessary that I should do so, and then judge me. It is four months since I was betrothed."

"Betrothed, my Lord Chrysolaras! And to whom?"

"Your Splendour knows Nicetas Choniates, the Exarch of Silivri?"

"I know him."

"It is to his daughter."

"What would your father have said," cried Phranza, "could he have seen this day! The last heir of one of

the noblest houses of Constantinople thus throwing himself away! thus stooping to a girl who will disgrace so ancient a family!"

"My lord," said Chrysolaras, "somewhat I allow to prejudice, and much more to your feeling of kindness disappointed; but no man, in my hearing, shall thus speak of my affianced wife. If our house were ten times as ancient and as noble,—had we borne office under Constantine for the first time, instead of under the Bulgaricide, Euphrasia Choniatis would be an honour to it. When your Splendour shall be made acquainted with her, you too will think so."

"Never," said Phranza. "You have committed a grievous act of folly, and you will smart for it. The Panaghia forbid that I should counsel you to dishonourable conduct. If betrothed to her you are, married to her you must be. But that does not let that I may still feel sorrow: it is disgraceful to you so far to have forgotten the dignity of your race; it is disgraceful to her to have sought to match herself so far above her own."

"My Lord Phranza," replied Chrysolaras, rising, "these are words which I will take from no man. I know of no right, save that of friendship, that your Splendour hath to pass judgment on my actions; to condemn my bride neither friendship nor aught else can justify you. I bid you farewell, my lord."

"Farewell, Lord Chrysolaras," said the other. "The Panaghia grant you never regret this day, as I do now.—Without, there! where is the Great Acolyth, fellow?"

"I think, my lord, that he has walked forth into the garden."

"Let him be sought, then; and bid the Varangian, whom he left below, attend me here."

## CHAPTER IV.

“ He either fears his fate too much,  
Or his deserts are small,  
Who dares not put it to the touch,  
To win or lose it all.”

SIR EDWARD DE RUSHTON had walked forth into the garden with a lighter heart than he had for months possessed. The great difficulty in the way of his happiness seemed removed. He should be guilty of no treachery to his friend, of no injustice to Theodora, though he gave full vent to his feelings. That Phranza, indeed, highly as the English knight knew himself to be respected by him, would willingly consent to his union with his daughter, was not to be expected. But much might be done by time,—much by the need, which Sir Edward could not but feel there would soon be, of his own strong arm and military skill; much, perhaps, if matters came to extremity, by the interference of the Augustus. He no longer felt himself a hopeless man: after so totally unexpected an opening made in his favour, what might not follow? “And I vow,”—such was the knight’s secret thought,—“a chantry to the Church at Rush-ton, with two acres of pasture land, and bread, wine, and lights, if I ever bring Theodora Phranza to my own country as my own bride.”

For some time, occupied in these thoughts, the knight paced up and down an avenue of aged chestnuts; till at length, pushing his walk a little further,

he turned into a more sequestered arcade, whither, through the well-clipped hedges of yew, the eye here and there glanced on the blue strait, as it laughed with the thousand dimples of its puny billows. Here, in former days, a kind of seat had been constructed, where a slight elevation of ground showed the Dardanelles,—the Asiatic hills beyond,—the Golden Horn,—and the silver domes of the Imperial city. Even so late in the year honeysuckle and jessamine twined around it, effectually concealing the interior of the harbour; nor, till De Rushton was close to it, did he see that the old grey stone, which served as a seat, was tenanted,—and that by the being of all others whom he most desired to see.

“Our Lady be praised!” said he in his mind: “she must have heard my vow. Now do I deserve to lose Theodora, if I do not exert myself to win her.”

It was indeed Theodora Phranza with whom a happy chance had so unexpectedly thrown him. She might be some eighteen years of age: every feature, every motion proved her high descent, and uncorrupted aristocracy of birth: the high forehead, the large hazel eye, the somewhat haughty erection of her head, the long, snow-white neck. She wore the fashionable dress of the day, beautiful though fashionable, and though a compound of the costumes of East and West. Over the white silk dress, and the embroidered bodice, she wore the short, tight-fitting cloak, or rather jacket, that the maidens of Circassia still wear: of crimson silk itself, the edges worked with gold thread into a thousand curious forms. Her veil, tied simply round her head, had been thrown on one side for the sake of air; and so showed her rich auburn hair clasped back from her forehead by a band of pearls. Rising at De Rushton’s approach with, “A fair good morning to you, noble Acolyth,” she was about to return to the palace, when Sir Edward turned too.

“Nay,” he said, “lady, I had not been here had I known that I should intrude upon your leisure. I am

but waiting for an interview with your noble father ; and had stepped forth to enjoy all the beauty of so fair a day."

"Yes," answered Theodora, as, having turned with her, Sir Edward was walking by her side, "this garden is a very favourite retreat of mine. It is so thoroughly out of the pomp and bustle of the City ; and the view over those waters is, to my eye, passingly beautiful."

"Passingly beautiful it is indeed ! So much motion, and so much rest. And not even from the Emperor's own garden is the landscape so fair, with all the taste of the Palæologi expended on it. I, too," he continued, after a moment's pause, "perhaps feel it the more, because it is now two years since we have met here."

"I was but a child then," said Theodora ; "but you may remember how, even at that time, I loved this garden and this terrace."

"I am not likely, lady," replied De Rushton, "to forget any taste of yours. Yes ; I know it well."

"Have you," said Theodora, passing from what appeared likely to become a dangerous subject,— "views like this in England ?"

"Nothing so soft,—nothing so gently beautiful," answered the knight. "Our seas are not like the Propontis. And now, while we are wandering under these beautiful trees, birds singing and flowers blooming around us, in England storm and sleet and snow are driving down, and making the fields and valleys raw and miserable."

"My father," said his companion, "is he still at the Council ?"

"He is," replied Sir Edward. "And the Lord Chrysolaras is waiting to speak to him on business of importance."

"On State business ?" inquired Theodora, rather anxiously.

"On business of his own," answered De Rushton,

looking at his fair companion. "The Court, I understand, is shortly to be enriched with a new beauty."

"Indeed!" said Theodora. "And has this to do with the Lord Chrysolaras's errand to my father?"

"It has everything to do with it," said Sir Edward. "The matter will be no secret in a few hours. The Lord Chrysolaras is betrothed to a daughter of the Exarch of Silivri."

"I wish him joy," said Theodora, hastily. "He is a brave and honourable man, and no doubt his choice does him credit. I wish him joy, with all my heart."

"He is, in truth, the very flower of the Byzantine nobility," replied De Rushton. "And yet—may I tell you so, lady?—and yet I know not that yesterday I could have said so to you."

"Yesterday or to-day, Sir Edward de Rushton, you would equally have told me the truth touching the Lord Chrysolaras. You do yourself less than justice."

"I fear not," he replied.

"And how long has the betrothal been known?" inquired Theodora. "I never heard a whisper breathed of it till now."

"Nor did I know it till to-day; for Chrysolaras was unwilling that it should get abroad, till by your father it should have been heard; he having ever been so warm a friend to the Lord Manuel. But it is now four months since they were betrothed."

"And he is with my father still?" inquired his companion.

"He is," answered De Rushton. "But now may I, without the certainty of banishing myself from this fair garden of which we were talking, tell you, lady, what, since I knew of Chrysolaras's happiness, I have been presumptuous enough to hope?"

There was no answer.

"Dear Theodora," said De Rushton, eagerly, "you



must have known it, you must have felt it, that, long before your father's embassy separated us for a time you were dearer to me than—"

As he spoke, one of the officers of the *Protovestiare* advanced down the lime alley—"Lord Acolyth," said he, "my lord bids me to say, that if you will do him the honour of visiting him, he is at your service."

"I will come immediately," replied De Rushton. And perceiving that the man lingered, he added hastily, "I am coming directly. Go in and tell your lord so."

The officer went. "Go, go, Lord Acolyth," said Theodora. "Oh! you should not have told me this! I may have thought it—I may have suspected it—but now—for the Panaghia's love, go! Leave me now at least. We shall meet again."

"*Shall* we meet again?" said De Rushton.

"Yes, yes," said his fair companion; "but leave me now." And the knight, seeing her agitation, and extremely anxious that no one connected with the palace should observe it, reluctantly obeyed.

"The foul fiend seize that meddling fool!" said he to himself as he returned to the *Protovestiare's* lodgings. "Yet it must be—she never would have heard me so far if it were otherwise. The opportunity must come again,—and then, to improve it better!"

So saying, he entered the colonnade, and was immediately ushered into the presence of Phranza. He found that worthy nobleman in conversation with Richard Burstow.

"Well, Lord Acolyth," he said, "this seems a likely fellow, and I think will answer the Emperor's purpose."

"I am glad your lordship is satisfied with him," replied De Rushton. "Are you from the Council?"

"Yea, my lord. Everything is settled; we are to receive the Cardinal as soon as he can arrange his entrance."

"That is well," replied the other. "And when is this good fellow to leave for Hadrianople?"

"The Augustus would first see him," replied Phranza, "and with your leave, we will be going to him, for it is well-nigh time. An hour after his return from the Studium was the hour he fixed."

The two friends, as after passing the quadrangle which we have already mentioned, they came into the great court of the Palace, were too much accustomed to the unbounded magnificence of the scene to give it even a thought. True, it was much impoverished since the days of Theophilus or Basil;—the golden tree with its vocal birds had long since found its way into Mahometan coffers;—the golden lions no longer astonished the passer-by with their mechanical roarings. But still, all was grandeur and luxury: everywhere were marble walls and porticoes, roofs of gilt brass, and mosaics of untold value. Before them was the celebrated *sigma*, the porch of the Church of S. Irene, one of the five that adorned and hallowed the palace; its walls marbled of as many hues as an autumn forest. On one hand was the silver fountain, now indeed contenting itself with Parian marble instead of the metal whence it derived its name; on the other, the Emperor's own private apartments,—the gold lay on its pure marble as the evening sunbeam on a mountain of cistus trees. Here they entered; and waiting for a moment in a hall of which the floor was of mosaic, the walls hung with the feathers of the most precious birds, a dazzling display of living purple, green, and gold, they were ushered by the Great Camerarius, who had orders to that effect, to the presence of the Emperor himself. Through corridor after corridor, through hall after hall they passed; each vying with the other in richness and splendour. Now the walls were hung with silk embroidered in gold; now with velvet powdered over with pearls; now they glittered with tooled and gilt marble; now with enamels from Limoges, or

mosaics from Venice. At length, on approaching the golden door, it opened, and the Protovestiare and the Acolyth found themselves in the presence of their Emperor.

Constantine Palæologus was seated on a throne inlaid with ebony and ivory, but here and there richly studded with jewels. He had not long returned from the Studium ; nor had he yet laid aside the insignia of the empire. He wore the red buskins,—the mantle embroidered with ermine,—and the imperial tiara. In the last there was something of barbaric magnificence ; it was a high pyramidal cap of crimson silk, sparkling with pearls and diamonds, surmounted by a light globe and cross of gold ; while two lappets of pearls hung down on the cheeks of the wearer.

The Emperor himself might be forty-seven years of age : tall, well made, commanding ; with an eagle eye, a somewhat aquiline nose, a decided, and at times rather stern character. Yet in the expression of his face there was somewhat which might well have led to the physiognomist's remark on seeing our own Charles the Martyr, "This man can never die a natural death."

The usual ceremony of adoration having been performed, the officers and the Varangian prostrating themselves, and touching the floor three times with their heads, Constantine spoke.

"A fair good day to you, Lord Acolyth. You have heard why we have summoned you to our presence ?"

"I have, sire. Your majesty"—for so we must be content to Anglicise Sir Edward's real expression, "Your superillustriousness"—"was pleased to desire that I should find a Varangian who might be employed on a mission to Hadrianople."

"We were. Is this the man ?"

"The same, sire."

"Where have we seen you before, sirrah ? We remember. It was you who brought intelligence of the

loss of that Venetian ship. We never forget a face that we have once seen."

"Wonderful!" said the Curopalata, who, with his silver wand was standing near the throne, to the First Secretary, who was also in attendance.

"The true memory of a Cæsar," replied that officer.

"It is our wish," said Constantine, taking no notice of these remarks, "to obtain as accurate information as we can regarding the proceedings of the Sultan at Hadrianople. We are told that you can pass yourself off as a Turk, fellow:—is it so?"

"I can, your majesty: my mother was of that nation."

"You will do well," proceeded the Emperor, "to use your best skill; for, if Mahomet discovers you, you know the consequences. We desire to learn especially,—what his present occupations are—if he is engaged in casting artillery—if there is any talk in his army of an early expedition against this city, beloved of CHRIST—what numbers he has with him, and what reinforcements he expects."

"I shall so inquire, sire," said the Varangian.

"And you must do it with speed. In a week we shall expect your presence again. Let a horse be given him from our stables, and a hundred pieces of gold; and let no time be lost. You can probably set forth to-morrow."

"At day-break, sire."

"That is well:—the Panaghia guard you! Lord Protovestiare, we require your presence. The rest may depart."

De Rushton and Burstow, having taken their leave, soon found themselves by the apartments of the former.

"Now, Burstow," said he, as he turned to ascend the marble staircase, "keep up the renown of the Varangians. You have a difficult task—God send you be equal to it."

“ Ay, ay, my lord,” said Burstow, “ no fear of that. An accident may happen to any man—a traitor may ruin any man ; but S. George guard me so far, and I will guard myself for the rest. Shall I wait upon you, my lord, before I go ?”

“ Yes,” said De Rushton ; “ come to me here after the gates are closed to-night. I may have something further to say to you.”

## CHAPTER V.

“ O pardon me for bringing these ill news ;  
Since you did leave it for mine office, Sir.  
—Is it even so ? Then I defy you, stars ! ”

*Romeo and Juliet.*

OUR tale returns to Chrysolaras. On leaving the Protovestiare, he had at first intended to ride again to Silivri. But there was an entertainment at the Palace that night, to which he was bidden ;—and he required time to arrange his thoughts as to what should be his conduct as regarded one whom, up to that time, he had respected and well-nigh loved, as a father. That some apology was due to him and to his bride, he could not but feel ; but he resolved to seize with avidity the slightest overtures from Phranza, and, in the meantime, neither to avoid nor to seek him.

That resolution he kept ; and in the banquet that evening, no opportunity of interchanging a word between them occurred. De Rushton was also there, and to him Chrysolaras told the whole circumstances of the case.

“ A hundred years ago,” said Manuel, “ the Emperor would have been called on peremptorily to interfere ; but I think now the time is past for such conduct.”

“ Past, and for ever,” replied the Knight. “ However, I will do my best to reconcile you to Phranza. He should have made allowances ;—and you also should have remembered his disappointment.”

“ Be it your part, then, to be peacemaker. I will wait upon you to-morrow to learn your success.”

Full of that determination, Chrysolaras, on the conclusion of the entertainment, that is, at about two in the morning, mounted his richly-trapped horse and rode slowly back to his own house. It was a very dark night, and the torches flashed brightly along the street as his train of six servants preceded him home.

The porter was on the alert ; the great gate of the court was thrown open, and he then said,—“ My Lord, a messenger from Silivri is waiting.”

“ A messenger from Silivri !” cried Chrysolaras. “ Where is he ? What tidings has he ? What, is it you, Demetrius ?” he continued, as he recognised by the fitful torchlight, an old servant of the Exarch’s, with a countenance of the deepest dejection. “ In our Lady’s name, what is the matter ?”

“ Oh, my Lord !” was all that Demetrius could at first answer.

“ What is it ? What is it ?” cried Manuel, impatiently springing from his horse. “ By S. Demetrius, an you speak not, it will be the worse for you.”

“ The Turks, my Lord ! They have carried them off ! All, my Lord !”

“ Carried whom off, idiot ? What Turks ? By the Panaghia, the man is drunk ! Carried whom off, sirrah ?”

“ My master, my Lord, and my mistress, and my young lady.”

It was now Manuel’s turn to be agitated. “ Impossible !” said he. “ What Turks could have ventured so near to Constantinople ?”

“ That I know not, my Lord. But about three o’clock this afternoon we heard certain intelligence that a party of a hundred and fifty Turkish horse were scouring the country towards Tchorlu and Karamisli ; and my master determined on putting his family into a boat, and sending them off to Constantinople, while he himself defended Silivri. I had ordered the boat—it was afloat, and the men in her ; and my master was coming slowly down the hill, when, all on a sudden,

the whole party began to run,—and in a moment afterwards, I saw the heads of the Turkish horse over the hill. We held the boat in, having all ready to push off in a moment; and I hoped that they might escape. But it was too late. They detached a party of horse, and hemmed them in; and I know nothing further.”

“Did you see whether any harm was done to them?”

“No, my Lord, I could not venture to land: but I understand that Silivri shut its gates against them—and that they retreated without doing further mischief.”

“They had done enough,” said Chrysolaras bitterly. “Infamous dogs! But they shall be well succoured, or well avenged. Demetrius, come you with me—and you too, Nicephorus, and you, Methodius. I am going to the Palace. Follow me as quickly as you may.”

Without waiting for attendance or torches, he galloped to the Palace. The rapidity of his approach put the sentinels on the alert: and when he actually reined up his horse, he was surrounded by the Varangian guard.

“I must see the Great Acolyth,” said he. “Open the gate for me.”

“You will give the word, then, my Lord,” said the Corporal of the guard.

“The word! How should I know it? I have to see Sir Edward de Rushton on important business.”

“I fear, my Lord, that cannot be allowed, unless you can give the word.”

“It must and shall,” cried Chrysolaras. “Open the gate at once.”

“My Lord, we have strict orders to the contrary. The thing is impossible.”

“Then,” said Chrysolaras, restraining his impatience, “do me the favour to call the Great Acolyth, and tell him that I am desirous of seeing him on



business of the greatest moment. You know me well enough."

The guards, after a whispered consultation, appeared to think that the request was reasonable: for the Corporal, merely saying, "Very well, my Lord," went into the Court. Chrysolaras, left to himself, could not but acknowledge that there was some reason for all this caution: the accession of Constantine to the Imperial Crown had been disputed: and for an Empire, contracted almost to the walls of Constantinople, there were not wanting rivals.

In about a quarter of an hour, however, steps were heard approaching from the interior of the Court, and, on the gate opening, the two friends were together.

"What in S. George's name means this?" cried De Rushton.

"Let us go to your rooms, and you shall hear all," said Chrysolaras. And Sir Edward, who only saw that his friend was greatly agitated, led the way, without uttering another syllable, till he and Chrysolaras were in the little room which we have mentioned before, and the guard who had attended them had withdrawn.

"How can I help you, Lord Chrysolaras?" he said briefly. "I see that something unforeseen has occurred."

The story was soon told; and Sir Edward sat for a few moments quite overwhelmed by the suddenness of the intelligence.

"This is terrible—this is very terrible,"—he said at length. "But it is waste of time to lament. The question is,—What is to be done?"

"What *can* be done?" said Chrysolaras, mournfully.

"This much at least," replied his friend. "To seek to recover those whom you have lost by force would, I fear, be desperate; the Great Domestic would never consent to despatch a sufficiently large body of men from the city. And if he did, long before they could be in marching order, your fair bride would

be at Hadrianople. But I will risk something to serve you. You know that the Varangian, of whom I spoke this morning, is to set forth for Hadrianople to-morrow at daybreak."

"I had not heard it," replied Chrysolaras. "But what out of this?"

"At my own peril," said De Rushton, "I will give him orders to track this party on his road: and, if you choose to go with him also, I will put ten of my likeliest men at your command. What good will thence arise, none can say: but it will give you a chance; and, if you be guided by me, you will take it."

"The Panaghia reward you, De Rushton!" cried Chrysolaras. "But when shall we start?"

"I will anticipate the time," replied the Knight: "as soon as the men can be got together;—and that may be in an hour. But you are not prepared yourself."

"But I will be in less than that," cried Manuel: "I will also take three or four of my own servants: two I bade to attend me here: they must be at the gate by this time."

"Take none," said his friend, "that you cannot fully trust: they will be more hindrance than profit. You, then, to arm: I will summon the men. Meet me here again as soon as you can."

In half an hour, Chrysolaras rejoined his friend, completely equipped, and having left four trusty servants at the gate of the palace.

"I have not been idle," said De Rushton. "I expect my men every moment. They are all well mounted. This must be answered to the Emperor to-morrow: but so it shall be. How many servants have you with you?"

"Four," replied Chrysolaras: "all of them right trustworthy fellows."

"That is well," said De Rushton. "Four servants;—yourself and Burstow, that is six; and a guard

of ten ; that makes sixteen. Would that I could myself be you, Lord Chrysolaras !”

“ Would that you could,” said his friend. “ But what course would you recommend ?”

“ At what time did you say the attack was made this afternoon—yesterday afternoon, rather ?”

“ About three o’clock, as nearly as I can gather.”

“ And they came by Tchorlu,—doubtless direct from Hadrianople. They can hardly, incumbered as they are, reach that place to-morrow. Push on, therefore, as vigorously as you can : spare neither for spoiling of horses or aught else ; for, to deal fairly with you, I think that if your bride once reaches Hadrianople, she is lost beyond the hope of redemption.”

“ Every moment seems an hour,” cried Chrysolaras. “ When will this guard be ready ?”

“ I expect them every moment—you were rather sooner than I thought for. You have sufficient money, of course ? That may be everything.”

“ I have three hundred gold pieces. I could not take more without burdening my servants.”

“ Take five : you shall not lose time in returning for it, though ; I will get the additional two ; and you may share it among the Varangians. Not one that I send with you but might be trusted with untold treasures.”

“ The Panaghia bless you !” cried Manuel, as his friend went back for the purpose of procuring the money.

“ Now,” said De Rushton, returning after a few moments’ absence, “ here it is ; and—I hear the guard riding up the street. One word more : I will ask for an audience both with Phranza and with the Emperor to-morrow : if anything can be done to help you, depend on me. And now GOD be with you.”

“ GOD bless you !” cried Chrysolaras. “ If anything happens to me, remember poor Euphrasia, and do for her what you can. I am so completely alone in the world that I have none else whom I need com-

mend to you, except my servants ; faithful knaves are some of them, as you know."

" You will return, you will return, Chrysolaras. I will do all you can wish. Ho! there! Let the gates be opened."

And in another moment Chrysolaras was on horse-back ; and the whole party were in motion towards the Silivri gate.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ Will you, not having my consent, bestow  
 Your love and your affections on a stranger ?  
 (Who for aught I know to the contrary,  
 Or think, may be as great in blood as I.)  
 Hear, therefore, mistress ; frame your will to mine,  
 And you, too, young sir !”

*Pericles of Tyre.*

At as early an hour on the following morning as Byzantine etiquette would permit, Sir Edward de Rushton presented himself at the door of the Great Protovestiare's apartments.

“ I have important business with the Lord Phranza,” said he to the servant who first met him, and who, he remarked, was the same that had summoned him from the garden the previous day :—“ Can I speak with him ?”

“ I will see,” said Zosimus, for that was his name. “ Please your lordship to wait for a few moments in the gallery.” He accordingly went, and returned with the message that the Lord Phranza would be disengaged in a quarter of an hour. “ And that is well, my Lord,” he added, with an impertinent air ; “ for I wished for a few minutes' talk with your Lordship.”

“ Indeed !” said De Rushton. “ Well, as you see, I am at leisure now ; so that you may begin.”

“ My Lord,” said Zosimus, “ I am a poor man, but an honest one.”

“ It may be so,” said De Rushton ; “ though I do

not see that you are the former, and, sooth to say, I do not hear that you are the latter."

"Perhaps so, my Lord; but it is true, nevertheless. My Lord, the office of Secretary to the Stratopedarch is vacant."

"Well, sirrah!"

"Well, my Lord, and I want it."

"You want it! By S. George, what will you want next? The Stratopedarchate itself, perhaps?"

"No, my Lord; I am not so unreasonable as that. But the secretaryship I do want; and I am going to trouble your Lordship to procure it for me."

"You must be mad, fellow!" cried De Rushton. "Off with you, at once, or I shall be forced to notice your conduct."

"My Lord, if you do not attend to my application, I shall be forced to notice yours."

The Knight, now really imagining that his friend's servant must have lost his senses, was about to walk into the hall to find some one to whom he might be given in charge; when the very earnest tone of the man arrested him.

"My Lord," he said, "listen to me for one moment. I saw all that passed yesterday between yourself and the Lady Theodora."

"What is it to me if you did?" inquired De Rushton. "You are impertinent, sirrah."

"And I heard all that was said, also, my Lord."

"You played eaves-dropper for the sake of distorting what you could pick up, and making a gain of it. Take my word, fellow, you are playing with dangerous weapons."

"Well, well, my Lord, you know your interest best; you must allow me to be the best judge of mine. What I then saw and heard I shall lay before my master unless I have that office of which I speak."

"And I will take care," said De Rushton, "that for any false report you carry to your Lord or to any one else, you shall be soundly punished: so look to it.

Take yourself off at once; or I shall disgrace myself by chastising you here."

Zosimus accordingly retired, leaving De Rushton in a state of far more anxiety than he chose to allow. He tried to remember all that had passed between Theodora and himself;—he tried to recall their position, the general locality,—the other circumstances connected with the affair, in order to be able to determine how far the servant had spoken the truth, or how far his invention might have enabled him to guess at what really had taken place, and his Greek brain had suggested to him the advantageous consequences that might result therefrom to himself. There remained, he thought, but one thing for him to do: candidly to acquaint the Great Protovestiare with all that had passed, and that without further loss of time. He had hoped for one more interview with Theodora before an explanation took place with her father; but to remain an unnecessary moment in the power of Zosimus was impossible. In a few minutes the Camerarius made his appearance, and informed De Rushton that his Lord was at liberty.

"I am come, Lord Protovestiare," said he, after the first salutations were over, "on a business of very painful import. Yesterday a party of about one hundred and fifty Turkish horse was ravaging the country in the direction of Tchorlu and Silivri; carrying off prisoners from undefended villages and farms, and burning what they could not take."

"By the Panaghia! This is too impudent," cried Phranza. "Constantinople is not invested yet, whatever it may be. How were they repulsed?"

"They were not repulsed at all," replied De Rushton; "they took themselves quietly off, when they had obtained as much plunder as they wished. So much for the public loss; for private sorrow, though I hear from Chrysolaras that you are annoyed at his choice of a bride, I am sure you will grieve with him at his having lost her."

"Lost her!" replied Phranza. "How lost her?"

"She was carried off with her family by those same marauders."

"Poor Chrysolaras!" cried Phranza. "And where is he?"

"I gave him a party of ten of my men, at my own risk, last night; for we learnt the news when we returned from the Palace. And with them I hurried off my spy—who was not, you know, to have set out till this morning. I spared all that I could venture, on my own authority; and I thought that time was of more importance than waiting for larger numbers."

"I think you judged rightly. Ah, Lord Acolyth, it is easy to see the end!"

"But what can be done?—or can anything be done?—I fear that any attempt by force is not to be thought of."

"Consider," replied Phranza, "how infinitely precious every man's life is to us now. One of our soldiers is worth more to us than thirty are to Mahomet. Could every man in our army destroy five-and-twenty Infidels before falling himself, we should very speedily be ruined."

"Can anything be done by treaty?"

"What have we to offer? Mahomet cares nothing for ransom: and we have not a prisoner, since that foolish generosity of releasing those we had. No: nothing can be done. I will mention the matter to the Emperor: but it will only be to add another sorrow to the many he has."

"I thank your Lordship," replied De Rushton. "There is yet one thing more," he said after a pause,—"on which I would speak."

"I am at your service," said Phranza. "I will but send a message to the Stratopedarch.—Without there!—Let Zosimus go to the Lord Argyropulus, and ask at what hour I might wait upon him on important business.—It is touching this inroad of the Turks, Lord Acolyth. Argyropulus ought to have intelli-



gence of it ;—and yet I hardly think he can ; for jealous as he is of my favour with the Emperor, I do not believe he would carry his jealousy to so absurd a pitch as to keep back from me information so necessary as this. Now, Lord Acolyth.”

“My Lord,” said De Rushton, “you cannot have forgotten, before you went on your embassy, how much, by your kindness, I almost seemed to form a part of your household.”

“I am not likely to forget,” said the Protovestiare, “how much pleasure I myself derived from so constantly associating with you, nor how much the information I obtained from you respecting some of the Courts of Europe tended to give me no small advantage in my negotiation with them afterwards.”

“My Lord,” continued De Rushton, making no reply to the compliment ; “when you set forth on your embassy, I became—as need was—a comparative stranger to this house : but I could not lose the interest in it I had so long taken, because it was bound up with some of the dearest recollections of my life. Your Lordship had not long been in Iberia when it was every where rumoured, and generally believed, that you destined the hand of your daughter for the Lord Chrysolaras. That I might have formed some wild hopes,—that it was a hard trial to learn to forget them,—matters not to your Lordship : forgotten they were ; and I brought myself to look on the Lady Theodora with brotherly regard,—such, and no other, as I might have felt had she been the bride of Chrysolaras. But when I heard from him yesterday that his troth was actually plighted to another—that your Lordship has also heard this, he told me too—all the old feelings came back upon my mind ;—and I am now here to ask from you whether I may hope.”

George Phranza was, as his writings prove, and as I have endeavoured to represent him, a high principled man for the time he lived in. When honour was almost unknown among the aristocracy of Constanti-

nople, it was something to find a great officer of state, scrupulously just, perfectly inaccessible to bribes, and unwilling to take an unfair advantage, even against an enemy. At the same time, there existed not a spark of chivalry in his composition: he was part and parcel of the old decaying system around him; the best part of it, perhaps, but still a portion. As De Rushton spoke, he was revolving in his mind the advantages and the disadvantages of absolutely declining his offer—of absolutely accepting it he never thought. Twenty years before, under similar circumstances, he could not have had a moment's doubt.

To bestow his Theodora on any, not of equal rank and wealth with herself, more especially if that suitor were a Latin, and held his office simply during the Emperor's pleasure,—he would have considered a pure act of madness. But now, by that time in the following year, the whole established state of things might be at an end for ever. Emperors and Courts, Protovestiarcs and Great Stratopedarchs, all might have been swept away before Islam. In that case, to leave his daughter unprotected was an impossibility: to give her to any of the ephemeral minions of the Court would be to give her to one who, stripped of the accessories of fortune, would become the cypher which, but for them, he must have ever been: while Sir Edward de Rushton had, at all events, a small patrimony in England, and was sure, in whatever service he enlisted, to distinguish himself by his courage and skill. But then again,—the danger to Constantinople might not be so imminent as it seemed. No politicians, of Phranza's sagacity, could doubt that the fate of the city eventually was sealed; but fifty years before, the danger had seemed nearly as great,—and for so long had the Empire been reprieved by the victories of Timour. Fifty years! It was a long time: and why might not the same thing happen again? At all events, it could do no harm to leave the answer doubtful,—and so, like all politicians of Phranza's stamp, he temporised.

"Lord Acolyth," said he, "I am flattered by the honour that you have done both to my daughter and to myself in making her the object of your preference. Were my choice perfectly free, there is no one to whom I would more unhesitatingly commit her than yourself,—a man of known courage in a degenerate age, and of unblemished honour in a lax capital. But, as you well know, we are scarcely free agents in this city: public considerations interfere with private wishes, and we, who hold office at Court, are very slaves to custom. To you, as a foreigner and a Latin, I cannot, in respect to popular prejudice, unconditionally give her;—from you, as a friend, and of so high reputation, I can still less absolutely withhold her. My conclusion is this;—allow the matter to stand over for six months: at the end of that time I trust I may be able to give you such an answer as may be pleasing to you."

"My Lord," replied De Rushton, "I know not how to acknowledge your kindness. The disparity of station—for I will hardly say of rank—since my birth is as good as your own, I feel strongly: my being a Latin will, I trust, as soon as this Union takes place, be a matter of less moment."

"In the meantime," proceeded Phranza, "let us meet on the old terms: and I trust to your honour that you will not mention the subject of our present conversation to my daughter."

"My Lord," replied De Rushton, "I cannot with truth give such a promise, for the Lady Theodora is already acquainted with my regard."

"That is unfortunate," said Phranza: "that is hardly right: or at least"—added he, unwilling to offend a man of such importance as the Great Acolyth—"hardly consistent with our ideas: with Franks, indeed, I know that the case is otherwise. I must then ask you not to renew the subject with her, till after your Lordship shall have received a final communication from me."

"I will willingly promise that, my Lord Protoves-

tiare, if you will engage to explain to the Lady Theodora a silence which she might well otherwise consider as strange."

"That I will do," said Phranza. "Come in,"—as some one requested admittance. "Oh! What says the Lord Stratopedarch?"

"He was about to go forth, my Lord: but he will willingly wait for any communication that your Lordship may have to make to him."

"Then, Sir Edward de Rushton, I will wish you farewell for the present. We shall probably meet again in the course of the day."

"Farewell, my Lord." And the Acolyth returned to his lodgings.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ Had he been ta'en, we should have heard the news :  
Had he been slain, we should have heard the news :  
Or had he lived, methinks we should have heard  
The happy tidings of his good escape.”

*Henry VI.*

ONCE fairly outside the Hadrianople gate, the little party in attendance on Chrysolaras spurred on at full speed, and hardly drew rein till they descended the hill above Silivri. The night was cloudless, but the moon had long set; and the stars glittered as calmly above, as if they looked down on an earth of peace. I suppose no one has ever passed a night of excitement, without feeling calmed and elevated by one look at the dark blue sky, with its innumerable array of constellations; not because of its peace only,—for the quiet of a sunny landscape is anything but soothing to an agitated mind,—but because its majesty awes, rather than woos, the mind to rest. Born in an age which had no sympathy with nature—the sure sign of a decaying race—Chrysolaras was nevertheless alive to all the vicissitudes of storm or calm, of light and shadow, that make the same scene so different. And even now, harassed by gnawing fear as he was, he could not but drink in somewhat of the high and holy influences of the hour. He thought of Euphrasia still; but he thought of her with more trust. The innumerable hordes of the Sultan—the ferocity of his predatory parties—the wild hills and rough roads which their

prisoners must travel—all these things, it is true, still presented themselves to his fancy; but he thought also of the angelic squadrons that might even then be arrayed on the side of his bride. He remembered how the race was not to the swift always, nor the battle to the mighty; and, in the beautiful words of Holy Writ, "he thanked God, and took courage."

And yet it was a bitter remembrance that came over him, as the little party wound down between the hill of Silivri and the sea, how, but a few hours before, he had passed along that same road with all the fond hopes of a lover, every thought full of Euphrasia, and counting the moments till he should see her again. At the same instant, however, Richard Burstow spoke.

"Right up to the gate, comrades! we shall get our best news there."

On they went at full speed along the sandy road, till close to the very walls; and then a halt was cried.

"Ho! ho!" cried Burstow, smiting lustily on the gate with the butt end of the battle-axe which he wore slung to his waist; "who keeps the gate there? ho!"

Presently a talking was heard in the guard-house, and in a few minutes a soldier with a lantern appeared on the walls.

"Who goes there, ho?" he cried.

"A guard of Varangians," replied Burstow. "We do not want admission, but we want intelligence of the Turks. We are on orders from the Great Acolyth."

The sentinel having reconnoitred them, and found the statement to be true, proceeded down to summon the corporal, who presently made his appearance at the wicket.

"Is it you, Lord Chrysolaras?" he cried, shading the lantern from his eyes, as he looked out into the dark night.

"It is," returned Manuel, who remembered the man's face, though he could not recollect his name. "We wish to obtain all the information we can con-

cerning the party of Turks that this morning carried off your Exarch and his family."

The intelligence communicated by the corporal, though not very concise, resolved itself into this:— that the first alarm had been given at about two o'clock, by a soldier who arrived at full speed from Tchorlu ; that the officer in command of the garrison had instantly despatched notice to the Exarch, believing that he might have full time to reach Silivri in safety ; that the Turkish cavalry had appeared about a quarter of an hour later ; that, on finding the gates closed, they had advanced in the direction of Constantinople ; that nothing further was known in the town except by report ; that it was believed that the Exarch and his family had been carried off, and that the marauders had again retreated to Tchorlu, though not by the same road, but had cut across higher up the country.

"What force had they?" inquired Burstow.

"About one hundred and fifty, or not quite so many, as near as we can calculate," replied the corporal.

"Good night, comrade! We must ride to Tchorlu, my lord ; no fear of their having taken the other road, though they did cross the country higher. We have too good a garrison there for that, and the Infidel dogs know it. For this wretched place they have not more than thirty men ; they must have more now. Gentlemen of the Life Guard, forward!"

Forthwith the steeds were breasting the hill gallantly. The wind grew colder, and the air damper, as the breeze, drawing round with the sun, swept bitterly over the high ground to the east. The road wound drearily over a vast common, studded here and there with a few small groups of stunted oaks, the rustling of whose leaves, as the train rode by, was like the distant talking of spirits. The sky, as so often before morning twilight breaks, began to cloud over, and rime formed on brigandine and cuisse, on horse-mane and helmet-plume. As the night was at its very darkest, Burstow's horse, foremost in that rapid chase,

started so violently at some object in the road, as almost to throw its rider; and the other steeds, close behind, were reined up so suddenly as nearly to bring them on their haunches.

"It is a corpse, Lochagus!" cried one of the guard, leaping down.

"Let's see," cried Burstow, also springing to the ground. "The skull beaten in, seemingly. Ah, well! I knew we were on the right track." And with this soldier's comment on that spectacle, he mounted, and again gave the word, "Forward!"

"Was it a man, or a woman?" inquired Chrysolaras.

"A man, my lord; it's the Infidels, I'll warrant. Take care, Stephen," as one of the horses stumbled desperately. "We must get a change at Tchorlu; it is a good forty miles there from Constantinople."

On they rode, though their good steeds gave manifest indication of weariness; still on, on, over the great waste common. The wind sang more mournfully; the oaks whispered more ghostly; the sky lowered more gloomily; still, without rest, without pause, without pity, onward.

"Is that day-break yonder?" said Chrysolaras, pointing to a cold, uncomfortable streak in the east.

"By'r Lady, it must be!" cried Burstow; "and if that be not cloud, it is part of the Strandjia. How say you, Gregory? Your eyes are better than mine."

"Ay," said the Varangian, "that is the Strandjia, sure enough; we shall soon be in Tchorlu."

But so weary were the horses, and so deep in sand the roads, that day had broken long before they saw the walls of the little town, and the dome of its cathedral rising above them; and just as they rode up to the gates, the sun rose. The sentinel had already given notice of the approach of a party of Varangians, so that Chrysolaras and his companions found ready admission. Here they heard that the party of whom they were in search had passed under the walls of Tchorlu at about nine o'clock on the preceding eve-



ning, and were supposed to have made some prisoners. It was, the Commandant of the garrison said, believed that the marauders had some ulterior object besides the acquisition of plunder,—so distinguished an officer as Achmet Pasha being at their head. The horses, which Burstow at once demanded, were furnished, but not without loss of time; and more than an hour elapsed between the arrival of his men at Tchorlu, and their departure from that city.

As they rode out again, the aspect of the country quite changed; for they had now passed the last garrison town that held for the Emperor of the Romans. The fields were uncultivated; the highway untended; the little farms that here and there bordered the road, either deserted, or, in some cases, blackened ruins; a peasant hardly to be seen; a woman, nowhere. In one or two patches of corn-fields, the wheat-ears had been cut off almost at the head, and the long stubble was still rustling to the wind; in the orchards, the apples still hung on the trees, or lay withering on the ground: everything bore witness to a government that could no longer protect its subjects, and an empire in the last weary stage of decay.

Little was said by either of the party beyond an occasional remark on the state of the country through which they were passing; and so, about mid-day, they rode through the little town of Bourghiaz, and found it deserted. Here they had hoped to refresh their horses, but the strictest search could discover no one; and the houses bore evident marks of the recent passage of the enemy through the street. Shutters had been wrenched back,—doors broken open; there were fragments of food and fruit cast here and there; and in one place a cask of wine had been brought forth, and the head knocked out by the depredators.

“A bad set, a bad set,” said Burstow, crossing himself; “they neither keep our laws, nor their own.”

“Our Lady confound them and their Prophet together!” cried Stephen.

"It is not many hours since they passed,—that is one thing," said the Lochagus; "and if we could but get other horses by and by, we might well overtake them to-night."

"No hope of that," said Chrysolaras, despondingly.

"A halt of two hours will do nearly as well, my lord. No use losing time here, however." Again they rode forward, as for life and death.

About two miles further on, the road, having climbed a slightly rising ground, plunged down into a narrow valley, to re-ascend almost immediately the opposite hill. To the left, this valley was rough with under-wood, through which a puny streamlet clave out for itself a little ravine, bearing the same similitude to a mountain gorge, that the empire of the last did to that of the first Constantine. To the right, the same valley went winding away to Strandjia, in one smooth bed of turf, save for the broken edges of the rill. As soon as our party reached the brow of the hill, there was a simultaneous exclamation. Some hundred and fifty yards to the right of the road, there was a cottage pitched snugly under the very brow of the slope, and round it eight or ten horses, some of their riders standing by their side, some, it would appear, in the cottage itself.

"That's some of them! that's some of them!" shouted Chrysolaras. "Gentlemen, on them!"

"Nay, nay," cried the Lochagus, "a moment's halt. What is that at the bottom of the hill?—there, by the stonework of the bridge? A corpse? No, by S. Mary, it moves! Gentlemen, follow me!" And he rode at the most reckless pace down the hill, closely followed by the Varangian life-guards.

Leaning against the abutment of the bridge, and bleeding profusely, and, as it would seem, from more than one wound, was an old peasant. The dust, ploughed up all around him,—the oak-stick which, notched and shattered, he still held in his hand,—the

thick felt cap, cut in half by the same blow that had gashed its wearer's cheek,—showed that he had not fallen without a struggle.

“What cheer, friend?” cried Burstow, reining up his horse; “who has been assaulting you?”

“The Turks! the Turks!” gasped the poor old man, pointing in the direction of the cottage. “Oh, save them! save them!”

“Save whom?” inquired Chrysolaras.

“My wife and children,” returned the dying man; “there, there,—do you not see?”

“But where are the Turks?” inquired Burstow, laying at the same time his hand on the bridle of Chrysolaras, who had turned his horse's head to the cottage. “I mean, where's the main body?”

“Gone on, towards Hadrianople,” said the peasant, with an effort; “but the Pasha is there—at the cottage. Save them! for the love of the Panaghia, save them!”

“No, no, my lord,” said the Lochagus, roughly; “if we stop every time we find a peasant in distress, we had better turn back at once. What should we know about the Pasha? Let us push on!”

“God forbid!” cried Chrysolaras; “how shall we obtain mercy ourselves, if we are merciless now?” And throwing off Burstow's hand in no very gentle sort, he galloped down towards the cottage.

“Well—an you will—have with you!” cried the Lochagus. “And beshrew me but I like you the better for it!” And the whole party galloped down on the cottage.

Having now fairly brought our party into action, I will do, what I ought to have done before, pause one moment to describe their equipment. They all wore the brigandine,—or rather, to speak in the language of the times, a pair of brigandines,—the breast and back being made separately; the lappets of steel were curiously set on to a groundwork of canvass, and covered over with rich purple velvet, embroidered, in the case

of Chrysolaras, with gold: the leg-harness was of the same material. The head was defended by beaver and gorget, much as in the West; only the shape somewhat resembled the ancient helmets of Greece—a lion, or other animal, forming its upper part. The proper or offensive armour of the Varangians was the double-edged battle-axe; but that being less adapted for cavalry warfare, the common men, all but two, carried the *spetum*, or long pointed partizan: a broad-bladed spear, rising from a crescent at the end of a staff. The two we have excepted carried the stirrup cross-bow, improved by a then recent invention, a reservoir box for arrows, so that the first motion simultaneously brought the string to the nut, and dropped a quarrel in the groove: the second discharged it. Richard Burstow, as Lochagus, would not discard the battle-axe, which hung by his saddle; and he carried a mere lance. Chrysolaras prided himself greatly on a match-lock musket, the stock richly inlaid with gold—not half so really serviceable as a cross-bow, but valued by him as a recent and very ingenious invention; as before this device guns were discharged with one hand and held with the other, or supported on a prop. When I have added that each party wore a cut-and-thrust sword, I have sufficiently armed them for the fight.

The sun, which had now got round some little way to the west, seemed at first to prevent the recognition of the Varangians by the Turks round the cottage. As they were yet in full speed, two piercing shrieks rang from the building; and almost at the same moment the Turks seemed to discover that the advancing body were not friends, but foes. In another second there was a rush from the cottage: a man, apparently of considerable importance, was hurried on to his horse; and the whole force, after manœuvring as if they were about to meet the Varangians, wheeled suddenly round, and galloped off. Almost at the same moment there was the whizz of two cross-bows,

and some five seconds later the report of the match-lock—the latter perfectly harmless.

“One of them is down,” cried the Lochagus, as the other Turks rode off without paying any attention to their fallen companion : “secure him, Stephen.” And then he and Chrysolaras, giving their reins to some other of the Life guards, entered the cottage. It was the dwelling of a yeoman of the times : substantially built, well kept, and as things went, not ill-furnished : much such a cottage, in short, as you may now see in the Christian villages of Bulgaria : the guardian picture of our Lady, and the lamp burning before it. There were but two persons in this cottage—a mother and a daughter. The former had, at the first entrance of the marauders, been stretched on the ground by a blow from the butt-end of a pike ; the latter, a fair girl of sixteen, had thrown herself on her knees before the image of the Panaghia, and clasped her arms round a staple in the wall with such convulsive violence that they were ghastly white. Her hair had been torn down from its fillet, and fell over her shoulders and waist ; while one long thin tress that lay on the ground by her side, showed what had been the violence of her insulters.

“God be praised,” said Chrysolaras, advancing into the room, “that we were in time to save you. Fear nothing : we are all friends.”

The girl for the first time looked round, and seeing Greek faces, gave one shriek, and fell back insensible. While the Varangians, some of whom had by this time dismounted, were endeavouring, in a more gentle manner than might have been expected from their appearance, to recall her and her mother to their senses, Chrysolaras and Burstow, eager for the great object of their journey, advanced to the wounded Turk.

“Listen,” said Burstow, speaking the language like a native, (I may remark in passing that Chrysolaras was sufficiently acquainted with it to keep up a conversation with tolerable ease.) “Speak the truth, and I

spare your life; prevaricate, and that word is your last. Were you of the party that was marauding by Silivri yesterday?"

"Allah is great," said the Mussulman: "I was."

"Who commanded it?"

"Achmet Pasha."

"It is well. Did you yesterday take any captives from Silivri?"

"Allah is merciful," was the answer; "not from Silivri, but on the sea coast nigh there."

"How many?"

"A despot, and his wife and daughter."

"Where are they now?"

"Who can say?" replied the Infidel. "Allah and the Prophet only know."

"No paltering with me, dog," cried the Lochagus, giving his battle-axe a little swing; "where do you imagine them to be?"

"Two hours further on, with the rest of our party."

"Where are they to halt to-night?"

"At Eski Baba."

"What is the destination of the prisoners?"

"The despot and his wife for the Pasha's slaves, his daughter for my lord's harem."

"And why did you attack this cottage?"

"Allah is just," gasped the Infidel with a great effort: "we did wrong—and—and—and—." The death-rattle came in his throat as he spoke, and he fell back on the grass.

"A good thing, too," said Burstow. "I should have been sorry to let the vermin escape. Where's this girl?"

Poor Eudocia—for such was her name—now somewhat recovered, came from the cottage, threw herself at the feet of Chrysolaras, clasped his knees, and half devotionally, half hysterically, called down a thousand blessings upon him.

"Kneel to the Panaghia, maiden," he replied, "not to me. She, doubtless, it was that rescued you in

this great strait; and you also," as the mother came up with scarcely less vivid gratitude. "Was it your husband that warned us of your danger?"

"If any man did, noble sir, it was he. Where did you see him?"

"Where he is now," replied Chrysolaras; "and whence—it grieves me much to say it—I misdoubt me, he will never rise again: by the bridge yonder."

A few hasty words explained the matter; and Eudocia and her mother were hurrying, in another moment, to the spot, Chrysolaras and his companions following. The yeoman had not moved: he made an effort to turn his head as the party advanced, and his wife and daughter were kneeling beside him.

"Are you safe, Eudocia?" he asked faintly, passing one hand over his brow, as if thinking that the darkness of death, gathering over his eyes, were some tangible substance, which might be rubbed off.

"I am safe," said Eudocia, weeping bitterly as she spoke, "thanks to God and to this noble gentleman."

The dying man made a great effort. "If there be one blessing more than another on which you have set your heart, noble sir, God and the Panaghia grant it to you!"

As he spoke, a terrible convulsion came over him; for he was a strong man, and life was not to be easily dispossessed by his great enemy. Burstow, to whom a violent death was no novelty, leaped from his horse, knelt by the ground, and held both the sufferer's arms down to his side, in a firm, calm, but vice-like grasp, while the others commended the departing soul to its Redeemer. In half a minute the distended muscles relaxed, the rigid form grew supple, there was one deep groan, and all was over.

"My lord," said Burstow, rising, "we must be gone. There is no danger now for the women."

"Two of you," said Chrysolaras, in a low voice, "carry the body to the cottage, then rejoin us: we will ride slowly till you do."

He said some kind words to the mourners; and in a few minutes more the party, with the exception of two of the Varangians, were in motion again. For some way they rode on in silence: Chrysolaras was the first to speak.

“God be praised that we turned out of our way to that cottage! Who knows how far a dying man’s prayer may prevail for us? ‘If there be one blessing more than another on which you have set your heart, God and the Panaghia grant it for you!’”



## CHAPTER VIII.

“ ‘She is won ! we are gone, over bush, bank, and scaur !  
They’ll have fleet steeds that follow,’ quoth young Lochinvar.”

THAT night, towards eight o’clock, the party whose rapid progress from Constantinople we have been relating in the last chapter, were holding secret consultation on the course they had still to pursue. Some quarter of a mile from Eski Baba, at which place the dying Mussulman, whom Burstow had interrogated, had said—and said truly—that Achmet Pasha intended to halt for the night, there was a grove of lime trees, a bow-shot from the high road that led southward. Here the Varangians had dismounted ; and tying or tethering their horses, as chance or convenience suggested, they were stretched in various attitudes on the ground, or against the roots of the old trees, and finishing the frugal meal which they had procured at their last halting-place. The moon, pouring down a flood of brightness on the open country, was dim here ; and the low murmur of the nearly leafless branches over head was all the sound—save the occasional voice of a speaker—that interrupted the repose of the scene and the time.

“It is certain, then,” said the Lochagus, “that Achmet Pasha is in the village. The best way (under your judgment, my lord) of proceeding will be, that I should put on my disguise, and procure such information as I may be able.”

“And we,” said Chrysolaras, “must, I suppose,

await your return here. Be cautious, however, Burstow. Remember how infinitely more than your own life, or than all our lives, depends upon this venture."

"I will be cautious, my lord," replied the Lochagus; "but there must be some risk run. However, thus much it might be well to arrange: if I return not in two hours,—or, say at furthest, in three,—from this time, conclude that I am betrayed, and act according to your own judgment. I need not say that, whether I am discovered or not, our secret will be equally safe."

"That I know well," said Chrysolaras. "God guard you, for you need His care."

"Hand me that trunk, Gregory," said Burstow. The Varangian disengaged it from the saddle of the Lochagus, and gave it as directed. "It contains my disguise, my lord; I will but don it, and then set out."

The change of dress took but a few minutes; and, prepared as Chrysolaras had been for the completeness with which Burstow could assume the Turkish character, the deception was so perfect as to astonish even him. Costume, countenance, expression, everything was in keeping; the manner seemed to change almost involuntarily; and the poor Turk—for such was the character which the Lochagus judged it best to personate—who stood in the midst of the Varangians, might, amidst eyes more critical than theirs, have passed unquestioned and undoubted.

"Farewell, my lord," he said; "farewell, comrades. I well hope that, in two or three hours, we shall meet again; if not, I shall have done my duty,—and you, I am sure, will do yours."

"Our Lady guard you, Lochagus!" cried three or four voices from the little band; and, in another moment, their leader issued from the wood. Striking into the high road, a very few minutes' walk brought him to the outskirts of the little village; and by the side of its first house he saw two Turkish sentinels.

"Who goes there?" said one of them, as Burstow approached.

"A friend," replied he. "I am from Bourghiaz, and have tidings for the Pasha."

"What is your name?" inquired the sentinel.

"Mustapha," was the answer.

"If you give us your message, it shall be taken to the Pasha," said the other.

"No," replied the Lochagus, "I will take it myself; or it shall not go at all."

The soldiers, though evidently displeased at this announcement, seemed not to dare openly to resent it; and after a few moments' conversation in a low voice, one of them desired the supposed Mustapha to wait, until he could receive the Pasha's own instructions. The other continued his beat, and took not the slightest notice of the new comer.

The sentinel who had undertaken to deliver the message presently returned with a more respectful air, and desired Burstow to follow him to the Pasha. The Lochagus, summoning up all his resolution, and feeling that he was indeed about to put his head into the lion's mouth, obeyed. The village might consist of about forty houses, and appeared to have been deserted by the inhabitants before the marauders had entered. At the door of most of the houses was a knot of the soldiers,—disorderly beyond the hopes of the visitor. Wine appeared to have been taken pretty freely; and the usual gravity of Turkish demeanour was, in many cases, utterly thrown off. The greater part of the horses were stabled in the church, which was open, and before which hay, straw, and barley were wastefully scattered about, as if to prove that the troops had no objection to squander what they had never paid for. Nearly opposite was the house of which the Pasha had taken temporary possession; it had been that of the mayor, or, as he called himself, the constable of the place, and was a dwelling of some size, and not ill calculated for its present purpose. Two soldiers were sentinels at the door; but they allowed Burstow and his conductor to pass. The latter

led the way up a staircase of some pretensions, and in another moment ushered the Frank into the presence of the Pasha.

Achmet Pasha, a good-looking, though somewhat corpulent man, of about fifty, was seated on a carpet at the upper end of the room, and solacing himself, after the fatigues of the day, with sherbet. The pretended Mustapha, after performing the usual homage, rose, and stood patiently, till it should please the Pasha to interrogate him further.

"Where do you come from?" inquired he, at length.

"From Bourghiaz," returned Burstow, "with important tidings for your highness."

Achmet indulged himself with two or three sips before he continued—"What are they?"

"The Christian dogs," replied the Lochagus, "have sent to Wisa for help. The Romans have a garrison there; and they wish to cut off your highness on your return to Hadrianople."

"Allah is great," said the Pasha; "they will not do it."

"They have heard," continued his visitor, "that your highness has, among the prisoners a Christian Aga, whom they wish to set free. I thought it was my duty to let this be known."

"You did well," returned the Pasha.

Burstow saw that he must wait till the great man should think it consistent with his dignity to ask something more; and in about a couple of minutes he found himself rewarded.

"What number have the dogs at Wisa?" inquired Achmet.

"Allah knows," said Burstow; "the servant of my lord's servants doth not."

"How soon might they be here?" said the Pasha.

"Not before midnight," answered Burstow, "if even then."

"We shall be prepared for them," returned Achmet.

"The prisoners are in this very house. What shall be, shall be; if we are ordained to be attacked, we cannot alter that which is written."

"Half a mile from this place," said Burstow, "on the road to Wisá, is a deep, narrow lane, where ten men might hold out against an army."

After his usual delay, Achmet inquired, "Could you lead the men thither?"

Burstow professed his ability to do so; and Achmet gave orders that a hundred of his party should be posted there. Nor was his attention to that spot at all singular. The garrison at Wisá had made itself peculiarly obnoxious to the Turks; and, under the command of a very active Frank officer, such tales were related of its deeds of prowess, as rendered its name the terror of the neighbouring country. Burstow himself, to whom every inch of Roumelia was as familiar as the guard-house of the palace, was perfectly correct in his description of the locality; and as soon as the men could be got together he led them to the spot, and saw them placed in good order for the repulsion of the pretended attack. That done, he was to return to the town, by order of the Pasha, who was not very well acquainted with the country, and was willing to obtain information connected with the locality that might be of use to him. But, instead of taking the nearest way back, he first resolved on going to the wood where he had left his comrades; as more than two hours had elapsed since he was with them, and they would naturally be growing anxious to hear of his success. Having reconnoitred the ground closely, so as to make sure that he was not watched, he turned from the road, and was presently greeted with rapture by his companions.

"How goes it?" cried Chrysolaras; "what have you done? Have you seen the prisoners? Where are they lodged? What can we do?"

Burstow related what he had done. "Now," he continued, "what you have to do is clear. There are

not more than five and forty left in the place; you are sixteen. They are great odds, I allow; but shall we ever have less? The men have been drinking; they are dispirited by hearing of the garrison at Wisa; the troop sent out on the road consists of picked soldiers; those in Eski Baba are the dregs."

"I am for the trial, by all means," said Chrysolaras; "but the thing must be the work of a moment, or they will rally."

"Nay," said the Lochagus, "I would not have you make an open attack down the street. The house where the despot is confined is almost opposite to the church, and is the only one that is built of stone. Behind it there is a garden, and then orchards, and then this moor. Now get your horses concealed in the orchard, as near to the garden wall as you can; you can climb the wall, and enter the house from behind."

"But you will be with us?" said Chrysolaras.

"No," replied Burstow; "I may be more useful if I return. I will do what I can to help you within; and that may be thrice as much as I can do without. But come, to horse! I will put you in the way; for, thank God! the moon is setting, and there will be no fear of our being discovered."

It took no long time to get the party on horseback; and Burstow's horse being led forth with the rest, he walked by the side of Chrysolaras for a short distance from the wood.

"There," he said, at length; "you can see the line of trees against the sky, out yonder; that is the orchard of which I spoke. Get to it as best you can; there can be no real difficulty. The house itself you cannot mistake: as I said, there is not another building of stone in the place, except the church. And one word more: give me an hour from this time, and then break in, as best you can."

Thus saying, he left his companions, and walked forwards into the village. Here he was somewhat

concerned to perceive that the alarm about the garrison from Wisa, if it had materially diminished the numbers of the intruders, had exceedingly increased their watchfulness. The sentinels were doubled at the entrance of the place; regular patrols were established in all directions; a guard-house was made out of what had been a wine shop; and every soldier wore a quiet, careful manner, far different from the licentiousness and listlessness that had prevailed two hours before. Reporting his arrival at the house occupied by the Pasha, Burstow was again summoned before that chief, and was questioned pretty closely as to his knowledge of the country, its capacities for an ambuscade, and the chances of falling into one before proximity to Hadrianople should give complete safety. In talk like this nearly half-an-hour passed; and then Achmet dismissed his visitor, promising him a reward on the morrow.

The Lochagus, on leaving the Pasha, found his way into the court-yard of the house, where several Turkish guards were drinking, and sat down among them, apparently occupied in listening to their occasional remarks, but in reality reconnoitring the size and capacity of the building. It formed three sides of a square; a low wall, in the direction of the garden, completing the quadrangle. The apartment occupied by the Pasha lay on that side which faced the village street: and from his observation both within, and also without the house, Burstow was persuaded that Choniates and his family could not be confined there, but must be lodged in the other wing, that, namely, which ran backwards, at right angles, into the garden. However, to make his guess certain, he led the conversation that way.

"I cannot think," he said, "where you can find room, in such a dog-kennel as this, to lodge these same prisoners, about whom the Pasha seems so anxious."

"There is room enough," said an old Turk, "yon-

der." And he pointed to the wing on which Burstow had already fixed.

"They are well guarded, doubtless," said Burstow.

"Why should they be?" said the former speaker; "they are as safe as the gates of Paradise."

"Why, truly," remarked the Lochagus, "the un-circumcised dogs would not find it easy to come here. And, by the blessing of Allah and the Prophet, I trust our Lord will soon make the whole country as safe up to Stamboul: it is ill living here, between water and fire."

"Up to Stamboul! ay, Inshallah, and beyond it," cried one of the party. "This will be our last winter at Hadrianople."

"We hear," said Burstow, "that our Lord is making vast preparations. I have not seen them yet; but the Nazarenes fear them much."

At this moment from the street there came the cry, "La illah illa Allah, Mahommed resoul Allah!" and the whole party prostrated themselves for the last hour of prayer. Burstow was fain to follow their example. "Our Lady confound them for compelling me," thought he.

The conversation then turned on the garrison at Wisa, and the probability of its attempting an attack; and the pretended Mustapha was much encouraged to perceive the intense dread with which the Franks were viewed by the Infidels.

"It was doubtless some of them," said one of the soldiers who had not yet spoken, but whom Burstow instantly recognized, "to whom we owe that alarm this afternoon." And he proceeded to give a somewhat exaggerated account of the rescue of Eudocia. "It was all but over with the Pasha," said he. "I was the first to see they were Varangians, and not our own men. By the Black Stone, a moment's later notice, and Achmet might by this time have been in Wisa himself."

"Or in Paradise," said another with a laugh.



"Trust him for Paradise!" cried a third. "He wishes for no houris but those of Hadrianople. And, by the Prophet, the Sultan himself never saw a more beautiful one than we have yonder."

"You say true," said the old officer: "nor Sultan Amurath—peace be unto him! neither. And yet his taste was famous in Roman beauties."

Burstow was all this while intently listening for any sound which might betoken the approach of his companions: and at this moment in the garden, separated from them by the wall, he heard a kind of suppressed cry, as if some one had stumbled over some unexpected obstacle, and had been on the point of uttering an exclamation of surprise.

"What was that?" cried one or two voices.

"Where is the lantern?" said the officer. "Hassan and Abdallah, go through that wicket and look."

"Best not," said Burstow. "It may be a Kata-khanas or a ghoul."

"It was nothing," said Abdallah, as if to excuse himself from stirring.

"Are there ghouls here?" inquired Hassan.

"They say so," returned the *soi-disant* Mustapha. "Eski Baba has an ill name for them. They ever haunt old ruined places like this."

"Ay," said one of the men. "And the Kata-khanades that the Romans talk of are just as bad."

"Or worse," said Burstow. "Their mufti at Bourghiaz told me what happened to himself about one, no long time ago."

"What was it?" said two or three voices. And the Lochagus, very willing to render his auditors nervous, said,—“Am I to tell it?”

"Tell it," said the officer.

"It is getting very dark," said the Lochagus. "I will come nearer to you, before I begin." And the whole party caught the infection of terror, and shifted their places a little further from the boundary wall, whence the mysterious sound had so lately been heard.

“Listen then,” said he. “There lived at Bourghiaz a Christian called Ephraim—and a right wicked one he was. He was Cadi, too: he never opened his hand but to receive a bribe—never did justice unless he was paid for it—ruined widows and robbed orphans, and ground the poor like a tyrant as he was. At last he died; and because he was so wicked, they would not bury him in the Nazarene cemetery, but they put him in the ground in a cave, in the hill just above Bourghiaz. And no long time after, there was a report that a Katakhanas went about, and several children were devoured by it. No one could tell where it lived, though inquiries were made in all directions. At last it fell out that a friend of this Ephraim’s, named Demetrius, having been out snaring hares, was benighted, and lay down in the cave where the wicked man was buried. And he laid his staff athwart his body, so as to make the figure of the Cross, and went to sleep. Towards midnight he awoke. It was a wild stormy night; clouds swept over the moon, making a bright glow of light alternately with a deep abyss of shade. The hill roared with its woods; and Demetrius wished for the day. As he lay awake, he heard a voice from the interior of the cave; it was Ephraim’s.

“‘Demetrius,’ it said.

“Demetrius lay in a cold sweat of terror; for now he saw that it was his friend who was the Katakhanas.

‘Demetrius,’ it said again; ‘I wish to come out.’

“Why do you not come out?” said he, summoning up all his courage.

“‘I cannot,’ said the Katakhanas, ‘while your staff lies crosswise over you.’

“When Demetrius felt his power over the Vampire, he took the more courage: so he said,—‘I shall not remove it: you will tear me to pieces if I do.’

“‘I will not,’ said the Katakhanas.

“‘You must swear it,’ answered Demetrius.

“‘I swear it by heaven,’ said the Vampire.

"Now Demetrius knew that Katakhanades are bound only by one oath—and he replied—

"That will not do. You must swear it by the inviolable oath."

"By what?" said the Katakhanas.

"You know," replied his friend: "swear it by YOUR WINDING SHEET."

"This the Vampire was very loth to do: at last he swore by his winding sheet; and Demetrius removed the staff; and the Vampire went out. At daybreak he came back, his teeth and lips dropping blood; and he went to his grave and lay down. Demetrius went to the mufti, and told him all. The Nazarenes of Bourghiaz went the next Saturday—for it is only on the Saturday that Vampires can rest in their graves—and dug up Ephraim; and there he was, perfect as when they buried him, only black. So they took him up and burnt him; and they have not been troubled with a Katakhanas since."

This story evidently affected the spirits of the party. One or two of the soldiers looked fearfully out into the thick darkness that shrouded the garden, as if dreading some unearthly appearance from the midst of it.

"And they say," remarked Abdallah, "that there are Katakhanades here also."

"By the Prophet they do," replied the Lochagus. And, as he spoke, there arose so wild and horrible a shriek from the garden that officer and guards, forgetful of everything but their own safety, and the terrors of their unearthly visitants, sprang simultaneously from their places, tumbled one over another into the doorway, and disappeared in the house. In another second, Chrysolaras and the Varangians had scaled the fence, and were in possession of the court.

"Admirably done," cried the Lochagus. "You heard my tale then?"

"Ay," said Manuel. "Where are they?"

"In yonder range of buildings—they have a sepa-

rate entrance. Stay; let us secure this door; we shall be the safer for it."

It took but a moment to barricade the door by which the Turkish guards had made their escape, and which fortunately opened outwards: and in another Chrysolaras and Burstow, with several Varangians, had forced in that which led to the range of rooms where the prisoners were confined, and were ascending the stairs which led to their apartment. The sentinel who was posted at the landing place, however he might have followed his companions in flying from supernatural foes, was too brave a man to dread any odds in enemies of flesh and blood. Shouting loudly for help, he struck at Chrysolaras, who was foremost, with his pike:—Burstow drove it up by a back stroke of his battle axe, wrested it from its holder, and the next instant plunged his dagger into the breast of the unfortunate Turk.

"Now Stephen, and Demetrius," he cried, "and two or three more of you, make good this passage for the next ten minutes with your lives. This way, my lord."—And hurrying along the corridor, they soon arrived at the door which, from his observations of the place, Burstow had fixed on as that which must lead to the room of which he was in search. A thundering blow from his battle axe almost stove in its panelling: but, before he could repeat the stroke, loud shrieks burst from the inside, followed by the question, in a voice which Chrysolaras knew to be that of Chonitates,—“Who is that?”

“It is I,” shouted Manuel:—“I, Manuel Chrysolaras. Open the door, if you have the means—there is not a moment to lose.”

“God be praised!” cried Nicetas. “The door is fastened on us; you must open it for yourselves.”

“Stand back then, inside,” shouted the Lochagus. And one or two more blows split panelling and tore down hinges, and the Varangians pushing their way through the ruins of the door, entered the apartment.

“Now, Euphrasia, now!” cried Chrysolaras, speaking to no else. “There is not a moment to be lost. Lochagus, look to the Lady Choniatis! Now, Exarch! we have horses for you in the garden!”

Hurrying Euphrasia along the passage, they found the Varangian guard hardly pressed, and with great difficulty holding their own. The Turkish soldiers appeared to have discovered the trick that had been played on them—but finding that the door leading to the court-yard was securely barricaded on the outside, they rushed to the apartments of the prisoners, and were confronted by the few picked men that Burstow had posted in the corridor. Achmet Pasha, throwing off his indolence, headed his troops: for such a rescue, he well knew, might have been punished by the bow-string at Hadrianople. The passage was, however, extremely narrow, and would not admit more than two abreast;—so that in the hand-to-hand struggle which ensued, the superior length of the Greek pikes told with fearful effect. Already, however, two Varangians were down, when Burstow and Chrysolaras, with the rescued captives hurried along the corridor.

“You to horse, my Lord!” cried Burstow—“I must mend this gear. Quick! quick! in S. George’s name! We shall have the whole city upon us!”

“But you will follow?”

“Ay,—if we can fight our way out. But quick! or we shall have lost all.”

So saying, and crying, “Give way, my masters!” he threw himself among the combatants. Chrysolaras hurried Euphrasia down the stairs, and across the court;—with the assistance of two or three of the Life Guard the wall was soon scaled; and almost before the prisoners could believe that they were rescued, they were on horseback.

“We must ride, my Lord,” said one of the Varangians. “We have express orders from the Lochagus.” Still, though on fire to free Euphrasia from her

danger, Manuel could not endure the thought of deserting his friend.

"But Burstow?" he said.

"He must take care of himself," replied the soldier, whose name was Gregory;—"he is fighting to give you a start: for GOD'S love do not lose it!"

It was enough. "We must ride, Exarch," said Chrysolaras:—and in another second the whole party, —Choniates, his wife and child, the four servants of Chrysolaras, and four of the Varangians, were in full gallop over the common. The night was pitch dark: the heath full of pools and gullies: but no fate seemed so dreadful as that of being overtaken,—and on they went, at reckless speed, towards the grove where Burstow had assumed his disguise.

"It seems like a dream," said Euphrasia to Manuel, who held her rein. "How could you hear that we were taken? And how could you come up with us?"

"Look well to your seat, dear Euphrasia," replied Chrysolaras: "this is no time for talking. The Acolyth lent me a party of Varangians and we were tracking you all yesterday. Hold up, Pasha! God grant we may come safely off this common!"

"Whither are we riding?" cried the Exarch, behind.

"To Wisa," replied Chrysolaras. "Once there, we are safe."

"That is well," said the Exarch. "Whatever be the issue of this night's work, which is in GOD'S hands, the Panaghia reward you, Lord Chrysolaras, for the attempt to save us from slavery, and Euphrasia from worse! And you, good fellows, if I live, you shall find that I have not forgotten how much I owe you."

"More to the left, my Lord," cried Gregory. "The Wisa road runs north of that copse yonder."

"So best, so best," said Manuel, as they followed the advice. "Hark! I could swear that I heard horses!"

Every head was instantly turned, but not an inch of speed abated.

"Push on, my masters!" shouted Gregory at length, "we are pursued."

More fast and furiously than ever dashed on the little party: till faint from the distance, but yet clear, was heard a shout of, "Halt ho!"

"It is the Lochagus," cried one or two of the men. "Draw rein, my Lord."

"Are you sure?" inquired Chrysolaras, still pressing on. But as he spoke, the shout came nearer and clearer.

"God be praised," cried he, drawing rein. "Dear Euphrasia, that is the man to whom we owe everything. I should never have forgiven myself if aught had chanced him."

In a few moments Burstow and three others rode up. "They have taken the Bourghiaz road," said he: "as if we should be such fools! But ride on, my Lord, we have no time to lose. It is far enough to Wisa yet."

"But how came you off, Burstow?" cried Chrysolaras.

"By good luck, the Pasha was struck down; and, in the hurry, we got off. The four we have lost have been well avenged. If there is one down of the circumcised dogs there are twenty. My Lord Exarch, I trust that beyond the danger you have not suffered?"

"God be praised, not a whit," said Choniates. "I wish some one could lend me a sword; they have stripped me of all I had; and I were loth to be taken again without striking one blow for myself."

"There will be no more blows to-night," said the Lochagus. "But we will find you a sword, in case of the worst."

Richard Burstow was too confident. To explain the reason why, we must go back a little.

It happened that Vasif, the officer to whom Achmet Pasha had given the command of the troops whom he had been persuaded to despatch against the pretended

sally of the garrison of Wisa, was a man of sense and courage; and though compelled to obey orders without a question, convinced that there was something strange in the errand itself, and in the character of the supposed Mustapha. With the latter, while on their way to the selected position, he had a good deal of conversation; and was more and more persuaded, though never for an instant doubting that his guide was a Turk,—that his motives were anything but pure desire for the success of the Sultan's arms. He had, indeed, very strong suspicions that it was intended to lead him into an ambuscade; and provided against such a result to his best ability by throwing out a strong advanced party, and keeping a diligent watch, as the band entered any copse or cutting that might seem to favour such a design. Nothing of the sort, however, as the reader knows, occurred; yet Vasif still felt doubtful and anxious; and as soon as Burstow had left them, communicated his suspicions to an inferior officer named Ali.

"Let me follow him," said the latter, on hearing the account: "he must be cunning indeed if he escapes from me. I know the country well."

"Ascertain, then, if he goes directly to the town, or if he makes a circuit by the way; and stop him without scruple if you notice anything suspicious in his conduct: I will answer it to the Pasha."

Ali, thus encouraged, mounted his horse, and following at the greatest possible distance, so as not to lose sight of his object—as we have before said, the moon was not then set—traced him without difficulty to the wood, and would have entered that also, had he not heard the sound of voices. He was now thoroughly convinced that some stratagem was to be apprehended; he endeavoured to catch a portion of what was said, but he was at too great a distance even to distinguish the language; and had he been nearer, his ignorance of Greek would have prevented his acquiring any information from what passed. He waited, however,



in the skirts of the wood, till he saw the pretended Mustapha issue forth in company with a body of Varangians, and take his way towards Eski Baba. Then, only waiting till they were at safe distance, he galloped back to Vasif, and related what he had witnessed.

On this that officer summoned one or two of the sergeants, and laid the matter before them. On the whole, it was agreed that, though there were grounds for believing that their being posted in that defile was a mere stratagem, perhaps devised for the express purpose of keeping them from some place where their presence might be most useful, there was not sufficient warrant for their deserting their ground, the rather that, after all, if the warning received should prove true, the bowstring might be only too slight a punishment for such an offence. Ali, however, with a party of ten was despatched to observe the wood; and a private soldier charged with a message to Achmet Pasha, and sent to Eski Baba. Had the latter reached his destination in time, the course of events might have been changed; but the night was dark, he was a perfect stranger to the country, the common was much intersected with dykes, and the natural consequence was that the messenger did not arrive at his destination till half-an-hour after the escape of Chonitates; and considered himself fortunate that in the hurry and bustle consequent on that event, he was not welcomed by an order for impalement.

Ali, meanwhile, and his comrades kept their post by the wood, and remained there for more than an hour without hearing any further sound than the sighing of the branches in the wind, and the occasional scream of an owl from a hollow tree hard at hand. They were beginning to think of returning to their superior officer, when the sound, in the direction of Eski Baba, of horses, first faintly and obscurely, then clearly beyond all possibility of denial, excited them to the sharpest attention. Ali, finding that the party, whoever they might be, were advancing on the Wis

road, drew up his men in line at the skirts of the wood, so as to be ready for instant attack.

On came the Lochagus, boasting, as we have just seen, of his security. "By the Panaghia," said Chry-solaras, "but this passes my expectations. That we should have tracked these dogs so surely, and come up with them so soon, and now, beyond all my hopes, have recovered the prize!"

"God be first thanked," said Maria Choniatis, "and then you!"

The pace of the fugitives, though still rapid, was much modified from what it had been; and did not now exceed a brisk canter. There was time, then, for a few brief hurried words of affection and hope.

"Ah, Manuel," said Euphrasia, "if my father had but followed your advice yesterday, what agony should we both have been spared!"

"All my advice, dearest one?" inquired Chry-solaras with a smile.

Poor Euphrasia, who had simply referred to the warning that Manuel had given of the risk from a sudden incursion of the Turks, and the consequent necessity of a removal to Constantinople, blushed, and said, "Nay, not all;—but, in good sooth, he must learn to brook what he calls imprisonment in a city. For this most unhoped-for deliverance," she presently continued, "dear Manuel, I am bound, were it possible, to be more your own in heart than ever; but that, I fear, can hardly be."

"You can never know, Euphrasia, the agony of that night. Had it not been that instant action was necessary to have a chance of recovering you, I really think I should have lost my senses."

"S. Irene be praised that it is over now," she replied, "and—"

At this moment, the wood being passed, there was a shout, a cry of surprise, and a rush from the side of the road.

"Halt, traitor!" cried Ali to Burstow, aiming a

blow at him with his scymetar, which fell harmless on his brigandine.

“S. George for the Life Guard!” shouted the Lochagus, swinging round his tremendous battle-axe as if it had been a mere staff, and felling one of the Turks. “Gentlemen of the Varangians, close in! My lord, push on! We shall soon end these dogs.”

Notwithstanding, however, the inferior numbers of the Turks,—eleven to thirteen,—they had the advantage of giving, instead of being taken by, surprise. Their horses were fresher, they were not so far from their own forces, and they knew perfectly well what they had to do. The Varangians, on the contrary, were well-nigh worn out with the labours of the preceding night and day, were taken unawares, were unacquainted with the country, and were by no means ready with an answer to the question, What was to be done next? Thus, though Chrysolaras threw himself desperately on such of the Turks as endeavoured to prevent his following the advice of Burstow, he was unable at once to cut his way through them; and the combat might have lasted four or five minutes, the soldiers being somewhat distracted by the defence of Maria Choniatis and her daughter, to secure which they were, after the first vain effort to break through the line of their opponents, obliged to form in hollow square.

At the end of that time, however, courage, discipline, and a good cause told. Four of the Turks were lying dead on the ground, while only one of the Varangians had fallen; Ali was hard pressed by the Lochagus, and the Infidels in the very act of dispersing, when the scene was changed by the rapid tramp of an advancing party of horse in the direction of Wisá. Burstow felt that his fate was sealed; Ali, on the contrary was divided between his hopes that the advancing troops might be a part of Vasif's detachment, and his fears that the garrison of Wisá might in reality have made a successful attack on his commander, and be now hurrying to the relief of their friends. A

moment's suspense ended the doubt ; and the shout of *La illah illa Allah* fell like a thunderbolt on the ears of the Christians. Still, hoping against hope, and in spite of the enormous odds, (for the new party consisted of a detachment of thirty men, despatched by Vasif, who was fearful, from Ali's long absence, that something had befallen him,) Burstow and Chrysolaras maintained the engagement ; nor was it till two or three only of their companions survived, that they consented to accept the offer of surrender on quarter, till the Sultan's pleasure should be known thereupon.

The prisoners were then separated, and each put under the guard of a Turkish soldier ; and so escorted, first to Vasif's detachment, and then the united body, leaving the place to which it was now manifest they had been directed by stratagem, advanced to Eski Baba.

Communication between the captives was impossible ; and the one sad comfort of Manuel Chrysolaras was, that he was Euphrasia's companion in captivity, and should, at all events, know the worst. As to Richard Burstow, he felt certain, that to reach Hadrianople was to step into his grave ; for the treachery of having assumed a Turkish disguise would never be forgiven. The stout old Exarch bore up manfully, except when, occasionally turning his head, he saw the deep agony of his wife and Euphrasia ; and then the tears, in spite of all his stoicism, would break forth. The few surviving Varangians followed slowly and sullenly, evidently certain that their choice would be between apostacy and death. Each of the prisoners rode between two soldiers, and was fastened to his saddle ; so that escape was impossible.

Thus, the east behind them kindling into a glorious day, they entered Eski Baba.

## CHAPTER IX.

“The purpose you undertake is dangerous ; the friends you have named uncertain ; the time itself unsuited ; and your whole plot too light for the counterpoise of so great an opposition.”—*Henry IV.*

WE must now shift the scene to Constantinople.

It is necessary to say a few words on the state of parties in the Capital of the Empire, or rather, the Capital *and* the Empire, in order that the course of our tale may be uninterrupted by explanations, and intelligible. The general hatred which was felt to any idea of union with the Latins seemed, instead of being diminished by the pressing urgency of such a step, to derive strength and bitterness from the very fact of its being inevitable. The popular voice was louder than ever against any trust in the Azymites ; the religious of both sexes, but more especially Genadius, the darling of the mob, preached day and night against such a contamination of Eastern orthodoxy ; the last of the Greeks were exhorted to suffer the worst, even to death, rather than be freed by means accursed in themselves, and bringing a curse on others. And it must be confessed that the conduct of the Latins, and more especially that of the Cardinal Isidore, which ought to have been the very model of gentleness and consideration, was, on the contrary, well calculated to alienate, even had there been trust and concord before. The various points of difference between the Churches were exaggerated and coloured ; the use of unleavened bread was made offensively

prominent; the precedence claimed by the Cardinal, in virtue of a dignity which had no parallel among the Greeks, also caused great disgust; and, in short, it needed the utmost efforts of a government, itself not very zealous in the cause, to prevent a popular outbreak, and the violent expulsion of the Cardinal from the city. Justiniani, however, the celebrated Genoese general, had arrived, with a body of two thousand men; and this circumstance no doubt had its effect in preserving order: such allies were neither to be despised nor offended. At the same time, the infatuation with which the mob clung to the idea that, however hardly the city might be pressed, however nearly it might fall, assistance would come, even at the last hour, either from Europe, or immediately from heaven, is only to be paralleled by the similar insanity of the Jews, in the last dreadful siege of their own city.

But it was not only from what we may call the fanatical party that the safety of the metropolis was endangered. The state of degradation to which the nobles of Constantinople had sunk; the effeminacy, the luxury, the want of all sense of honour, the cowardice, the cruelty, is scarcely to be matched in history, unless it may find some likeness in the aristocracy of the last stage of the decadence of Poland. These men saw that the Empire could not, in human probability, hold out many months longer; that it certainly could not, without the toils and perils of a long and terrible siege; that, in case of the worst, their wealth and influence would be lost, themselves reduced to a condition little better than slavery, and the days of their delicate living for ever terminated. Hence the suggestion was entertained, that by secret negotiations with Mahomet, such a fate might be prevented; and such a plan was now actually on foot. It was proposed that on such a night one gate of the city should be opened to the Turkish force; the conspirators conditioning for themselves complete security

in life, fortune, house, and family ; and, they had the decency to add, religion. But such a conspiracy was almost beyond the strength or the daring of that dissolute and enfeebled aristocracy ; and, on looking about for instruments who might be subservient to the design, none appeared so likely as the heads of the ultra-fanatical party. It was no secret that in harangues and sermons, it had been given out as a watchword, "Better the Sultan than the Pope ; better the Vizier than Isidore : " and men who could thus teach were not unlikely to enter with avidity into a negociation which might banish the Latins, and give them toleration for their own religion, though it ended the Roman Empire in the last of the Cæsars.

These two most opposite parties, accordingly, came to an understanding ; joint commissioners were sent to Hadrianople, and favourably received ; and the negociations, though of course conducted with the strictest privacy, were understood by the general body of conspirators to be approaching a happy termination. Such an union of opposing factions may receive a very good illustration in the alliance formed, rather more than two hundred years later, between the Ultra-Puritans and Fifth Monarchy men on the one side, and the flagitious Duke of Buckingham and his mates on the other.

A few days after the events we have been recording, Sir Edward de Rushton had just returned from a review of the Varangians, and was reposing himself in his own apartments, when he received an urgent message from Phranza, desiring his immediate attendance. Imagining that some intelligence had been received from Burstow or Chrysolaras, he lost no time in obeying the summons ; and found the Protovestiare walking up and down his room of audience, apparently in a state of great agitation.

"Is anything the matter, my Lord ?" inquired De Rushton. "No ill news, I trust, from Hadrianople ?"

"Better such tidings, than these," replied Phranza.

“Read this paper: it was found in the terrace-walk of my garden some hour ago.”

Sir Edward took it, and read as follows:—

“Noble Protovestiare,—My own particular love to your lordship, and some other causes, not needful here to be specified, lead me to give you this warning. Look well where the Caloire<sup>1</sup> Joasaph, of the Studium, goes to this evening, at eight of the clock; and learn, if you can, with whom he consorts till midnight, and what is arranged by him. Seek not to discover the author of this letter; such an attempt must be vain, and may be mischievous.”

“What do you think of this?” inquired the Acolyth, when he had read the document.

“As of a thing that may be of great weight,” replied Phranza. “Joasaph is one of the most dangerous men in Constantinople; and, since he was disappointed of the throne of Chalcedon, ready for any perilous attempt. Intriguing he is, and artful as a Cardinal; and, after Gennadius, no man so popular.”

“Gennadius,” said Sir Edward, “is at all events conscientious and honest; he may be an enemy, but he will be an open one. And his deep asceticism, I verily believe, is from no desire of human applause. But Joasaph I have had my eye on long; and, it seems, a closer watch must be kept on him still.”

“One might have him instantly arrested,” continued Phranza, “though in the present state of the city it might lead to an outbreak; for the thing would be said to be owing to Azymite influence. But, if we did arrest him, we should be as far from gaining any knowledge of the plot as we are now; for that there is a plot, this letter most clearly intends to assert.”

“There is no reason, I suppose, for doubting the

<sup>1</sup> A priest who is also a monk, as distinguished from a secular. And it must be remembered that the difference between these two classes is much greater in the East than in the West, the secular priests of the Eastern Church being necessarily married.



credibility of this communication?" said the Great Acolyth.

"It bears every stamp of truth," rejoined Phranza. "Joasaph is no doubt dangerous; and any warning against him so far proves itself. Besides, what could any one propose to himself, by deceiving me here? The only possibility is, that it may be intended to withdraw our vigilance from a real to a fictitious danger; but again, if there be any real plot, my life for it, Joasaph is concerned in it."

"It is plain," said De Rushton, "that we must keep the matter as secret as may be. What say you to my watching this monk myself, and having a party of Varangians at hand to support me, if needed?"

"It is the very thing that I was going to ask of you," said Phranza. "The whole matter shall be left entirely to your own discretion; and I will obtain warrants under the Emperor's own seal, without troubling the First Secretary, authorising you to proceed as you shall think fit, and giving you the fullest powers.—Sup with me to-day, at six of the clock, and make all your arrangements beforehand."

"I will not fail your Lordship," replied Sir Edward de Rushton. "And I must look to the business at once; for it is already two hours past noon." So saying, he withdrew.

De Rushton's first care was to visit the Studium, for the purpose of determining in what way it would be most easy to keep an efficient watch over the proceedings of Joasaph. This large and celebrated monastery lay on the east of Constantinople, and presented an immense aggregation of buildings of different dates, though all conceived in the same immutable Byzantine type. Two vast quadrangles were appropriated to the dwellings of the monks; but the bakeries, granaries, and storehouses of all sorts extended the actual building in every direction. Conspicuous above all towered the great Church, with its five silver domes; and the marble walls of the convent

rose gloriously amidst the extensive gardens and thick foliage with which it is surrounded. In all the extent of its walls, however, there was but one gate; that which led immediately up to the entrance of the first quadrangle. Having satisfied himself, by inquiry, that Joasaph was then within, De Rushton posted a corporal of the Varangian guard, by name George Contari, on whom implicit confidence might be placed, in a wine-shop which commanded a view of the monastery gates; for the wine-shops of Constantinople at that time answered much the same purpose as the coffee-houses of our own day, and so afforded convenient accommodation for the officer in question. He was disguised, however, in the ordinary dress of a Byzantine tradesman; and to spend an afternoon in such a manner was nothing unusual in that luxurious city. Contari had orders to follow Joasaph,—whose person was perfectly well known to him, as, indeed, to almost every other citizen,—if he should leave the monastery; if not, to remain quietly in the wine-shop till De Rushton should come back again. Having arranged thus much, the Great Acolyth returned to the palace: and having summoned ten of the most trusty of his Varangians, he informed them that they would be wanted for secret service in a few hours, and commanded them to hold themselves in readiness in the guard-room at seven o'clock that evening.

By this time a December night was closing in: the sentinels wrapped themselves more closely in their military cloaks; the windows of the various shops were shut and secured; fires were lighted in the public places; the bells of S. Sophia, responded to by those of a hundred other churches, thundered out their summons to vespers; next, the quadrangles of the palace shone with innumerable lamps; and presently fifes and hautboys echoed through the stillness of the night, proclaiming that the Emperor was going to supper. As the supper-hour of the Augustus was of course that of his courtiers, De Rushton had to hurry through

his own—to us elaborate, for the time, simple—toilette ; and even so committed what, under other circumstances, would have been a high breach of etiquette, by keeping the Protovestiare at least five minutes waiting.

The supper was quite private,—Phranza and De Rushton alone sitting down to table. As soon as the meal was served, the servants were ordered to withdraw, and the whole subject of their morning's conversation was rediscussed between the two friends. The Protovestiare had procured the warrants, drawn up by himself in as full and particular a manner as the conventional forms of such documents allowed. He informed his guest that the Emperor was disposed to view the whole subject in a very serious light ; from having noticed the frequent expressions and signs of odium manifested by the populace on his way to and from the Studium, when the Council for the Union of the Churches and the reception of Isidore was being held there : and from having observed that, wherever the malcontents were most clamorous, there an attentive search would be sure to discover the Monk Josaph, though keeping himself, as much as might be, in the back ground. It was agreed that Sir Edward should return to the Palace as soon as any information was to be obtained, and that Phranza should not retire to bed till his friend either came back himself, or communicated with him. The free discussion of the subject, joined to the excellence of the meal, and the exhilarating effects of the Tokay which, as a great rarity, Phranza produced,—but more than all, a few words which the Great Protovestiare skilfully, though to all appearance carelessly, let fall, as if the alliance of Sir Edward de Rushton with himself were a thing, to say the least, very conceivable, served to raise the Acolyth's spirits, and to send him forth cheerful on a sufficiently difficult errand, and in weather as miserable as the state of the city which it enveloped.

“ Good night, Lord Acolyth, for the present,” said

Phranza, as it drew towards the time. "Take care of yourself, whatever you do: as a friend I should be deeply grieved now—in another point of view I may be grieved hereafter, at any misfortune that may happen to you."

The Great Protovestiare, as I have said, was a man of the highest honour, considering the evil days into which he was thrown. In the like manner, and with the same proviso, he was a very model of abstinence and moderation. Nevertheless, no particular public business claiming his attention now, he replenished his silver tankard, called for fresh cedar wood for his brazier, and listened with great complacency to the ceaseless dripping on the marble pavement before his lodgings.

Who has not known the inspiriting effect of a night walk, when the wind meets you bravely, like an open foe, in front, and dashes down the big drops in torrents, or pours a volley of sharp, cutting hail against you—when for every inch you have to do battle, and every mile achieved is a victory? But it was no such night into which De Rushton then went forth. There was no wind; nothing but a ceaseless, changeless, drizzle, diversified only by change from sleet to rain, and from rain to sleet. Not a ray of light to be seen in the sky; the fog hung like a funeral pall over the city; the Bosphorus itself hardly moaned on the shore; the streets shone like mirrors wherever an occasional lamp was yet alight; the city fires hissed and smouldered away under the descending deluge: and the damp and cold chilled the very heart of the benighted wanderer.

De Rushton, however, manfully pursued his way to the wine shop, where he had left Contari; and from him he learnt that Joasaph was certainly at that time in the Studium. Many of the nobility, however, who had the worst name for immorality and licentiousness, had visited the monastery in the course of the afternoon: and one or two of them, the Varangian believed,

were even still there. The Acolyth, who had thrown the long military cloak over his brigandine, now placed his ten soldiers in the same wine shop, desiring them to remain there till he should send or should give them his orders. Then, summoning Contari, he walked up and down before the outer wall of the Studium for more than half an hour ; fully resolved that Joasaph should not leave it that night without the discovery of his errand.

It was now considerably past eight ; the night more dismal than ever ; the wind began to rise, and the fitful gusts howled round the stern old walls of the monastery, or rustled in the laurels and cypresses by which it was surrounded. The great gates were shut and barred ; hardly a light was to be seen in the whole range of buildings, except in the church, which was all a-glow with lamps, the *Apodeipnon* (i. e. Compline) having just commenced. De Rushton became more and more fully persuaded, either that the intimation forwarded to Phranza had been a mere ruse, or worse, a blind to distract attention from some really important movement, or else that Joasaph had changed his determination, whether from the dreadful state of the weather, or from having some other arrangement. He resolved, nevertheless, to maintain his watch till midnight ; after which time he thought that it would be unnecessary to carry it on longer.

It was not nine o'clock, however, when the little gate of the monastery opened, and a monk, drawing his black cowl completely over his head, came forth, and hurried along in the direction of the sea. De Rushton and his companion followed, at the furthest possible distance which allowed their retaining sight of the personage whom they were dogging : and through a succession of the worst and narrowest by-lanes of the city, they followed him down on the beach, close to what is now called the Seraglio Point. Here, dark as it was, a boat was evidently ready for launching : five or six persons were standing by it, who

seemed at once to recognise and to address the monk. Keeping as far as possible under cover of the pier, the Acolyth and Contari contrived to approach near enough to hear somewhat that was said.

"The light has been burning this half hour," said one of the men that had been waiting: "we began to think that you had played us false."

"I could not get the writings finished sooner," said the monk, "and I think I was followed by two men: I threw them out, however, in the street of S. Trophimus,—and here I am. But, for heaven's sake, lose no more time—we have lost too much already."

He entered the boat as he spoke: it was pushed into the water; and in another moment the sound of the oars came regularly on the ear.

"There is something wrong here, Contari," said Sir Edward. "Tell me,—did that man who spoke first, and mentioned the light—a light there is yonder, sure enough—did he resemble, think you, any one you know?"

"Both in voice and form," said the Varangian.

"Tell me whom," continued the Great Acolyth.

The soldier hesitated.

"Never fear," cried De Rushton: "my thoughts, I see, point the same way as yours. Who was it?"

"Your Lordship, I know, will not betray me," replied the Varangian. "On my honour, I believe it was the Great Duke Leontius."

"I am sure it was," said De Rushton, briefly. "But now,—where can that light be?" and he pointed across the Bosphorus to a clear, bright, red flame, easily distinguishable from, and higher than, the lights in Chalcedon, and in the new fort.

"Why," said the soldier, after looking attentively in the direction pointed out to him, "that yellow light to the left must be the Monastery of S. Euphemia at Chalcedon; and this red one, therefore, can come from nowhere else but from Leander's Tower."

"I think so, too," said De Rushton. "Could we not, think you, pull across to it?"

"Have with you, my Lord," cried Contari. "Shall I run for some of my comrades?"

"No, no," said the Acolyth; "we should lose too much time. Look! here is a light boat which we can manage to push down. Lend a hand."

In about five minutes, the two were afloat, and bending to their oars with main strength, though certainly not in very seamanlike fashion, they were soon nearing the signal: which was then clearly seen to proceed, as they had imagined, from the little island called "Leander's Rock." A ruined fortress on the shore had a flight of landing steps which led up to it; except here, it was no easy matter to land at all. But Contari knew the spot, and could act accordingly.

"My Lord," said he, "if we go to the usual landing place we shall find two boats moored there:—for certain it is that the monk is gone to meet some one. But I remember having noticed a little creek on the Asiatic side of the island, where one might make a shift to get out."

"Try it, then," said the Acolyth: "and now gently—for more than our lives depend on our quietness."

Keeping, therefore, round the island, Contari soon discovered the place he was in search of. It was a little cove; the rocks which bordered it were slippery with sea-weed; and in that obscurity offered no very safe footing. The boat was moored as well as it could be; and then the Varangian and his commander clambered slowly but steadily over the rocks, and in a few moments had made good their landing. Directing, then, their course to the castle, they soon reached its outer wall. The interior, though long ago dismantled, still retained the guard-room in tolerably perfect condition, and, at all events, afforded ample shelter from the weather; and from this apartment voices were heard issuing, as of people in consultation. Groping their way over the debris of the former building, which

lay thickly strewed around its walls, Contari and De Rushton at length reached the corner formed by the barbican and the castle itself: and there they could hear tolerably well all that passed.

"We must have ample security, Lord Pasha," said a voice which De Rushton knew perfectly to be that of the Great Duke. "Here you require us to do everything, you exact ties and pledges, and hostages of all kinds, and yourselves offer nothing. This is not fair; and we will not be satisfied with it."

"The Commander of the Faithful," replied the person addressed, "is desirous of sparing the blood of his own subjects, and, in so far as in him lies, that of the Nazarenes also. For it is written in the book, 'slavery for infidels, but death only for apostates.' Therefore it is, that he commissions us to treat with you: not that he has any doubt that Allah will give Constantinople into his hands, but that he may lose as little as possible in gaining it."

"That may or may not be," said the Monk Joasaph "but this I can tell the Sultan; if he fights for Constantinople, he will need all the forces he can gather, all the artillery he can find; and then, by the Unmercenary Ones,<sup>1</sup> he will have no easy task before him."

"A wiser man than you or I, Pasha," continued Leontius, "has said, Never force a foe to stand at bay. Reject our offers,—and us, whom you might have for your friends, you will have for your most bitter and determined enemies; for we well know what would be our fate in case the city were taken. Accept our terms, and Constantinople is yours."

"Let me hear what terms are contained in this paper," said the Pasha.

<sup>1</sup> This was one of the most common oaths of Christian Constantinople; it referred principally to the popular saints, Cosmas and Damian—Physicians renowned for their charity in visiting the sick without a fee, but also to other saints of the same profession who had distinguished themselves in a similar manner.



"They are not so difficult to remember," returned Joasaph, "but that I may well repeat them here. Firstly, the ten principal churches, and S. Sophia, to be left to the Christians; and all the monasteries to remain, and enjoy their present revenues."

"Proceed," said the Pasha.

"Then, the utmost security of life, person, property, houses, lands, servants, to the same extent now enjoyed by them, for those whose names are on that paper, and their families."

"It is well," observed the Pasha.

"Then, that, remaining Christians, they shall not be obliged to wear any particular dress, nor debarred from the use of horses, nor subject to any other vexations for their religion."

"Is that all?" inquired the Turk.

"All, so far as conditions go," returned Joasaph; "but we must have securities."

"It is not all, by S. Demetrius," cried Leontius. "I claim Phranza's daughter, Theodora, for my own peculiar reward in this matter. Her father you will of course have disposed of: for he will fight to the last."

"But you are married, my lord," said Joasaph.

"And what if I am?" cried Leontius, turning round upon him fiercely. "Mind your own business, Monk, and leave me to mind mine. You never could imagine that I perilled my neck only to secure your monasteries? If I don't gain this article, I will have nothing to do with your conspiracy."

"I call God and the Panaghia to witness," cried the Monk with great agitation, "that I am innocent of this foul deed. I am labouring for a great end, and I will not draw back: but it is an accursed scheme, and unworthy of any that calls himself a Christian."

"Make yourself easy, father," cried Leontius with a sneer. "I can easily call myself a Turk if occasion be. How say you, Pasha, to my conditions?"

"If we can agree to the others, no fear that we shall quarrel about this," replied the Turk. "Thus much I may promise you of my own authority. And I have no fear but that your second and third articles will be easily arranged. But for the first, and especially that part of it which touches on the monasteries, I must consult the Sultan; and he, I doubt not, will be guided by the Mollahs."

"But now," said Joasaph, "the Sultan must swear to observe these conditions on the Koran, if he accepts them,——"

"That he will do," observed the Pasha.

"I know he will," said the Monk. "But he must further do this. One of his sons we must have in hostage at Chios; at least for the present. I fear not that, when the city is once settled, he will violate his oath; but for security's sake at first, we must insist on this."

"That will hardly be granted," returned the Turk.

"Then the negotiation ends," said Joasaph. "But when shall we have your answer, and where?"

"Here," replied the Pasha. "No place can be more secure. The seventh night from this, and at the same time."

"We will not fail," said one of the conspirators who had not yet spoken. "But for my part, if the plan be not then definitely settled, my vote will be for thinking no more of it, and fighting it out to the last."

"So say I," remarked Joasaph. "And now better disperse; for the night is wearing, and we must not be recognized in the city."

So saying, the conspirators bade good night to the Pasha, and went down to the boat.

"How suspicious these Christians are!" cried the Pasha to one of his attendants, as soon as they were out of hearing. "As if the Commander of the Faithful would violate his oath for the riches of Constantinople ten times told! But they remember, I sup-

*Adm. Pitt.*

pose, the battle of Varna; and they judge others by themselves."

Nothing further passed; and the Turks unmoored their boat, and pushed off. In a few moments Sir Edward de Rushton and the Varangian were left sole tenants of the island.

"Here is an infernal plot," said Contari, "spawned up by the Father of all plots. Back, I suppose, my Lord, directly?"

"Directly," said De Rushton. "But, thank God, we are in time enough to frustrate it. The Emperor shall hear of your conduct this night, Contari; and I pledge myself it shall be rewarded."

"It was not for that," said Contari, as they picked their way over the slippery rocks; "yet I am much beholden to your Lordship. But I confess that a lieutenancy in the Life Guard would be the summit of my wishes."

"Why that?" inquired Sir Edward, stepping into the boat.

"Why, my Lord, it is a long tale," said the Varangian. "Trim the boat, my Lord, or we shall be over."

"Let us have the sum and substance, then," cried De Rushton.

"Thus it is, my Lord," said Contari, pushing the boat off. "If I had that place, I could do what I cannot do now,—and that is, marry."

"You in love?" inquired the Acolyth. "I thought you had been a wiser man, Contari."

"Wiser, my Lord? The wisest man that ever I heard tell of,—and that was King Solomon,—thought differently; and so did the wisest man too, for the matter of that, that I ever saw—and that was Sultan Amurath."

"With such examples, Contari, I have nothing more to say. But who is it, if I may ask the question?"

"None the worse, my Lord, for having been bred in the country. Her father is an honest yeoman, be-

tween Bourghiaz and Eski Baba. His name is Tomates, and hers Eudocia."

"Not a very safe place for Christian yeomen now," returned De Rushton. "The sooner you remove her from it the better. I think I may safely promise you the place you wish. But now let us bend to our oars. The Protovestiare must hear of this as soon as may be."

## CHAPTER X.

*Val.* Why, then, a ladder, quaintly made of cords,  
To cast up, with a pair of anchoring hooks,  
Would serve to scale another Hero's tower,  
So bold Leander would adventure it.

*Duke.* Now, as thou art a gentleman of blood,  
Advise me where I may have such a ladder."

*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

THE castle of Hadrianople, to which Chrysolaras and his party were conveyed, had been built as an outpost when the Empire was harassed with the incursions of the Bulgarians; and had been constructed to possess a degree of strength which, at the time of its erection, was thought a wonder of art. The succeeding emperors had, however, added both to its conveniences and to its fortifications; and Amurath, when it came into his possession, and he had resolved to make it the head quarters of the war of extermination which he proposed to carry on against the Empire, had surrounded it with another wall, erected by a renegade Frank.

The castle itself was not constructed, as was usually the case in the West, with a central keep, but in a quadrangle; the interior court being occupied by a damp and gloomy garden, to which, in consequence of the enormous height of the surrounding walls, the sun had access but for a few hours in the middle of the day. Hence nothing but trees that love the shade would grow there; the paved walks were green with mould; loathsome funguses grew on the stems of the

trees, and on the garden beds; and the foul miasma of putrid vegetation exhaled over the building. In one of the angular turrets of this quadrangle, square, massy, and solid, the prisoners were lodged. In spite of all their tears and entreaties, Euphrasia and her mother were torn away from the rest of their party: Chrysolaras, Choniates, and the Lochagus were placed in the highest story of the building; while the Varangians, and the servants of Manuel, as unworthy of any better lot, were thrust into a dungeon.

The only fortunate circumstance in the whole series of circumstances, was the absence of Mahomet, who was understood to be in Bulgaria, occupied with the pleasures of the chase. On his return, the time of which was uncertain, the prisoners felt that their fate would be sealed.

It was late on a December afternoon that Chrysolaras and his two companions were lodged in their prison. The room they occupied was square, and very high; there were two windows, looking respectively north and east. They were circular-headed, and very narrow, but still further secured by a massy stanchion, and three or four strong bars. The walls were of hewn stone; the door plated with iron, and enormously thick. There was nothing in the room but three straw pallets, which the superior rank of the prisoners had warranted the governor in allotting to them. The windows were so high in the wall, that nothing could be seen from them except the blue and distant sky, which seemed to aggravate, by its own freedom, the loss of liberty.

As soon as the officer who had conducted them to their cell was gone, Choniates sank down on his pallet in an agony of dejection. Chrysolaras paced hurriedly up and down the room, as one beside himself; but Burstow, after investigating every corner of the apartment, striking the walls and floor with his knuckles, and trying the strength of the door, clasped his hands round the stanchion of one of the windows, and, by a

great effort of strength, elevated his head to the arch, so as to be able to look down as much as possible into the space of ground immediately surrounding the castle. Having pursued his investigation at length in one window, he went through a similar process at the other; and then, letting himself quietly down, walked two or three turns up and down the room.

"Well, my Lord," he said at length, "this is an awkward place to get out of; but, if you will both set in earnest to the work, I think it may be done."

"You are mad," said Choniates.

"Will that save Euphrasia?" inquired Chrysolaras.

"By your good leave, worthy Exarch," returned Burstow, "I am not mad; and, my good Lord, if the Lady Euphrasia Choniatis be not saved by us, she will not be saved at all. We can but try; and if you be of my mind, you will rather die in escaping from this place, than waste away your lives in it."

"Undoubtedly," replied Chrysolaras; "but the thing is manifestly hopeless. Here we are, in the strongest castle in the Sultan's dominions, in the heart of his principal city; the very thought of escape is folly."

"Do you not see," persisted the Lochagus, "that this cell was never intended for a prison?"

"No, I do not," answered the young nobleman; but the Exarch, who had probably had more experience in the nature of prisons, seemed to catch at the idea, and exclaimed,

"You are right, Lochagus; it never could have been."

"A child may see that," pursued Burstow. "If it had been, they never would have built the windows to look out of the court. Where would have been the use? You don't suppose they wish to give their prisoners a view of the country, just for the sake of amusement?"

"There's something in that," observed Chrysolaras, "certainly."

"And look you, my Lord; these iron stanchions have been inserted since the castle was built, and rudely enough too. The windows were open before that."

"So they must have been," said Chrysolaras. "But granting it was not designed for a prison, what follows?"

"Our deliverance, my Lord. We cannot get out at the sides; but, I will stake my life on it, that the floor is not guarded."

"I take you, Lochagus, I take you," cried the Exarch. "If we had but instruments!"

"I never put my head into a lion's mouth, without devising how I may get it out," said Burstow, coolly. "I can show you nothing now, for we shall have our worthy keeper ere long with our supper. But, if my plan holds, we can get into the room below us. If there be prisoners there, we must take our chance of them; there are few men who would not risk somewhat for liberty. Somewhere in this turret the Lady Choniatis is confined: we shall see. God grant Mahomet may have good sport!"

The plan was discussed at some length, as day darkened and darkened. As twilight was closing, the keeper made his appearance with a pitcher of water, and three small loaves, which he deposited on the floor; and without deigning any reply to the "good night" of Burstow, went out. The prisoners heard the lock shoot into its cell, the bolts drawn, the retiring footsteps of the gaoler, and then all was silence.

"A surly fellow, that," said Burstow, whose spirits seemed to rise in proportion to his danger. "The bolts move rustily; I do not think this cell has been lately used.—Come, my Lord, I trust to see you sit down to a better supper than this; but this is better than none. I have a good deal to do afterwards."

He practised what he had advised, and had already finished his loaf; while his companions, utterly worn



out in mind and body, had the utmost difficulty in swallowing a mouthful or two.

"Now," said the Lochagus, when their sad meal was finished, "you must keep perfectly quiet. I wish to find out whether there is any one in the apartment below."

He lay down on the floor, and applied his ear to the boards; keeping so profoundly still, that, were it not for the tension of every muscle, he might have passed for a corpse. After about three minutes he rose, and said,

"I am pretty sure that the room is empty, unless the prisoner is asleep. We will try that too.—First let us finish the water in the pitcher."

"I have had enough," said the Exarch.

"For now," answered the Lochagus; "but better too much than too little. But you had better drink it, for we must break it directly."

"Break the pitcher!" cried Chrysolaras.

"Yes," said Burstow. "I will lie down as before; one of you must let the pitcher fall, so as to make as much noise as possible. That will answer a double purpose: it will wake anybody beneath, and I shall hear him; and if they are watching us very closely, they will come in to see what is the matter."

"It will wake him, I doubt not, if there is any one below," said Choniates; "but how can you be sure of hearing him?"

"I tell you I can," cried the Lochagus. "I learnt the art of listening through wood from a Candiot pirate, in recompense of a good turn I did him,—our Lady assoil him!—and it has stood me in good stead before now. I will tell you the way another time. Have you finished the water? Here is to our success!" And he drained what was left. "Now," he continued, "I am going to listen again: when I raise my hand,—thus,—do you, my Lord, let the pitcher fall from as high as you can hold it."

He accordingly lay down, composed himself in the

same attitude of profound attention, and all was silent as before. Chrysolaras held up the pitcher, and, at the appointed signal, down it came, shivering into a thousand atoms, with a crash that echoed down the staircase which led to the apartment where the prisoners were. In another moment Burstow rose, saying, "I am sure there is no one. Now to see whether the gaoler will come."

They waited for five minutes, but no alarm appeared to have been excited. At one time, indeed, Chrysolaras imagined that he heard a step on the stair; but nothing occurred, and the prisoners felt convinced that they were not watched.

"Well," said Burstow, "nothing like careless guard. Had I been keeper now—but that does not matter. We must set to work. But first I will show you what I have. And with some difficulty drawing off one of his boots of untanned leather, he extricated from the sole a very thin saw, with teeth so fine that at first sight the edge appeared to be almost straight. From a belt which he wore next to his chest he produced a gimlet, and then a sharp-pointed pen-knife.

"I wonder," he said, "when they stripped us of our arms and our gold, that they did not find my belt. I trembled for it, I promise you; for the saw by itself would have been very little use."

"I do believe," cried the Exarch, overjoyed at all these preparations, "I do believe, Lochagus, that we shall succeed."

"Of course we shall," said Burstow. "Now, as we may be interrupted, and I were loth to lose my saw, I will put it where no one will ever dream of looking for it." He climbed up to the window, which, it need hardly be said, was not glazed, and passing his finger outside the stanchions, found that there was a ledge sufficiently wide for the saw to lie on without fear of falling.

"That is well," said he; "now then I will begin my task in the place where this middle pallet is, be-

because it can most easily be covered over, if need be."

The mattress was soon drawn from its place, and Richard Burstow kneeling down, applied his gimlet to the floor. "Well," said he, presently, "the planks are thin enough; they will not give us much trouble. I must find out, however, where the joists lie; for if we should not be able to get down without cutting one of those, our case will be somewhat desperate." Accordingly, he bored the floor in four or five places, and expressed himself satisfied. "There will be room enough, but none to spare," he said. "Now I shall begin my operation. I do not think that any one is listening to our proceedings, or in any way watching us: but it is as well to be on the safe side. I must make some noise in sawing, though it will be little: one of you must sing or hum pretty loudly while I work, and that will overpower my noise. The other had better lie down, both because you will want rest, and also because, in case of our being interrupted, it will look well that some one of us should be asleep."

"Do you lie down, my Lord," said Choniates; "you have had far harder work than I; and I am but little fatigued."

"I will accept your offer with thankfulness," replied Chrysolaras, "provided you will promise to call me at the end of two hours, that I may take my share of the labour."

"At the end of four I will," said Choniates. "Then we shall each take our half of the night. Now lie down; and the Lochagus and I will do what we may towards our liberation."

Worn out with labour and grief, the young nobleman had hardly stretched himself on his hard couch before he was asleep. The Lochagus was now busily at work with his penknife in cutting out a small space for the saw to move in; and having at length succeeded, he requested Choniates to begin. Over and over again, therefore, the Exarch, who was by no

means naturally musical, sang or hummed a tune of most doleful ditty; the subject being the capture of Smyrna by the Turks, and the miseries of the sack. To this accompaniment Burstow worked hard and sedulously, till the sweat rolled off his face in streams, notwithstanding the chillness of the night.

"Take the saw awhile, worthy Exarch," he said at length: "my fingers will hardly hold it: I will sing to you."

Choniates worked away with great alacrity, but little skill; and at the end of twenty minutes was forced to give in.

"It matters not," said Burstow. "We shall soon have succeeded. I would I had a cup of wine. Now, then." And he exerted himself so vigorously that, in three hours from the commencement of the work, he had sawn round a square of eighteen inches, and lifted it out of the floor. The Exarch could hardly repress his exultation: Burstow, who better knew how much remained to be done, was eager to proceed.

"The next thing to be done," he said, "is to find what is the height of the room below. I have a good quantity of twine wrapped round me—I will try with that."

Accordingly, disengaging a piece, he tied the gimlet to it, and cautiously lowered it: when, to the vexation of the adventurers, the height appeared to be not less than thirteen feet.

"It is impossible to drop that," said the Lochagus, in a tone of annoyance: if I escaped without broken bones, I should run the chance of causing a disturbance, and I see no way of getting back. This will delay us several hours; for we must plait the twine into a cord. But first I will close our trapdoor again, and replace the saw; one never knows when to expect a visit here."

This having been accordingly done, "We must waken the Lord Manuel," said Burstow; "we shall want our full strength in this work."

Chrysolaras was roused ; and the position of affairs having been explained to him, he joined the Exarch and the Lochagus in their labour. It was with the utmost difficulty, while their fingers moved mechanically through the work, that they resisted the extreme and painful tendency to sleep.

At length, after two hours' vigorous work, the operation was finished, and a piece of plaited twine produced, long enough to reach into the lower apartment, and fully stout enough to support a man's weight. By this time, however, the night was wearing away : a faint and uncertain glimmer began to find its way into the prison ; and the Lochagus saw that little more could be done till the return of darkness.

"At all events," said he, "I will try to find out what is in the apartment below the next one. Shut the trap-door on my rope, as soon as I am down, in case any one should be on the alert ; and hold it with all your might while I descend."

A little exertion placed Burstow in the lower apartment. "Shut the door, shut the door," cried he : "I must have a little leisure : you can open it again in a quarter of an hour."

His companions did so. "If any man can extricate us, it is he," said the Exarch presently ; "but I fear—I fear,"—

"Nay, my Lord," said Manuel Chrysolaras : "if the Sultan returns not for this day or two, we have every reason to hope."

"Ay,—if,"—said Choniates ;—"but who shall assure that ?"

"I hear him," cried Manuel : "he is trying the lower floor : what a noise he makes !"

"Hark !" said the other. "It is some one coming up the stairs—what are we to do ?"

"Pull the mattress over the door," cried the young nobleman, suiting the action to the word. "Nay, nay ; never lie down : best seem to be what we are—wide awake. There—that may perhaps do :—" and he

arranged his travelling cloak on the further bed, in the best way that he could, in the hope that it might be taken for the sleeping Lochagus.

"Well," said Choniates, "I never hoped to escape. God's will be done! Here he is!" And the steps came nearer: a bright light shone under the door, a key was applied to the lock: the wards creaked and groaned.

"God's will be done, as you say," said Chrysolaras: "but I hope to escape nevertheless. Leave all to me. Now, then!" And the door opened.

"What is all this disturbance?" cried the rough voice of the gaoler. "I have heard you all this night—what is it all about? Where is the other prisoner?"

"Where I wish I were," said Chrysolaras, boldly, and pointing to the cloak which, though arranged in the dark, had fortunately very much the effect of a real sleeper. "—Disturbance? One can't help being restless, I suppose."

"But you can help disturbing the whole place," said the gaoler: "or, if you cannot, I will teach you how—down in the dungeon will be hardly so good a lodging, Allah knows."

"Well," said Chrysolaras, "I will try and go sleep. Let us lie down, worthy Exaroh! Good night, master gaoler!" And that functionary, who never had entertained any idea that anything was wrong, but had merely imagined that the prisoners were unusually and amazingly restless, growled a good night, and departed.

"That was a near escape," said Manuel, as soon as he was gone. "In future we must be more cautious. Nothing more to be done to-night, except extricating the Lochagus."

The mattress was moved back, the trap-door opened, and Burstow duly summoned and drawn up.

"How did you escape? how did you escape?" said he. "I heard that ruffian of a fellow above—and gave up all for lost."

They related what had passed. "Then," said he, "it is impossible to do more to-night. God grant the Sultan returns not—or whatever happens to you, it will be the bow-string for me! I am well-nigh sure there are prisoners in the room below the next. However,—let us sleep now—we may want all our strength to-morrow night." And the three friends, utterly worn out, were, notwithstanding the imminency of their danger, in a few moments enjoying an unbroken and deep sleep.

Wearily passed the hours of the next day: broken only by the visit of the gaoler as he brought the morning, and noon, and evening meals of the prisoners. Nothing whatever was to be learnt from him, for his sullenness and ferocity appeared to increase with each succeeding visit; but it was evident that they were treated as persons of some consideration; the food supplied to them being not only plentiful, but of superior quality, while the wine was excellent. The Lochagus, according to his usual practice and precept, failed not to supply himself plentifully with the good things set before him; and both he and his companions passed the afternoon in such sleep as they could get; for, as he observed, they had a hard night's work before them. "And a good night's work too," he added, "or I am very much mistaken: we have our preparations ready, we are fresh men, and can do twice as much work in the same time."

Evening closed in around them, and Chrysolaras was beginning to inquire whether it would not soon be time to think of recommencing operations, when the gaoler was heard on the stairs, and, while the prisoners were wondering what this unusual visit might mean, he re-entered the chamber. He entered it as if on business of moment, and he spoke more civilly.

"The Sultan is returned," he said; "and he desires your presence, (addressing Chrysolaras,) and that immediately. As to you, Varangian, make the best of

the time that remains: for your death to-morrow is as certain as the Empire of the Prophet."

"Amen," cried Burstow; "so it be no surer. Could you not get me a bottle of wine, good gaoler? If this be so, I am not likely to taste any more."

"Drunken dog!" cried the gaoler: "but you shall have it. Come, worthy sir."

"This is fatal indeed," said Chrysolaras, speaking in modern Greek. "And when I had hoped—"

"Hush, my Lord, hush!" cried Burstow, fearful that the turnkey might have some knowledge of that language. "You are safe yourself from all danger, except that of paying a good ransom; and you may be able to do more for the lady."

"God grant it!" said Choniates and the young nobleman.

"Farewell, noble despot," cried the latter,— "and you too, Lochagus. I trust your fate may be better than this good man thinks."

"I trust so too," said Burstow; and Chrysolaras was taken off.

"Fate is against us," said Choniates: "it is useless contending against it."

"Fate is what Paynims talk about, and not Christians," said the stout Englishman; "if God and our Lady be for us, all the fate in the world may be against us. Stop! I will say forty Paternosters, and as many Aves."

"And I, five hundred *Kyries*," added Choniates. And, falling on their knees, the companions in misfortune went through the prescribed prayers with great speed and devotion.

They had hardly finished, when the turnkey again came, bringing a bottle of wine, which he set down on the floor, and, wishing his charge good night, departed.

"We shall need this, before we make our escape," said Burstow. "I think we may soon begin: but we had perhaps better wait an hour, to see whether Lord Chrysolaras will return."



The hour passed, but he came not; and as it was now nearly dark, it was determined to continue the work.

"We must both now leave this room for good," said the Lochagus; and we had better dispose things so as to give the appearance of our still being here, if the gaoler should pay us another visit. Spread your cloak, worthy Exarch, over your bed; I will do the same over mine, and lay them with a hump in the middle, as if some one were below them.

"But is it not possible," inquired Choniates, "that Lord Chrysolaras will return?"

"I think not," replied the other, "or he would have come before now. But if we are to escape at all, it must be now or never; and, to be plain with you, I think your daughter's danger greater by far than that of Chrysolaras."

"But how does our escape affect her?" inquired the Exarch.

"I have good hope," answered Burstow, "that they are confined in the room next but one below this—that is, on the second story. If so, we will see what can be done."

"Let us lose no more time," said her father. "Oh, if it might but be so!"

"I say nothing," cried Burstow, "of my own neck; but you must remember that no man likes to be strangled if he can help it; and though, thanks to our Lady, I have no particular cause to fear death, the rather that I confessed and was shriven before I left Constantinople, yet I own that I had sooner live."

"I trust you will escape," said Nicetas Choniates; "I had not remembered—I fear mine own sorrows make me selfish—let us only try."

"You must descend first," said Burstow, opening the trap-door: I can hold the rope for you, which is more, I think, than you could for me. Then you must break my fall as well as you can." He lowered Choniates down with some difficulty; and then, letting

himself through the opening, and hanging with his hands on the floor, he contrived so to arrange the trap-door as that when he removed his fingers it should fall into its place. "Now then!" cried he, "stand firm and let me get my hand on your shoulder as I leap: the rest I will manage for myself." The manœuvre was with some difficulty accomplished; and the adventurers now found themselves safely in the room below that which they lately occupied, without having given the slightest alarm, and in good spirits for their next operation.

"Now we must fall to it again," cried Burstow: "God send our second attempt as prosperous as the first."

Accordingly, the gimlet was introduced as before, the place chosen, and the saw set to work: but not quite with the same result. Scarcely had it fairly got into play, when voices were heard in the apartment below.

"It is my wife and daughter," said Nicetas Choniates, in great agitation.

"I think so too," answered Burstow. "I hope they will not be alarmed and cry out. We must be quick."

Presently, however, the words—"Who is that?" could be clearly distinguished, and no doubt remained that it was Maria Choniatis who spoke.

"Our Lady strike that woman dumb!" was the secret ejaculation of the Lochagus, as he plied his task more vigorously than ever: while the Exarch walked up and down in a state of agitation almost amounting to frenzy.

"Who is that?" was presently repeated more loudly and shrilly: and, no answer being returned, a succession of shrieks issued from the apartment below them.

"They have done for us," said Burstow, coolly, as he withdrew his saw, and concealed it about his person.

Some little time passed, and no notice seemed to be taken of the uproar: Burstow, hoping that he might this time succeed better, again inserted the saw, and

began with the greatest caution to work. But no sooner was the grating noise heard, than the shrieks were renewed with more violence than ever : and the Lochagus impatiently withdrew his tool, and awaited the result.

This time the clamour was more successful. The door of the room in which the ladies were confined was presently opened ; and a loud, gruff voice was heard in conversation with them. Burstow listened attentively, but could not distinguish the words : the tone, however, was threatening, and the interview, of whatever kind, short. The door was soon closed again, and all was silence.

"We must try again," said Burstow ; and, for the third time, he set to work. One faint scream below, apparently hushed off ; and then he was allowed to pursue his labour uninterruptedly to its close.

"Now, worthy Exarch," cried the Varangian, "we are just through : be ready to speak to them, when I have removed the piece of wood." This was done : and stifled sobs were heard from the darkness below.

The Exarch knelt down, and called, gently, "Maria ! Euphrasia !"

"Who are you, in the Panaghia's name ?" cried Maria Choniatis, faintly.

"It is I and a Varangian officer," said her husband. "Only keep quiet, and we will save you."

"Oh, God be praised ! Oh, God be praised !" was all that he could hear in return—till Burstow broke in with—"Now, sir, you must descend : here is the rope." And without much difficulty, Choniates was lowered down—and in a moment was in the arms of his wife and daughter.

"Have you any bed, or any other soft thing to break my fall ?" cried Burstow, from the top. A mattress was soon dragged under the aperture ; and then the Lochagus descended, closing the trap-door after him, as he had done before.

Some few minutes were given to explanations and

congratulations and sorrow for Chrysolaras. The Lady Choniatis dwelt on the dreadful terror that Euphrasia and herself had suffered when it became evident that some one was endeavouring to enter from above; their shrieks had brought the gaoler to inquire what was the matter. He treated their entreaties for protection with contempt, assuring them that the room above was, and had long been empty, and that, if he were disturbed any more by their folly, he would try whether a separation of the prisoners might not keep them more quiet. This threat effectually silenced all further outcries; and in an agony of fear they awaited the result.

"And nearly marred it," said the Lochagus, bluntly. "Well, thank GOD, the past is past. The thing now is the future. Do you know, lady, whether the room below you is occupied or not?"

"Half an hour ago," replied Maria Choniatis, "there was the sound as of a hard struggle, and of cries: but before and after, all has been as still as death. We thought that some one entered the room, and left it again."

"Then we will run the chance," said the Lochagus: "but speak low, if you speak at all." He set to work instantly, and while he was proceeding in his task, Euphrasia eagerly demanded from her father some more minute account of Manuel Chrysolaras. He assured her of his conviction of that nobleman's perfect safety; told her that all his anxiety was for her; and in his turn inquired into the kind of treatment that she had received. The Lady Choniatis, too, had her own tale of hopes and fears to tell; and by the time that particulars on all sides had been communicated, Burstow announced that his task was completed. The separated piece was removed, and the adventurous Lochagus again lowered. To his dismay, however, on reaching the floor, he found that he had no longer wood to contend with, but that it was of stone; although from his recollection of the castle, he felt certain that he was not on a level with the ground. Groping with hands and feet in the pitch darkness that surrounded

him, he at length stumbled over a long iron bar, which evidently was connected with a trap-door. It required merely to be drawn back, and then the massy plate which composed the door was raised on its hinges. As it opened, a cold, damp air rushed into the apartment; and at the same time the roar of waters beneath burst upon the ear. It was clear that the river Toondja, dark, fierce, and rapid, poured under the arch on which the room was raised.

Choniates speedily descended; and the two adventurers were equally at fault what course to pursue. The Lochagus, habituated to all sorts of dangers by sea and land, had not the least fear of submitting himself to the torrent. Choniates could swim a little, but had never ventured into aught else than the smooth waters of a sunny sea: and how Euphrasia and her mother were to be saved, seemed utterly beyond human power to devise. Meantime, the attempt must be made at once or never. Twilight was already breaking, and concealment or escape would in an hour be impossible.

"It is very strange," said Burstow, "but I could have sworn that I saw a flash of light below. Surely the river cannot be a free road here—there must be a chain or cage-work somewhere to secure the place."

"I thought I saw it too," said Choniates: "nay, and I fancied that I heard the faint dash of an oar."

"There is certainly some one below," said the Lochagus, after listening for a moment.

"Will you not own now that there is such a thing as fate?" inquired the Exarch, half reproachfully.

"No," answered Burstow. "I will speak to them in Turkish. We cannot be worse off than we are, and we may be better."

"Try, in S. Demetrius's name, then," said Choniates.

"Who goes there?" demanded the Lochagus, bending over the aperture, and assuming a tone of authority.

To explain the answer he received, we must go back in our story.

## CHAPTER XI.

“ *King.* Let us from point to point the story know,  
 To make the even truths in pleasure flow :  
 All yet seems well ;—and, if it end so meet,  
 The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet.”

*All's Well that Ends Well.*

ON returning from Leander's rock, Sir Edward de Rushton lost not a moment in making his report to the Great Protovestiare, whom he found, faithful to his promise, awaiting his arrival. Phranza, though aware that treachery might be expected, was horrified at finding that it involved a minister of so much importance as Leontius ;—if he were guilty, who could be known to be innocent ? Day had broken before the Acolyth returned to his own *metæcia*, and then under an engagement to wait, at the earliest possible time, on the Augustus, in company with Phranza, to determine on the steps that were to be pursued.

Constantine Palæologus, though shocked with the treachery which seemed to envelope him like a net, in his own brief decided manner gave directions what he would have done.—Nicephorus, the Townsend or Fouché of the day, having been summoned, and made acquainted with all that was known of the plot, received directions to inquire, as far as he could, into its ramifications. “ I am resolved,” said the Palæologus, “ to let this treason run still further on : let the messenger return with the answer from Hadrianople ; let the meeting take place at Leander's rock : it shall be your place, Acolyth, to arrest all concerned : if the

Sultan be indignant for the imprisonment of a Pasha, it matters not. Look to it."

"And with a hearty good will, sire," replied De Rushton.

"When said they? The seventh night from last?" inquired the Emperor.

"Even so, sire," answered the Acolyth.

"As to that sergeant of our Varangians—how call you him—Contari? Ay, Contari.—We must promote him, and that at once."

"I ventured to promise that your majesty would condescend so far," replied Sir Edward. "It seems he has set his heart on a lieutenancy in the guards."

"Let him have one," said the Cæsar. "At another time we will send for him. At present, bid him wear this ring from me."

Contari on being informed of his good fortune, immediately asked for leave of absence, that he might pay a visit to Eski Baba, and communicate his happiness to Eudocia Tomatis. De Rushton gave it without much difficulty, merely requiring that he should be back in time to take part in the intended arrest of the conspirators;—for which his previous knowledge of the locality especially qualified him.

That afternoon, then, the new made lieutenant rode out at the Hadrianople gate; utterly unconscious, the reader will remember, of all that had happened since the departure of Burstow and his party on their dangerous expedition. To them he had given his best wishes; for Burstow was one of his most intimate friends: and De Rushton had hesitated for a moment which he should choose for the mission to Hadrianople. But Burstow could better assume the part of a Turk; and that had determined his selection.

The storm of the preceding evening had given place to a lovely day of autumnal beauty,—and, as Contari rode northward, the sun sunk in an unclouded blaze behind the blue hills of Thermolitz. Twilight came on, purple, and dark, and still Contari rode on briskly,

well knowing every inch of his way, and determined not to draw rein till he should reach Tchorlu. Here he found no difficulty in obtaining quarters in the garrison, which had been considerably strengthened; and here also he heard such reports of the direction of the raid led by Achmet Pasha, and of the devastation it had occasioned, as to give him the greatest uneasiness for the fate of his Eudocia. Again mounting his horse at an early hour next morning, and barely allowing him half an hour's bait at Bourghiaz, where he heard of the death of Tomates, and of the preservation of his daughter by the Varangians, he again pushed on, and reached the cottage we have before described, at an early hour in the afternoon. There, and from the mouth of Eudocia, he heard the whole tale:—and not only this, but that it was to Manuel Chrysolaras alone, though so pressed for time, and devoured by anxiety, that the preservation of his promised bride was owing.

“And, as I hear,” said Eudocia, “he and the Lady Choniatis, to whom men say that he is betrothed, are in prison at Hadrianople; and your friend too, George,—I mean the Lochagus Burstow.”

“God forbid,” cried Contari. “Richard Burstow is a dead man, then, for he was to go as a Turk, and will be dealt with as a spy. What is to be done?” he continued, rather as speaking to himself than as asking counsel of the fair girl by whom he was seated.

“Do they not know it at Constantinople?” inquired Eudocia.

“They did not when I left yesterday, and I see not how they should now. But who is that talking in the next room, Eudocia?”

“A dying man, George;—a Turk, who made a shift to crawl up to our door, and ask for mercy. He was wounded when the Lord Chrysolaras saved me.”

“And you have taken him in here?” said Contari, as harshly as he could speak to one whom he loved so well.



"My mother knew," she replied, "that we ought to return good for evil; and the Papas Demetrius told us that no more pleasant offering could be presented to GOD for the soul of my poor father than a deed of charity like this. And, indeed, the Panaghia be praised, this Turk has, in the great fear of death, received Baptism, and the good Papas doubts not of his salvation."

"You were right, dear Eudocia, you were quite right,—and I love you the better for what you have done. But who is that with him?"

"Father Demetrius is there," answered Eudocia. "I will tell him that you are here—he will be joyed to see you."

She opened the little door which led to the other room, and entered, followed by Contari. The sick man was lying quiet on the little couch which had been provided for him; but a bright red spot on each cheek bone, and an involuntary twitching and clutching of his right hand as it lay on the coverlet, denoted at once the fever that consumed him, and the shortness of the space that he had yet to live. The widow, whose husband the Turks had slain by the bridge, was fanning him, as he constantly called for air: and the Priest was kneeling at his side, and had apparently just concluded prayer. He rose as Contari entered; a tall, well-made man of some forty years of age, attired in his simple, but somewhat threadbare purple Priest's cloak, and with his beard descending nearly to his waist.

"Welcome here again, my son," he said. "You have much to be thankful for in what has happened since you last were here."

"I have indeed, father," replied the lieutenant; "and much also to regret. Eudocia tells me," he continued in a lower voice, "that this man was one of them?"

"He was," answered the Priest; "but, the Panaghia be praised, *was* is true in all senses of the word.

A blessed wound will this have been for him, if, while sending his body to the grave, it shall also introduce his soul to Paradise."

"He is baptized, father?"

"He is: and he is not long for this world. He wants to say something—What is it, my son?"

The Turk, whose original name had been Ismael, but who had been baptized as Joseph, said with difficulty, and in very broken Greek,—“He is a Varangian?”

“He is,” answered father Demetrius.

“Did you not tell me,” said the dying man, “that if we have done wrong in our lives, our repentance at death is of no avail unless we try what we may to undo the crime?”

“I said so, my son: and I said, moreover, that if we only do try with our whole hearts, God will accept the service as an offering well pleasing to Himself.”

“Come nearer,” said Joseph to Contari—“I can neither see nor hear well—I think I must be going. Are you a bold man?”

“None ever thought me else,” replied Contari.

“And would you do a friend a good turn?” asked the sufferer.

“That I would,” answered the other.

“Listen then. The party of Varangians that were here some few days ago—I pray you a little water—” He drank, and proceeded—“were afterwards taken prisoners, and carried to Hadrianople. All such we confine in the Water Tower.”

The widow Tomatis shook her head, as if she thought that the man’s senses were wandering; but the Priest, more used to death beds, knew that such was not the case, and held up his finger in token of attention.

“The river runs under the Tower,” he pursued, in a still lower voice; “and there is a water gate on each side. I will give you the key—reach it, some one, from my cloak—if you have that”—his voice faltered, and they thought that he was going.

"Give him some wine," said the Priest.

Eudocia ran for a cup, and held it to his lips: he seemed to revive: "if you have that, you can make your way in in a boat, and—and perhaps—I am going, good Priest."

"Leave me alone with him, my children," said Father Demetrius: "it will be better so." And accordingly, while he and the dying man were left together, the other three retired into the adjoining room.

"What a happy chance!" said Contari. "Your charity has brought its own reward; for I may be able to set free the man, Eudocia, to whom I owe your life and honour."

"I would not have you delay one unnecessary moment," she said: "I will scarcely say, take care of yourself. Wait only till the Papas comes out; his rede is ever good."

They had not to wait long; for in less than five minutes the Priest came forth, looking grave, but not sorrowful; and saying merely,—“He has made a Christian end,”—proceeded, “And what mean you now to do, my son?”

“What,” replied Contari, “but to ride to Hadri-anople at once; and do what I can with this unlooked for help? One of those prisoners is the man that saved Eudocia; one of them is a dear friend of mine; and it may be that the Lady Choniatis, the betrothed bride of Lord Chrysolaras, is another. Only promise me, good mother, that if I return safe and well, Eudocia shall be mine without further delay. I have enough, the Panaghia knows,—and more than enough, to support you both now.”

“How is that?” inquired Father Demetrius.

He heard the story: and having congratulated Contari on the courage and tact which had procured him his lieutenancy, added, “I am sure Eudocia’s mother will not refuse your request.”

“Faith, not I,” said the old woman—“I shall only

be too thankful to see her safe, and to be safe myself within good walls."

"Well then," said the Priest, "set your heart at rest so far. And now, GOD'S benison be with you! I will offer a particle<sup>1</sup> for you in the most holy Liturgy to-morrow—and for your friend—and for Lord Chrysolaras, and his bride—and so I will daily, till I see you again, or hear from you."

"Your horse must be tired," said Eudocia; "these two hours cannot have rested him; had you not better take the Turk's?"

"Had he one?"

"And a very fine one, to judge by its looks. He is in the shed."

"Take it by all means," said the Priest. And Contari, finding that the beast was as good as his character, shifted the saddle; and entrusting his horse to Eudocia, took his tender farewell of her, and a more cheerful one of Sophia Tomatis, and the Priest, and was speedily on the road to Eski Baba.

It was one of those afternoons when the sky is full of dark billow-like clouds which catch the glow of the departing sun, and reflect it with a ghastly and lurid radiance. The horizon was wild and stormy: patches of sunlight swept hurriedly over the moor, blotted out in a moment by the shadows that chased them; the distant copse, the far off hill, were now aglow with crimson, and now a black mass of shade: it was the very season, as assuredly it was the place, for wild and lawless deeds. As the traveller rode out of Eski Baba, the big drops began slowly and solemnly to fall; and as he pursued his way along the vale of Erkeneh to Khasseh, the storm drove furiously in his face, cloud after cloud opening its volley upon him, and

<sup>1</sup> The Priest is referring to the ceremony of dividing sundry particles from the "Holy Lamb," that is the Altar Bread with the "Holy Spear," in commemoration of various persons, and arranging them on the Paten before the commencement of the Liturgy.

then hurrying on to do the work of devastation in other valleys and remote cities. Towards nine o'clock, his horse and himself alike needed rest: and spying a miserable hovel at the right of the road, he rode up to it, and battered the wretched door with the handle of his sword. Not without difficulty did he succeed in obtaining any notice; but then a quivering voice faintly demanded, "Who's there?"

"A Varangian," returned Contari, amply satisfied that his interrogator was a Christian: "I am willing and able to pay you for food, if you have any,—at all events for lodging."

Cyril, for such was the name of the wretched peasant to whom the cottage belonged, somewhat reassured, speedily opened the door, which he was well assured would be battered in if he delayed; and Contari, entering, found a hovel, with bare walls, a mud floor, a shelf at one side with two or three plates and cups, a few tiles in the middle for a fire place, a hole at the top to allow the smoke to escape, the guardian image of the Panaghia, a wretched daub, and a few pieces of rag in one corner, the bed which the peasant and his wife had been occupying. A piece of black bread was all that Contari could obtain, and that he shared with his horse; but a cup of brandy refreshed and warmed him, and ere he wrapped himself in his cloak to sleep, he had made the poor man's heart glad by the promise of an ample reward on the morrow. He slept soundly: and on waking, considered that his best chance of getting into Hadrianople would be to assume the disguise of a peasant. He therefore informed Cyril that he was anxious to get into the enemies' head quarters; that he knew no method so likely as the costume of a poor Greek: and, on the promise of a liberal present, prevailed on his host to equip him in his own clothes, and to lend him the ass on which he sometimes carried mushrooms to market. He at first thought of going by himself; but afterwards considering that his ignorance of the locality would be

extremely dangerous, he engaged the services of the peasant, who had difficulty enough in furnishing forth a sufficient quantity of rags to cover two men. Then some time was lost in procuring enough mushrooms to give them the appearance even of traders in that article; they were at length, however, obtained; and Contari, leaving his horse and every other part of his equipment except his dagger in the charge of Cyril's wife, set forward with his companion, driving the ass before them.

The distance to Hadrianople was twelve miles; and in the three hours and a half which this distance took to accomplish, the Varangian heard such tales of Turkish cruelty and wanton oppression exercised on Christians, as made his blood boil within him; and rendered him still more anxious than before to free his companion and his benefactors from Mahometan slavery. At length the tall minarets and golden domes of Hadrianople rose before them; and they entered the southern gate, a work of stupendous strength, without any further harm than a few hard words from the soldiers on guard directed against the Christian dogs. Cyril led the way to a coffee-house of the very lowest description: and ordered some refreshment for himself and his companion, of which they both stood in need. Then Contari desired the peasant to show him the way to the Castle; and driving the ass before them, they soon came into the open place before it. The Varangian officer now made the best use of his eyes; and the sum of his observation was this. The Castle itself made a part of, while it also projected from, the city walls; one of its angular towers was, so to speak, in the wall; the river Toondja, which had entered the city on the other side, flowed under the turret, and so made its escape from the city: a tremendous grating of iron, at the bridge arch where it entered the Tower, effectually secured the place from surprise; but higher up, and nearer to the market place there was a little quay,

where some light boats were moored. Having satisfied his curiosity, Contari bade his companion return to the coffee-house, which they did not again leave for some time. In the meanwhile, the Varangian was maturing his plans, and procuring such information as he thought likely to be of use: under colour of desiring to know whether a decent livelihood could be earned as a boatman, he learnt that the water-gates, as they were called, were opened on payment of a small fee, to any boat between sunrise and sunset, but on no account after that time; that there were six guards appointed for that purpose, who each, in time of peace, had a key of the gate; that boats did frequently pass northward, even as far as Jeni Kezilaghaz, sometimes with parties of pleasure, sometimes with fruit and market provisions. Having learnt thus much, Contari summoned his companion, and having procured a basket, and filled it with their mushrooms, they went down to the quay, and hired a Greek boat to take them to a hamlet called Jeni Bazaar, some half mile up the river. The boatman pushed off; and the Varangian came under the towering height of the castle in which he knew that his friends were confined: the boat presently stopped at the grate. A foul scum had collected round the apertures; vegetables, parings of fruit, offal of animals, and all the filth of a great city. The water-warder was summoned; he came surlily enough out, and demanded half an Amurath before he would open the gate. It was paid him: and Contari watched with intense interest the way in which the lock was managed. He saw at a glance that the key which the man held was the counterpart of his own: he noticed that it fitted easily, and moved the lock without noise. They entered into the jaws of the Castle: at the opposite side was a second iron grate of the same kind; above them was an arch of immense and most massy stones.

“Row slowly,” said Contari to the boatman: “this is a place worth looking at.”

"They don't like us to loiter here," replied the other: "so make the best use of your time."

"I will," thought the Varangian to himself. And he did. He observed, that in the very centre of the upper part of the arch was a trap-door, evidently communicating with the turret; while at the side was another door, small, but very strong, close to the water's edge, and enabling those in the Castle to embark without leaving it.

"Ay," said the boatman, as they rowed past, "if these walls could speak, they would tell of more murders than I care to think of"—and he crossed himself. "See you that trap-door, comrade?"

"Ay, ay, well enough," replied Contari.

"They talk of fearful screams from it a' nights," continued the other,—“and then of heavy plunges into the stream below. It may be true, or not; but this I know, that, once, just as I was where we now are, up rose a corpse head foremost from the water; and I saw that it was a poor Albanian soldier that they had carried into the Castle some weeks before.”

By this time they had reached the other gate, which was opened to them in the same way as the first had been, though without payment. But Contari saw that the key and the whole arrangement of the lock was different, and found that, if he made his entrance in under the Castle, he must return by the same way he came, and not, as he had hoped, accomplish his escape from the city. They pursued their course to Jeni Bazaar: where Cyril disposed of the mushrooms to a man with whom he sometimes dealt; and again embarking, they returned to the city without adventure. It was now nearly sunset; and at that hour the city gates were shut. Contari therefore informed his companion, that he had no further occasion for his services; and rewarded him for what he had done beyond all his expectations. "Now, listen to me," he said: "if I return not in three days to your house, take this letter"—and he put one into his hand—"to



Constantinople, and deliver it yourself to Sir Edward de Rushton, Great Acolyth of the Empire: he will pay you well for your trouble, and your pains may much advantage you. My horse you may keep for yourself, if I do not come back to claim it." Cyril faithfully promised compliance—called the Panaghia to witness that he would forget nothing—invoked the blessing of twenty or thirty saints on Contari, and then departed.

The letter which the Varangian had written to De Rushton contained an account of what he had done, and of the hope he entertained of being able to effect something for Manuel Chrysolaras; and concluded by asking the Acolyth to provide for Eudocia, who might almost be regarded as his widow, in case he fell, and her mother; and he knew De Rushton well enough to be sure that his request would be well attended to.

When Contari was left alone, he told his host that he should stay there till eight or nine o'clock, but had an engagement in another part of the town at that hour; and requested to be served with supper, which was provided with great alacrity: his payments being more liberal than those to which the worthy landlord was accustomed. By nine o'clock the night was pitchdark, and the city seemed silent and deserted; the Varangian, therefore, after paying his reckoning, bade farewell to the host, and went out. He had no difficulty in finding his way to the little quay of which we have already spoken; but, to his great annoyance, he found that a party of Greeks were carousing in one of the boats, and that there was no chance, till their orgies were over, of being able to obtain a boat for himself, at least without exciting suspicion. He retired into the court-yard of a house that seemed deserted, and there waited patiently till the voices of the Muezzins from the neighbouring mosque, proclaiming that there was no God but God, and that Mahommed was the prophet of God,—and ending with the shrill exhortation, "Come to prayer! come to

prayer! "It is better to pray than to sleep," warned him that it was midnight; for in the city where the Commander of the Faithful resided this night-call to prayer, then partially, and now still more generally disused, was kept up in full force. Again stealing down to the quay, he found that the riotous party had dispersed; the banks of the river, which were laid out as walks, seemed quite untenanted, and he resolved to lose no more time in putting his plan into practice. Mentally contrasting his situation with that of two nights before, when he was unmooring the boat which carried him and De Rushton to Leander's Rock, he untied the knot which held one of the little market boats, stepped quietly into it, and pushed off. It was so very dark that he could hardly make out the gigantic walls of the castle, towering through the blackness, as he approached it; but at length he was close under them, and the boat's head touched the iron grates. He brought her to that side of the river where the lock fastened; and making her fast to the water-gates themselves, the river running *from* them out of the city, leapt as silently as he could on shore.

Still all was quiet as death.

Running his hand over the iron work, he soon found the key hole, with its heavy flap; pushing that aside, and inserting the key, which he had taken the previous precaution of oiling, the iron tongue ran swiftly and smoothly back, and the gate was opened. But Contari's difficulties were not over. Stepping into the boat again, he had to push that forward, and the gate open together, and that in the face of a swift current, and with nothing better to push against than the slippery green sides of the arch. Once he had all but fallen into the river; but at length the feat was safely accomplished: the iron gate pushed open, the boat put under the arch, the grating again closed, and Contari in the heart of the castle.

After waiting about a quarter of an hour to be sure that no suspicion was excited, he drew from his pocket

tinder, flint, steel, and a taper, and struck a light. He was certain that no one within the castle could see it: and any one who might be on a level with the arch at the bank of the river would, he was quite sure, feel that it was no business of his to inquire after it. After having made a careful survey of the whole passage, and paddled himself three or four times up and down it, he resolved to try whether the second key which had been given to him would not open the side door which he had noticed that afternoon. He accordingly went up to it; but here an unexpected difficulty presented itself. There was no way of mooring the boat either to the wall, or to the little landing place which projected in front of the door. While he was considering how to overcome this hindrance, his attention was attracted to an extraordinary noise overhead. It seemed as if a violent struggle was going on; and even through the stone roof the voices as of men in great exertion made themselves heard. Contari extinguished his light in a moment; leapt into the boat, and pushed it off to the water-gate by which he had entered; but there paused, to see whether there were any real cause for alarm. He next heard the trap-door open, and saw a bright gleam of light shoot forth from it; and it then became evident that some persons above were endeavouring to push a prisoner through the aperture.

“Now in with him!” cried one voice.

“What’s the use of all this resistance?” roared another. “Go you must.”

“Tie his hands,” shouted a third: “we shall never manage him till we do.”

The plan seemed to be adopted: for there was a more tremendous struggle than before. It appeared as if at last the prisoner were secured;—for there was a pause;—and then a somewhat exhausted voice panted out in Greek,—“Ah, you circumcised dogs! If I had but a good sword, and an open field, you should soon know the difference!”

"By the Panaghia!" said Contari to himself, "that is Stephen the Varangian."

"Now then, we can do for him," said one of the Turkish soldiers.

"God a' mercy on me, then!" cried Stephen, as they dragged him over the floor, and pushed him, head foremost, through the trap-door. A second more, and there was a heavy splash in the water.

"Good night!" cried a harsh voice above; and the door was shut and all was darkness. Contari lost not a moment; but pushed his boat along to the place where Stephen had fallen: and where, though both his hands and feet were tied, he was endeavouring by expanding his chest, and keeping the back of his head well in the water, to float. Contari's hand was on the soldier—and at the same moment he said in a cautious voice,—“All's right, Stephen.”

The Varangian soldier thought for a moment that he had passed out of this world. "Where am I?" he said: "Who are you?" as he felt himself supported.

"It is I, George Contari. Are your hands tied?"

"Yes."

"I will cut the rope—hold them this way—so—that's it—now you can keep yourself above water, while I strike a light."

"How, in the Panaghia's name is this?" cried the bewildered Stephen.

"Never you mind that, comrade, just now," replied Contari, applying the steel to the flint—"Now we can see each other. Strike out for yonder step: then I can take you in: but you will upset me if you try here."

Stephen did as he was directed; and presently was safely on board. "Well," said he, "this is beyond all wonders—how fell it out?"

"'Twere too long a story to tell now," replied Contari: "enough, that I have the key of yon gate, and came to see if I could be of service to the Lord Chry-

solaras, or any of my comrades. But how came you here ? and where are the rest ?”

“Of the rest I know nothing : I have been confined by myself all the time—I had a chief hand in rescuing the good old Exarch and his family.”

“They were rescued, then ?” inquired Contari. “They told me so at Bourghiaz.”

“Have you not heard it at Constantinople ?” asked Stephen. “Yes : and taken prisoners again. So it was all over with me. The rest,—I mean the rest of our comrades are to be offered their choice, I hear, of death, or taking service with the Sultan : but I was too bad even for that chance. But now, tell me how you came here.”

Contari very briefly related the circumstances : and added,—“Now, I believe that I have the key of yonder door, and I will try it. We will see what can be done. Do you know where that door leads ?”

“I know nothing about the Castle,” replied Stephen : “I was in a dungeon that lay in quite a different part of the Castle. They only dragged me in over head to drown me.”

“We will try, at all events,” said Contari. “You keep the boat near, while I try the key.” He fitted it to the lock, and to his joy, the door opened, and disclosed a narrow winding staircase.

“Now we can fasten the boat to the hasp,” said the lieutenant in a low voice : “it puzzled me much how to do it before.” The little vessel was accordingly moored ; and then the two friends ascended the staircase, Contari going first with the light. After mounting about twenty steps, they were stopped by another door, with an external handle, as if it needed only to be opened from the outside. Contari had his hand on the ring, and was just going to turn it, when Stephen, who was close behind, laid his hand on his friend’s shoulder, and pointed to the lintel of the door, under which shone a strong gleam of light. The lieutenant immediately extinguished his own taper,—

and took the liberty of applying his eye to the key-hole. It seemed to be an apartment of an officer: for one in the splendid costume of a lieutenant of the Janissaries was seated at a table with his head on his hands: as if he had the command of the guard, and were ready, and within call, should alarm occur. Contari stepped back, and whispered to Stephen to look.

"Let us rush in upon him," said he, after gazing intently on him for a few moments, "That is the man that gave the order for my murder. He may serve as a hostage, or what not."

"No, no," cried Contari eagerly. "It is clear that there must be guards at hand—we should be taken at once. We can but do this if the worst comes to the worst. Let us step down again. We can talk more safely below, when that door is shut."

They accordingly went down the staircase, and closing the door, got into the boat. "Stay," said Contari: "I may as well lock the door, in case your excellent friend above should take it into his head to interfere: and I will turn the key half round in the lock, and leave it so;—then no one can unlock it from the inside."

When this was done,—“Now,” said the lieutenant, lighting the taper, “let us explore the place thoroughly: I have done so once already:—but let us make quite sure.”

“Is there no other door like that we have just shut?” inquired Stephen.

“None,” said his companion: “I am quite certain: I came through this place in the afternoon, and made another inspection this evening before—Hark! what was that?”

“Nothing,” replied the Varangian: “I heard nothing.”

“I thought I heard some one at the trap-door,” said the other.

“Impossible!” said Stephen—“they cannot intend to murder another of our poor fellows.”

"I tell you it is opening," cried Contari, for the third time extinguishing his light. And so it was.

Some moments passed, in which it was clear that the trap-door was open, for the murmuring of voices could be heard above ; but no light came through the aperture.

"Some one in the Castle must have seen our light," whispered Contari to his companion. "They must be in the dark on purpose to discover us the better."

"How deep do those gates go?" inquired the other, who seemed somewhat unnerved by his late escape.

"Oh! no possibility of diving. I learnt this afternoon that the bottom is paved, as well as the sides,—and that they reach almost to that."

"Hark! there are more voices!" cried Stephen. "We cannot escape."

"It is strange," said Contari, "how like one voice is to another. I could have sworn now, that that last voice was Burstow's, if it were not impossible."

As he spoke, all further doubt was put an end to by the Lochagus authoritatively putting the question with which we closed the last chapter—"Who goes there?"

## CHAPTER XII.

“ Oft expectation fails, and most oft there  
Where most it promises ; and often hits  
Where hope is coldest, and despair most sits.”

*All's Well that Ends Well.*

WHEN the peasant Cyril left Contari, he was but just in time to pass out of the gates, which, as we have said, were shut at sunset. Having, however, succeeded in effecting his passage, he mounted his ass, and urged it homewards at its full speed ; but, in the two hours which were necessarily taken up by the journey, it had grown quite dark. When he came to the turn of the road which, he well knew, gave him the first view of his own cottage, to his horror and dismay, he found that it was on fire ; and, as he hurried onward his weary beast, the lurid glare showed him that a party of eight or ten Turkish soldiers were standing round the blaze. Suspecting he hardly knew what, he turned and fled. But he had been discovered ; and with shouts of “ There he is ! there he is ! ” five or six of the soldiers ran after him, and found not the least difficulty in overtaking him.

Dragging him from the ass, they hauled him along, amidst shouts and blows, to him who was apparently the chief of the party.

“ Uncircumcised wretch ! ” said the latter personage, “ how came you by the Aga Selim’s horse, and where is he himself ? ”



Cyril was a true Greek, in the worst sense of the word ; the more he was insulted and injured, the more he crouched to his oppressor.

"May it please your most gracious excellency," said he, "I know not who the Aga Selim is ; but if your very reverend worship means the horse that is in my shed, I had him to take care of for a Varangian."

"Dog, you lie !" said the officer. "Habib, tie him up to yonder tree, and scourge him till he speaks the truth."

"No, your worshipful excellency," shrieked Cyril, "no, for the Panaghia's sake, your thrice illustrious respectability ; no, by your beard, your super-excellent reverence. I will tell you all I know of the Varangian, and somewhat, perhaps, that you will be glad to learn."

"Stay, Habib ; let us hear what the dog can tell. Speak on, Nazarene !"

"And your excellency will do me no harm, if I speak the whole truth ?"

"I will throw you into the fire if you palter with me any longer, dog," was all the comfort Cyril could obtain ; and thus adjured, he told all that he knew, and a great deal that he only guessed ; that a Varangian had lodged in his cottage the night before, had disguised himself as a peasant that morning, had paid him for attending him to Hadrianople, had seemed much bent on some scheme connected with the prisoners who had lately been lodged in the castle, and had finally dismissed him some three hours before.

"This tallies," said one of the men, "with what we have elsewhere heard of a single Varangian having passed this way."

"It does, so far," said the leader ; "but yet it seems hardly probable."

Cyril had resolved to say nothing of the letter that had been entrusted to him ; but when he saw that his account was evidently not believed, his fear overcame every other feeling, and he said,

"I am speaking the truth, your excellency, and so

I have no doubt that this letter will show, though I cannot read."

"What is this letter?" asked the leader of the party, taking it into his hands.

"The Varangian gave it me," replied Cyril, "with orders that, if he did not return in three days, I was to take it to the Great Acolyth of Constantinople, and that I might then keep his horse for my pains."

"Which of you can read Greek?" demanded the chief, after opening the letter.

"I can, a little," said one of the men; and with some difficulty, he read as follows:—

"To the most illustrious Lord, Sir Edward de Rush-ton, Great Acolyth of the Roman Empire, George Contari, devotion and greeting:

"I have received, thrice worthy lord, such intelligence of the fate of the Lord Chrysolaras and his companions, that I have thought it right to go forward to this place; having also received most singular and unexpected help towards assisting them. But if this letter reaches your lordship's hands, I shall have failed, and shall probably be no more.

"In that case, if your lordship will send to Eudocia Tomatis, my promised wife, whose mother's cottage is between Bourghiaz and Eski Baba, as I once mentioned to you, she will be able to explain all that has passed, which it may advantage your lordship to know. And forasmuch as I shall have fallen in the service of the Cæsar, and in doing a good deed towards your lordship's friend, the Lord Manuel, I am sure that I may commend to your care one who will, in all but name, be my widow; praying you to remove her family into a place of safety, and to protect them from poverty. And so I pray God and the Panaghia to have you in their most holy keeping.

"Written from Hadrianople, this Wednesday after the Presentation. Indiction 8."

"This," said the Mussulman, "confirms what the Greek has told us: let him go.—Be off, dog!" And

Cyril, overjoyed to retain the very handsome present which had been made him by Contari, and caring nothing for the loss of the hovel, knowing well that there was many a one at no great distance, deserted, and free for him to occupy if he pleased, slunk away to his wife, who had stood wringing her hands close by, to learn from her how the Turks had discovered the horse, which had been the occasion of his trouble.

"This letter," said the leader, "warrants us in going at once to Hadrianople. We cannot be more than ten or twelve miles thence, and if there is any mischief, we might prevent it; though what it can be is hard to say."

"Were it not well," asked one of the soldiers,—the same who had read the letter,—"that some two or three were despatched after this girl whom he names?"

"I think it were," replied his chief. "You, and Habib, and Omar, shall ride thither. Inshallah, we will find out the truth. You might sleep at Eski Baba to-night, for there is no occasion to distress your horses. The rest will attend me to Hadrianople."

It is not our intention to follow either party at present; but we shall again transport the reader to that precise moment of time to which we have already twice brought him, and have twice been compelled to carry him off to other scenes; we mean when Burstow, making a virtue of necessity, demanded the name of the intruders by the river gates.

That precise moment, we said; but to take up our tale five minutes later will, on all accounts, be better. By that time, the first burst of surprise, the doubt whether the whole circumstance were not a mere vision, had gone by; and the party, both above and below, were at leisure to consider how best advantage might be taken of the circumstances, and the escape of the prisoners facilitated.

"My advice," said Contari, who had been drawn up into the room of consultation, "would, on most accounts,

be this: to remain quietly where we are till morning, which cannot be far off; and then, at the first moment the river gates are opened, to present ourselves at the outer, as if we had already passed the inner one. But my boat certainly will not hold seven,—and it was the largest I dared to take; so that we must run the risk of disguises, and I must carry you back into the town at two trips. Then, at the earliest, you must present yourselves at the gates; and it is not likely that, at that time, there will be any alarm in the castle.”

“As to disguises,” cried Burstow, “consider this; Stephen is the only one who cannot, with tolerable safety, show himself as he is. I should prefer, indeed, that the despot Choniates and the ladies were differently attired, but there must be some risk; and, after all, there are plenty of Greeks of good fortune in the city, infidel though it is: he might well be mistaken for one of them.”

“Lose no time, then, in S. Dimitri’s name,” said Contari; “that is day which is breaking yonder. I dub myself general of the expedition, and will take three the first time, and two the next. This time, the ladies and Stephen.”

Matters being thus arranged, and the rope attached to Contari, he was lowered with some difficulty into the boat: he and Stephen rendered the descent of Maria Choniatis, who came next, both easier and safer; and the comparatively light weight of Euphrasia made her descent the easiest of all. As softly and tenderly as heart could imagine, the two oarsmen rowed out into the river. Choniates and the Varangian Lochagus were left behind; the former with a heart that palpitated for the safety of those nearest to him,—the latter with the coolness and nonchalance which so greatly distinguished him.

“We must manage something for Stephen,” said he, “or the poor fellow will be snapped up like a locust by a turkey. I must buy him something as soon as the shops are opened.”

"I fear he will ruin us all," said the Exarch.

"Not he, sir," replied Burstow. "Ruin himself he may; but never those he is with. I wonder how long it will be ere they find that we are gone?"

"Are they not a very long time?" inquired Choniates.

"Why, truly," replied the Lochagus, "they are taking the matter easily, if no accident has delayed them. Day is breaking very fast."

"I can never believe that we shall effect it," answered Choniates, despondingly.

"Never fear, sir. I do not think that that ruffian of a gaoler paid us a visit till nearly the second hour yesterday; and it must want two hours and a half to that yet."

"No, but the light, Lochagus! that will betray us as effectually as the gaoler." And he wrung his hands in agony.

Burstow tried to comfort him; but the light increased so fast, as to make the risk evidently tremendous. Each object in the room became greyly visible; even the sullen water that flowed beneath caught a leaden hue from the little light that found its way in at the arches.

"We must let ourselves down, and swim for it," said Burstow, at length.

"Then shall I never see the shore," said the Exarch.

"Keep up a heart, sir, and hope better things. Hark! what is that?"

"By the Panaghia, it is an oar," said Choniates.

"Ay, it is Contari," said the Lochagus, bending down his head through the trap door. "Hist! hist! George! quick!"

The Exarch was lowered down. "I have had rare work, sir," said Contari, "to get back at all: a dog of a Turk was on the quay. But I think all is safe. They are in the court of a house that I know is empty, till we join them.—Now, Burstow, bend to your oars,"

added he, as his companion lowered himself into the boat, and took his place.

Swiftly and smoothly the little vessel glided out of the stone jaws of the fortress. Still, all silent and unsuspecting.—

We must shift the scene.

A bright November morning: the sky, blue—the air, balmy—the bees, at work—the birds, in song. Round the little village church of the Taxiarchus, near Bourghiaz, a party of Christian peasants were assembled. The church itself, with its heavy, arcaded dome, three semicircular east ends, and western porch entered by a triple arch, curiously contrasted the mosaics with which its exterior was adorned, with the grey, sombre tints of the autumnal grove, by which it was partly enclosed. On the south side, there was an open grave; and into the interior of the building a little group of labourers were conveying the coffin of him who was to be its tenant. Very plain and simple it was; of the commonest elm, and adorned with one long cross only, that stretched from the head to the feet. Among those who followed were Eudocia and her mother; and the Priest, who, vested in the purple phenolion,—which, even in that age of Church oppression, still retained some of its jewels, was none other than Father Demetrius. The coffin was set down on the tressels, the Deacon swung the silver censer, and the solemn office of the dead began. Bright was the sunshine without—glowing and solemn the radiance of the lamps within; and the song of the birds and the melody of the breeze was in strange contrast with the wail of the requiem, broken only by the monotonous, but musical cry of the Deacon, as he called on the spectators “again and again in peace to make their supplications to the LORD.” “Approach!” cried the good Priest, kissing the pale cheek of the corpse,—a man, apparently in the prime and vigour of life, but with the distorted features that

always accompany death by a sword wound; "approach!" embrace him who is one of yourselves. He is delivered up to the grave; he is covered with a stone; he sojourns in darkness, and dwells among the dead. Kindred and friends, they are far from him; pray we to the LORD for his eternal repose." Again rose the wail of the requiem: "When the tremendous band of angels have sundered spirit and body, kindred and acquaintance are for ever forgotten; then the coming judgment is alone, and is all; then the pursuits and pleasures of life are at an end. Let us supplicate the Judge of all for the sins of the departed."

While the little band of attendants were thus surrounding the coffin, a small party of horse might have been seen, had any one been outside the church, to pass rapidly along to the house of the old peasant Tomates. The ten or twelve soldiers that composed it seemed much harassed at finding the cottage empty, and pressed still further onwards, as if seeking for some information. In the mean time the requiem was finished, the party of mourners followed the coffin to the grave. It was lowered into the earth, and Father Demetrius proclaimed, as the last farewell rite, "For our brother Joseph, everlasting remembrance, everlasting remembrance, everlasting remembrance!"

Scarcely had he finished, when the Turkish horsemen whom we have already mentioned were upon them. Leaping from their horses, they hurried into the churchyard; they seized, while the peasants were escaping in all directions, Eudocia and the Priest, and dragged them out into a kind of green which faced the southern entrance to the church. Sophia Tomatis had been fortunate enough to escape.

"What mean you by thus seizing us?" said Father Demetrius, calmly, "when there is peace between the Sultan and the Cæsar?"

"Peace can there never be between the faithful and the infidel," said the leader of the party, whose name was Walid, and who was none other than the soldier

who had interpreted the intercepted letter of Contari to Sir Edward de Rushton. "But if there were, treachery is always to be punished. I am given to understand, maiden, that a Varangian soldier, named Contari, lodged at your mother's house yesterday: is that so?"

"I cannot tell a lie," replied Endocia; "he did."

"Whither went he?"

No answer.

"I ask," continued Walid, sternly, "whither went he?"

"That question you have no right to ask," said Father Demetrius.

"We shall soon see that," replied the leader: "look at my men, and at yon peasants, and then judge if I have not the right. Tell me, maiden, whither he went; or rather, that I know already,—to Hadrianople he went. But tell me with what design, and what had happened that made him willing to go? No answer? Nay, then we will easily tear one from you." And he laid his heavy hand on her shoulder.

"Listen," said Father Demetrius. "This maiden and her mother carefully tended one of your comrades, who died but yestermorn; and is this the return you make her?"

"One of our comrades!" cried Walid, fiercely: "whom? was it Ismael?"

"The same," replied the Priest.

"Where is the body?" said the other. "How know we that he was not murdered?"

"Because you have my word to the contrary," said the Priest, quietly, taking no notice of the other part of the question; the necessary consequences of a reply being too clear.

"Where is the body, then?" repeated Walid.

There was a moment's hesitation that confirmed the Turk in his suspicions. "Infidel dog!" he cried; "speak! or I stab you to the heart." And he drew the dagger from his belt.



"I will freely speak," answered Father Demetrius. "His body is in yonder grave." And he pointed to that which had so recently been opened, and was still uncovered. One or two of the soldiers hurried thither, to satisfy themselves of the truth of the statement: while Walid proceeded,—“In yonder grave?—You will not venture to tell me that he died a Nazarene?”

"God be praised, he did," answered the Priest.

"At your persuasion, dog?"

"Yes," said Father Demetrius.

"Then have you sealed your fate. Does the Nazarene speak truth?" he continued, as his comrades returned from the grave.

"It is true," replied one of them, "that Ismael lies there."

"Take away the Mufti," cried Walid, "and hang him in his own church; and throw out the body of that miserable renegade into the road: the dogs shall have their gain from it. Or stay: let us to this other matter first—Maiden, will you tell me the truth, yes or nay?"

"God forbid that I should," replied Eudocia, trembling.

"Then God also strengthen you, my daughter," said the Priest: "but you are right—come what come may."

"We shall see," said Walid. "Habib, cut me from yonder tree a stout piece of a branch, some foot long: and do you, Omar, fetch me a rope. I have seen Achmet Pasha make the dumb speak ere now, and will try the same way here."

Poor Eudocia trembled as if she would have fallen; the one or two peasants who lingered at a little distance, drew nearer, as if to see the event. Father Demetrius seemed wrapped in prayer for a few moments—then he said, "My daughter, did you never hear out of whose mouth praise is perfected?"

"Oh, Father," said Eudocia, in a low voice, "you know not my weakness!"

"He That made you doth," replied the Priest,—  
"and He will strengthen it. He That died for you  
doth, and He will reward it."

"Will this serve the turn?" said Habib, returning  
with such a piece of wood as he had been ordered to  
bring.

"Excellently," cried Walid, taking out his dagger,  
and carving each end to a blunt point. "Now carry  
her to yonder tree. The rope, Omar."

Eudocia was carried to the tree. "Now," con-  
tinued Walid, "tie me the rope round both her hands  
in a running noose, and draw her up to that branch."  
The command was obeyed—not without a shriek of  
terror from the sufferer, or a silent prayer from the  
Priest. Walid next fixed the piece of wood upright in  
the ground, and under Eudocia; and then, taking off  
her sandal, desired the men who held the rope to lower  
her till the ball of the great toe should rest on the  
blunt point. "That will do," he said. "Now make  
it fast. I never knew woman that endured that for  
five minutes."

"You may make me shriek out," cried Eudocia,  
"for I am abundantly weak,—but never tell."

"Wait," said the Turk.

And they stood round for a minute or a minute and  
a half; when from the lips of the sufferer there burst  
such a long, piercing shriek of agony, that even some  
of the Janissaries started at the sound.

"It is well," said Walid, seating himself on the grass.

"Patience yet, my daughter," said Father Demet-  
rius. "You shall not be tempted—sore though the  
temptation be—above that you are able to bear."

"I will not tell," gasped Eudocia: and in another  
moment uttered another shriek, more prolonged, more  
heart-piercing than the former.

Father Demetrius seemed for an instant to notice  
nothing of the scene around him—his whole attention  
was concentrated on something that appeared for a  
second on the hill that rose on the Hadrianople road,

and then almost instantly disappeared. Forthwith he exclaimed, to the intense astonishment both of the Infidels, and of those few of his flock whom curiosity had attracted to the place, "Tell all! tell all! my daughter!"

"Tell all?" moaned Eudocia. "May I? may I, father?"

"On my blessing, tell all," replied the Priest.

"Let me down, and I will tell all," she cried.

"I said so," observed Walid, coolly. "Loose her, Habib. Now, then, maiden," he proceeded, as she was lowered to the ground, and sank exhausted upon it—"how was it?"

"Well, then," began Eudocia——

## CHAPTER XIII.

“ For within the crown  
That rounds the mortal temples of a king  
Holds death his court : and there the antic sits,  
Mocking his state and grinning at his pomp.”

*Richard II.*

“SIRE,” said Sir Edward de Bushton, ushered into the private apartment of the Cæsar, on the afternoon of the day that had been fixed for the second meeting of the conspirators, “I am here by your Majesty’s directions to receive instructions for to-night.”

“To your own wisdom, and your own faith,” replied Constantine, “we leave all. You have preserved our Crown and our Church, and we cannot better what you have done.”

“Sire, your Majesty is pleased to overrate my poor services. I am most deeply concerned for the death of those whom I ever regarded as my best men—Contari and Burstow—God rest their souls. I had trusted much to them ; but your Majesty shall be well and faithfully served.”

“We doubt it not,” replied the Cæsar. “But use all gentleness with the conspirators—and as much as may be hide their crime. One or two must perish : but none shall die that the most lax justice can suffer to live. I, too, grieve for those brave men. Is their death certain ?”

“So goes the report, sire : and the Lord Chrysolaras and his betrothed bride. A merchant coming

from Hadrianople spoke of it as beyond doubt. I sent for the man—but he had left the city for Chalcedon, and I cannot learn how to get at him.”

“The Lord Phranza lays it much to heart,” said Constantine.

“Manuel Chrysolaras was a son to him in all but name, sire. But they died gloriously, for they died for the faith. Doubtless they might have saved their lives, had they abjured their LORD: and they have their portion with the Martyrs.”

“God give us grace to embrace it too!” said the Cæsar. “They died like heroes; the maiden showed the courage of the warrior; the Panaghia give us faith to tread in their footsteps. Lord Acolyth, the end is drawing near.”

“Sire,—I will not attempt to deceive your Majesty—I fear it is. But the great empire shall end gloriously.”

“So it shall—so it shall, De Rushton. They that have fallen for the Cross against the Crescent shall not have died in vain.”

And so he spoke—and so he acted. He almost seemed, in his words, to anticipate the glorious lines of a then unborn poet:

“They had the hearts of freemen to the last,  
And the free blood that bounded in their veins,  
Was shed for freedom with a liberal joy.  
But had they thought—or could they but have dreamed,  
The great examples that they died to show  
Should fall so flat, should shine so lifeless here,  
That men should say—For liberty these died,  
Wherefore let us be slaves—Oh, with what shame,  
Their blushing faces buried in the dust,  
Had their great spirits parted hence for heaven!”

“And at what time, sire,” said the Acolyth, preparing to take his leave, “shall I wait on your Majesty? As soon as the traitors are in safe custody? or shall it not be till to-morrow?”

“To-night, Lord Acolyth. I shall not sleep.”

“I will use my best diligence, then, sire. God preserve your Sacred Majesty!” And he left the palace.

The management of the enterprise was left to the Great Acolyth alone. He could have wished to trust no one but Phranza; and the Protovestiare was in no condition to give advice. He had given himself up to one deep, uncontrollable burst of grief since the tidings of Chrysolaras's death had reached him. He thought of his father—he thought of Manuel himself as a child,—as a boy—as a youth—how he had grown up in his house,—how he had wound round his heart. Above all, he remembered that their last interview had begun with reproaches on his side, and had ended in deep grief and anger on that of his friend. Phranza was not a hero; we have not represented him as such: he could not rouse himself; had the fate of the city depended on his acting, it must have fallen. To Sir Edward de Rushton, then, the whole business was intrusted.

He had made his preparations with great skill and sagacity. A week before the day fixed, a Genoese galley had been ordered to sea, under the pretext of carrying despatches to Chios; the commander had sealed orders, which he was to open twenty-four hours after sailing. On doing so, he was directed to cruise between Gallipoli and Marmora for six days; on the evening of the sixth, he was to be off Silivri, and then to wait till he should receive orders from, or under the hand of the Acolyth, but on no account to obey or to notice any other, even though they should profess to come from the Emperor himself. During those days, the captain, whose name was Athanasio Coressi, was instructed not to communicate with the shore. The eyes of the conspirators were thus completely blinded: they knew not that the slightest idea was entertained of their plan; by the Cæsar's express orders, no parade of double guards, or additional military preparations were visible. The only change made—and

on that Sir Edward de Rushton had insisted—was, that at nightfall, when the palace gates were closed, a strong party of Varangians were drawn up under arms in the gardens of Constantine, to be ready for action, should their services be required. But of this nothing transpired beyond the walls of the palace.

It was late in the afternoon when Sir Edward de Rushton left the Emperor; and, followed by four picked Varangians, he rode out at the western gate, and, urging onward his horse, reached Silivri towards nine o'clock. The night was dark; and everything seemed to favour his design. Riding through the gates, (for his office, of course, ensured him access at any hour, and to any place,) he left his own horse, and those of his party, in charge of the sergeant of the guard; and preceded by a soldier with a lantern, he desired to be shown the way to the quay.

“A large galley is lying off the town, is there not, good fellow?” inquired he, as they wound their way through the dark and narrow lanes of the place.

“Yes, my lord,” replied the man; “she came in about nightfall—a Genoese galley, by her build; but it was past port hours, and the harbour-master would suffer no boat to go out to her.”

“Past port hours, was it?” said De Rushton. “Show me the way, then, to the harbour-master’s house. He lives, I suppose, near the quay.”

“Close to it, my lord. That is it, with the light in the lower story.”

The Acolyth struck the door somewhat impatiently with the hilt of his dagger; and it was presently opened by an important, busy, bustling little personage, who seemed disposed to resent the unwonted summons till his anger was changed into surprise at understanding its import.

“The Great Acolyth!” cried he, “and wishing to go aboard! I beg your most honourable Lordship’s forgiveness. I had no idea that it was your excellency. I will order my own boat at once.”

"Thank you," said De Rushton, briefly; "but let it be procured without delay, for time presses."

"My lord, it shall attend your lordship directly. Will not your lordship walk into my poor house while I give the orders?"

"No," replied the Acolyth; "I will accompany you with your good leave. We shall, perhaps, be quicker."

It took some little time to get the rowers prepared, and the boat off. But at length, rowed by four stout seamen, and attended by the harbour-master and the four Varangians, Sir Edward was on his way to the galley. The dark sea flashed gloriously into phosphorescent light; the watchword—Irene—was given to the sentinel on the pier-head; and presently the dark form of the Genoese galley could be made out through the obscurity. Captain Coressi was on deck; and as the splash of the oars came nearer, he sung out—

"Boat ahoy! What boat's that?"

"From Silivri," answered the harbour-master.

"And with orders, Captain Coressi," added De Rushton.

"Show a light," cried the Captain. "My lord, I hardly thought we should have had instructions to-night."

"I am rather later than I should have been," replied De Rushton, as he mounted the ship's side, followed by the Varangians. "Good night, sir harbour-master! Good night, good fellows! Take that for your pains!" and he gave a gold piece to one of the men.

The boat was presently cast off, and on its way to the shore. "How's the wind?" inquired Sir Edward.

"North and by west," said the Captain.

"Set your men to work, then," returned the other; "up with your sails, and steer for Chalcedon. I will tell you more anon."

It took no long time to get the ship in motion. The long sweeps ploughed the dark waters; the sails belied out; and the galley, which was called the Griffin, went bounding along over the Sea of Marmora. As



soon as the Captain had given his necessary orders, he rejoined Sir Edward ; and the latter, as they walked up and down the deck, informed Coressi of the circumstances in which they stood.

“ Now,” continued he, “ my plan is this : When we are within half a mile of the island, you shall lie to, and send me ashore in your boat. I shall thus, perhaps, be able to gain some useful insight into their schemes. And then do you, at one o’clock, get up to Leander’s Rock, and send your long boat on shore for their capture.”

“ You may run some risk, my lord,” said the Captain.

“ I know I may,” replied De Rushton ; “ but I may gain a very important advantage. You have your full complement of men ?”

“ A hundred soldiers, my lord, besides the seamen and slaves.”

“ I do not expect that there will be more than eight or ten at the conference,” said the Acolyth : “ but it is as well to be on the safe side. And give strict orders that no further harm be done to the conspirators than is absolutely essential to their capture.”

After a good deal more conversation on the subject, the lights of Chalcedon were clearly to be made out ; shortly afterwards the galley lay to ; a small boat was lowered ; an experienced seaman took the rudder ; the rowers were instructed to make as little noise as possible ; and, a quarter of an hour saw the party at Leander’s Rock, without sight or sound of alarm.

“ It is too early,” said De Rushton ; “ get you back, good fellows, to the galley, and bid your Captain remember his instructions.” His orders having been obeyed, he and his followers made their way to the castle ; and groped up a broken staircase, near the spot where the conspirators had held their last meeting. This led on to the ruinous floor of an oriel window, of which some of the shattered mullions remained ; and crouching down behind the window-seat, the knight felt confident that he should be able to

hear everything that was said, and, if necessary, to view what was done, without himself running the slightest risk of observation. For some time he and his companions waited patiently, yet rather anxiously; lest perchance, notwithstanding all their precautions, some hint should have been conveyed to the conspirators. A few minutes, however, after midnight, made them sensible that a boat was approaching from the Asiatic shore; and gliding lightly up to the ruined landing-place, it was moored to the old staple that, in ages past, when Constantinople was in her glory, might have held many a freight of Grecian chivalry and Byzantine loveliness. One by one the Turks glided out, and took up the same position which they had occupied on the former occasion.

"I thought we had been late," said Redschid Pasha. "Surely the Christians mean not to betray us!"

"We are deep enough in their secrets, if they do," observed one of the attendant officers, "to endanger more than one head with the Cæsar."

"All is smooth now," said the Pasha; "but we must not too lightly give way. I am glad that the Sultan consented to the terms. I know Constantinople better than he does; and though Allah would doubtless at last deliver it into the hands of the faithful, there would be many a tent empty first, and many a horse masterless. But now—hark! did I not hear them?"

"I heard something, my lord," said one of the attendants, "but I thought it was in the castle."

"It was an owl," replied another, "when I was here last I noticed one."

"I hear them now, at all events," said the Pasha, "And a boat from the north presently glided up to the walls. So far as Sir Edward de Rushton could make out, in the extreme obscurity of the night, the conspirators on each side were, whether by chance or design, six; and among those that came from Constantinople, he instantly recognized by their voices, in

the course of the preliminary salutations, the Monk Joasaph, and the Great Duke Leontius.

After formal greeting, Redschild Pasha spoke first. "We have to announce," said he, "that, as was agreed upon at our last meeting, my companions and myself have had an interview with the Sultan at Hadri-anople." He seemed to wait for an answer.

"I trust," said Joasaph, "that the communication with which you are charged is such as may prove satisfactory to us. The risk of these interviews is very great on our side,—none at all on yours; and, if the negotiation fails, we only shall have incurred danger: you, most probably, will claim reward from your master."

"They are such as ought to content you to your heart's desire," said Redschild, "unless men in such a desperate condition as your own be more unreasonable than your good sense on other points would lead me to believe that you are."

"Our condition is in GOD's hands, not in yours," replied Joasaph; "we came not here to be taunted with it. Please you to proceed; with the full knowledge that, whatever be the result of the negotiations, here, at least, we meet no more."

"For your first condition, then," said Redschild, "that concerning the ten principal churches, and all the monasteries, it is conceded; but I tell you fairly that we had no small difficulty to procure the Sultan's consent thereto."

"Methinks you counselled, and he acted, wisely," said one of the conspirators who had not yet spoken.

"Do you know that voice?" whispered De Rushton to the soldier next him.

"I think I should, my lord," he replied.

"Who is it?" inquired the Varangian chief.

"Nay, my lord, tell me your own thoughts."

"I think—nay, I am all but sure—that it is Neophytus, the Great Emir:" or, as we should now say, the Lord High Admiral.

"It is he, my lord, past doubt. Hark! he speaks again!"

"Come, to the second condition, Lord Pasha," said he; "we tarry too long over the first."

"The second," said Redschid, deliberately, "was to the effect that no badge of disgrace should be forced on the Christians."

"Yes," interrupted Joasaph, "we know it was: but what we wish to hear is, whether the Sultan agrees to it."

"In all particulars," replied the Pasha, "except that which relates to the allowance of the use of horses to Christians. For yourselves personally, and for those that have a share in the transfer of the city, exceptions will be made; but the Muftis will not consent that it should be general."

"Then my sentence is," cried the Great Emir, "that the negotiation breaks off."

"Pooh, pooh!" said Leontius, "why should it? We have secured our own rights."

"Yea," returned another of the party, "but will not men say that—"

"My lords," said Joasaph, "let us reserve this point to be discussed afterwards: it may be that the result of the last condition,—which is also the most important,—will upset all. If that is agreed to, we can return and discuss this."

"The Sultan," said Redschid, "gives free consent that such a hostage should be given, and in such a way as you require. If, therefore, you can agree to the terms I have hitherto proposed,—and I swear by our most holy law that I am not authorised to make any relaxations in them,—the matter is concluded, and we have only to interchange such written sureties as may be satisfactory to both parties."

"Stay," said Leontius. "What say you to my own particular stipulation, that I shall have Theodora Phranza given into my hands?"

"Even as I said before," replied Redschid Pasha, "It shall be as you desire."

Sir Edward de Rushton, in his eagerness to hear every word relating to the infamous proposal of Leontius, was leaning over the broken mullions of the oriel window, and almost directly over the heads of the conspirators. The night, as we have said, was very dark : but the northerly breeze had cleared that part of the sky from clouds, which hung like a heavy veil over the rest of the heavens. On a sudden, from the north-western portion of the sky, over the hills of Erekli, arose a meteor of most intense brightness, four times as large as the moon ; and traversing the north slowly and majestically, again appeared to touch the horizon at or near Cape Kirpe ; and there exploded, with the sound of a thousand cannon. During its progress, heaven and earth glowed with a brightness exceeding that of the mid-day sun : the domes of Constantinople blazed and glittered ; Chalcedon stood out as clear as at noon ; and speechless terror seized on the conspirators, infidels, and even on De Rushton and his companions. At the explosion, the Turks fell prostrate on their faces, the Greeks crossed themselves, and invoked the innumerable saints of their country ; Joasaph only spoke.

"Heaven itself," said he, in a voice trembling with emotion, "bears witness against this infamous proposal : it would blast the best cause. I will have nought to do with it."

"Hush ! hush !" cried Neophytus ; "there are spies in the castle. I watched them at the window."

"It cannot be, my lord," said Joasaph. "It was the spectacle of terror that abused your fancy."

"I am sure I saw something," replied the Great Emir. "At all events let us have a torch, and examine."

"We will meet them on the staircase," said De Rushton in a whisper to the Varangians. "One man might hold it against a host."

"By your leave, my lord," said one of the soldiers, pushing past him, "you shall not be he. The Empire depends on you, and I shall serve this turn. Now, you

accursed dogs and traitors!" he shouted out, "come on if you will; you are dead men which way soever you turn. I noted the galley, my lord," he added in a lower voice.

All below was dreadful consternation. God and man seemed to have combined against the conspirators. They crowded round the servant, who, with trembling hands, was endeavouring to strike a light. Sparks flew hither and thither, but the tinder would not kindle; and at each ineffectual stroke, the horror and agony of all increased. At last a fortunate spark set it aglow; a torch was lighted, and the gray old walls gleamed ruby red in its glare.

"There are but three or four," said Redschid Pasha, who, as having the clearest conscience, was the coolest of the party. "Follow me! A purse of gold!" he shouted to two Janissaries, who came running up from the boat, "for each of their heads."

He threw himself on the staircase. "Now, Nazarenes! it is certain death for you if we fail! On them! on them!"

But the Varangian stoutly stood his post, till one of the Janissaries, crouching under the Pasha, struck him in the leg with a dagger, and brought him to the ground. He was pulled out, and stabbed on the green sward below. De Rushton instantly took his place.

"Help! help!" shouted one of the surviving Varangians. "Help! help! for the love of God!"

The splash of the approaching oars was heard. "Give way, my men! give way!" roared Captain Coressi. And in another second a bright gleam or tongue of light shot out from the forecastle, followed by the heavy boom of a cannon, rolling from Chalcedon to Seraglio Point.

"To the boats! to the boats!" cried Joasaph. "We are betrayed." The conspirators made a rush for their boat; the Turks, in better order, and fighting hand to hand with their four opponents, made good

their retreat also. One of the Varangians was stretched senseless on the beach from the blow of a boat-hook, in his attempt to stop the fugitives. Another, a quickwitted Londoner, caught up the torch which had been thrown down in the conflict, and lay blazing on the ground, and applied it to the dry withered grass that grew up to the castle walls. In an instant it was in a blaze; and the two boats were clearly seen, the one pulling for Chalcedon, and the other for Constantinople.

"Captain Coressi!" shouted De Rushton, "follow the Turks! The others cannot escape us!" The captain put the ship's head about; the four-and-twenty oars struck the water evenly; the Turks laboured and hauled in vain: flight was hopeless; resistance impossible; and, at length, they obeyed the Genoese commander's order to lie-to.

"Keep them in sight, if you can," said De Rushton, leaping into his boat, and followed by his three soldiers; he that was stunned having received only a momentary injury. "They cannot escape us."

And, indeed, the effeminate arms and weak hearts of the nobles of Constantinople were no match for the brawny muscles and English courage of the Varangians; their weight also was a fearful disadvantage; for they too only carried four oars. So that, though a sailor would have smiled at both flight and pursuit; though over and over again the oars of both parties flew out of the water; and more than once, the rowers were precipitated backward, half the space between Leander's Rock and the city was not passed, when De Rushton was within a boat's length of the fugitives.

"Turn on them! Turn on them!" cried Joasaph: "we are six to four! It is our only chance!"

The conspirators turned: and the boats were presently alongside of each other. But the swell was now considerable; blows were struck at random, and at random returned; and both parties were in

more danger from the waves than from their enemies. Still the flight of the traitors was hindered, and thus their last hope cut off.

Meanwhile, the heavy sweeps of the galley thundered behind them; and up came the vessel like a greyhound on its prey. Five or six torches were kindled on deck; and as the Griffin dashed up to them, the conspirators felt that all was over.

"Assure us of life, and we surrender," cried Leontius.

"I will assure you of nothing," said De Rushton, "except that the Cæsar wishes to be merciful, if you submit to his mercy."

"Surrender!" cried Coressi, "or we fire upon you."

Mean, pale, and trembling, the traitors submitted; they were ordered to bring their boat to the galley's side, hauled up one by one, and secured on board. The Turks were already in security.

"God bless you, Lord Acolyth!" said Coressi. "You have done most gallantly."

"My good Varangians might be depended on, I knew," said De Rushton. "But onwards! worthy captain! The Emperor must hear of this as soon as may be."

"We shall be under the palace gardens in twenty minutes," said Coressi. "But, my Lord, did you see the meteor?"

"See it!" said the Acolyth. "I never beheld aught so awful. It betrayed us."

"I thought it would," said the captain. "It portends some great changes, belike."

"No less, I fear," answered De Rushton. "I took it at first for some signal."

"So did I," said Coressi. "Hark! what is that?"

First one bell, then another, then another, came pealing from the shore; then it seemed that every church in the Royal City was pouring out its summons—lights flashed from the land—gradually a long line of tapers made themselves perceptible—the thunder



of the bells ceased, and, soft and clear, from a thousand voices, *Kyrie Eleison* floated out over the night waves.

"Doubtless a procession," said Coressi, "I would fain be there also. Where shall we put in, my Lord?"

"Under the palace gardens," replied the Acolyth. "Land me there: I will send you the Emperor's orders."

And the galley flew onward to the shore.

## CHAPTER XIV.

“ And let us try, with God’s help, while we may,  
To make the done undone, ere ends the day.”

*Love’s Revenge.*

WHEN the peasant Cyril had made his escape from the inquiries of the Turkish officers, it struck him, to use his own expression to his wife, that he had been a very great rascal. “ But what was I to do ? ” continued he. “ I was not born to be a martyr.”

“ Nor I neither,” said his wife. “ Wherefore, let us quietly go to the cottage, where old Cosmas used to live till they murdered his son ; we shall find shelter there, I warrant.”

“ I know not, I know not, sweetheart,” replied her husband. “ Here have I this soldier’s money in my scrip ! S. Luke be praised they found it not ! and it goes against my heart to have betrayed him, or at least not to give him warning. I will back towards Hadrianople, may be I may meet him on the road.”

“ May be you may meet the foul fiend, rather say,” said his wife angrily. “ Come along, come along : a wise man may do once what we have done to-night, but only a fool will do it twice.”

“ Nay, nay, wife, I will go. There, take the money. I warrant you I keep out of the way of mischief. I will go, I will.”

And in spite of all that his wife could urge—in spite of tears, threats, and ridicule, Cyril set forward ; night being now very far advanced. With a good

heart he kept on, feeling as if he were making some slight recompense to his benefactor for his former vile cowardice and ingratitude. Twilight broke before he reached the city; and he retired into a little grove at the side of the road to hold council with himself on what he was to do, on the degree of danger that would attend his re-entering the city, on the chances that Contari would return on the same road by which he had gone, and on other themes of a similar kind.

"After all," said he to himself, "would that I had taken the advice of my wife! And yet—and yet—well; none can compel me to enter the city; and while I keep out of it, I am safe enough. Would, though, that I could do something for that soldier!"

While occupied with these thoughts, his attention was attracted to a party of horsemen, who, leaving the city, were now winding up the hill where he stood. Though unable to see, at that distance, the person of any of them, Cyril felt a kind of unaccountable presentiment that Contari was one; and on finding that a number, at least, of them were Greeks, he left his retreat, and came forth into the road, so that they could not advance without passing him. As the party drew nearer, he discovered beyond all doubt, that one of them was the Varangian whom he had guided into Hadrianople, and instantly resolved on telling him what had occurred. The others, though utterly unknown to Cyril, were, it is almost superfluous to say, Euphrasia, her father and mother, Burstow, and Stephen, the latter of whom now wore the dress of a Christian peasant well to do in the world, or small farmer.

"Noble sir," said Cyril, addressing Contari, "may I crave a word with you for a moment, and in private?"

"Be quick, then, good peasant, for my business is one of haste. Lochagus, ride forward; I will overtake you."

"May it please you, worthy sir, when you dismissed me last night, I hastened home with my best speed,

and found that, through that accursed horse which you left at my poor cottage, the Turks had set it on fire, and were waiting to seize me. Hardly did I escape with my life. They took all I had,"—at least, thought Cyril, they were as guilty as if they had, and I am sure the Varangian could afford to make good the money he gave me, if I had lost it,—“and among other things, your worship’s letter. That they opened and read; and the chief of the party sent two or three Janissaries to the cottage therein mentioned by you, and, as I fear me, with no good intent.”

“Now God forbid!” cried Contari. “Lochagus, a word with you!” He related the circumstances to Burstow, and then said, “What shall we do?”

“We cannot leave the Lady Choniatis and her daughter, nor can we diminish our numbers by separating from them. They must push on with us; for I fear the worst, if they find out the truth of the matter.” He again rode forward to the rest of the party, and explained what had occurred, and what was feared.

“Oh, let us save the poor girl and her mother at all risks, if we can,” cried Euphrasia.

“We have need enough to ride, on our own account,” said the Exarch, “and this is an additional spur.”

“Then on, sir, in S. George’s name,” cried Contari. “Here are you, and I, and Stephen, and the Lochagus, whose one arm is worth four Turks, any day,—only let us lose no time.”

“Much at the same moment that Contari said this, the Turks were, without any manner of hurry, leaving Bourghiaz, after the night’s repose, which, by their superior officer’s direction, they had taken there. But as they rode slowly, and Burstow and Contari hurried on their party at its utmost speed, it is not astonishing that the latter should have gained very considerably on the former, and have made their appearance on the hill in time to prevent Eudocia the necessity of further suffering.

As they gained the brow, Contari, who was foremost, shading his eyes with his hand, and exclaiming, "Ah! what have we here?" drew his sword, the only weapon which he had, and galloped recklessly down the hill.

"We must support him," cried Burstow, "or he is lost: there are six or eight of them.—Ladies, ride on as fast as you can, keeping about a hundred yards behind us: you will be quite safe. Now, Exarch! now, Stephen!" And the three dashed forward together.

On descending into the little valley which intervened between the hills, they again lost sight of the whole party; but, at their second view, they were near enough clearly to distinguish what was passing. Eudocia lay stretched on the ground; Walid was bending over her, and apparently listening with great eagerness to what she was saying. The other Turks, also dismounted, were in a circle round, and holding their own and their leader's horses: two being more especially occupied in keeping guard over Father Demetrius. Contari and his companions were not a hundred yards from them, when first perceived. All was confusion—mounting of horses—an attempt to form—an adjuration to stand firm—when the Varangians were among them. Walid was in the midst of a brief exhortation to his men to do their duty, when one sweep of Contari's long sword silenced his voice in death; one or two blows were struck by the Janissaries, but the loss of their leader, and the suddenness of the attack, had beaten down their courage; and, within five minutes from the first onset, they were riding off in all directions, not without leaving two of their comrades on the scene of action.

While Burstow and Nicetas Choniates rode back to cheer their companions with the intelligence that the danger was over, and Stephen procured such information as he could from the crowd of peasants who were now rapidly collecting, Contari threw himself from his horse, and kneeling by Eudocia, eagerly inquired into

what had passed. She was too much exhausted by pain and the struggle to be able to reply in more than a few words; but Father Demetrius, after despatching one of the bystanders for Sophia Tomatis, gave him the full account. "You will have," he added, "a heroine for your bride, my son; only love her according to her deserts, and she will be happy indeed."

"I cannot do that, Father," replied Contari; "but I will love her most dearly and tenderly, nevertheless. But what are we to do? Her I cannot leave here; my own party—whom, God be praised! I have rescued—are hurrying on to Constantinople: had they not all better journey together? But it must be at once, for we shall doubtless be pursued."

"Carry her first to her mother's cottage," replied Father Demetrius; "there I will look to her, for I have some small skill in medicine, and you shall tell me what has chanced as we go along. Bid all your party thither too; your horses must want refreshment, and the time will not be lost."

The advice was followed. Contari raised Eudocia in his arms, as easily as he might have carried an infant; and bearing her softly and quietly along, he laid her on her own bed, and then left her to the charge of the Priest and of her mother, whom they had met; almost in a state of frenzy, near the cottage door.

"Burstow," said Contari, "my rede is, that we ride for Wisa. Even now, no doubt, the Janissaries are in hot pursuit of us; and we may, perchance, throw them out for an hour or so, by leaving the road they will judge us likely to take."

"And Wisa is nearer than Silivri,—nearer even than Tchoru," said the Lochagus. "But the road under the Balkan is terrible."

"Perhaps the better," replied Contari. "But, at all events, we must not tarry here. Give my poor Eudocia half an hour,—the horses must have that time,—and then she *must* be ready; for any fate is better than leaving her here."

“And she may then go, my son,” added the Priest, who had entered the room while the latter was speaking, “in safety, as I trust. I will ride with you too; for though I will never desert my flock, yet I think that it will be for their safety, as well as mine, if for a time I withdraw myself from these bloodthirsty Turks.”

“Come with us, father,” said Euphrasia; “we shall need your prayers, and perhaps your counsel. But oh! do not let us lose unnecessary time.”

“We will not, my daughter,” replied the Priest. “I will go seek a horse for myself, and by that time we may be ready. And God and the Panaghia defend us! for we are of those that suffer for righteousness’ sake.”

In the mean time the gaoler, at the usual hour, visited the cell in which Burstow and Choniates had been confined. He carried with him their breakfast, and as he set it down,—“There, Varangian,” said he, “that is the last you will ever need; for the Sultan—but ah! what! how’s this?” He ran to the beds, and found the deception. “By the Prophet! they must be fiends! they have vanished! Now Allah save us from sorcery! There is not a hole large enough for a mouse to escape; they could not have known the wards of the lock.” And he scrutinised door, window, and ceiling very minutely, and then proceeded, much crest-fallen, to make his report to the lieutenant of the guard,—the same soldier whom Stephen had wished to attack on the previous night.

“Made their escape, sir, and no door nor window broken open? Never tell me that; such things happen not now-a-days. Run for two or three of the watch, and then we will examine the thing together. By Allah! when the Sultan hears of this, your head is like to be in peril!”

The gaoler did as he was desired, and the party went to the empty cell. It was unlocked; for that

functionary, in his dismay, had left the key in the door, as he hurried down stairs.

"Are you sure, sir," said the lieutenant of the guard, sternly, "that the Nazarenes were not safe enough when you went in, and that they had not a golden key to make their escape when you came to me?"

"By the Prophet"—began the gaoler.

"I know they cannot escape from the castle," said the lieutenant; "but that does not lessen your guilt. You shall pay right dearly, if——"

"Look, sir," cried another of the party, and its shrewdest man. "What is the matter with the plank? By Mahomet! they have cut a trap-door," he added, with some difficulty pulling it up.

"Quick! quick! to the room below," cried the lieutenant.

They ran down—threw open the door—found it empty,—and observed that a similar method of exit had been used from it.

"Now I understand!" cried the gaoler. "The women were shouting and howling last night, because, as they said, some one was coming in from above, and I thought——"

"The women! By the Black Stone, we are all undone if anything has befallen them," cried the officer. They hurried to the apartment they had occupied—found it untenanted, saw the trap-door open, and heard the sullen roar of the river underneath.

By this time the castle began to be alarmed: and it was soon discovered that some accomplice or accomplices must have introduced a boat through the river gate. Inquiry was made along the river side, but to no effect. Every one who might possibly be implicated in the matter was under the greatest apprehension for his own personal safety; as Mahomet had expressed an intention to examine Burstow for himself that morning, and had conceived the highest ideas of the beauty of Euphrasia Choniatis from the account



which the officer, who had effected her capture, had taken care to have transmitted to him. Confusion was at its highest, when the arrival of the Janissaries who had been concerned with Cyril the night before tended to make the fact of an accomplice more clear, and to prove that the scheme had been well laid. What the plan was could not be learnt till Walid with his party should discover it from Eudocia Tomatis ; but the fact of the escape was certain, and a little inquiry convinced the officers that the fugitives had set forth on the Constantinople road. The man on guard remembered that, as soon as the gates were opened, a party of mounted Greeks had issued from the city, and, immediately afterwards, had set forth at so quick a pace as for the moment to excite his attention.

Pursuit, then, was all that remained. Pursuit, if successful, would appease, and if earnest might palliate, Mahomet's anger ; and, within half an hour from the first alarm, a hundred Janissaries were on their way towards Bourghiaz. From one or two wayfarers they learnt that their pursuit lay right ; and, could a bird's-eye view have been taken of the whole scene, they would have been seen entering Eski Baba, just as Father Demetrius, the Exarch, with his family, the Varangians, and Eudocia and her mother, a party of nine in all, were leaving the cottage to which we have so often had occasion to refer.

Meantime, determined to lose no clue to a discovery of the truth, the lieutenant of the guard resolved to pay a visit to Manuel Chrysolaras. That nobleman had, on the preceding night, been separated from his companions solely and entirely with a view of tampering more easily with his fidelity to the Cæsar ; and of attaching him to the factious party in Constantinople. He was therefore removed to an apartment furnished with every luxury that lay within the reach of even the Sultan : the hangings were of silk and pearls ; the chairs and couches of ebony, inlaid with ivory : the fireplace had silver andirons ; and a costly chandelier

hung from the ceiling. Here the prisoner was supplied with a sumptuous repast, and with the costliest wines; and having been informed that he was to be favoured by the Sultan with an interview on the morrow, he was asked when he chose to retire for the night. Two slaves attended him to his bed chamber, adorned with at least as much luxury as the other apartment; where, with difficulty excusing himself from their menial attendance, Chrysolaras was left to meditate on the reason of this singular change in his circumstances; and, as he closed his eyes, to breathe one last prayer for the success of his comrades in the difficult enterprise which they meditated that night, and above all for the safety of Euphrasia.

He was still asleep on the following morning, for the labour of the preceding night had almost worn him out, when a knock at his door was followed by a petition for admittance—and the lieutenant of whom we have already spoken, entered.

“I have to apologise, my Lord,” said he, “for thus disturbing your rest; but circumstances have occurred which must excuse my intrusion.”

“What are they, sir?” inquired Chrysolaras, rather eagerly, immediately connecting the visit with the enterprise from which he had been so unwillingly cut off.

The lieutenant had concerted his plan. “I am sorry to say, my Lord, that your companions were last night guilty of the egregious folly of attempting to escape from their confinement; and that they were assisted by some person or persons from without. They are, of course, in safe custody; but the accomplice has escaped.”

“Well, sir,” said Manuel.

“My lord, I have in vain applied to the prisoners for any explanation as to who this unknown party could be; I have reason to fear that it was some official, which makes me more anxious to discover who it was: I have told them that their lives are worth nothing,

when the Sultan shall be informed of the attempt, and that their only chance of escape is to tell all that they know."

"Well, sir," again replied Chrysolaras.

"They, my Lord, I am sorry to say, were not to be persuaded: I thought that as you feel an interest doubtless, in their welfare, and are probably acquainted with their plans, you would perhaps do them the only good turn which circumstances put in your power, by informing me who this audacious accomplice was. You will probably save their lives by so doing."

"If I could," replied Chrysolaras, "by so horrid an ingratitude, God be my witness, I would not! But I know not who might have helped them. I know that they attempted to escape, and I hoped that they had succeeded; but God's will be done!"

"Then I may tell the Sultan, my Lord, that you are absolutely ignorant—"

"I send no message, sir: what I have told you, it is, of course, in your power to use as you please."

At this moment another officer came in. "The Sultan has been informed," said he, "of the escape of that girl and the rest of the prisoners—"

The lieutenant had in vain tried to stop him. "Hush! hush!" he said.

"Have they escaped?" said Chrysolaras.

"Eh! how? have they? why all the Castle knows that."

"It is useless to deny it now," said the lieutenant; "but what says the Sultan?"

"I never saw him so moved—you must to him directly."

"Allah preserve me!" cried he in consternation, as he hurried to Mahomet.

"Now God and All Saints be praised," cried Chrysolaras. "It matters little what becomes of me!"

## CHAPTER XV.

“ But oh !  
 What shall I say to thee, Lord Scroop ! Thou cruel,  
 Ingrateful, savage, and inhuman creature !  
 Thou, that dost bear the bag of all my counsels,  
 That know’st the very bottom of my soul,  
 That almost might’st have coined me into gold,  
 Would’st thou have practised on me for thy use.”

*King Henry V.*

THE great meteor had excited the most intense consternation in Constantinople. Its passage through the sky was slow enough to allow many of the inhabitants to view it for themselves; and the report with which it exploded was enough almost to awaken the dead. Doors opened; tradesmen, half clad, poured out; patricians swarmed from the gaming-house, officers from the mess-room; all was terror and confusion.

“ Saw ye ever the like of this ? ” said Theodosius, the wheelwright, to his gossip, the butcher at the corner of S. Irene’s lane.

“ Once, neighbour, once,” said he; “ and that was the year before the accursed Council of Florence.”

“ Ah ! ah ! it is clear enough ! ” cried Peter the sacristan; “ it is the damnable doctrine of these Latins, that the sky itself rebukes. Mercy on us ! mercy on us ! what have we lived to see ! ”

“ Oh, infamous Azymites ! Oh, blasphemous Double-processionists ! ” sighed Pattelari, the schoolmaster; “ the Turks, the Turks, say I, a thousand times rather than the Pope ! ”

"Ay, my masters; and this spawn of hell, this Cardinal Isidore, is to celebrate next week in the Great Church," cried the butcher.

"Now God and All Saints forbid!" said Peter. "Twenty meteors were not so terrible!"

The bell of S. Irene pealed forth, and at the same moment a servant of the palace approached, crying, "Form! form, good people! the most holy Archbishop of Chalcedon will go in procession from the Great Church to the Tower of S. Romanus, incontinently, to implore the defence of the Panaghia the Protectress; and the ever illustrious Cæsar will walk in it barefoot."

And a gorgeous procession it was that passed half-an-hour afterwards from the square of S. Sophia. First, with tapers and crucifixes, were the servants of the church, and a large body of the aristocracy of the imperial city; then came the deacons of its countless churches, two and two, the silver censers flashing in the dim light, and the sweet smell rising to heaven; then the Priests, in their gorgeous robes, the Bishops, of whom so many resided in the city; then the Metropolitan of Chalcedon, a venerable old man, his white beard sweeping over his mandyas; and the Cæsar, barefoot and clad in mean attire, at his right hand, but a little behind him.

And wildly and plaintively that Litany rose, through the darkness and stillness of the night, as they passed through the echoing streets. They had now nearly reached the goal, the tower of S. Romanus,—of which we shall have to write so much when we come to speak of the great siege,—when Sir Edward de Rushton, hurrying along after the procession, came up with the Emperor, and falling on one knee, addressed a few words to him in a low voice.

"Mother of God, I thank thee!" cried Constantine Palæologus. "Most holy Prelate, God hears your prayers. Let them be guarded well, Lord Acolyth. Follow on, my lords!" And the procession again moved forwards.

Sir Edward de Rushton lost no time in returning to the ship, and caused the prisoners, under a safe guard, to be carried to the palace. The Turks were confined by themselves near the quarters of the Varangians, Redschid Pasha being treated suitably to his rank. The Christians were led to the Emperor's private suite of apartments, and secured in different rooms, in order that there might be no collusion between them when put upon their trial.

It appeared that the most important of the traitors were the Great Duke Leontius, the Emir Neophytus, and the monk Joasaph. The other three were officers connected with the native forces, and under the immediate command of the Great Domestic.<sup>1</sup> Phranza was summoned, according to the directions left by the Cæsar; and the Archimandrite<sup>2</sup> of the Studium was hastily called from the procession: as, in a matter so nearly concerning the privileges of the Church as the arrest of Joasaph, it was deemed imprudent to act without his concurrence, or at least his privity. The Abbat and the Great Protovestiare were, accordingly, in attendance when the Cæsar returned from the midnight procession; and Sir Edward de Rushton had kept them company during the weary and melancholy hour which had elapsed between their being summoned to the palace, and the notice that Constantine was ready to receive them.

They were accordingly ushered into the room of audience, where the Palæologus was about to examine into the details of the conspiracy. He seemed pale, and worn out with anxiety; for, in truth, with one or two exceptions, he knew not on whom he might de-

<sup>1</sup> Great Domestic: that is, Commander in Chief of the Forces: a dignity which had its rise under Heraclius. This was generally a sinecure; and the principal office of the person who held it was to carry the sword of the Emperor in processions. If he were absent, that duty devolved on the Great Protostrator.

<sup>2</sup> Archimandrite: literally, "The Head of the Fold:" that is, the Abbat.

pend in that corrupt court. One of those on whom he had placed most reliance, Manuel Chrysolaras, was gone ; another, the Great Duke, had proved a traitor ; Sir Edward de Rushton, his chief stay, was a foreigner ; and Phranza, by whose counsel he was principally guided in civil affairs, was so overwhelmed with grief, as to be of little use in suggesting remedies to an ill that truly seemed irremediable. Two secretaries were present ; one or two of the Emperor's servants ; and there was a strong guard of the Varangians at the door. It was Constantine's wish that the inquiry should be as strictly private as circumstances allowed.

"My lord," he said to the Archimandrite of the Studium, "we much regret that treason of the most flagrant and palpable kind should have been brought home to one of your monks,—as we hear, a man of learning,—as we can testify, a preacher much approved and followed of the people,—named Joasaph. Nevertheless, such and so great is our veneration for that Church whereof we are but an unworthy son, though a crowned monarch, that we were willing to take no steps herein, as to his condemnation and punishment, till we had the benefit of your counsel. The evidence on which we proceed you shall hear, and shall then be able equally with ourselves to judge."

"The evidence," said the old man, sorrowfully, "I have, so please your majesty, already heard ; and it is conclusive. The Caloire Joasaph deserves death ; yet I trust that the Cæsar will show such respect for the Church in the first place, and for the Angelic Habit in the second, as to be content with perpetual imprisonment."

"Sire," said De Rushton, "from all that I saw and heard, this man Joasaph is the prime mover of the conspiracy—its life and soul. Consider therefore, with what justice others can be punished, if he escape. And you, reverend lord, should rather, methinks, rejoice, by one just blow, to rid your Church of such a blemish, than to be exposed to the charge of unwor-

thily sheltering him therein." For Sir Edward, as a Latin, viewed the Greek monasteries with a pardonable prejudice, and was by no means willing to see them made asylums for criminals.

"I was sure," replied the Archimandrite, bitterly, "that I should not lack my Lord Acolyth's good word. But I will call on your Majesty to remember that pure justice is not always wisdom; that at this time, in consequence of this attempt at the Union, your Majesty's sincere devotion to our Eastern Church is somewhat questioned by some—far be it from me to agree with them! but yet, I say, by some that have the ears of the people,—and to punish Joasaph capitally would not tend to lessen that ill rumour."

"My lord," said Constantine with dignity, "what is really right, is really expedient. We shall never suffer ourselves to be swayed in our duty, or turned from it by popular opinion. Nevertheless, as we said, all the mercy that we can show to so well-known a Priest, and so noted a brother of the Studium, we shall desire to extend. And it is something in this man's favour that he opposed to the utmost of his power the most infamous part of the scheme,—that touching the Lady Theodora Phranza."

"My lord Cæsar," said Phranza, "I wish not to be swayed by any personal consideration in this business. If I thought that it were really for the good of the empire that he should die, my sentence should be for death, though he had spoken thrice as much on my daughter's behalf. But I think that, considering the state of things generally, the need there is of pacification, the fact that we dare not trace out this conspiracy too widely and deeply through all its branches,—the certainty that the common people will overlook the desperate villany of this man,—and surely regard him as a martyr to his dislike of the Union, perpetual imprisonment were a better doom than death. Not, my Lord Archimandrite, in the Studium, but in such a prison as the Cæsar shall, in his wisdom, judge fit."



"We will be guided by your advice," said Constantine; "of ourselves we are ever disposed to mercy. If He That harrowed Hell hath forgiven us, we are bound also to forgive."

"Save, sire," said Phranza, "where forgiveness to the guilty is cruelty to the innocent. I trust there is no one here who would for a moment advise the extension of mercy to the others. The Great Duke and the Emir should die, though an angel pleaded for them; the others should have promise of their life on condition of revealing all they know of the conspiracy."

"So be it," said Constantine Palæologus. "The next question is, How are we to treat with the Turks?"

At this moment, a sergeant of the Varangian guard knocked at the door with intelligence that Sir Edward de Rushton was wanted without, on business of importance. The knight requested the leave of the Emperor, and on going into the antechamber found, to his equal delight and astonishment, Contari and Burstow.

"Now God be praised!" said he—"we had been told that you had all lost your lives in the attempt. How is it with your party? Where is the Lord Chrysolaras?"

In as few words as possible, Burstow acquainted him with all that had passed; and then added,—

"I should not have ventured thus to intrude on the Council, my lord, but that the report goes you have a Pasha prisoner in this hellish plot. Is that so?"

"Yes," answered De Rushton.

"And I deemed that, before the Emperor's word was pledged to any course with him, he should know that Lord Chrysolaras was a prisoner. I am sure the Sultan will not release him for ransom; but for such a prisoner he perhaps might."

"You did well," said Sir Edward. "Return to the Exarch, and see that both he and his family, and the good Priest of whom you speak, be taken all care of;

and tell them that as early as may be to-morrow I will wait upon them. Where are they now?"

"At the Lord Chrysolaras' palace," replied the Varangian. "The Exarch so requested; and Lord Manuel had himself mentioned it."

"It is well," said De Rushton. "I am sure that the Cæsar will forget neither you nor Contari. Fare you well both! I must return to him with speed."

"Well, my lord?" said Constantine rather anxiously, as the Great Acolyth entered the room.

"Good news, Sire! The prisoners we deemed lost are returned, all but Lord Chrysolaras,—and he is not dead, but a captive at Hadrianople. They have had some hairbreadth escapes—which your Majesty may desire to hear at a less busy time. The Varangian Burstow, whom your Majesty remembers, deemed that, in dealing with this Redschid Pasha, it might much concern your splendour to know what had happened to Chrysolaras: in order that if need be, an exchange might be effected between the two."

"God has heard our Litany," said the Emperor. "They are well cared for?"

"At the Lord Chrysolaras's house, Sire."

"I will be the first to visit that poor girl," said Phranza, joyfully. "I have done her injustice, and need is I make reparation. Now, Sire, I can go to this work with a light heart."

"Would that all offenders could make reparation as easily!" said Constantine. "But we must not lose time. Let us begin with mercy. Let the Monk Joasaph be called in; and, Secretary, be exact in your notes."

Joasaph was presently introduced between two Varangians. He was a tall, dark, dangerous looking man: his eyes were deep set, black, and with the sparkle of live coals; his beard unusually long; his forehead high; he had drawn the cowl as much as possible over his face,—but he stood erect, and seemed undaunted at the imminent danger in which he found himself.

"It grieves us deeply," said the Emperor, after looking at him for half a minute with a stern glance under which even Joasaph's eye quailed, "it grieves us deeply to find, as the prime mover of a plot against not only ourselves, but against the very existence of the Church wherein he is a Priest, to find, we say, a Caloire,—a learned man too—a brother of the first Monastery in the world. You deny not the charge?"

"If your Majesty means, that I deny not the conspiracy,—I glory in it," replied Joasaph. "But it was to save our Church from the accursed Azymites, and the execrable Union, that I would have put an end to the existence of the State. And what of that? A few months sooner, or a few months later, it must come at last. Emperor, the next time that Autumn chases the leaves—as I have just seen them,—along the gardens of Constantine, your throne will have been swept away like them, will be trodden to the ground like them, will be contemptible like them. Come it must; why seek by these subterfuges to put off——"

"Sir Monk," interrupted Constantine, "placed as you are, about to receive sentence for a crime which no subtilty can excuse or justify, it had better become you to ask pardon first of your GOD, and then of your Emperor, than to use such vain and impious sophisms. It is decreed, say you, that our throne is to fall. Be it so. To GOD's will we shall not be the last to submit with cheerfulness. We shall fall, I am bold to say it, like a Christian and an Emperor: and these brave men, and others like them, if they cannot be victors, will at least be martyrs. But may a man bring about a deed of blood, because it is ordained? Then were Iscariot excused."

"I die," said Joasaph, "for opposing the Union. You judge me now: God will judge you hereafter. I say no more."

"You would deserve to die," replied Constantine, gravely, "not for opposing the Union, but for selling

the city to the Turks rather than submit to it. But in consideration of your office, and lest the vulgar cry should resemble what you have even now said yourself, we will be merciful far beyond your deserts. Your sentence is perpetual imprisonment: that the necessity of the State, and the well-being of those whom you would otherwise pervert, no less demand than your own guilt."

"Take notice," said Joasaph, "that this union will not prosper; that God's curse is upon it; that all good men—"

"Take him off! Take him off, guard!" cried Phranza. "Keep him in the guard-room till further orders be issued. Is it your Majesty's will that the Great Duke should be summoned?"

"Let him be brought in," said Constantine. "My Lord Acolyth, is that day which is breaking?" and he pointed to one of the windows.

"It had broken, my liege, when I was called out even now. Accept the omen, Sire."

At this moment a scuffle was heard outside the door,—the stern voices of the Varangians, and the frantic exclamations of Leontius, "I cannot! I will not! I will die rather," hardly hushed even as the door was opened, and he was dragged, rather than led, into the presence of the Cæsar.

The miserable man wore the same cloak which he had assumed when he set forth to the secret rendezvous: it was drenched with salt water, torn in the fight between the two boats, and as unlike the usual dress of the luxurious nobleman as imagination could conceive. His hair was loose and dishevelled; his face a ghastly pale; his fingers worked convulsively together; his eyes rolled restlessly around: the bitterness of death was already begun in him. The guards, as they stood on each side, half held him, half supported him; it seemed as though he would fain have spoken, but his voice refused its office; and there he stood,—shunned by all, contemned by all, marked out

for punishment,—the very image of a detected and impotent traitor.

“My Lord Grand Duke,” said Constantine, “to prolong this scene were to change justice into cruelty. The proofs of your treason—your gross, diabolical treason,—are too manifest for you to attempt a defence. We suppose you will not attempt any.” He paused ; but Leontius only wrung his hands. “The necessities of the State would, in any case, have forbidden our extending mercy to you ; but the villainy contemplated by you towards a noble lady of our court, dries up all pity in its source. God grant you forgiveness for this, and for all your other sins ! Your sentence is, that you be beheaded at noon, in the inner court of the palace. Till then, you shall have all such ghostly consolation as you may need. Any Bishop resident in the city shall attend you, and your family, whom you have so deeply wronged, shall have free access to you.”

Leontius heard as one stupified. At length, by a sudden exertion of strength he burst from his guards, and flung himself at the feet of Constantine, grasping his purple buskins with frantic violence.

“Oh, mercy, mercy, Lord Cæsar !” he shrieked, in a voice that long afterwards rang in the ears of the auditors. “Only mercy for my life ! Spare that, and take every thing I have ; spare it, and I will bless your clemency to the end of my days : spare it,—and imprison me where you will—only life !—for God’s sake, life !”

“Lord Grand Duke,” said the Emperor, “these effeminate entreaties advantage you not one jot. Your earthly doom is fixed. Only use the same vehemence towards God, and, as this holy man,” and he looked to the Archimandrite, “will tell you, His Ear is ever open. Secretary, give the warrant” (for one of the officials had been busy drawing it out) “and the purple ink.”

The miserable nobleman uttered shriek after shriek,

and would have clung more closely to the Cæsar's knees; but the guards, who, out of a principle of humanity, had allowed him, when he burst from them, one chance for life, now dragged him off, and held him between them till the Cæsar, notwithstanding the outcries of the prisoner, had calmly and quietly affixed his name to the death-warrant in the purple ink, which was the peculiar badge of the Emperor of the Romans.

Leontius was then dragged off, and the two inferior officers introduced,—the Grand Emir being kept back to the last. A choice was held out to them between immediate death, and perpetual imprisonment: the latter being reserved for them if they made a full and free confession of all that they knew concerning the conspiracy. As, only too thankful to escape death, they revealed all their information, its ramifications were so extensive as to strike terror into the Emperor himself. Many of the highest officers of his court were implicated in it; none could say where it would stop: and at every fresh disclosure, the miserable chances of preserving Constantinople from the Turks grew less and less. When the informers were removed, Constantine gave orders that the Secretaries and other officials should withdraw, and then, in private, with Phranza and Sir Edward De Bushton, he took counsel in the sad view that opened before him. The result of that deliberation we shall hereafter have occasion to relate.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“ That wealth, too sacred for their country’s use ;  
 That wealth, too pleasing to be lost for freedom ;  
 That wealth, which granted to their weeping prince  
 Had ranged embattled nations at our gates.”

*Irene.*

OUR tale must now pass over a period of about four months ; and carry forward our readers to the April of the year of grace 1453.

But it will be necessary to give a short historical glance at the events of the interval. They then, who are acquainted with the annals of the period in question, may miss the present chapter, which shall be a short one ; and will find the story continue, uninterrupted by the insertion, in the next.

Anna Patellari, the much injured wife of the Great Duke, did not desert her husband’s cause when it seemed hopeless. That night she appealed to Phranza, to De Rushton, to the Emperor himself. All was in vain. In the grey of the morning she sent for Salathiel, the rich merchant of the Contoscalion, and by parting with all her jewels raised the enormous sum of five thousand gold pieces. This was too much for the fidelity of the guards : and long before the messengers of death arrived, Leontius and his wife were on their way to Hadrianople.

On the twelfth of September, 1452, the False Union of the two Churches took place. Cardinal Isidore offered Pontifical High Mass, according to the Roman rite, in the Church of S. Sophia : and the schism, from

that time, became more determinately embittered than ever. The great church was deserted. The conforming Priests were suspended. Those that had communicated from their hands, or from the hands of those that had communicated with them, or that had merely assisted at the Mass, or even held communion with those that had assisted, were put to penance at the approaching Lent. The siege, now known to impend, was hardly talked of: the Azymite and Processionist controversies were in every one's mouth; Cardinal Isidore could not leave his mansion without a guard; the Monk Gennadius issued his instructions and thundered forth his anathemas with the authority of a Pontiff; Constantine and Phranza were known to submit to the Union merely from motives of expediency; the Monks were actively engaged against it: everywhere was polemical discussion and religious invective.

Constantine, meanwhile, was not inattentive to the military defence of Constantinople. Provisions of all kinds were brought into the city by sea: salt fish, salt meat, cheese, flour, biscuits, pease, beans, sheep, oxen, hams, wine, everything which prudence could suggest or art procure. Beside the native soldiers, he had two thousand western auxiliaries, under the charge of John Justiniani, a Genoese officer of noble birth and high reputation.

The reader must remember that Constantinople, properly so called, is in the form of a triangle, or to speak more accurately, of a half crescent. The convex part of the crescent is bounded by the Bosphorus; the concave by the harbour called the Golden Horn, which runs up between the city and its suburb of Galata; and the land side, or base of the triangle, presented a double wall of about four miles and a quarter in length, protected by an exterior ditch. The bastions of this wall, as they would undoubtedly be the first point attacked, so all the skill of the besieged had been laid out in their construction; and the Tower of



S. Romanus, half way between the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, was considered the turning point for the possession of the City.

On the 6th of April, 1453, which was Good Friday, the Crescent first appeared under the walls of Constantinople; and thenceforward the works continued with incredible ardour. Three great batteries thundered day and night against the wall; the three enormous cannons were, by great exertions, fired seven times a day each; and machines of the most formidable kind were then for the first time brought into operation, or at least so much improved as to acquire a new place in the art of war.

At one and the same time the cannon thundered, the cross-bows twanged; huge rams played against the bastions, the men that worked them being defended by a light roof of leather; flights of arrows were shot into the city; the Greek fire burnt through mail and plate; the match-lock musket was slowly and painfully discharged; in some cases a fire-arm, nearly resembling the then unknown *snap-haunce*, was brought into action; red hot shot fell into the streets; and still, hourly, the trenches ran on; still the Christian chivalry of the west, either by a sudden sally, or by a well directed flight of arrows, or by a deadly shower of bullets, larger than walnuts, held their assailants at bay. The great cannon burst, and killed all that were in attendance on it; and the progress of the Mussulmans, all through the Holy Season between Easter and Whitsuntide, was so slow, that the besieged began to entertain the strongest hopes, diminished only by their rapidly failing stock of gunpowder, and by the increasing scarcity of provisions. They knew well that the Turks had neither patience nor means to carry on a prolonged siege; a resistance of two months would for that time, be successful; and April wore on, in the vain indignation of Mahomet, and the sanguine expectation of Constantine.

It was known that several of the Christian Princes

were arming, slowly and tardily indeed, but yet surely, for the defence of Constantinople; that the merchant republics were preparing to send money and provisions; that a very moderate naval force could introduce anything by sea, as the Turkish fleet, though numbering three hundred vessels, consisted of little better than gunboats. Constantine himself seemed ubiquitous. Now he was actively engaged at the long wall, and the Tower of S. Romanus; now offering up his devotions in S. Sophia; now visiting the provision stores; now, in a little boat, venturing across the Golden Horn, to examine the security of the Great Chain that stretched from the Seraglio Point to the Lime Gate, and secured the harbour. All that man could do, he did; and he was well seconded by some four or five of his principal officers. But the western auxiliaries clamoured for pay; the Emperor was reduced to the expedient of taking the treasures of the churches with the promise of fourfold restitution; and the nearest Christian princes, Hunniades, and the King of Hungary, stirred not a foot to the relief of their distressed brother, believing an obscure prophecy that Constantinople would be the term of the Turkish conquests.

In the meantime, Sir Edward de Rushton continued the life and soul of the defence. The limit of the time fixed for Phranza's answer was now drawing near; and the old Greek nobleman, though determined to consent if the siege should continue, was in no hurry to anticipate what he considered the degradation of his house. The Emperor had been as good as his word; and had hinted to Theodora his knowledge of one great motive that influenced De Rushton, and his hopes that the exertions of that knight would not be in vain. Poor Theodora was much alarmed at the idea of the secret being discovered: but her fears were dissipated by the kind and frank declaration of the Emperor that he knew the worth of the Great Acolyth—could wish him a suitable reward—when

the proper time came would not be wanting in whatever assistance he might give—and till that period, would at least show himself as discreet in his silence as he hoped then to be effectual in his words.

The offered exchange of Redschiid Pasha for Manuel Chrysolaras was rejected by the Sultan with disdain. If the Pasha could not protect himself against infidels, he, the Sultan, was in no way bound to interfere for his deliverance. He might make his escape if he could ; and if not, he must wait at Constantinople till, with the blessing of the Prophet, the green flag should float over the Palace of the Cæsars. Chrysolaras was therefore obliged to accompany the Sultan on his expedition ; and was witness day by day to the gigantic efforts made by Mahomet for the capture of the devoted city. He was not, however, entirely left without the means of benefiting his brethren within the walls. Calil Pasha, one of Mahomet's most trusted councillors, had been for some time bought over with Byzantine gold ; and though, under the circumstances, able to hold little communication with the prisoner, yet they understood each other, and were able, occasionally, to interchange sentiments by a trusty eunuch of the Pasha's retinue.

Euphrasia, with her father and mother, still remained in the city when the siege commenced ; for Silivri, after a brave but useless defence, had fallen before the Moslem troops were led to Constantinople. By the kindness of the Emperor, they were provided with suitable lodgings : the palace of Chrysolaras being objected to, under the circumstances, by both mother and daughter, to the great indignation of the old Exarch, who denounced their change of abode as a womanish affectation. Contari, on returning to Constantinople, had been promoted to a higher post in the guard than he had even requested ; and, on obtaining this, he begged Eudocia to delay his happiness no longer : so that as soon as ever the return of January rendered marriages canonical, Father Deme-

trius performed the ceremony of the bridal coronation.

We have now only to speak of Leontius. He and his wife had made good their escape to Hadrianople; where, to her infinite grief, he instantly made a tender of his services to Mahomet, by whom they were readily accepted. His perfect knowledge of Constantinople, his acquaintance with the disaffected party there, his intimate familiarity with the revenues of the Empire, all these had induced the Sultan to settle on him a handsome pension, and to place him in the confiscated palace of a Greek nobleman at Hadrianople. He would also have induced him to change his religion; but Leontius, though declaring that at some future period he very possibly might do so, preferred retaining the faith in which he had been brought up, till he should see what degree of success favoured the Sultan's arms.

All these things were the deepest and most bitter affliction to Anna Patellari, but she bore it all, patiently and meekly: submitted to her husband's passive neglect, or active unkindness,—knew that, in the hour of her need, he was joining a hunting party of the Sultan's,—and finally, when able again to perform the usual duties of life, had the agony of finding that Leontius had openly introduced a Turkish mistress into his house and her place. This last blow she felt not called upon to bear; and taking advantage of one of the many embassies which passed between Hadrianople and Constantinople on the subject of the release of Redschid, she returned, to her husband's great joy, to the Imperial City, carrying her infant along with her, and leaving him to pursue his career of vice unobserved and unchecked.

Now we return to the course of our history.

## CHAPTER XVII.

“ But, since the affairs of men stand still uncertain,  
 Let's reason with the worst that may befall.  
 If we do lose this battle, then is this  
 The very last time we shall speak together.  
 What are you then determined to do ?”

*Julius Cæsar.*

“ WHO is on duty at the Silivri Gate ?” cried Constantine, as, during an attack from the Janissaries, he met one or two of the principal officers in a hurried council in the Tower of S. Romanus.

“ The Great Logothete,”<sup>1</sup> said Phranza.

“ They seem slow in their defence towards the Hadrianople Gate. The firing has quite ceased. How is that ?”

“ Sire,” said Sir Edward de Rushton,—“ I am from thence. They are husbanding their powder—for the attack has slackened ; and, if we have the consumption of last week for the next, there would not be an ounce left in Constantinople.”

“ They come on like fiends,” said the Emperor, looking from one of the narrow windows. “ That Bulgarian renegade, Baltha Ogli, seems determined to carry all before him. My lords, we must on to the rampart. De Rushton, ride to the Tower of Belisarius, and

<sup>1</sup> Great Logothete : this dignity, originally equivalent to that of Postmaster-General, was instituted by Andronicus Palæologus ; but in the later times of the Byzantine Empire, when there were no distant functionaries to whom the Emperor's orders might be transmitted, it seems to have been well-nigh a sinecure.

bring up the twenty or thirty Varangians left there. There is not the slightest danger on the sea side."

"I will be back instantly, my liege." And he hurried off.

Deafened by the roaring of the huge cannon, harassed by the blinding clouds of drifting smoke,—quarrels, bullets, and arrows flying thickly round them, Constantine and Phranza passed along the outer wall, as calmly as in the palace garden. Now there was a shout of "La allah illa Allah," as some Mussulman distinguished himself by a successful aim, or a bastion trembled under the blow of one of the enormous masses of stone hurled by the cannon of the infidel;—now it was "S. George for England!" as a couple of Varangians, heaving a mass of rock from the wall, dashed off the head of a ram that was butting it: now, farther off, "Saint Denis!" was the shout; while, fighting hand to hand with the infidels,—no unaccustomed warfare for them, "S. Mark for Venice!" told of the daring of the paid forces of the republic, or "Flanders and the Lion!" of the chivalry of some Flemish knight. In the very heat of the conflict, a procession passed along the inner wall, bearing a banner with the image of the Protectress Virgin; and the tumult and confusion, the shrieks and outcries, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting, was strangely contrasted with the wail of the Litany, and the constant and suppliant cry, "Again and again, *in peace*, let us make our supplications to the LORD."

"Ha!" cried the Emperor, as a drift of smoke swept past—"that is a new arrangement—they are pointing yonder cannon against the opposite sides of the salient angles—there—at S. Nicholas' bastion."

"Some one is directing the engineers, sire,—yonder! By S. Dimitri, I believe that it is that archtraitor Leontius—he learnt that secret at your Majesty's own banquet, when the General Justiniani was describing a Western siege."

"Where is Justiniani?" inquired the Emperor.

"Gone home for an hour's rest," said Contari, who happened to be on that part of the wall.

"Gone home!" cried the Emperor. "What now?"

"So please your highness, I will summon him."

"Go at once—no, stay—here comes better help. Lord Acolyth, they are bringing eight or ten cannons to bear on S. Nicolas's bastion—Leontius is directing the work—see, there! will you dislodge them?"

"Instantly, sire. Contari, go to Burstow—he is towards S. Theodore's Church; bid him take twenty Varangians, and fifty of the native troops, and take yonder party in the rear, while I attack them in front. My lads," speaking to the men he had just brought up—"if I go down, never mind me; spike the cannon, and then get safe back—and twenty gold pieces for Leontius's head!"

"You are under his orders, Stratopedarch,"<sup>1</sup> said the Cæsar to an officer standing near. "Follow him with thirty men."

The gate of S. Romanus flew open—out galloped the Acolyth and his followers; and even while the engineers were most closely superintending the position of the largest cannon,—“S. George the Callinicus!” “De Rushton! De Rushton!” “S. Edward for England!” rose confusedly in their very midst. The cannoneers could not offer the slightest defence—for linstocks were not then used—but Baltha Ogli, with a strong party of Janissaries, flew to the succour of the attacked part. Outnumbering the assailants five to one, they stretched an impenetrable line against the most violent efforts of the Varangians.

“Leontius! Leontius!” shouted De Rushton,—“Cowardly dog! Turn for one moment, apostate and traitor! Nay, then, if you will cross my way, have at you in S. George's name!” as Baltha Ogli spurred his powerful horse against the Varangian leader. He

<sup>1</sup> Stratopedarch: this personage was the ninth in order in the offices of the Byzantine Palace. Commander of the forces is the nearest English title which would describe him.

was a man of gigantic frame, and the powerful animal which he rode had almost borne, in the first shock, De Rushton to the ground. The dexterity of Western chivalry soon began to tell against the barbarous style of the Bulgarian giant. And, just as one severe wound had taught Baltha Ogli that, with such an opponent, his life was in imminent danger, from the further gate galloped the party led by Burstow, with loud shouts of "S. George for England! the Virgin the Protectress!"

"Lord Phranza," said Constantine, "this knight shames us all. There is Justiniani, brave man as he is, must needs be sleeping at this very moment: but De Rushton, with scarcely less prudence, has ten times his vigour. By S. Dimitri! I have a mind to despatch him to Chios, to discover what detains our missing ships there!"

His attention was a moment called off to Burstow, who was now in close pursuit of Baltha Ogli.

"Could we afford to lose one for ten or even twenty, sire," said Phranza, "this day's work were a brave one."

"They are spiking the cannon," cried the Emperor. "Ah! my brave Varangians, I knew I might trust you! But what think you of my plan, Phranza?"

"It is wonderful," said the Protovestiare, "what can detain those vessels: but I own, I think the attempt, with five ships, to break through three hundred, is almost desperate."

"If they do not, my lord, how are we to procure gunpowder?"

Phranza merely shrugged his shoulders.

"I believe," continued the Cæsar, "that they are held back by the greatness of the risk. If so,—and if it be possible to relieve the city, I can trust no man like De Rushton."

"It is a great stake to throw for, sire; but methinks it were well thrown. But how is he to reach Chios?"



"Oh, the difficulty for a single boat to steal out will not be so very great," replied Constantine. "At all events, he must run that as well as the other."

"Then the sooner the better, sire."

"The sooner the better. Look yonder! The reserve of Amurath's veterans are coming up. By the Panaghia, he will be cut off! Ah, no—he sees it—there is the trumpet of recall. And now, Lord Phranza, I have a favour to ask at your hands."

"To ask, sire, is to command."

"But I would not force it from you, Phranza. Give it willingly, or give it not at all."

"Most willingly, sire: so much I can say beforehand."

"Still, if, when you have heard it, you think otherwise, you shall have full licence to retract what you now say. I know, Lord Phranza, what it is that urges this English knight on—valiant and true he would be ever,—I would rather say, that stirs him up to such intense exertion."

The Great Protovestiare looked uneasy.

"And I have known it long, Phranza. The poets, you know, tell us that love can do wonders; and for once they do not lie; for he proves it. But tell me,—were it not well (and I speak as much for you as for him) were it not well that you promised him, if he succeeds in this attempt, the recompense for which he has striven so long and so nobly?"

"My liege," said Phranza, "your words must ever be laws to me. But your Splendour cannot wonder if I have hitherto hesitated to match the daughter of one of the best houses of Constantinople with a foreign adventurer."

"My lord," returned Constantine, mournfully, "dare to look at things as they are. Is there the meanest Count, think you, in Europe, that would change his paltry coronet for my imperial diadem? And by the like reasoning, may not a knight of good birth, and undoubted valour, and so approved in every point

of chivalry, claim to match with your daughter, circumstances being as they are—although he comes from that barbarous northern country?"

Phranza was silent. His pride and his good sense were strongly contesting possession of his heart.

"Forgive me, my lord," proceeded Constantine, soothingly, "if I have said anything which might hurt you. What I have said of you, I had before said of myself; and—so help me the Panaghia!—had I a daughter, princess though she were, I should hold her the safer, and myself the more honoured, for this knight's alliance."

"I can hold out no longer, sire: so be it, then, in God's name."

"That is well and wisely spoken," said the Emperor, "and you have a Cæsar's thanks. Look! the Janisaries are drawing off! There will be no more work to-day."

The parties that had sallied out, after facing round once or twice upon their pursuers, had now made good their retreat. The gates were closed, and Sir Edward de Rushton soon was again standing by the Emperor.

"Bravely done, as ever, my Lord Acolyth!" cried Constantine; "I think that will be your last exploit for to-day. Come with the Lord Phranza into the tower; I have a matter of importance on which to speak to you."

De Rushton followed into the lower part of S. Romanus's Tower, where a room had been hastily fitted up for the Emperor's occasional reception.

"Nicephorus," said Constantine, "we would be private. Admit no one for the next half hour."

"And let me find you on the wall, Burstow, when I come out again," said De Rushton.

"Ay, my good Lord."

Constantine seated himself, and then said, "I need not tell you, my Lord Acolyth, that all hope of relieving the city, both from famine, of which there is danger,

and from want of ammunition, with which we are even now so sorely pressed, lies in the arrival of those ships that, as we last heard, were at Chios."

"Has your majesty intelligence of them?"

"Not a word," replied Constantine. "But it is too evident, either that they do not know our extreme need, or that they are afraid to run the risk."

"Yet, by the account, they are strong vessels," observed De Rushton.

"Ay," replied the Emperor; "but five to three hundred is fearful odds. For the imperial galley, I can warrant it; I have sailed in her with my brother, the blessed one.<sup>1</sup> For the Genoese, we have only their own words. But the sum of all is this, Lord Acolyth. We have determined to despatch some one, if it be possible, from the city, to bring those galleys in. The risk is great—the glory will be great too. Are you willing to be the man?"

"I thank your majesty," cried De Rushton, kneeling; "I could not have asked for anything better."

"Could you not?" said Constantine, smiling and looking at Phranza; "that is but a poor compliment to you, my lord. I fear I must ask you to retract what you have even now said."

"I think not, sire.—De Rushton, some time ago you told me that you loved my daughter; do you still hold in that mind?"

"Would I reach Paradise?" cried the knight.

"If, then, you return in safety from this adventure, take her, and take my blessing with her," answered Phranza.

De Rushton poured out his thanks in terms more energetic than eloquent.—"And when, sire, am I to set forth? and in what way does your majesty deem the best?"

"As to the way, one soldier you had better take with you; and then you must try to creep through

<sup>1</sup> I.e. my *late* brother.

the blockading fleet by night. For the time, this very night, if you so please."

"With your majesty's leave, I will take Burstow with me. He is faithful and courageous as any, and has a brain that will carry him through everything."

"Do so, my lord. We will draw out a warrant for your taking the command of the fleet. You must remember to humour the Genoese captains, for they love not interference. Never interfere, except in case of necessity; but then, all offence must be risked."

"I understand, sire."

"Come to me in the palace at dusk," said Constantine, "and have all your preparations ready by that time."

"I have but one to make, sire, and that is of the Lord Protovestiare.—My lord, I am setting forth on an expedition full of risk, from which I may never return: I shall go with a lighter heart, if you will let me have half-an-hour's speech of your daughter before I set forth."

"My Lord," said Phranza, "consider that this meeting would be but painful to you at the best; and if—"

"Nay, nay," said Constantine, "by all the rules of Western chivalry, the lover should see his mistress before setting forth to his battles. Have you not a silly trick of wearing the lady's scarf, in your knight-hood?"

"It is often so done," replied De Rushton.

"Give him licence, give him licence, Lord Phranza."

"You have my good leave, Lord Acolyth. Shall I see you again?"

"Come you to us, my Lord," said Constantine, "when this same interview is over.—Go, now, and S. George speed you!"

"Burstow," said the knight, "you may come back with me to my lodgings. The Emperor has given me a commission to take charge of the fleet at Chios. You have heard of it, I doubt not—"

"Oh, yes, my Lord; they say that the city cannot hold out a fortnight longer, if it does not arrive."

"If I can once get there," continued Sir Edward, "I do not fear for the consequences. The thing is, how to get forth in safety. I am to have one companion, and I have chosen you."

"And you could not have chosen a better man, my Lord, unless you had taken Contari; and him it would be cruel needlessly to take from his wife."

"You have not a very modest opinion of your own merits, Burstow."

"No, my Lord; I never had. I never could see the use of it. If I had had it, I should not have the honour of accompanying your lordship to Chios."

"Only do as gallantly as you did at Hadrianople, Burstow, and we cannot but succeed. Stay—this is S. Theodore's lane; I will just bid the Exarch Choniates and his family farewell: do you go on to the palace."

Eager as Sir Edward was to be with Theodora, it struck him that, by mentioning the fact of her father's consent to his seeking her hand to Sophia Choniatis, he might ensure her one firm friend in case of need. He stopped at the house which the old Exarch then occupied, and was shown into the apartment which he usually tenanted. There also, contrary to his expectation, he found Euphrasia and her mother.

"Country habits, country habits, you see, my Lord," said the Exarch, rising to welcome him. "Here we are, sitting all together, as we might have been at Silivri. None of your women's apartments for me; it was never merry world since they came in. I have been on the ramparts all the morning, I promise you; I have but just taken off my brigandine. A masterly manner you drove the dogs back in, my Lord: how many cannon did you spike?"

"Four, worthy Exarch; I marvel that I saw you not. A happy time of day to you, lady; and to you,

fair Euphrasia. No news, I fear, of Lord Chryso-laras?"

"None, my Lord," replied Sophia Choniatis.

"I have come," he continued, "to ask your congratulations." And he went on to tell his long love for Theodora, the difficulties he had experienced from Phranza, and the promise he had just received from that nobleman of his daughter's hand, should he himself succeed in a dangerous enterprise, which, however, he did not more minutely particularise, on which he was even then about to set forth.

"Glad to hear it, my Lord," cried the honest old Exarch; "glad to hear it, with all my heart. S. Dimitri bring you safely through your business, whatever it be!"

"I am in haste," said the knight; "I am even now on my way to the Lord Phranza's house. But I would fain first tell you this: that, when the Lady Theodora shall see you next, as I know she often does see you, she may feel as among friends."

"I understand you, my Lord," said Sophia Choniatis; "and GOD's blessing be with you, and come back with you!"

"Amen!" replied the knight, "and I am much beholden to you. And the same wish for our friend, Lord Manuel.—Now I must bid you farewell." And he was speedily on his way to the palace.

At the door of Phranza's *metæcia* he found old Barlaam, with whom, during that long and tedious winter, he had contracted a kind of friendship.

"Is the Lady Theodora within?" he inquired eagerly.

"She is in the garden," replied the old man, with a kind of half smile, which he veiled under an appearance of most demure gravity.

"Thither will I, then," said De Bushton; "I come to her from her father." And he entered and passed through the hall, and found himself in the garden we have more than once described.

It was a melancholy evening in spring. The sun had set about a quarter of an hour ; there was a clear, cold, bright hue of green where he had gone down ; Venus was just visible towards the west ; the air had a touch of chilliness in it, but was perfectly still ; the buds were beginning to burst forth, and one or two of the April flowers of that warm land filled the garden with fragrance. The landscape was confined to the north, so that the besieging army was no longer visible ; but over Galata a cloud hung, the scattered remains of the fog-smoke of that day's battle. The Bosphorus, instead of rolling in light, was covered with an innumerable multitude of the besieging fleet, —rude, black boats,—here and there a taller galley,—alive with a crowded soldiery, and lazily tossing on the calm deep. Theodora was walking up and down the terrace, scarcely seeing the scene around her, her thoughts fixed on the end of these terrible preparations, and almost envying the lot of her mother, who was sleeping quietly in the cemetery of S. Irene.

“Theodora! dear Theodora! I come to you with your father's consent: will you tell me now that we must part?”

Theodora Phranza had not noticed his step till he spoke ; and the flush of joy that passed over her cheek sealed De Rushton's happiness.

“No, Lord Acolyth,” she said. And she held out her hand to him.

“You have made me a man indeed, dearest one,” said De Rushton, after the first few words of transport were over ; “and, truth to say, there is need of it too, for this very night I must leave the city.”

“Leave the city! Where? why? Nay then, it is you who come to say we must part.”

“Had it not been for this parting, Theodora, we might not have met so soon. The Emperor has been pleased to give into my charge those ships now at Chios, on the safe entry of which into the Horn the well being of the city depends. I am to use my en-

deavours to get to them unperceived; and then we must force our way in. Your father told me, that, if I succeed, his free leave should I have to be a suitor for your hand; and the Cæsar, like himself, prevailed on him to let me come here even now."

"But how shall you succeed? how shall you attempt to leave the city? you will be taken in the very first trial."

"I hope better things, dearest. And, if I am fortunate enough to reach Chios, I shall know that you will be looking on us, as we come up yonder strait; and trust me, the knowledge of that will enable me to do wonders."

"But do not be rash, do not be rash, Sir Edward. I heard my father say the other day that you and that Varangian who liberated the Exarch Choniates were the two rashest men in the city. And oh! I must not tell you how it terrified me to hear it."

"Fear nothing, dearest: I can assure you that Burstow, who is going to be my companion to-night, is the very man to bring us safely through anything."

Theodora inquired eagerly after his plans. Nothing, he told her, was as yet arranged; but Phranza would be present at the consultation, and would know, and could tell her, whatever was known.

Thus they went on talking till the half-hour specified had gone by, and darkness was gathering round them.

"And now, dear Theodora, I must leave you really. The Cæsar was to expect me in half-an-hour, and I fear I have overstayed the time. God bless you, my own one! and give us to meet as joyfully as we part sorrowfully. You will not say no: it may be for the last time," he continued, as he almost frightened Theodora by the—for the time and place—extravagant liberty he took of throwing his arms round her, and kissing her fair cheek. Another moment, and he was gone.

Outside Phranza's lodgings he found Burstow.



"My lord," said that worthy personage, "I don't like your plan of passing the Turkish fleet; I think I could tell you a better one."

"Walk on with me to the Emperor's apartments; I will hear it as we go."

"I would rather escape by land, my lord, if I am to have a voice in the matter. We might be two Turks. I can pass myself off for one anywhere, as your lordship knows; and you have only to leave the talking to me, and look Turk-like, if we fall in with any advanced post."

"I will be guided by you, Burstow, in the business, if the Emperor finds no difficulty in the plan. But why not try the sea?"

"If we did, we are sure to fall in with some of their vessels—they lie as thick as bees in a hive. Disguised we must be, after all. By land, we may escape notice at all; by sea, we are sure of it; and, to tell you the truth, my lord, I feel twice the man on dry land that I do on the water. It is not my element."

"I will speak to the Cæsar," replied the knight. "Wait me here."

"You are waited for, my lord," said one of the secretaries, as De Rushton entered the hall. "This way, my lord:" and he led him into Constantine's presence.

"Welcome, my lord!" said the Emperor, looking up from a paper which he was signing: "you are late, but we can pardon you. Your signature, my Lord Great Logothete." And the celebrated Lucas Notaras, Great Logothete of the Empire, affixed his name in green ink under the imperial purple letters.

The Emperor was attended by this nobleman, by Phranza, by one or two officers of the native troops, by the secretary who had drawn up the document which had just been signed, and by a tall, bony, stern-looking Frank, very strongly built, with a pleasing and open countenance, but with a certain look of sleepiness about his eyes, which might have led a

physiognomist to declare him deficient in energy. This was the famous Justiniani.

"Here," said Constantine, "is your warrant for assuming the command of all the vessels now lying at Chios. They are absolutely to obey your directions, and our instructions to you are to relieve the city at any risk, even if you have to encounter the whole force of the enemy. The accounts we have this evening received of the magazines—my lords, this goes no further than these walls—are dreadful. We have but sixty-five barrels of gunpowder left; and provisions are beginning to run short. We must from this day diminish the allowance of the city one fourth, for all not engaged in actual service."

De Rushton knelt, and took the warrant: "My Lord Cæsar," said he, "have I your Majesty's leave to make my own choice of the means for getting out of the city?"

"Certainly, my lord."

"Then, sire, it would be by land." And he mentioned the reasons for such a course which had been detailed to him by Burstow, amplifying them with one or two more arguments which had occurred to himself.

"It does seem the best plan," said the Emperor. "What say you, Justiniani?"

"I think it has the less risk of the two, sire: though there is danger in both. But I envy you, my Lord Acolyth; you have a fair field open to you to win immortal glory."

"Then, General Justiniani, you must have the goodness to write me a pass for the Silivri gate; that is where I shall leave the city."

"Have I your Majesty's leave?" inquired the Genoese.

Constantine bowed his head; and advancing to the table, Justiniani bent over it, and wrote as follows:

"To the serjeant on guard at the Silivri gate.—Allow Sir Edward de Rushton"—"how many attendants, Lord Acolyth?"

“ Only one.”

“ And one attendant to pass out this night. April 14. Saturday. As witness my hand.—JUSTINIANI.”

“ The result of this scheme,” said Constantine, “ is in GOD’S hands, and to Him we cheerfully leave it. We know well that all that heroism, skill, and courage can do, will be done by you, my lord ; and so to His care we very heartily commit you.”

Bidding farewell to the rest of the assembled party, Sir Edward de Rushton rejoined Burstow, with the intelligence that he had a pass for the Silivri gate.

“ That is well, my lord. The next thing to be done is to equip you as a Turk : I will bring you a dress which I think will suit you if you will go home.”

In about half-an-hour, the two adventurers were equipped ; and, not without exciting a good deal of attention even at that late hour in the city, and being once or twice compelled to produce their pass, they proceeded through the Contoscalion, by the church of S. Parasceve, by that of S. Theodore, and so finally presented themselves at the Silivri gate.

“ You don’t imagine we are going to let you pass ?” cried the soldier on guard.

“ Call the serjeant of the watch, if you do not know me, fellow,” replied Sir Edward. And that officer being summoned, and having read the document, made a low obeisance to the Great Acolyth, whom he had not previously recognised ; and gave orders that the gates should instantly be opened. This was done : and De Rushton and Burstow found themselves on a clear twilight night without the walls of the Imperial City.

“ Remember, my lord,” said Burstow, “ if we are stopped, I am Mustapha, and you are Abdallah,—brothers,—and we are going to Rhodosto to see our father, having been for some time on board the fleet.”

“ If I have to speak,” said Sir Edward, “ my accent will betray me at once.”

“You must leave the speaking to me, my lord; and if it is so that you cannot help it, you must answer yes, or no, or that you don’t know, as briefly as possible. But I hope we may escape. I see they have not carried on the trenches on this side.”

In silence and obscurity they pursued their way towards Athyra for nearly a quarter of a mile; when, just as they were beginning to flatter themselves that the danger was over, a Turkish sentinel came out from a miserable hovel on the right hand.

“Stand, ho!” he cried;—“the word!”

“How should I know the word, comrade?” said Burstow. “We are but just from the fleet—landed under the very wall—the dogs keep bad guard, they let us pass.”

“But I must have the word,” persisted the man.

“Then, by the Prophet, you must tell it us first,” said the other.

“I must take you to my officer,” said the sentinel, “our orders are strict.”

“Come, comrade, come,” said Burstow, “you won’t be so harsh. We have had a world of trouble to get leave of absence from Baltha Ogli: he is as strict as a dragon: and now to be stopped at the beginning of our journey is too much, by Mahomet.”

“Where are you going?” inquired the soldier.

“As far as Rhodosto,” answered the Varangian, “to see our father, my brother Abdallah, and I.”

The sentinel seemed as if he would have allowed them to pass, when three persons, who appeared to be officers of rank, though they were enveloped from head to foot in simple military cloaks, came up.

“How now?” said the foremost of them, a man apparently about five and twenty years in age, with a bright, piercing eye that seemed to flash as it reflected the sentinel’s torch, an aquiline nose, a clear, decided voice, and a good, but somewhat haughty expression of countenance.

“How now? what is the dispute?”

"These soldiers desire to pass without the word," replied the sentinel.

"How? without the word? Do you not know it, fellows?"

"No," said Burstow, briefly. "How should we? We are poor fellows, just from the fleet, and unless we divined it, we had no chance of knowing the word. We left the fleet before it was given out."

"By the thirty-seven thousand prophets!" said the first speaker, "they are spies! Have them before the Aga, sentinel!"

"You lie," said Burstow. "If the Sultan were here, he would see justice done us; but among your Agas and your Pashas one has a poor chance."

"Why would the Sultan let you pass, sirrah?"

"Because he has as much wit in his little finger as his officers in their whole body, and he would see at once that we were speaking the truth."

"By the Black Stone! I do believe it," said the Sultan,—for it was no other than Mahomet himself. "Let them pass, sentinel!" and the astonished sentinel fell prostrate on the ground: imitated by Burstow, and rather unwillingly by Sir Edward.

"Go on, good fellows; we can see that you are honest men. Ha! said he well, Pasha?"

"Your highness's knowledge is as that of the Prophet," said the obsequious Calil.

"Where are you going, sirrah?" asked Mahomet, who frequently went forth on such nocturnal excursions,—familiar to him from his very youth by the Thousand and One Nights.

"To Rhodosto, may it please your highness."

"What do you there?"

"We go to visit our father, your highness."

"Well, pass on: and you, good sentinel, we commend you for your vigilance. Come, my lord Pasha."

No sooner were the Varangian and his leader beyond the hearing of the sentinel, than De Rushton said, "S. Mary be praised! that was an escape."

“I knew him, my lord, by his voice. I thought it was he when he came up; that speech of mine about the Sultan did the business, and now, I warrant me, he goes back thinking he has done a good action, and it will be in the mouths of all the eunuchs by this time to-morrow. So men deceive themselves. But we must on, my lord. I have a kind of cousin at Athyra, who I make no doubt will let us hire a couple of horses of him, and then on to Silivri as we best may. There we must try to find a boat across the strait.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ *Mon.* Is he well shipped ?

*Cas.* His bark is stoutly timbered, and his pilot  
Of very expert and approved allowance :  
Therefore my hopes, not surfeited to death,  
Stand in bold cure.

*Within.*

A sail ! a sail !

*Cas.*

What noise ?

*Fourth Gent.* The town is empty : on the brow o’ th’ hill  
Stand ranks of people,—and they cry, A sail !”

*Othello.*

“ THEN, my lords,” said Constantine, as a council of war had assembled in the Great Audience Hall of the Palace, “ that powder has failed.”

“ It has as good as failed, sire,” said the Great Logothete. “ At my bastion they have not fired more than twenty or thirty shots this morning—and now I have absolutely none at all.”

“ It is not quite so bad with me,” said Justiniani ; “ but I do not think I have five barrels left—and we are so exposed at S. Romanus’s Tower, that we can hardly hope to beat them off without fire-arms.”

“ For me,” said Phranza, “ we did some execution early in the morning at the Adrianople bastion—but we have been forced to be idle all the forenoon, for we are reduced to a barrel and a half.”

“ It is strange beyond admiration what can have happened to the fleet,” said Constantine :—“ sometimes I begin to fear that it is cut off altogether : certain it is that, if it be not, De Rushton could never have reached it,—he would have made the attempt at all risks.”

"If we are thus idle another day, sire," said Justiniani, "the Infidels will try a general assault: it is only the good service of our cannon that has kept them off hitherto."

"The wind is perfectly fair for their arrival," said Lucas Notaras. "I have marked it especially; last week it was principally east and north-east, so that they would have been pretty well wind-bound,—then we had a day or two of perfect calm—but yesterday the wind shifted to the south-west, and to-day there is a steady gale from that quarter."

"The watchman has orders to report half-hourly: but the message has ever been the same," said the Protovestiare.

"Ay," replied the Emperor: "and the question now is, whether to risk another adventurer. It is ten days since we despatched the Great Acolyth: he might have had ample time to return—to say nothing of the chance that the fleet might have sailed before his arrival."

"What is the precise number of men that we expect?" inquired the Curopalata.<sup>1</sup>

"Each of the Genoese vessels," replied Justiniani, "is to bring two hundred men at arms; and a hundred barrels of gunpowder. Then there will be a good cargo of wheat, barley, rye, wine, oil, and cheese."

"The Imperial vessel's cargo," said the Emperor, "must depend on its good fortune among the Islands,—but I look for more provisions and fewer men in her, than in the rest."

At this moment, one of the guards approached the Emperor, saying,

"May it please your Majesty, the watchman on

<sup>1</sup> Curopalata: this dignity, which answered to that of Count of the Palace in the West, assumed its importance, if not its name, under Leo the Philosopher. At its first origin, the Commander of the Life Guards was so denominated. At the time of which we are writing, as so many other titles of dignity in the Byzantine Court, it was a mere sinecure.



S. Michael's Tower thinks that he can make out some vessels to sea—but whether our fleet or not, he dare not say."

"Follow me, my lords,—let us see for ourselves." And led by Constantine, the whole party passed along one of the corridors of the Palace, till they reached the foot of the Tower in question, and began to ascend the winding staircase.

And a magnificent view it was that presented itself to them when they stood on the balcony. The city, squares, domes, fountains, gardens, streets,—stretched at their feet like a map: the Golden Horn winding along like a silver river, under its walls,—the fair houses and rich gardens of Galata beyond, to the north-east,—the innumerable parties of Turks, in the trenches under the walls, in dark squares, in long lines, the tents, the banners, and cavalry, the single horsemen hurrying across the plain on some message—the advance of a solitary body of infantry,—here and there a white wreath of smoke, followed by the boom of a cannon—huge machines of destruction, stretching out their long thin arms, as if bearing witness, like gaunt preachers, of the impending ruin of the city: beyond all this again blue hills and green plains, stretching on and on and on, till limited at last by the dark ridge of the Balkan. Seaward, the eye ranged over the enormous mass of S. Sophia, over the black vessels that thronged the Bosphorus, on to the cypress groves of Chalcedon, the long narrow strait,—the interminable Pontus, and the lovely hills of Mysia and Bithynia.

But not one eye lingered on any part of this wonderful landscape eastward: every face was instantly turned, with intense and protracted gaze, down the Sea of Marmora,—to where Cyzicus and Proconnesus seemed to touch the European shore, and to shut out further view.

"What do you make out, Theophylact?" inquired the Emperor, hurriedly.

"I thought," said the watchman, "may it please your Splendour, that some ten minutes ago I made out sails—but the sun comes so strong from the south-west that I know not whether I saw sooth or not. There, your Highness—you see the dome of the Panaghia of Hope?"

"I see it," said Constantine.

"Bear a little to the right—not so much as to S. Theodore, your Highness is too far: and you see one tall house, by itself."

"Yes," said the Emperor.

"Straight over that, your Majesty, if I see them at all,—there it is."

The whole party shaded their eyes from the sun, and gazed in the direction pointed out. Phranza and Notaras, now elderly men, soon gave up the task: the Emperor, after a few minutes' perfect silence, said,—  
"I can see something, but it may be a white house at Proconnesus."

"I doubt, sire, I doubt," said Justiniani.

"How shows it to you?" asked the Curopalata of the watchman—"larger at the top, or at the bottom?"

"At the top, my lord, if I see right."

"So it does to me," said the nobleman.

"That looks not like a house," observed the Emperor. "But half an hour will set us beyond doubt."

"There is one man in Constantinople," said Theophylact, "that has a sharper sight than I have—if your Majesty thought fit, he might be summoned."

"What is his name?" inquired Constantine.

"He is a lieutenant in the Varangians, sire, and his name is Contari."

"I know the man," cried the Emperor: "let him be called here instantly." And a guard went off with all expedition to fetch him.

While the party were waiting in eager expectation of his arrival, a cloud passed over the sun; and then the whole line of coast showed so clear, so unbroken, as it embosomed the Propontis, that even the most

sanguine believed the hopes they had been entertaining to have no foundation. In about twenty minutes Contari had arrived.

"Lieutenant Contari," said the Emperor, "we hear that you have an excellent sight. Look westward, and see if you can make ought out."

Contari looked steadfastly for about a minute, and then said decidedly, "Yes, sire;—there are two great ships in sight."

"God be praised! God be praised!" cried Constantine.—"But only two?"

"Only two, sire, on this side Proconnesus, at least, as yet."

"I see them, I see them," said Theophylact, presently, "sure enough. But look, lieutenant—there yonder by the shore under yon hill, that must be another!"

"Yes, yes, there are three! there are three!" cried Contari joyfully:—and now the foremost two of the squadron were clearly and distinctly visible.

"Let a procession be instantly made for their good passage," said the Emperor. "Let the Archbishop of Chalcedon—nay, he is indisposed—let the Bishop of Rhodosto take his place. We will join it ourselves. Where shall we see the passage best, Lord Phranza?"

"In no place, my liege, so well as from the terrace of my garden," answered the Protovestiare, "if you will condescend to honour it."

"Excellently well thought of, my lord. Thither will we all. Let some one call the despot Choniates—he is well versed in sea matters—his advice may be of use."

"There is another!" cried Theophylact and Contari simultaneously.

"Then there lacks only one. No doubt the number is full."

"Ay, sire," said Phranza. "God only send them a good passage!"

"He will, He will, Phranza. The wind holds very fair."

In the meantime the news was evidently spreading:—housetops and church roofs began to exhibit first one or two scattered spectators—then thicker groups, then to be crowded. Gradually, the sea-wall was thronged, though nothing, at present, could be seen from that.

"There it is, my liege," cried Contari; "that makes the five."

"Let us go down, my lord, to your terrace," cried the Emperor. "Contari, you will come too. As soon as the procession is formed, we will join it."

But such was the eager devotion of the populace, that even as they descended the tower stairs, the bells began to toll forth the summons; and falling in with the tide of the crowd, Constantine and his attendants passed through the Contoscalion and so on to the sea-wall.

Theodora had been drawn forth by the beauty of the afternoon into the garden of Phranza:—and with a heart sick with hope deferred, she was walking up and down the terrace, gazing on the Bosphorus and the hostile armament, and almost renouncing the hope of again meeting him whom she had so lately seen depart with so sanguine expectation of success. It was about three o'clock, when the sounds of confusion were heard in the palace—and presently her attendant, Maria, hastened into the garden.

"Lady! dear lady! the ships are in sight!"

It was so: now, even from the shore there could be no doubt of the fact. For far to the west, the sun glanced on the white sails, flaking the sea as with spots of snow. A hum and buzz in the great city, like the wind in a distant forest: shouts here and there: horses galloping: then the bells rang out. Multitudes, multitudes on the sea-wall, on every vacant space, on every house-top.

Theodora's heart beat till she could hear no other

sound. The servants were forgetful of all distinctions of rank in the excitement of the moment. Presently from the galley of the Capitan Pasha, as it rode proudly among the lesser vessels, the great green flag rose, and waved in the gale. Instantly all was confusion in the blockading fleet :—the approach of the enemy was at length seen ; orders were issued in all directions ; trumpets sounded, and atabals clanged ; little boats were rowed hither and thither ; and slowly and with difficulty, the three hundred vessels of the infidels forming in a crescent, stretched from the Stable gate on the sea wall to the landing-place now called the Harem Iskelehsi on the Asiatic side.

While Theodora was employed in watching these movements, there was a stir and a hum of voices in the palace itself ; and presently the Emperor, her father, Justiniani, and three or four more of the principal officers of the court, entered the garden. After kneeling to Constantine, she was about to retire ; but he said, kindly, “Nay, lady, you have as much interest in the end of this day’s business as any one ; pray you stay, and if it please you, be seated. Justiniani, let all the powder remaining in the city, every ounce of it, be brought down to the sea-wall ; draw thither what artillery we can manage, and look that the guns be double shotted. We must take good heed of a surprisal on the other side, in the midst of all this excitement. My Lord Curopalata, that shall be your charge.”

“Were it not well,” said Phranza, “that orders be given forth in the Horn about the chain ? It will be a delicate business, to admit these vessels and exclude the rest.”

“Lieutenant Contari,” said the Emperor, “go down to the harbour, show them that ring, and bid them follow your directions in all things. And when you have shown it them, wear it for our sake.”

Contari kissed the hand that was held out to him, and withdrew.

"Had it not been for him," said Nicetas Choniates, who had joined the royal party previously to their entering the garden of Phranza, "I had not now stood by your majesty."

"He is a right good soldier, and an honest man," replied Constantine.—"How fast they are nearing us!"

"Twenty minutes will bring him up with them," said the Exarch; "and I suspect that he will reserve his fire till he is close to them."

At this moment the wind, which had been steadily south-south-west, shifted two points to the north. Up immediately went the stud-sails of the vessels, fluttering for a moment like white birds at the end of the shrouds, and then steadily bellying out.

"That must mean that the wind has changed," said the Exarch. "Ay, by my faith, so it has!"—looking at a weather-cock on one of the turrets,—"and a good change too; it will carry their smoke right into the enemy's teeth."

In the mean time, the five great ships were steadily coming up the channel. The foremost carried the Genoese arms at her mast-head, and was named the Unicorn; she bore the character of the swiftest ship in the Mediterranean. Her forecastle—literally a castle rising up in the forepart of the deck—was crowded with archers and musketeers. She had ten cannon on deck; and at her gangways was an apparatus for discharging the Greek fire. Next came the S. Irene, the only imperial vessel; the great flag, bearing the double-headed eagle displayed towered aloft, and her deck, nearly as well manned as the Unicorn's, was far more lavish in its display of painting and gilding. The two next vessels were the Dolphin and the S. Francis; and about a quarter of a mile further back lagged the great Bucentaur.

De Rushton was on deck, surrounded by the officers of the vessel, among whom was the *Great Drungaire*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> That is, the Lord High Admiral.

of the Empire. "Captain Bulgari," said he, "before we go into action, I wish you, and I wish all the officers to understand, that the Emperor's express orders are, that we run every risk to relieve the city. From what I know of its state when I left, I am sure that now—the wind having delayed us so fearfully long—it must almost be at extremity—"

"The green flag up on the Capitan Pasha's galley!" reported the man at the mast-head.

"Then we shall be in action in a quarter of an hour," said Sir Edward. "And you, gentlemen,—and you also, good yeomen,—remember that you will be fighting in sight of your wives and daughters, fighting for their safety and for their honour; that your Emperor himself will be the judge and the rewarder of your bravery; that your contest will be under the very walls of your cathedral; that you are going about God's service, and may look for God's blessing. We are but five vessels, it is true; but consider that our mariners are the best in Europe,—our ships the strongest that can be built,—our cause, above all, that of the Faith; while that host of boats were knocked up by men that never built a vessel before, are manned by men that never were on the sea, are fighting merely to escape the punishment that a tyrant can inflict. Gentlemen, I will not waste your time with more words: there is the enemy, and there is the city, and I am sure you know how to do your duty."

Then arose a shout from the vessels, that rang as far as the Seven Towers; and still the dark waves foamed before their bows, and still their sails swelled steadily out, and still the great dome of S. Sophia rose clearer and clearer; and now they could hear the distant clang of its bells, mellowed as it stole over the sea of Marmora.

"My lord," said Captain Bulgari, "were it not well that we lay to for the Bucentaur?"

"Use your judgment," said De Rushton. "I were loth to lose unnecessary time."

"My lord, I fear they may otherwise cut her off."

"Make the signal, then." And the signal was accordingly made.

Through the streets of Constantinople great pieces of artillery were rolling along, dragged by men, women, and children; the precious barrels that yet remained of powder were brought up under the immediate superintendence of Justiniani; smiths were stationed on the city side of the great chain, to drive out its staples when the moment should come; flags were floating from every turret; the houses were well-nigh deserted; many of the shops were closed; the more distant streets were still as death. Constantine maintained his position in Phranza's terrace.

"Ha! lying to!" cried the Exarch. "Well, well, he knows what he is about."

"What vessel is that which lags so much behind the others?" inquired the Emperor.

"I know not, sire."

"It must be the Bucentaur," replied Justiniani, who had shortly before returned from his mission. "I have seen her at Genoa. She is slow, in truth; but none will do greater execution when she is once among them. No fear of any attack, my liege, from the land; the Infidels are as much excited as we are. I saw the Sultan himself, on that noble white horse of his, galloping down to the Seven Towers; and they say that Achmet Pasha, and Baltha Ogli, and Calil Pasha, are all in the fleet."

"Who commands it?" inquired Phranza.

"Baltha Ogli—so the report goes."

"The last ship is up with them—now, Phranza!"

The Bucentaur having come up abreast with the other ships, the squadron, again crowding all canvas, bore up the strait. When almost abreast of the Seven Towers, De Rushton gave orders that the Unicorn should allow the S. Irene to pass. The imperial eagle came proudly on, leading the way: the Unicorn and the Dolphin abreast behind her, the S. Francis and



the Bucentaur last. At the same moment the sun, which had been behind a cloud, burst forth in its afternoon splendour, dazzling and perplexing the Infidels, rendering every object clear and distinct to the Christians. On their left, the walls of Constantinople were a living mass of heads ; and as the eagle flag passed the Seven Towers, one long, loud, continued cheer ran along the city wall, and passed on and on, till it lost itself in the distance. Men threw up their caps, women waved their shawls and handkerchiefs, and the cheer was returned in quick succession from the five ships. Constantine had given orders that the great banner of the Empire should be planted where he stood ; and the Sultan, on his white steed Pasha, was almost as conspicuous an object on the sea shore.

At half-past three o'clock, Baltha Ogli made the signal to the wings of the crescent to get into action.

Instantly a flight of arrows and quarrels were volleyed forth from the right horn, that under the walls of the city ; but they fell far short of the S. Irene, and the men replied by a derisive cheer.

"Justiniani," cried the Emperor, "spur to the Contoscalion, and bid them open their fire. If they wait till the ships are abreast, the opportunity will be lost."

Justiniani rode off, the great guns roared one after the other, and a dense cloud of smoke blotted out all view of the squadron. Presently the cannon boomed from the ships ; and to those on the walls all was confusion. Shouts, cries, firing, hissing of Greek fire, shrieks, told that the fight was going on ; but that was all.

Around the Emperor crowded the royal party,—all but Theodora. She was leaning on the wall of the terrace, and hiding her face in her hands.

"Cheer up, lady," said Constantine ; "this will not last long."

"You had better go in, Theodora," said her father.

"No, I am best here," she said. "Oh, merciful Panaghia, what was that?"

From the midst of that dense cloud of smoke shot a perfect *geyser* of Greek fire, spreading far and wide, and followed in its descent by shrieks, groans, and outcries, that echoed above all the other sounds from Chalcedon to Galata.

"Some one is hard pressed," said the Exarch; "hark to the cannon!"

They were fired for the time with such extreme velocity, that the excitement grew intense. On a sudden there was a dead pause.

"That's bad," said Justiniani.

"Boarding, I take it," cried the Exarch.

"O God, that a breeze would spring up!" burst from the lips of Constantine.

Not immediately, but it *did* spring up. Now the face of the battle was indeed changed. Far ahead of the other vessels was the Bucentaur, having won her way nearly so far as to be abreast of S. Sophia, and clearly certain to make the harbour. Surrounded on all sides with the Turkish boats, but still fighting at a distance with them, and every stitch of canvas set, bore along the Dolphin and the S. Francis; the Unicorn, once the first, was now running in right under the guns of the Contoscalion; while the S. Irene, driven out into the middle of the channel, was in a pitiable state. Ten or twelve boats were hooked to her side; the Turks were swarming up her like bees; Baltha Ogli's own galley lay close astern of her; everywhere the soldiers were pushing their assailants down with long pikes; the sails were cut to pieces with bolts from cross-bows and musket-balls.

"God help her!" cried the Exarch. Even Theodora, so close was the fight, could discern the imminent danger of De Rushton, and fell on her knees, clasping her hands together in an agony of supplication. At length—it seemed as a last resource—the Imperial Eagle was run up reversed, as a signal of

distress, that the other ships might come to her assistance.

Too eager for their own safety to pay any attention to their over-matched companion, the Dolphin, the S. Francis, and the Unicorn fought on their way inch by inch ; but, in a minute, the sails of the Bucentaur, now certainly free from danger, shivered, her helm was put down, and she swung round again into the heat of the battle.

“ Bravo, Bucentaur ! bravo, Bucentaur ! The Virgin the Protectress ! ” was the shout that ran along the walls.

“ S. Luke for Genoa ! ” shouted Justiniani ; “ all will be well yet . ”

On it went, the great lumbering ship, dashing aside the Turkish boats, as a whale might pass through a shoal of herrings ; and bearing down on the windward side of the S. Irene, poured in a deadly shower of Greek fire on the boats, trapped, as it were, between the two vessels. Leaving that side to the care of his ally, De Rushton evidently concentrated all his efforts on the leeward side, and the Turks were clearly baffled there also. Boats were hurriedly pushed off, men leaped into the water, and presently the Imperial Eagle again floated proudly as before.

“ Take her in tow, take her in tow, Bucentaur ! ” cried Justiniani, as if he could be heard.

“ He will, ” said Constantine ; “ God be praised ! But look ! the other galleys are crowding up ! they will have a hard fight of it yet . ”

“ Two are safe, sire, at least, ” said Phranza ; for now the Dolphin and the S. Francis had beaten off all their assailants, had rounded the Seraglio Point, and were tacking into the Golden Horn. Already the blacksmiths were at work, the great chain relaxed, and, amidst cheers that burst from both sides of the Horn, they sailed slowly and majestically into the harbour. The Unicorn was still hardly beset.

In the meantime, messengers were continually de-

spatched by the Sultan, both by sea and land, to every portion of his vast armament. Now it was an order to Calil Pasha to urge on the transmission of the lighter artillery to the sea side; a command which the wily Pasha took all possible care to make every show of obeying, while in reality retarding the workmen: now it was an urgent injunction to Baltha Ogli to close in with the galleys around the vessels that yet lay in the power of the Infidels: now it was a threat to the Capitan Pasha if he allowed any one of the Christian vessels to enter the Horn. The sun was now almost in the very horizon; his slant rays shot along the channel, topping the waves with the lustre of rubies, or falling more mournfully on broken hulks, dismantled masts, useless oars, dead bodies, and all the wreck of a battle. Still the two great vessels, the Bucentaur and S. Irene, were fighting in a shoal of the Moslem boats; but gradually forcing their way onwards and approached so nearly by the Unicorn as to be able to render her some assistance in her great strait. Three times, however, that day, the Emperor gave up De Rushton and his Genoese ally for lost men: three times a vigorous effort drove back the boarders, and allowed some faint progress to be made. The wind kept steady the whole afternoon to the same point; yet it was past seven o'clock when the vessels rounded the Seraglio Point, and steered right up towards the harbour.

Here the Turkish boats dared not follow: the artillery, now reduced to two or three barrels of gunpowder in all, was too well served, from the city side: and the Genoese merchants of Galata brought one or two smaller pieces to bear upon the scene of action: less moved by the danger of Constantinople, than by that of the Bucentaur. But Baltha Ogli, dreading the rage of the Sultan beyond all other perils, crowded all sail on the six galleys that were the flower of the fleet, bade the slaves row their best, and pursued.

“Now, my lords,” said Constantine, who had till

then kept his post in the gardens of Phranza, "our place is by the Horn. Follow me. Is there a horse in waiting?"

One was instantly brought; and followed by the whole party, some on horseback, and some on foot, but no one waiting for his neighbour, he galloped down to the entrance of the Horn, by the Fish Market Gate, where the chain was stapled on to the city side of the harbour. It was a strange scene that there met him. The *S. Francis* and her companion were now safely riding at anchor, close under the walls: the ramparts were crowded with Genoese sailors eagerly expatiating on the voyage from Chios, on the dangers of the fight, and as eagerly listened to by such as were fortunate enough to understand Italian, while those who did not were fain to pick up such brief and unsatisfactory explanations as their brethren could or would afford them. A broad bridge of planks was formed from the deck to the shore: men passed and repassed on it, staggering along under the weight of barrels of flour, sacks of beans, pease, or millet, and, equally welcome to the timorous population of Constantinople, kegs of gunpowder: oxen were lowing in the open space of the Fish Market; sheep were being driven off to the public stalls; the Great Logothete was giving directions for the safe bestowal and proper arrangement of the provisions; and the various officers of the Genoese inquiring into the accommodations provided for, and the duties at once falling on, themselves and their men. As Constantine rode along, one long shout of "The Cæsar! The Cæsar! The Virgin the Protectress!" rolled along the crowd, till he arrived at the spot where the chief interest was concentrated.

Close to the sea-shore a rock of immense size had been embedded in the ground; a staple, the thickness of two men's bodies, welded into it: the enormous chain that swept the Horn fastened on to this by a staple bar of polished and well-oiled steel. Round

this a band of workmen were assembled: Contari was at their head: five or six smiths with bare brawny arms stood leaning on their sledgehammers and waiting for the signal to drive out the staple—others there were by the great crane, to which the chain was attached by cables, so as to be pulled up again, and replaced when necessary.

And now the *S. Irene* appeared full in view, having well rounded the Point; but still engaged in a running fight with the pursuing galleys. Close behind her was the *Unicorn*, while the sturdy *Bucentaur* bore the brunt of the battle, and kept off the most importunate of the enemy.

“A near thing, sire,” said Contari, briefly.

“They can hardly fail now,” replied Constantine.

“The devil himself cannot prevent them,” cried the lieutenant. “Stand off! my masters! Stand off! We shall want room anon.”

“She is throwing them well behind,” said Choniates. “Look! he is sending the men aft.”

“Ay, ay,” quoth Contari: “he knows his business—so do we ours. Cranemaster, slacken your cable.”

The action of the crane was reversed; the cable ran out, and lay in a useless coil on the sand; the men stood to their winches; and all was expectation, till Contari should give the signal.

And now every face in the approaching vessel could be clearly distinguished; and the *Cæsar*, raising the jewelled cap from his head, himself set the example in the lusty cheer that followed. Wives pressed frantically to catch a sight of their husbands,—fathers of their sons,—maidens of their lovers,—and still it was the same cry, “*S. George the Callinicus! The Virgin the Protectress!*”

But above all, the clear voice of Contari rang out,—“Now, my masters!” Instantly the sledges were in the air: the strokes fell in measured order: bang, bang, went the iron upon the steel; the panting of the workmen was heard in the intervals of the strokes, and

mingled with the shouts of the captain and mariners,—  
“Keep her off two points”—“Ay, ay, sir”—“Steady now!”—“Steady it is!” and the roar of the waters round the prow.

The staple fell—and lashing the waters into fury, the chain dashed into the sea, while the slackened cable of the crane ran out taut, and the men leant on the winches to keep it from passing too far.

“Slack away, men! slack away!” shouted Contari, “she draws more water.”

As he spoke, a volley of spent arrows from the foremost Turkish galley fell harmlessly around.

“Helm hard a-lee!” roared Captain Bulgari. And on glided the *S. Irene*, over the white path where the chain had sunk. And, in two minutes more, amidst deafening cheers, her companions were also in safety.

Baltha Ogli had done his worst. He put his galley about, and fled, slowly followed by the rest of the Turkish vessels. And that evening, as if by way of farce to the tragedy of the morning, his Royal Master, in the presence of all the Pashas, administered corporal chastisement to him with a golden rod, five pounds in weight.

## CHAPTER XIX.

“ And must the day, so fair that rose,  
And promised rapture in the close,—  
Must it, ere heighth of noon, divide  
The bridegroom and the plighted bride?”

*Lady of the Lake.*

A CALM, bright evening in May.

At the western gates of the church of the Eternal Wisdom well-nigh all the aristocracy of Constantinople were assembled. There was Constantine himself, with that noble, but now worn and anxious countenance, forcing itself to assume an expression of cheerfulness; there was many a dissolute nobleman of the imperial city, in the scarlet mantle yet glittering with gems and gold; there was many a fair face and a bright eye; for the loveliness as well as the chivalry of Byzantium was there. Phranza, and Lucas Notaras, and Justiniani, and other names of note, held a prominent place in the crowd; but all clustered round the bridal pair, whose “coronation” they had met to celebrate. The betrothment and the marriage were to take place at one and the same time; every day was now precious, for it was known that, undeterred by the arrival of the Genoese fleet, Mahomet meant to continue the siege. The fairest maidens of Constantinople were proud to attend on Theodora Phranza, and were flinging roses before her from silver baskets, as, attired in the white silk pallium and long veil, and attended by her two bridesmaids, she moved forward to the porch. Then came the Frank knight; young



Manuel Notaras was the paronymph: friends and acquaintance clustered in behind and around; a picked guard of Varangians attended; the crowd filled the great square of S. Sophia; and so they awaited the opening of the silver gates.

Back they rolled on their noiseless hinges: and there, in his glorious phenolion,<sup>1</sup> stood the Archbishop of Chalcedon, ready for the holy office. And so the sweet Litany began: closer and closer the circle drew to the porch, till the Prelate, taking the golden ring, declared that "the servant of GOD, Edward, was betrothed to the handmaid of GOD, Theodora, in the Name of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, now and ever, and to ages of ages." And then, with the silver ring, he in like manner gave Theodora to De Rushton as his promised bride.

Darkness was gathering over the earth, as with lighted tapers in their hands, the bridal pair, and then the rest of the company, entered that great cathedral. Onward they went till they stood before the jewelled screen; and then the office of Matrimonial Coronation began. For the servants of GOD, now to be crowned, the prayer arose; for their wealth, prosperity, and salvation; that the blessings of Cana of Galilee might descend upon them, and that they might be preserved in peace to their lives' end. And then, bringing forth the coronets of gold, the Archbishop crowned them, in the Name of the HOLY TRINITY, for each other,—“now and ever, and to ages of ages.”

Even while the final Litany was chanting, a low buzz might have been heard among the crowd around: voices grew louder and louder: there was rapid questioning, and still more rapid answering; till at length Burstow, who commanded the division of the guards then in attendance, hastily entered the cathedral. Advancing towards the bridal party, he found them

<sup>1</sup> The *phenolion*, or *phelonion*, of the Eastern Church, answers to the chasuble of the Western.

drinking from the common cup, which the Archbishop was holding forth to them.

"Most gracious Emperor," cried he, kneeling, "I shall report a miracle. The fleet of Mahomet is in full sail across the dry land to the upper part of the harbour."

"It is sorcery," cried the Archbishop.

"It is impossible," said the Emperor.

"I do assure your Majesty," said Burstow, earnestly, "that it is the very truth. I had it from one who could not fancy, and would not deceive: Lieutenant Contari."

"We will hear him ourselves," replied the Palæologus, "but not here. Bid him attend us in the sacristy. My Lord Archbishop, let this holy rite be concluded."

It was hastily ended; then, as the custom of the time was, Theodora de Rushton was tenderly embraced by her husband, and congratulated by all the party.

"Lady," said the Emperor, kissing her forehead kindly and gravely, "we shall yet hope to be present at the banquet. My lords, attend us without: you, Phranza, and you, Lord Acolyth, follow us into the sacristy. My Lord Archbishop, we will also pray your company."

The Emperor accordingly retired into the sacristy, —or, to use the more appropriate term, the *Diaconicon*,—of the Great Church. The walls were lined with presses of the most costly wood, containing the magnificent apparel of the officials of S. Sophia, and labelled with the names of those for whom they were designed—as the great Sacellarius, the great Chartophylax, the Commemorator, the Castrensius, and so forth. The middle of the vast apartment was occupied by forty or fifty enormous chests, containing altar-plate, candlesticks, processional crosses, and the thousand other appurtenances of the Metropolitan Church.

The Chartophylax, who had heard nothing of the report, and took it for granted that Sir Edward came to register the marriage, was in the sacristy, and brought forward the immense tome in which coronations were entered ; for they were registered as strictly by the Byzantine clergy as by our own at this day.

"Let that be done without," said Constantine, much to the worthy Priest's surprise ; "the paranympth will attend to it. Now, where are the two officers? Ha, in happy time!"—for as he spoke, Burstow and Contari entered.

"Lieutenant Contari," he continued, "let us hear from your own lips this strange tale."

"I will tell it, sire, as briefly as I can. Just before sunset, I was at the top of S. Michael's tower, trying to make out the last dispositions of the Turkish army—the Great Acolyth had ordered it." Sir Edward nodded assent. "Looking to the south, I missed all the galleys, but thought that they might possibly have put out to sea ; to the north, too, the army was perfectly still—not a single troop in motion that I could see, and the firing had ceased all the afternoon. Then I looked over Galata. There was a dark cloud in that part of the sky ; but close to the horizon was a clear silver line of light, and, sire, I saw as plainly as I now see your Majesty, ten or twelve galleys, one behind the other, in full sail to the north-west, over the dry land—nay, over the hilly country there. Sire, I am willing to lose my head if I have not spoken the very truth."

"Of that we are well assured," replied the Emperor. "Nevertheless, we are fain to think that it must have been some delusion of sight. Of a surety the followers of the False Prophet have dealings with the Evil One,"—and he crossed himself,—"but scarcely would he have been permitted to exercise for our destruction power unknown since the beginning of the world."

At this moment a voice was heard in the Great

Church, proclaiming, "Woe! woe to the Azymites! Woe! woe to the Double Processionists! Woe! woe to those that shall communicate with them! Now indeed is the Devil let loose against this city; now is fulfilled that which is written, that 'the whole creature in his proper kind was fashioned again anew, serving the peculiar commandments that were given to them;' now do we behold ships passing through the air as in the great sea——"

"My liege," cried De Rushton, "it is Gennadius. Have I your royal licence to silence him?"

Constantine bowed assent, and he left the sacristy. "Whatever this strange sight may be, and whatever it forebode, we must send forth some trusty officer to investigate it. Under ordinary circumstances, we should have chosen none more thankfully than Sir Edward de Rushton; as it is, go, Contari, to the Great Constable, and desire his presence here."

The Great Constable, Sir Etienne d'Angoulême, a young Frank knight of great energy and courage, who, as the name of the office implied, had the command over all the Frank allies not English, was accordingly summoned. In the meanwhile De Rushton, knowing nothing of the Emperor's designs, had partly by persuasion, partly by force, accomplished the removal of Gennadius from the church, and had then hastened to the bridal party, who, having now finished the registration of the marriage, were waiting in a dreadful state of uncertainty for what might be the decision of the Emperor.

"Theodora," said he, drawing her a little apart, "my own wife! whatever this report may mean, we may assuredly gather as much as this,—that Mahomet is preparing some new and terrible device against the city. I am sure the Emperor will not ask me to leave you, in order to discover what it is; but oh, Theodora! that is only the more reason why I ought to offer myself."

"If it be really your duty," said his bride, "God

forbid I should say aught to keep you back! But will there be danger?"

"Not half that which every man that defends the city is exposed to every day of his life. But if there were, it were a very ill return for the Emperor's kindness in giving me the best treasure I possess, and for your father's consent, and for your own love, if I withheld my services when they might be most useful. I will see you again first, and that presently. Ha! there is the Constable! I wonder what he makes here. Good e'en, Sir Knight: have you heard the news?"

"Marry have I," replied Sir Etienne. "God give you fair e'en, lady: pray you accept my best wishes that this day may be the beginning of brighter times! De Rushton, I congratulate you with all my heart."

"I thank you, good faith, very heartily," replied De Rushton. "But whither away?"

"To the Emperor," answered Sir Etienne. "He hath even now summoned me."

"I will with you," said the other; and together they entered the sacristy.

"Lord Constable," said Constantine, when they appeared, "we have a mission of some importance to trust to you. You have heard this strange report concerning the Turkish ships?"

"I have, my liege."

"We would fain have accurate information touching the matter," said the Cæsar. "This good knight we could not ask to leave his bride; but we know well that you will supply his place right ably."

"My liege," cried De Rushton, "I shall pray you, as you have thought meet to intrust this noble knight with the expedition, at least to permit that I accompany him. Little joy could I find in the city when I knew that my place ought to be in the field; and that my brothers in arms were in danger abroad, and I in peace and delight at home."

"Spoken like yourself, Lord Acolyth; but we doubt

whether we ought to allow this. Supposing, which God forbid! that anything should befall you."

"I am in His hands, sire; and it can never be His will that I avoid risk by avoiding duty."

Still Constantine hesitated; and the issue might have been doubtful, had not Angoulême joined his request to his brother knight's.

"I pray you, my liege, give him licence! This is a matter whereon the weal of the city may mainly depend; and, in such case, it were a thousand harms not to take the best means in our power of providing against this evil."

"Be it as you will, then," returned the Emperor: "this is but another proof of that zeal, Lord Acolyth, which makes us ever your debtor. Let your report be made as early as it may be."

"We shall not fail, sire," replied De Rushton. "My Lord Phranza, I shall, with your leave, return to your lodgings, and there claim my fair bride, when we have certain intelligence."

"S. George preserve you!" replied the Protovestiare. "I shall make the wedding cheer with a heavy heart. Does your Majesty still hold your gracious purpose of honouring the banquet?"

"Of a surety," replied Constantine. "Unless I went forth myself, which public considerations forbid, I know not where I could be so fitly found, as doing honour to one who, at the very time that life is dearest, is risking it for the city and for me." And so they parted.

## CHAPTER XX.

“ For earthly things were turned into watery ; and the things that before swam in the water, now went upon the ground.”—  
Wisdom xix. 19.

MANUEL Chrysolaras, an unwilling spectator of the Sultan's gradual but difficult progress, was guarded, a close prisoner, in the Turkish camp. He was, however, permitted to take the air at stated times, under good guard. He had been witness to the successful result of the attempt made by the five ships ; and, throughout the whole of that famous action, his heart had burnt with a mixture of honest pride and friendly envy ; for it was well known that Sir Edward de Rushton was the commodore of the little fleet. He knew, also, that the Sultan's council of war was much divided as to the propriety of continuing the siege : that the approach of summer, considering the insufficient preparations made for that vast army, was greatly dreaded ; that large armaments were being talked of, as in a state of equipment by the European Powers ; that if once the strong arm of Christendom were stretched forth, so far from being able to obtain Byzantium, Mahomet might be forced to disgorge Adrianople, and the rest of his European conquests. Then the impossibility of reducing the city, unless it were invested by sea and land ; the great difficulty of entering the Horn ; the impracticability, by any then known means, of breaking the chain. All these things were urged with great force by Calil Pasha, and but feebly

repelled by Baltha Ogli, who was again received into favour, Achmet Pasha, and the other counsellors in whom Mahomet placed most reliance.

One evening, towards the middle of May, Chrysolaras received a visit, as was sometimes the case, from Calil Pasha. "I am on my way," said that nobleman, after the usual interchange of civilities, "to a great council in the Sultan's tent, in which the question of raising the siege is to be decided. If they determine to persevere, the fate of Constantinople is sealed. Is there aught that I can urge, which I have not urged already, in favour of desisting?"

"I know of nothing," replied Manuel. "But, to speak truth, even if they resolve to carry on operations, the fate of the city seems by no means so sure as you say. What have they done in the month that has passed since you first appeared before the walls?"

"I know it,—I know it," replied the Pasha; "but there is some fresh scheme, I cannot tell what, that they say is to produce wonderful effects. I will let you know the result, if I can; but we must be careful to avoid suspicion. At all events, I will lose no time in announcing what happens to the Lord Phranza."

"By the old conveyance, I presume?"

"None so safe or so speedy," replied Calil. "A slave may deceive you, if he had sworn ten thousand oaths to secrecy;—a bird, never. But I must not delay. If you wish to communicate with your friends, get ready your letter at once; I will forward it, if it be possible. But, whatever you do, be careful."

The Pasha left the prisoner's tent, mounted his Arabian, and rode, followed by his usual retinue, to the Sultan's pavilion. The Council were already assembled, though the Sultan was not yet in readiness. All the pashas were there; some of the most experienced generals; Baltha Ogli and Leontius, from whose presence Calil augured the very worst; inasmuch as the Greek, who had no hope of being restored to his property while Constantine reigned, was one of the



warmest promoters of every design for carrying on the siege.

At length an eunuch, drawing aside the curtains at the upper part of the tent, announced that the Commander of the Faithful desired their presence. And, in the council-chamber, which, though a mere portion of the imperial tent, was hung with the costliest silks, and adorned in all directions with fringes and draperies of inestimable value, Mahomet was accordingly awaiting them.

After the usual prostration, the Sultan gave them leave to be seated, and a secretary having taken his place, Mahomet, who, when not carried away by passion, spoke well, stated the business before the Council.

Allah, he said, had not yet blessed their arms, as they had a right to expect, and as the Muftis assured them that he would. They had tried means that had never been tried before; they had mustered three hundred thousand soldiers against the city; they had invented new engines; they had spared neither toil, nor treasure, nor blood:—and to what effect? Save the overthrow of three or four small towers near that of S. Romanus, absolutely nothing had been done; nay, provisions and ammunition had been introduced into the city, and it had thus been proved that the blockading fleet was nothing more than a name. In the mean time, the summer was coming on; disease was spreading among the troops; potent armaments were expected from Europe: in time, the attacked might become the attackers, and a retreat, now only advisable, might be found indispensable.

“The words of the Commander of the Faithful are as the Law of the Prophet,” replied Calil Pasha. “Allah hath not decreed, at this time, to give the Golden City into our hands. There is no disgrace in acquiescing in that which is written. A few years or a few months later, and Constantinople shall be ours. To-day, for the sins of the army, it is otherwise or-

dained. Already do provisions begin to fail: every day the sun grows more powerful, and herbage more scanty: even now, not without great difficulty, can the horses be supplied with fodder. The sky is bright and glowing, and there is no hope of rain; and, without rain, they must soon perish. Add, too, that water grows scarce, that disease grows rife; daily we hear of more numerous deaths; charms and physicians avail nothing. Now we may raise the siege with honour: another month, and almost certain disgrace will be the consequence. Let us be wise while we may. To defer is not to abandon. Unless we could command the sea, unless we could force our way into the Horn, the enterprise is hopeless. And well says the proverb, 'If Allah has given the earth to the Faithful, he has left the sea for the Infidels.' We will come before Constantinople again, but we will come with a larger fleet; and fear not then, but that the Vicegerent of the Prophet will soon unfold the green banner in the courts of the Cæsar's Palace."

The Sultan seemed much influenced by what Calil had said. Achmet Pasha, however, instantly rose.

"The Gaban Ottashi," (the foster-brother of the Infidels,) he said, with a sneer, "hath doubtless spoken well and wisely, both for himself and for them,—for it is one and the self-same thing to do both."

"How mean you by that, my Lord Pasha?" asked Mahomet, angrily; for, at that time, no one stood higher in his good-will and confidence, than Calil.

"I crave pardon most humbly," returned Achmet, "if my zeal for the prosperity of the Sultan, and the advancement of our most holy faith, has caused me to speak unadvisedly; but the Pasha said that, till we obtain the command of the sea, we can effect nothing. Will he then confess, that if we could at once obtain possession of the harbour, we should persevere in the siege?"

"Were it not that we are in the presence of the Emir of Emirs," replied Calil, "I would chastise any

man who dared to hint what Achmet Pasha has even now said. As it is, thus much I reply : if the harbour were in our possession, I would be first in urging the continuance of the siege."

"Then will the matter be made easy," returned Achmet; "for this Greek nobleman pledges himself,"—and he pointed to Leontius,—"if your majesty will give him leave, to put the harbour in your possession in seven days."

"How? how?" inquired Mahomet, eagerly.

"Has your slave licence to speak?" asked Leontius.

"Tell us at once," cried Mahomet; "lose no time."

"Then," said the Great Duke, "I would engage, if I had the men and means, to transport twenty or thirty galleys from the Sea of Marmora into the upper part of the harbour."

There was a pause of astonishment. Mahomet was the first to break it.

"If you can do this," said he, "name your own reward.—But it is surely impossible?"

"My Lord Sultan," said Leontius, "I am certain that it may be done, with patience and resolution. Give me but the command of ten thousand men, and the unbounded use of all the timber felled for the purpose of building vessels, or of making machines; and, my life for it, I succeed."

"May it please your Highness," said Calil, in dismay, "this is a very extraordinary proposal. Such power is not usually given but to a Pasha; and though I mean to imply no suspicion against the Christian, may it not be thought dangerous to put such weapons into the hands of one not yet a believer?"

"If your highness entrusts them to Achmet Pasha," replied Leontius, "I shall be well content."

"And we repeat what we said," answered the Sultan. "If you succeed, you have but to ask your own price; and, by the thirty-seven thousand prophets, I would give it, were it half my empire! But if you fail, you, Pasha, shall be publicly degraded from your

office, and your wealth confiscated to the treasury ; and you, Lord Leontius, sent back again to Constantinople. Are you content ?”

Achmet seemed to hesitate, but Leontius boldly answered, “And thankful also, may it please your highness.” And the Pasha, who had been made thoroughly acquainted with the plan, assented.

“Take this ring, then,” said the Sultan, “and lose no time in setting about the work. We ourselves will visit it to-morrow morning ; let the progress then be made in it.”

Calil, on his return to his tent, finding himself already suspected by his rivals of some sympathy with the Greeks, thought it best to refrain from giving any notice of the attempt at Constantinople, lest an investigation should take place into the methods by which the besieged acquired their information, and his head should pay the price of his treachery. But he took care to acquaint Chrysolaras, at an early hour of the following day, with what had been determined.

“It is a bold attempt,” said that nobleman, “but it can hardly be successful. The distance must be full three leagues, the ground hilly, the valleys marshy ; and then the Genoese of Galata might endanger the work by a well-conducted sally. It is the scheme of a clever desperado.”

“I know that,” replied Calil. “I have this morning been down to the works ; and, if you wish to see them, you shall have leave.”

“I would gladly go thither,” said Manuel Chrysolaras. And before noon, mounted, but under an escort of six Janissaries, two of whom passed his bridle reins through their own, he was on his way to the place.

It was a wonderful scene, of which some faint idea may be formed from the view of the operations in making a railroad. Fifty thousand men were at work ; hills were being lowered, valleys filled, planks clamped and clenched together, to form a viaduct for the pas-

sage of the ships ; oxen pulling along piles of wood, loaded on heavy drays ; everywhere the blunt echo of mallets, the sharp ring of chisels, the shouts of workmen, the strokes of spades, the creaking of wheels ; everywhere messengers running along to excite or to despatch ; trees felled, bushes torn up by the roots, cart-loads of earth poured on to a suspected spot, piles driven in, pulleys straining, cranes groaning, windlasses stretching,—all in full work, none interfering with another—the long line of country between the two seas, a living stream of heads ; flags waving in the sun, to direct their course ; officers slowly cantering along, to inspect the proceedings.

Mahomet, when the operations were actually begun, had been so impressed with the feasibility of the scheme, that, instead of ten thousand men, he placed fifty thousand at the command of Achmet ; and Leontius engaged that, by the following night, all should be ready for the transport of the ships. Herds of bullocks and oxen were slaughtered all along the line of operations ; butchers and cooks were busy in extracting their fat ; immense cauldrons were hissing and bubbling, as they received suet, and marrow, and tallow ; and fires beneath them were tended by armies of slaves. Already in some places they were applying the unctuous mixture to the planks, to facilitate the passage of the ships. Two thousand young pines, cut down in the neighbouring hills of Therapia, were being fashioned into rollers. On a sudden, every sound ceased, as if by magic ; the hammers fell not, the pulleys were silent, the windlasses were left, the beasts of burden were checked ; while from the tower, that served as a temporary minaret, the muezzin thundered forth his summons, "Come to prayer ! come to prayer ! There is no God but God, and Mahomet is the Prophet of God ! Come to prayer ! come to prayer !" And every head was bowed, and every knee was bent, for a few short moments towards Mecca. Then every hand turned busily to its work

again, and the orderly confusion of a labouring army clanged on as before.

And Chrysolaras thought to himself, as he viewed the scene, "It is not wonderful that these men have conquered the East." He turned, and the Sultan was by his side. The Greek nobleman courteously raised his cap, for he scorned to do more; and Mahomet, than whom, when his passions were not aroused, none was ever a more finished gentleman, as courteously returned the salutation.

"Ha! my Lord Chrysolaras! what think you of this? what of the city now?"

"The city, your highness, is where it was; in God's hands, not in yours. Yet none shall ever say that I would not do an enemy justice. This is a wonderful scene."

"See how Allah himself is fighting for us," said the Sultan with a smile. "This bright blue sky and pleasant north-eastern breeze is the very weather we need."

"God oftentimes permits a bad cause to prosper," said Manuel, boldly, "if only for this—to teach us that there is a world where these wrongs will be set to rights."

"Ha! say you so? By Omar, you are a bold man! But prisoners have a licence. By to-morrow morning, our galleys will be in the Horn."

"I think your highness is right."

"And what then?"

"Then—the final struggle."

"You cannot doubt that the city will fall?"

"I do not, your highness, unless God interferes to save it with a miracle. That may well be; but whether or not, I am sure that my brethren in arms will do their duty."

"It is a beautiful city," said Mahomet, rather sadly, as he turned towards it. And glorious surely it was, the noonday sun lying quietly upon it, and lighting up its golden domes and towers, while the silver Bosphorus

rolled on as if to kiss its feet,—and here and there a light wreath of smoke played round the ramparts, or crested the besieger's works. "It is a fit city for the head of the world. Perhaps the prophecy will be fulfilled."

"What prophecy, your Highness?"

"An old one,<sup>1</sup>—now afloat for a hundred years at least. It foretells that Islam shall obtain yonder city, and shall hold it for four centuries,—but not a day longer; and that strangers from the north-east shall dispossess them of it. But the empire of the Prophet is interminable."

He was riding away, when, as if impelled by a sudden thought, he returned and said, "My Lord Chrysolaras, doubtless you have some friends in the city who are interested in your weal. Now, if I give you licence to go thither for twelve hours, will you pledge me your word as a knight and a nobleman, to lay fairly before the Emperor the state of affairs here, and to return? I am well resolved that the city shall yield; but if it might be so, I would spare the lives of many brave men, who, if we come to the final struggle, must fall."

"I will certainly give the promise," said Chrysolaras. "But I will not deceive your Highness. If I go, so far as in me lies, I shall exhort the Cæsar to hold out to the last: and to rely on help from Europe, or from heaven."

"Give him what advice you please," said the Sultan in a displeased voice, "only state what you see and know. Will you do this?"

"Assuredly I will."

"You shall wait till after the evening hour of prayer: by that time great progress will have been made. And I shall look for you by noon to-morrow, and, as I hope, with terms from the Emperor."

<sup>1</sup> This is strictly true, and is related by more than one historian. The 400 years were fully completed on the 16th of May, 1853.

“For me, your Highness, undoubtedly; I trust for nothing further.”

Mahomet spoke a few words to one of the Janisaries by whom Chrysolaras was guarded; and then said to him,

“Under these circumstances you will give your word not to attempt to enter Constantinople till you receive my licence this evening?”

“I will promise so far, your Highness.”

“Then you are released from your attendance,” said the Sultan to the guards. “I should wish you, Lord Chrysolaras, to examine the works for yourself—ride along the line, and satisfy yourself that the thing is practicable.”

So saying, he rode off in the direction of S. Dimitri; and Chrysolaras, by no means unwilling to make use of his temporary freedom, proceeded at a brisk trot to the sea-shore, where now stands the suburb of Beshiktash. Here eighty galleys and brigantines were moored, as near to the beach as might be: and here were the head quarters of the engineers. Leontius himself was absent, at a different part of the line: but Achmet was surrounded with all kinds of officers, and had barely time to acknowledge the salutations of the Greek nobleman.

“So you have accepted parole at last?” said the Pasha.

“Till sunset,” replied Chrysolaras, to whom it was well known to have been frequently offered. “The Sultan was desirous that I should see the works.”

“That shall you do,” replied Achmet. “I shall ride along them myself, if you will wait for a few minutes. Now, Hassan?”

“May it please your Highness, they need more sheep—all that were brought in have been slain, and there lacks more grease.”

“Send out a party of light horse towards Therapia, and so on by Buthys and Delcus. You, Ameer, to the Asiatic side—there are five or six transports there



—bid them send over every beast that can be spared, and instantly.”

“If it please you,” said another messenger, “Selim, the engineer, cannot get the piles to hold under S. Nicolas’ hill. He bade me come and inquire what he was to do.”

“To prepare for the bowstring,” answered the Pasha, “if the planks be not laid there in an hour from this time. Lose no time in telling him so.—There are few difficulties, my lord, that such an argument will not overcome.”

“I should think not,” replied Chrysolaras, drily.

“Now, Avedichian,” said the Pasha, addressing an Armenian renegade who, with pencil and compass in hand, was sitting at a table in the tent, “is that plan ready?”

“A moment, Lord Pasha. There:” and he gave it to a Janissary in waiting. “Bid Murad rebate the timbers thus, in his viaduct, and rest assured it would bear the earth itself. What further, my lord?”

“The sea-bridge,” replied the Pasha. “Choose your own spot, and the galleys shall come ashore there.”

“No place better than here, my lord. Boy, bid them bring the largest crane hither. I will arrange the platform.”

“Well, Lord Chrysolaras?” said Achmet in a moment of quiet.

“I give you all the praise you can wish for,” replied the prisoner. “If diligence alone deserves success, you have a right to it.”

“And we shall secure it. What now, Abdul Medschid?”

“The men have wrought long and well, my lord—were it not well they dined?”

“Let them dine on the works, then—serve them out their rations along the line. And hark—let those have wine that will—we must not be too strict to-day.”

“I understand, your Highness.”

"Lord Chrysolaras, you shall dine with me. But first shall we ride towards the Horn?"

Manuel consented; and they were presently on their way along the line of works. Everywhere the same diligence—the Sultan was inspecting—the Pashas in constant attendance—everything that despotism could do, both in rewards or punishments, was strained to the full.

"Well wrought, mên, the Sultan will not forget this," cried the Pasha, as he paused at the deepest cutting. "Firm, very firm," as he rode along an in-trenchment. "Well, Selim, do the piles hold?"

"We have just got them to hold, your Highness."

"I thought they would. Remember, if they fail to-night, your head answers it. What is that yonder?"

"They have opened a sandpit, may it please your Highness."

"Let us see"—and followed by Chrysolaras, he galloped up to it, meeting a waggon groaning under the weight of sand that had been heaped upon it. Eight or ten men were at work in the excavations.

"So, so," said Achmet. "Work away! work away! it will be dinner time anon. How now! By the Prophet, there is a man asleep! How now, sirrah?"

The unfortunate slave started to his feet, and saw the Pasha close to him. "It was but for a moment," he shrieked out. "I had not tasted anything—"

But he said no more: the scymitar was already glittering in Achmet's hand; there was the sound of a stroke; and the head fell on the ground, and rolled into the pit.

"Let that be a warning to sleepers," said Achmet, quietly, and again rode forward.

In a few moments a horseman came towards them at a rapid pace; and, to his horror and disgust, Manuel Chrysolaras recognised Leontius.

"Well met, Lord Pasha! everything is right towards the Horn."

"Then will we back towards the sea. The Sultan will believe us now."

"We must not flag, though, my Lord. I am anxious about the torches. We must turn night into day, or there will be no progress."

"I have given orders that cauldrons of pitch be placed every fifty yards along the whole line, at sunset. There is, luckily, pitch enough in the stores yonder at Beshiktash and at Scutari. The transports are actively engaged in carrying it over."

"May I ask," said Manuel Chrysolaras, "whether this scheme is owing to the Lord Leontius?"

"It was his proposal to the Sultan," replied the Pasha.

"Then, Leontius," cried Manuel, "you are the deepest dyed villain that our times can show. Well for you I am unarmed, or, whatever were the consequences to me, I would take such vengeance on a renegade, as should be equally famous with his crime."

Leontius half drew his sword.

"Nay, nay!" said Achmet; "the Lord Chrysolaras is a prisoner, and under my protection. Never waste your anger on a loser. And you, my Lord, I warn you to be more chary of your words."

"This only will I say; and mark me, Leontius, if God does not visit your crime in some terrible and unheard-of manner, and so deprive human justice of its prey, I will never leave you till I have inflicted, in some degree, the punishment you deserve. Nay, nay, Lord Pasha," seeing him about to speak, "not while I am a prisoner,—fear nothing;—but that, by God's grace, I shall not always be."

Leontius glared at him like a disappointed tiger, and then, striking spurs into his horse, rode off to S. Dimitri.

## CHAPTER XXI.

“ A renegade and leopard-spotted traitor ;  
A most accursed and fiend-prompted traitor :  
One that no tie of friendship, fear of God,  
Respect of man, nor dread of hell, can touch.”

*The Revenger's Tragedy.*

As soon as it was dark on the following night, Sir Edward de Rushton and Burstow, leaving the city by the gate of the Fish Market, crossed the Golden Horn in one of the Emperor's boats, and, after showing their passports, were admitted into the suburb of Galata. The state of this little town was peculiar. Nominally part of Constantinople, and of course under Imperial jurisdiction, not only was it in the habits, customs, and religion of its inhabitants completely Frank, but it was in reality unwilling to submit to any political interference. Its own podesta was supreme governor: all causes, both civil and criminal, came under his cognizance, or were, in case of difficulty, referred to Genoa. The links which connected the suburb with the city, were thus very slight. The Genoese, so that their rights were respected, cared little whether they formed a factory in an infidel, or a dependency in a Christian, state. They offered no opposition to the Infidels, further than carefully securing and watching their own end of the great chain; and the Turks were careful not to attack Galata, and so rouse the indignation of a maritime republic, like Genoa. Thus the ease with which the viaduct was executed was greatly increased,

for Achmet Pasha felt certain—and the result proved him right—that no sally would be made by the Galatense, though the line of works ran within half a mile, at one point, of their ramparts.

Having, as we said, presented their passports, De Rushton and Burstow passed through the quiet little merchant town, and betook themselves to the north-eastern gate,—which then stood as nearly as possible on the spot at present occupied by the hotel of the French ambassador.

The sergeant of the guard was called out, and examined their credentials. “Body of Bacchus!” cried he; “but you are a bold man, Signor! Why, the workmen are not half a mile from this gate!”

“What are they doing?” asked De Rushton. “The stories they tell in the city, are quite incredible.”

“Why, that we could not make out till this afternoon,” replied the officer. “Yesterday afternoon, and all last night, and to-day, they were about some great work; but this evening, it turns out, that they mean to transport their fleet right over the land, into the upper part of the Horn; and, by S. Luke! they will do it, too.”

“But why did you not let the Emperor know, as soon as you observed what their real purpose was?” inquired De Rushton.

“Well, Signor; some of the merchants thought that it would only be right,—not that we wish to quarrel with the Turks; but still they need have known nothing about it. But the gates are always shut at sunset: it was nearly that before the plan was generally known. Then there was half an hour wasted before the matter came to the Council; and the Podesta swore by the Holy Face of Lucca, that the gates should be opened neither for King nor Cæsar, when they were once shut. When he swears by that oath, Signor, it is no use reasoning with him. Not but that I was sorry, too, for my own part, for I have a sort of liking for poor Constantine.”

"So," thought De Rushton, "the 'splendour,' and 'majesty,' and 'super-excellency' of Byzantium is cut down, in this miserable little suburb, to 'poor Constantine.' Well, then, if the works are so near," he continued aloud, "we shall, probably, not be long absent. We only go to satisfy ourselves as to what they really are. The pass, you see, is good to come in with, as well as to go out."

"It is so," said the sergeant, looking at it: "God speed your Excellence." And they passed out.

Their way lay between what, in the flourishing times of the city, had been small suburban houses and gardens. The houses were now, for the most part, in ruins; walls fallen in, verandahs broken down, doors torn from the hinges for fire-wood, roofs stripped of their tiles, which served well to break up for roads for the artillery and the like, over swampy ground. Here and there, indeed, some of the best had been patched up, and served as the residence of some of the officers; but even these, on the night in question, were deserted; for not an eye was closed in the Ottoman camp. The gardens had shot forth into all the rankness of tropical luxuriance: untended jessamines and untrimmed heliotropes ran over the walls; unpruned daturas waved their silver trumpets in the wind; roses hid themselves in their own wildness; and, except for the distant sounds of labour, all the neighbourhood was still in its dewy freshness, the nightingale alone filling the air with melody. But as the adventurers ascended a rise in the road, between the present English Embassy and the Seraglio Galata, a strong line of lights burst on their view, stretching over hill and valley, from the Sea of Marmora on the south, till lost in the distance on the north. The cauldron fires, at regular intervals, threw up their lurid vapour to the sky, and flashed on the tall masts and expanding sails of the galleys, behind them, that like a ghostly procession of ships, moved steadily onwards to their destinations, amidst the darkness that encircled them. Fifes, haut-

boys, and trumpets swelled forth in unison or separately ; but as the knight and his follower approached nearer, the straining of the pulleys, the labouring of the steeds, and the shouts of the drivers could be heard even above their melody. De Rushton advanced as near as prudence permitted, and quite near enough to see that the bold plan of the Sultan was already, in some sort, successful. On the embankment, to which he was just opposite, more than common interest seemed to be concentrated. On came one of the largest galleys ; fifty oxen were yoked to its prow. The bellows of the beasts and the shouts of the drivers rang out into the night. The side of the bank was a net of pulleys ; a host of soldiers bent to their work at them. The sails bellied out, as if to woo the breeze ; the helmsman was at the rudder ; slaves dashed pailful after pailful of melted grease on the rollers that held the keel and the side supports of the vessel. And thus, slowly but surely, she passed onwards to her goal. And now there was a rising ground to climb ; for the difficulties had only been lessened, not removed : and the shouts became louder, and the labour grew more intense. Oxen fell down and groaned their last ; chains snapped and ropes broke : there was shouting for smiths and running for carpenters ; fresh beasts of burden were driven up at full gallop, and attached in the place of those that had died beneath the toil. Still the galley advanced not an inch. Then huge wedges of wood were laid under the hindmost roller ; sledge-hammers rang loudly upon them ; the huge mass was made firm in its position, and the order given out for all hands to rest. Up presently rode Leon-tius, almost touching the ruined wall behind which De Rushton was concealed. Fifes and drums again struck up, and, amidst a chaos of noises, shouting, groaning, creaking, straining, panting, hammering, with two or three desperate efforts, the galley gained the summit of the ascent, and began to glide down the responding declivity.

"That is enough, Burstow," said De Rushton, when the galley had passed on. "Better return before the next comes up."

"Did you see the Great Duke, my lord?"

"Ay, and had we not been on a mission of importance, the time and place would hardly have sufficed for his safety; but his hour will come, never fear."

We shall presently have to accompany the knight and his companion on their return; now we must, for a few seconds, follow Leontius. Riding up to his temporary tent, as soon as the difficulties attendant on the passage of the galley which we have just been noticing were removed, he leaped from his horse, and entering it, called for a glass of sherbet.

"Is that matter arranged, Nicetas?" asked he.

"It is, my lord," replied the ill-looking person addressed, his confidential servant. "Ali and Chenouda are on his track: safe men, both, for their necks are in your lordship's power."

"And which way goes he?"

"By S. Dimitri, and so to Galata, my lord. He has only one Janissary with him; and they are thus quite at our mercy."

"What time went he?"

"He rode out to S. Dimitri some half an hour ago: and is probably in their hands before this."

"That is well. Another glass, Nicetas; it is a hot night. So, so, my Lord Chrysolaras,—you who threatened to chastise me, we may chance to turn the tables on your lordship. It was lucky, too, that Achmet should have mentioned his going. Come and tell me when it is done; I shall be somewhere on this part of the works." With which words he re-mounted, and again rode off.

De Rushton, meanwhile, and Burstow, were pursuing their way back.

"It seems to me," said the Acolyth, "that these cowardly Galatense dogs might have prevented this if they would. They must have known far more about



it all these last six and thirty hours, than we could, and yet not one word to the Court."

"Why, even last night, my lord, a sally might have done wonders: even now, perhaps, it might not be too late to do some good, though the foremost ships must long ago be in the Horn."

"I fear so; but the Cæsar shall hear, without loss of time, what the Infidels are about; and by his judgment we may well stand."

"And I trust, my lord, that when we shall have beaten these Mussulman dogs off, then the Emperor will remember that he has a debt to pay to his good friends and very obedient servants in Galata."

Sir Edward smiled; but it was a melancholy smile. "Why, Burstow," said he, "you have talked to others so much about beating the Turks off, that you really begin to believe it yourself."

"If you wish to deceive others, my lord, begin by deceiving yourself. I have always found it the best way; it comes more naturally. But as to these Galatense, whichever party wins, they are sure to lose. Mahomet is too wise a man to trust a factory of such traitors as he knows them to have been."

"You are right," returned De Rushton; "and it will but be their—S. Mary! what is that?"

They had now reached a spot where a by-road ran northwards in the direction of S. Dimitri; and, apparently about a hundred yards up it, shouts and blows, as of persons engaged in conflict, were heard.

"Some camp quarrel," quoth Burstow; "best get on quickly."

"No, no," cried Sir Edward, "it is a Greek voice; follow me."

Hurrying in the direction of the sound, by the light of a torch, which was burning on the ground, De Rushton saw a Greek, apparently of superior rank, stretched on the grass, a Janissary bending over him; while two or three men, on hearing the sound of advancing footsteps, ran off in the direction of S. Dimitri, as hard as their feet would carry them.

"Whoever you are," said the Janissary, astonished to see Frank costume in such a place, and at such a time, "help me to carry this nobleman to some spot where he may be in safety. He was going with a pass from the Sultan into the city, being a prisoner in our camp, and on parole; but just here we were set upon by two villains, one of whom, I fear, has killed him—he breathes, too."

"What is his name?" inquired De Rushton, rather anxiously.

"He is called the Lord Manuel Chrysolaras," replied the Janissary.

Sir Edward threw himself on his knees by his friend. He was perfectly insensible, and showed no other sign of life except by breathing faintly. The wound had been given with a sword through the throat, and from behind.

"We are close to the gate of Galata," said De Rushton; "help us to carry him as far as that, and we will reward you for your pains, and discharge you, if you wish it, from further attendance. The Lord Chrysolaras is one of my dearest friends."

"Yes," said the Janissary, rather doubtfully; "but I rather think that I ought to carry him back to the camp. He cannot return to-morrow, that is certain, if ever he is able to return at all. I know not what I shall say to the Sultan."

"Say that you were in danger of your life," cried Burstow; "for, by S. George, I will run you through the body if you do not carry him whither we bid you. Take up, take up!"

"Come with us, fellow, if you like," said De Rushton, "and the matter shall be accounted for to the Emperor and to the Sultan, and you shall be well rewarded."

Under the combined influence of avarice and fear, the Janissary yielded; and Manuel, still insensible, was conveyed to the gate of Galata. The sergeant, being summoned, examined the passport, and declared that it only mentioned two persons.

“ You know me, sirrah !” cried Sir Edward ; “ I am Great Acolyth of the Empire, and this nobleman is of one of the first families in Constantinople. If he dies in consequence of your delay, were it the last act of my life, I would stab you to the heart.”

The man growled out something about the pride of the aristocracy, but unbarred the gate, and the whole party entered. In the guard-house a rude kind of litter was procured, and the wounded man conveyed to the water-side. The boat was in waiting, the Golden Horn was soon crossed, and Sir Edward then gave orders that the litter should be carried to his own lodgings in the palace.

His first care was to send a messenger for Theophrastus, the Court physician ; his next, to despatch Burstow with the intelligence he had gained to the Cæsar ; and his third, by another Varangian, to request Phranza's attendance. Theophrastus, whose apartments were in the Court, came first. By this time, Chrysolaras had given some faint signs of returning consciousness ; and he had been, with some difficulty, undressed and laid in bed. The physician was a man of imposing stature and appearance ; his long white beard flowed reverently to his waist, and he carried in his hand a case of instruments and medicines ; for those were not days in which any nice distinction was made between surgery and physic. He was a man of sense, too ; though certainly his manner, which was pompous beyond all expression, would have led a stranger to believe very much to the contrary.

“ So a young nobleman of great promise hath been hurt in mortal conflict ?” asked he, ascending the staircase in company with De Rushton, who was waiting for him. “ We shall see what can be done for him ; we have not studied Galen and Averroes for nothing. Aha ! Lord Acolyth ! a sorry change for you !” for the whole *metœcia* had been prepared for the reception of the bride. Balustrades and chande-

liers were garlanded with flowers; everything was as gay as the contracted means of the city would allow. "I remember, when I was a young man,—time flies, time flies, Lord Acolyth,—that was under Manuel Palæologus, and not long after the death of John; I remember being consulted by a young nobleman—"

But here the worthy Physician's eloquence ceased; for De Bushton, who knew him well, and liked him, notwithstanding his loquacity, very unceremoniously held up his finger, and said, "Hush! this is the door."

Theophrastus was instantly silent, and entered the darkened room on tiptoe. "More light," he said; "but gently, gently. Where is it? ah! in the neck. Not much blood, I see. No more blood—cloths—napkins? Eh? none:—bad sign. Pulse full, and tolerably strong. Strong man, your friend, my lord. Quite insensible?—eh?—quite insensible? Ah, well; hold up the head. Ah, under the ear, avoiding the jugular vein, out below the deflexor muscle, by the left jaw. A bad wound. I think he will die."

"Is the case desperate, then?" inquired the Acolyth.

"Desperate! blessed Panaghia, how hot these young men are! Desperate, quotha?—no, no. Now, if—as might have very well been the case—the vertebra had been injured, by the sword or other sharp instrument,—for at present I by no means wish to be understood as expressing my deliberate opinion that it was a sword; as my old master, Nicolas Trinaldes, used to say, Never be sure of what you have never seen,—but, as I said, if the instrument, be it of what kind it may—"

What the supposition was, must remain doubtful; for at that moment a servant entered the room with intelligence that the Lord Phranza was in waiting below. Sir Edward seized his opportunity. "Use your best skill," he said, "and join us below presently." And so he went down stairs.

"Well, my lord," said Phranza, hurriedly, "what

is it? what is all this I hear?—Chrysolaras come back, and wounded? How fell it out?”

De Rushton satisfied him as he best might, and then added, “Now I must to the Emperor. Are your guests gone?”

“Nearly all,” replied Phranza; “only the Great Drungaire, and Thomas Palæologus, and Callistus Nicephorus, and one or two other such nocturnal banqueters.”

“Then you had better go to the Cæsar also. But first, of your kindness, I will pray you to return, and see Theodora: tell her that I am safe and well, and have done my errand without harm or loss. Her I will not see to-night; for there is yet much to be done—at least there may be—and it must be an hour past midnight.”

“Nearly two,” replied Phranza. “I will do as you wish me.”

“Do not let her be aroused, though, if she sleeps,” said Sir Edward; “she must have had enough sorrow and anxiety this last day.”

“Sleep, poor girl! I have had much ado to keep her quiet about you. She was certain that something would happen, and so, sure enough, there has. God be praised it is no worse, if Chrysolaras only recovers. But I must go and see Lord Manuel first.”

“Better not, my lord, if I may advise; hear, at least, what Theophrastus says first.”

“Is it so bad then?” inquired Phranza. “By S. George, I hope not! They told me it was a trifle—a mere scratch—for heaven’s sake, what is it?”

“Much more serious than that, my lord,” replied De Rushton. “I fear his life is in great danger.”

“Then I *will* see him,” cried Phranza, “let who will say nay. If he should die—if he should die—”

“He won’t die, my lord,” said the physician, in a clear, hearty voice, entering the room. “I have probed the wound. It requires great care; but I pledge my knowledge of our divine art that he recovers. But I

will have no one see him that could excite him; for he is sensible now. I have explained to him where he is, and all that has happened."

"May I not see him for one moment?" inquired Sir Edward.

"No," replied Theophrastus. "A servant is with him now: I will send up one of my young men to attend him, as dull as Tzetzes' Chiliads—ha! ha! no excitement there—till I come again myself, which will be at daybreak. Till when, I leave strict orders that no one sees him. If any dangerous symptom supervenes, I shall be called for."

"Of course we shall obey," replied Phranza.

"Of course you will," said Theophrastus. "Disobey the Cæsar if you will—that may be set to rights; but never a physician. By the way, he said, 'Let Euphrasia know.' Who, in the name of the Unmercenary Ones, is Euphrasia?"

"The lady to whom he is betrothed," said De Rushton. "I will take care that she does know; but it shall not be till to-morrow, unless there is any immediate danger."

"That I pledge you my honour you shall hear," said the physician. "And now good night. Or stay,—I think one cup of Chian would be wholesome—may I ask for it?"

De Rushton rang the silver bell. "A bottle of Chian, Stephen."

"And hark ye, Stephen," said Theophrastus, "two sprigs of cinnamon, and one of black pepper—not a jot more, d'ye hear? They are medicinal."

"I must leave you though," said Sir Edward: "the Emperor must be kept waiting no longer."

"Go, go, my lord—I can take care of myself."

"I will go round by my house, De Rushton," said Phranza, "and meet you at the palace." And at the same moment the Chian entered, and the two friends departed.

Phranza, as he had said, immediately repaired to

his own metœcia. De Rushton went straight to the Cæsar, and, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, found instant admission. Burstow was already there, and had related the occurrences of the evening.

“We thank you, Lord Acolyth, again and again for your zeal and good discretion in this matter. The great question now is, whether to attempt an instant surprisal of these vessels. If they obtain possession of the upper part of the Horn, we are lost.”

“If my advice might have weight, sire, I would not advise a sally to-night. We are utterly in the dark how to attack: we have not galleys enough to throw any great force instantly on the opposite side of the Horn; and if we have to shut it, it must be broad daylight before we could come into action. It were much more to the purpose to bring down all our available artillery into that part of the ramparts. Somewhere, say, by the Church of S. John; and to-morrow we will see what can be done by a well-directed fire, under cover of which we may, if it shall seem advisable, cross the Horn.”

“We leave all to you, my lord,” said Constantine. “But now, touching the Lord Chrysolaras: is his wound dangerous?”

“Dangerous, sire, certainly: but yet Theophrastus has hopes of his recovery. And there, also, is a great difficulty. It seems that he was allowed to come into the city on an engagement to return to-morrow by noon. That the circumstances have rendered impossible. But some intimation should be given to the Sultan of the fact; or he will, with good reason, accuse us of a breach of faith.”

“God forbid!” cried the Cæsar. “The Janissary who, this gallant officer tells me, accompanied Lord Chrysolaras, must be sent back to Mahomet, and must be instructed to acquaint him with all that has passed. If he doubts the account, safe conduct shall be given to any physician whom he may name, to enter Constantinople and to examine into its truth for himself.”

"I will take order for that, sire."

"One thing more," said Constantine. "It is but too sadly certain that things continuing as they are, Chrysolaras must return to the Infidels when he can do so with safety. But it were well in the meanwhile again to offer Redschid Pasha in exchange, and to represent to the Sultan that the Lord Chrysolaras's life being so uncertain, it were much to his advantage to obtain the Pasha's release while he can secure it, than by pressing for too much, to run the possible chance of losing all."

"It is well thought on, my liege. I will myself give the Janissary his instructions; and now, with your Majesty's leave, will make such dispositions of the artillery as have been mentioned."

"Good night, my Lord Acolyth, then. Ah! my Lord Phranza, Sir Edward de Rushton was just about to take his departure to arrange matters for to-morrow." He explained what had passed, and then added,—“You shall give the Janissary instructions, while Sir Edward goes about the artillery. Any further tidings?”

"The rumour goes, sire, that Sir Etienne d'Angouleme has been taken prisoner; but I know not yet on what foundation. It is a grievous loss if so it be."

"It is indeed," said the Palæologus: "for we have few better officers or braver men. Let all inquiry be made; and let us be acquainted with the result as early as may be to-morrow. And now, my lords both, good night!"



## CHAPTER XXII.

“ This gives you warning that within few days,  
Death needs must marry you : these short lines, minutes,  
That dribble out your life.”

DECKER'S *Fortunatus*.

THE rising sun showed a position of affairs fearfully altered for the worse, so far as regarded the devoted city. Eighty Turkish galleys and brigantines rode proudly in the upper part of the harbour; the Crescent at their heads glowed in the morning brightness; crowds of horse and foot were forming in lines and squares on the archery ground, and where the Crimson Mosque now stands: the Bosphorus was comparatively deserted; even the north of the city and the Tower of S. Romanus by no means presented the same active spectacle of attack and defence which up to that time had been the case. Slowly and painfully from all quarters, west, north, and south, oxen were to be seen dragging forward timber and stone to one point on the eastern side of the Horn. There, again and again, in the course of the day might Mahomet be found on his white horse; there the principal Pashas and officers were constantly congregating; thither every half hour, or oftener, messengers were to be seen arriving, and thence departing.

But, on his part, Constantine had not been idle. The ten galleys that yet remained to the Empire and its allies were arranged in line of battle. The walls, from the Church of S. Basil to Port S. Peter were defended by formidable batteries; masons were busily

engaged in repairing the fortifications in this quarter, —and not without need,—for it had been deemed inaccessible, and therefore neglected. Constantine was continually carrying on the works in person; the soldiers were encouraged, as much as possible, to rest; the labour fell principally on the handicraftsmen of the city, who, both by strengthening the fortifications, and yielding what assistance they could in the manufacture of engines, gave no small assistance in that day's work.

The Sultan, on being informed of what had occurred with respect to Manuel Chrysolaras, gave a commission to Ali Jamisi, his principal physician, to avall himself of the safe conduct, and to visit the Greek nobleman. Ali's report was that, though it was utterly impossible for Chrysolaras at that time to return, and though, in spite of favourable symptoms, danger was still to be apprehended,—in his opinion the patient would recover. On receiving this intelligence, Mahomet positively refused to exchange Chrysolaras with Redschild Pasha: demanded that the former should return as soon as ever the state of his wound would allow him,—and then dismissed the matter from his thoughts.

Sir Edward de Rushton, faithful to his word, did not fail to acquaint Choniates and his family, as early as possible on the following morning, with what had occurred. The old Exarch further paid a visit to De Rushton's *metæcia*; but, encountering Theophrastus at the door, was by him so peremptorily ordered to abstain from visiting the sick room,—so potently encumbered in all his petitions for but one moment's interview with quotations from the physicians both Greek, Syriac, and Arabian,—and so learnedly refuted in every plea he urged, that he was fain to retire from the conflict with no better consolation for Euphrasia than that Manuel was doing as favourably as the physician could possibly expect, if not beyond his hopes.

But there was one point on which Chrysolaras was

determined ; and that was to see Sir Edward de Rushton, in order that he might be satisfied how matters stood in regard to the pledge he had given. In vain Theophrastus assured him that every necessary step had been taken ; that the honour of Chrysolaras was as safe in the Emperor's hands as his own ; that he neither could, should, nor might see the Great Acolyth. Manuel insisted so urgently, became so extremely restless, and showed such evident tokens of an accession of fever, that Theophrastus finally gave way.

The young nobleman was lying on the same bed to which he had been first conveyed ; the scholar recommended to the office of keeper by his dulness, was gazing out from the window over the Cæsar's gardens : when a firm, decided step was heard on the staircase, the door opened, and Chrysolaras turned himself round to welcome his friend. But, to his great surprise, it was the Emperor that entered.

"Nay, nay, Lord Manuel," said he, advancing to his bed, and sitting down in a chair that was placed by it, while the pupil of Theophrastus prostrated himself, and then stood by, in a kind of stupid awe,—“lie down quietly, or I cannot talk to you. How feel you this morning ? The physician gives us excellent accounts.”

“Better, sire, I thank God,” replied Manuel. “And, indeed, your Splendour's visit ought to make me well at once.”

“I wish it had such power,” returned the Emperor. “But I heard that you were anxious to hear from Sir Edward de Rushton what had been done respecting your pledge. He, at this moment, is superintending some new batteries, and could not well be spared ; but I can give you all the satisfaction he could, and indeed more, for a messenger has just arrived from the camp. The Sultan has sent his own physician to report on your case, and I am in great hopes that he may exchange you for Redschid Pasha. But whether this be so or not, your honour is quite safe : and if Ali de-

serve the reputation which he has, his report will more than satisfy Mahomet."

"I thank your Highness," replied Chrysolaras. "That removes a weight from my mind. There are one or two other questions which I would fain ask, if it is not giving your Majesty too much trouble."

"I will spare you one," said Constantine. "It is about your affianced bride—is it not so? Nay, if you smile, I shall indeed begin to hope that you will speedily gain strength. Euphrasia Choniatis is in as good health as she can be, while you are on a sick bed; and, on the word of an Emperor, she shall visit you with her father as soon as ever Theophrastus will give leave. What was your other question?"

"The galleys, sire,—are they in the Horn?"

"I am sorry to say that they are," replied Constantine. "But we are taking measures against them, of the success of which you will soon, I hope, hear. Now, I have one question to ask, and it shall be but one. You have seen, I find, Calil Pasha. May we trust to him?"

"You may, sire."

"May not a traitor to Mahomet, prove a traitor to us also?"

"He will not, sire, I am sure; whatever his reasons may be, his heart is with us."

"Then now I will stay no longer," said Constantine; "for Ali must not be kept waiting—and you, I see, are not equal to more. The Panaghia guard you!" And stretching out his hand to Chrysolaras to kiss, he left the apartment, which was soon entered by Ali Jamisi and Theophrastus, on whose medical disquisitions we shall not intrude.

We will give but one more scene from this day's events, ere we go on to more exciting matters. One scene of peace we may have, before we turn again to war.

Theodora de Rushton was seated alone in the evening twilight. The Penelopean tapestry, as much the

employment of the ladies of Constantinople as of the high-born dames of London,—we doubt not as tedious to all but themselves as the Berlin work of the fair successors of these latter,—the tapestry, we say, was on this occasion, laid aside; partly, because it was getting too dark to continue it, and partly that she might follow with the less interruption the sad, yet sweet train of her own thoughts. Her husband she had not seen that day; though she had received two or three messages from him, as its hours rolled wearily on, in which he promised to see her before night. He had been so fully employed at the fortifications by the Horn,—almost at the very extreme furthest distance from Phranza's house,—as to be unable to leave the works,—and the more so, as in consequence of the capture of Sir Etienne d'Angouleme, which was now confirmed, the command of the Franks now devolved on him. The day had been quieter than the days of late; but it was the calm which precedes a storm. There had been but little firing; indeed none of any consequence, except one brisk attack on the Tower of S. Romanus, about noon; and Theodora fondly believed that the transportation of the ships, with which of course the city rang, could be a fact, therefore, of no very serious importance, or some more immediate consequences must have resulted from it.

Then there had been a visit to Euphrasia Choniatis, to give and to receive comfort. That was, indeed, an ordinary occupation of Theodora; but under the circumstances in which both those fair girls were now placed, the more necessary for the consolation of each. Thus then, Theodora was thinking over the events of the past day—but more especially that of the preceding evening, twilight deepening and deepening around her,—when suddenly the door was hastily thrown open, and De Rushton stood by her.

“Now, dearest one,” said he, throwing his arms round her, and kissing her again and again, “I can feel that you are really mine. How long the day has

seemed! and how I longed but for one hour to be with you!"

"It has, indeed," said Theodora. "But is your work really over? or is it only a rest?"

"It is really over," replied Sir Edward: "there will be nothing more done on either side to-night. And I have seen Manuel, and he is certainly better; and Theophrastus has given his consent that Euphrasia may see him to-morrow."

"Poor Euphrasia!" cried Theodora; "how glad I am for her sake! But you must tell me all that happened to you last night. I have just heard the substance from my father, and he has been abroad almost all day."

"You shall hear it all, love, but not here. Can you not guess why I am with you now? Do you not know that you have another home, dearest one?"

"But my father—"

"He is even now below," said Sir Edward. "He let me come up to you first. I hear him even now on the stairs." And with a heavy step, and an air that showed how great a part he had borne in the labours of the day, Phranza entered, and fondly kissed his daughter.

"You have a better right to her now than I have, De Rushton," he said. "Theodora, we shall not be very far separated; I know not how we should bear it if we were."

"Oh, no, no, dearest father, I shall be very near you. I shall still see you every day—just as we have done till now. Is it not so?"

"I should be almost as grieved as you would be, dear Theodora, if I did not think so," said De Rushton.

"I believe you, from my soul, Lord Acolyth," cried the old nobleman, giving him his hand. "God bless you, Theodora! Ever have you been a most dear daughter to me; and I thank God that He has given you a better protector now than myself. Take her

now, De Rushton. You must go with him, Theodora. I must not stay, for the Emperor has just sent for me : it appears there is some dispute between Justiniani and the Great Logothete, and I must help to reconcile it. Maria has her instructions, and will be at your new home well nigh as soon as you."

"Let us go through the gardens to my house, Lord Phranza ; and do you come with us so far—it will be scarce out of your way."

"Do, do, my dearest father," added Theodora.

"Let us go, then," said Phranza. "Ah, Theodora ! your bridal procession of yesterday—where is it ?"

"While I have you and my—and Sir Edward de Rushton,"—she corrected herself with a blush,— "how can I think about processions ? But you will come and see me to-morrow ?"

"I will, my dear child, I will. Now we are in Sir Edward's garden—a right pleasant one, is it not ?"

"I shall learn now to love it better," said De Rushton. "At present it has not the happy memories of your own garden, Lord Phranza."

As he spoke, they ascended the marble steps that led up from it to the house, entering it quietly and alone. But in a moment servants of all kinds assembled round them, eager to do honour to their new mistress.

"God bless you, my dear child ! Take care of her as she deserves, Sir Edward." And without more words, George Phranza passed through the crowd of servants, and took his way, unattended, across the court to the Emperor's own apartments.

"Now," said Sir Edward, "my Theodora shall judge for herself whether I have guessed aright what her taste would be." And he led her into a little room, to which we shall have occasion hereafter to refer more particularly. It looked out on to the gardens : the branches of an aged cedar rustled pleasantly against the very windows : a fountain, on a green plot beneath, threw up its waters and made a delicious

coolness around : and between the branches of the tall trees the blue sea of Marmora, in that twilight hour, was faintly visible. The room itself was hung with green silk, embroidered with golden fleur-de-lys, a decoration utterly unknown at Constantinople : there was an open hearth, with small fire-dogs of silver ; the furniture was of satin-wood ; the ceiling was painted after the Greek fashion, with intertwining cable-work of crosses ; and, in compliance with the accustomed use of his bride, the image of the Panaghia and the silver lamp were fixed against the wall.

Theodora threw herself into her husband's arms, and found vent for her feelings, both of sorrow and joy, in a flood of tears. We will leave De Rushton to wipe them away, and to that first sweet evening with his bride.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

“ . . . . . The Grecians judged  
 Hope vain, and their whole host's destruction sure :  
 But nought expected every Trojan less  
 Than to consume the fleet with fire, and leave  
 Achaia's heroes lifeless on the field.  
 With such persuasion occupied, they fought.”

*Iliad. XV.*

FOUR days more had passed,—and what days for Constantinople!

No sooner was the Upper Horn fairly in the Sultan's power, than he commenced preparations for attacking the city from that side. Day and night the coopers were making casks, and the carpenters shaping beams; and in spite of the best directed fire, and most vigorous efforts of the Greeks, a floating mole, fifty cubits in length, was moored across the narrowest part of the harbour. One of the huge cannon, that threw a ball twelve hundred pounds in weight, was placed on its extremity; and nightly and daily, every three hours, it discharged the enormous mass of rock against the devoted walls. Nor was the attack less vigorous towards the tower of S. Romanus: there also the wall was much shaken; and the double assault had almost worn out the physical strength, as much as it had depressed the courage of the handful of troops by which the city was defended.

It might be about six o'clock on the evening of the fourth day, that Constantine, who ever seemed to delight in the post of danger, was holding a council of

war in a guard-house nearly opposite the mole. Every nobleman and officer of note in the city was there; and, as if to heap misfortune on misfortune, high words had broken out among the Christian chiefs.

"I repeat it again, John Justiniani," cried the Great Logothete, "that if you and your Genoese had done their duty this morning at the Tower of Nicetas, it could not have fallen."

"Done my duty, Lord Notaras? How could I keep bricks and lime together that were old and decayed to begin with, and had never been properly repaired? If you had done your duty months ago,—if you had only taken common care of repairing the walls, this could never have happened."

"The walls may be bad for aught I know, or care," cried Lorenzo Galeotti, the leader of the Venetian auxiliaries, "but I will maintain it with my body in a fair field, either by sword or lance, against all gainsayers, that the Genoese did not do their duty."

"And the Venetians of course did," retorted Justiniani. "But I tell you this, Galeotti; the White-Horse shall go further in a sally than the Winged Lion would dare to follow even with his eyes. Come, now; let it come to a trial when you will, and then—"

"Silence, my lords!" said Constantine. "It is for us to judge whether you have done your duty, one and all; and to reprimand you for it, if you have not. As to such vain trials as you talk of, he that leaves the city in that guise will never return to it, for we will give strict orders that the gates be shut upon him."

"But, sire—" said Lucas Notaras.

"We will not be interrupted," said Constantine. "The thing we have now to discuss is, not why the Tower of S. Nicetas fell, but how we may if possible destroy this terrible mole. Sir Edward de Bushton, have the walls on this side been surveyed, as we gave orders?"

"They have, sire; and the engineer reports that.

they cannot hold together for more than ten or twelve fresh discharges of that cannon."

"That will be something more than a day, and then we have nothing to trust to but our swords," said the Emperor. "My Lord Phranza, we wait for your sentence."

"I would try, my liege, if my rede be worth having, to set the mole on fire. The weather has been very dry, and there has been little dew since it was erected; the planks and the galleys must be like tinder—fire one, and the whole would be in a blaze in less than an hour."

"I agree," said Justiniani, "that it is our only hope; and why not to-night?"

"I marvel you do not think the danger too great," sneered Galeotti.

"Sir General," said the Emperor, "you will either bridle your tongue, or leave the Council. Such taunts are no disgrace but to him that utters them."

"I thank your Majesty," replied Justiniani: "they trouble not me. Have I your Royal leave to speak my mind on this point?"

Constantine bowed, and the Genoese General proceeded. "I would man the galleys, sire, soon after nightfall; the wind, I see, is south; they might creep up in single file, if the night be tolerably dark, as it is like to be, with so cloudy a sky and no moon; and then, in God's Name, try the Greek fire. The galleys it is sure to destroy, if we can but once get close to them; if the mole will not kindle, we must try if it cannot be broken up."

"I think the scheme good," said Sir Edward de Rushton. "It is useless to sit here, till the walls are knocked down about our ears. We may fail in this plan—very like; but there is a chance of success."

"So say I," said the Great Logothete.

"And I," cried young Gabriel Notaras, his son.

At this juncture of affairs there was a demand for admittance at the door, and Contari presented himself.

"Well, what is it?" demanded the Emperor.

"My liege," said Contari, "the Curopalata bids me to say, that in five or ten minutes they will discharge the great cannon; and this place is hardly safe from its effects."

"We will go on the ramparts," said Constantine; "it were well to note what the effect really is. Follow me, my lords."

So saying, he walked quietly down to the guard-house, and passed on to the ramparts. Immediately in front, the mole stretched far out into the Horn; and at its nearest end stood the huge, shapeless piece of ordnance, surrounded by the engineers, now busily engaged in removing the crane which had raised the enormous bullet into its mouth. The mole itself was a living mass of heads. On the shore, close to the place where it joined the beach, was the Sultan, on horseback, surrounded by a glittering ring of his principal Pashas: while the further side of the Horn was dark with the immense masses of troops, now inactive, but preparing themselves for the great assault. Around the mole, and higher up the harbour, lay the galleys and brigantines,—also full of workmen,—and fearful piles of scaling ladders might already be seen on one or two of the decks. A little behind the rampart was the small church of S. John, hitherto safely protected by being out of the direct line of fire, and at that time the favourite resort of the wives and mothers of such as were engaged in that part of the ramparts. The bells had just rung out for vespers; the priest and deacons had long ago entered the church; and now thirty or forty, principally women, were passing in through the silver gates.

"Why Eudocia!" cried Contari, as he followed the Royal train, "you here, also!"

"Can I do better?" she asked; "You are doing your best for us: we must do what we can for you."

"Go in, then, dear girl, go in," said her husband. "I will try to come to you by supper-time to-night;

but it will only be for half-an-hour, or so, for there is a scheme on foot which will keep me up all night, I hear."

"Well, I shall look for you at supper, then, if only for that," said Eudocia Contari. And she went into the church: and, in another moment, amidst the soft response of the Litany, you might have seen her kneeling on the marble floor,—her hands clasped on her breast, her head bowed,—as quiet and peaceful as if, instead of a temple in a besieged city, she had already entered the home of everlasting peace.

"A little more this way, Sire," said De Rushton. "They will discharge it in a moment, now."

Constantine moved a few yards, but yet stood more exposed than any others of those with him, except Sir Edward de Rushton and Contari.

"I have been watching them this half-hour, Lord Acolyth," said the Curopalata, "and it strikes me that they never charged that cannon so before. I saw them empty that *congiarius* three times into it."

"God grant it bursts," cried one of the officers. "It would do some execution."

"The Sultan keeps at safe distance," said Phranza.

"Ay, he is shy of those pieces, since that one burst by S. Romanus's tower: and, by S. Cosmas, I cannot blame him," replied the Curopalata.

"Well, there is the quick-match," cried De Rushton. "The fellows have no great relish for their work. Look how yon engineer is slipping off behind!"

"Surely," said Constantine, "that would not be very difficult to sink!"

"I dare say the rafterage is well lashed together," replied De Rushton; "but still, the weight must be tremendous."

"How they ever contrived to get it to its present position, is a marvel to me," said Justiniani. "They must have some good engineers."

"That arch-traitor, Leontius, directs all the engineering operations," said the Curopalata.

"Our Lady confound him therefore," growled Galeotti.

"Now for it!" cried Justiniani, as one of the Janisaries applied the match to the touch-hole. "No, by S. Luke! How was that? Well, they are bunglers at their trade, any how!"

"They are clustering round it thick enough," said the Curopalata. "What are our gunners about?"

He had scarcely spoken, when from the Byzantine side, and close to Port S. Peter, there was the boom of a single cannon: and, before any of the party could speak, five or six of those who were clustering round the Turkish piece of ordnance fell.

"Bravo!" said Phranza, "who commands there?"

"The Lochagus Burstow, my lord," replied Contari.

"A clever fellow that," observed the Curopalata.

"I can bear the same testimony," cried Phranza.

Constantine, while these remarks were being interchanged among his courtiers, stood rather apart, as his custom sometimes was; and though he kept his eye fixed on the Turkish cannon, his thoughts seemed occupied with some other subject. Now, however, he came forward and spoke.

"That shot was well aimed, my lords; was it not?"

"Excellently well, Sire," replied Phranza. "But they soon repair their losses."

"Ay, ay," said the Curopalata, "they will do it this time."

"There is the match again," remarked Justiniani.

"The dogs know not whether to be more afraid of their own cannon, or of ours."

"Stand fast, sire," said De Rushton. "Now!"

As he spoke, a low, rumbling sound seemed to shake the wall on which they stood. The waters of the Horn darkened, as at the rising of a breeze. There was a blinding blaze of light, that seemed to fill all the sky, and then a roar,—deep, long, and terrible beyond words to describe. The ejected rock struck the breastwork of the battlements, about three hundred

yards from the place where Constantine stood; a volley of shattered masonry flew round, as from a whirlwind; the mass of stone glanced off northward, humming in its passage like thunder, and crashed in upon the central dome of S. John's church. Even at that distance, the shriek that followed was terrific.

Contari, merely exclaiming, "Oh God!" flew to the place; and Constantine, calling out, "Let us give what help we may: De Rushton, send for surgeons!" followed with all the rest.

The outer walls of the church were standing: but the crush from the doors,—the struggling, the screaming, the fighting,—was terrible. Women seemed changed into furies, impelled by the desire to escape; the weaker were borne down and trodden upon; even the voice of Constantine himself was ineffectual for some minutes. Ingress was impossible; and Contari tried it with the frenzy of despair, as one after another rushed by him, and still no Eudocia.

"There is no danger now, it is over,—quietly, quietly,—whatever you do take time!" Such were the Emperor's words: and Justiniani and the Curo-palata joined with Phranza in endeavouring to restore order. Contari, meanwhile, flew to the sacristy door: it was locked; but two or three blows with one of the shattered stones of the building, soon drove it in. Leaping through its fragments, and hurrying through the Holy of Holies, he came out under the dome.

It was a frightful scene.

Masses, piles of masonry strewing the floor; wounded creatures, in every kind and degree of agony, writhing upon the ground; here and there a mound of stones heaving, as if with the efforts of some wretch imprisoned below them: pools of blood, blotting out the patterns of the mosaic-work, or oozing through the clotted dust of the fallen fabric: in one place, a man, with his head literally smashed to atoms, tremulously beating the ground with his feet; in another, a woman crying for help for God's love, to enable her to extri-

cate her broken arm from the heap of rubbish which pinned it to the ground; in another, a child, with its back broken, trailing itself along the floor like a wounded serpent, and uttering cries which it made the blood run cold but to remember; in yet another, a woman wallowing in a pool of her own blood, and throwing every limb convulsively about in the death agony. Every where shrieks, outcries, adjurations; not one left who could fly, except only the Priest and Deacons: they were extricating as they could the wounded, and removing them into the aisle, till help could come from without.

In the midst of all this wreck and carnage, a female figure lay extended on the floor, as still and undisturbed as that of one in sleep. It was on one side, and supported against the plinth of one of the columns; the hands were clasped on the bosom; the face rather pale, but with not one feature discomposed,—the very drapery unruffled; the lips parted in a half smile; the eyes closed as in slumber. It was Eudocia Contari: and of such a death the curious but beautiful question of the schoolmen might well be asked, Whether her last prayer entered first into Heaven, or her soul into Paradise?

Contari thought that she had fainted, and tried to raise her: but the Priest, who was rendering assistance to a wounded man close by, said sadly, "She will wake no more, my son, till the Resurrection day." The Varangian officer, in a silent agony of grief, laid his hand on the heart of his bride: there was, or he fancied, a tremulous motion; but the clear, distinct pulsation was over for ever. He held her lips to his cheek, but the breath had fled: and, finding that the spirit had departed to its Maker, he laid her down whence he had raised her, and knelt by her side, hiding his head in his hands for about two minutes. When he arose, the whole expression of his face was altered. A friend might have passed, and not recognized him,—or, if he had, would surely have pro-



nounced him to be not long for this world. Rising, he went to the Priest, and said, in such a deep, hollow voice that the good man perfectly startled, "Can I help you, father?"

"We have help, my son," said the Priest: for now men were pouring in from the western doors, and the Emperor was already in the church. "And you,"—looking towards the corpse—"have your own charge."

Without saying another word, Contari returned to all that remained of his bride: and he was about to raise her in his arms, when the Priest, struck by his grief, was again at his side. "Remember, my son," said he, "He doeth all things well: and who shall say that this also is not well; who knows what may be the lot of those who survive the siege? Could there be a better death than to be removed from prayer to praise? And look at that face, and tell me if you think that she could have suffered?"

It was, indeed, a most sweet and gentle face, even in death: and raising the fair form in his arms as easily, and withal as tenderly, as a mother might a sleeping infant, he bore it to the house where, but a quarter of an hour before, he had promised to meet Eudocia at the hour of supper. The room into which he carried her, was untenanted; for her mother chanced to be out. He laid her on the bed on which so often, returning from the midnight watch, he had hung over the beauty of her quiet sleep, and had woke her gently with a kiss. There she now lay, sleeping more quietly, more beautifully; but insensible now to caress or word of love, and to be woke by no less a sound than the trumpet which will end time.

Half an hour he was with her alone,—the loving with the loved: the one at rest, after the storm of life,—the other in its worst and most tremendous tempest. Half an hour he was with her; but what passed in that half hour was never known. At the end of that time, Burstow, who had received intelligence from some whose humanity had carried them

into the church, of what had happened, knocked, first gently, then more loudly, at the outer door. Receiving no answer, he went in, and found the room in which he had so often sat with Contari and Eudocia empty. Knocking then at the inner door, there was still no answer: but in a moment his friend opened it and came out, so startlingly changed that Burstow was absolutely beyond the power of speech.

"Is it arranged for to-night?" he asked, in a careless, harsh voice.

"Arranged!" repeated Burstow. "Contari! Contari! for God's sake be yourself!"

"Myself! who else should I be?" cried Contari,—and he laughed. That laugh had something in it which haunted Burstow till his dying day.

Burstow, though unused to scenes of such anguish, yet even then displayed the natural good sense which never forsook him.

"Contari!" he said, "talk to me of her. Did she suffer much? Tell me how it was?"

Contari seemed for a moment as if he were going to give way to a burst of grief. But then he said, "No, I will not talk to you about her. Come, let us go."

"May I not see her, Contari? Many and many a happy hour have I seen you spend with her here: but I make no doubt she is happier now."

"Come," said Contari, "we are losing time. I am going to the Acolyth." And he went out at once, followed by Burstow, who was unwilling to lose sight of him, and took his way to the ramparts. Inquiring for De Rushton, they found that he was said to have returned to his residence.

"We will go there, too, then," said Contari: and Burstow, unwilling to thwart him, followed. We will use the historian's liberty, and precede them.

In the same little room which, no long way back, we described, De Rushton, who had but just returned from rendering what assistance he could to the sufferers at S. John's church, was seated by Theodora,—

one arm thrown round her fair waist,—the other hand tightly clasped in hers, as he related to her the events of the day.

“Poor Contari!” said she. “I owe him much gratitude for having attended you so faithfully in that dreadful conspiracy; and now to lose his bride thus! Have you seen him since?”

“No,” her husband replied: “he went home immediately, and, though we much needed him, yet of course, under the circumstances, unless it had been a case of absolute necessity, we would not intrude on his grief.”

“But now tell me,—at what time is this expedition to take place to-night? Oh, will it ever be that we shall have any rest from this constant alarm and danger?”

“The principal persons concerned are to meet here at the third hour of the night, and to receive their orders: so it was thought best. But I am very anxious about poor Manuel. Since the Emperor’s visit, he has seemed to go back every hour. Whether it were that the excitement was too much for him, or what else, I wot not, but certainly Theophrastus thinks ill of his case.”

“And poor Euphrasia!” said Theodora, leaning her head on her husband’s shoulder. “She was here to-day, as she derived some comfort from being in the same house with the Lord Chrysolaras; and oh! how anxious she is to see him, if it were but for one moment.”

“And by my faith, if we come through this night’s work well,” said Sir Edward, “she shall see him, let Theophrastus say what he will. I ever doubt these physicians, when they counsel what is so opposite to nature. Who can tell but that his seeing her were worth all the drugs of the apothecary’s confection?”

“I think you are quite right,” said Theodora. “I pray you, for once let her have her way. Her father or I can be with her, to satisfy all that this evil-minded city could suspect.”

"It shall be so without fail," replied Sir Edward, kissing the forehead that had somehow insinuated itself almost close to his lips. "It shall be so, if I have life and health to-morrow to order it. Ha! who is this? Come in! Well, Cyril?"

"My lord, Lieutenant Contari is below, and desires to speak with your lordship."

"Show him into the great hall," replied the Acolyth. "I will be with him immediately. I wonder what his errand can be," he continued, when the servant had left the room: "however, whatever it is, I will but despatch it, and return to you."

"Contari!" said he, as he entered the hall, and saw that officer and Burstow, "I am most truly and deeply grieved for your loss; and had it not been for the great pressure of business, I should myself have come to tell you so."

"I thank you, my lord," replied Contari: "but I came now on other business. Burstow tells me that this attack is resolved on to-night. I would fain, if your lordship will so arrange it, be one of those that attempt to fire the mole."

"Willingly," said Sir Edward, "if you so wish it. But remember, Contari, no one has a right to throw away his life, however much he may have suffered: nothing can justify that; nothing can prevent its being an act of cowardice."

"Not cowardice, my lord!"

"Yes, cowardice," replied the Great Acolyth; "because it shows that he who throws it away is afraid of enduring what GOD appoints him to endure. But I well trust you have no such thoughts."

"I should, at all events," said Contari, "like to be in a post of danger: there is no harm in wishing that; and if I am at the mole, I will promise to do my best."

"Well," returned De Rushton, "you are here in happy time, for I expect the rest of the generals here anon: and then the matter will be definitely arranged. You shall wait till they come: it may be we shall be

glad to put some questions to you. Burstow, you had better take you supper here: you will have need of all your strength to-night; and you too, Contari,—go you to my steward, and tell him so.”

“I thank your lordship,” replied Burstow; “we will not fail to wait. For me, wherever I am placed, I hope I shall do my duty.”

“I am sure you will,” replied the Acolyth. “Now go and take care of yourselves:” and he returned to Theodora.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

“ Fire ! bring me fire ! Stand close, and urge the foe !  
Jove gives us now a day worth all the past !  
The ships are ours, which in the Gods’ despite  
Steered hither.” . . . . .

*Iliad. XV.*

“ Is the danger, then, so very imminent ? ” inquired Leontius (some two hours later on the same night) of a withered old man, with whom he was shut up in his tent alone.

“ Most imminent ; most deadly,” replied the renegade Baltazar, chief astrologer to Mahomet, spreading a parchment, inscribed with a horoscope, on the table ; “ It is clear to every one. Look for yourself, my lord ! In one hour from this time a most deadly sign will stand in the House of Life. Observe here, again, the sextile, and in the secundan ! ”

“ Is there no hope ? ” asked Leontius, turning very pale.

“ Nay, that I said not,” answered the astrologer. “ This I say,—that seldom or never have I beheld a more malignant conjunction of the planets : and there are some things in it which puzzle even me.”

“ Do you mean,” inquired Leontius, in a trembling voice, “ that it is absolutely fated I shall perish this night ? ”

“ The time of no man’s death is absolutely fated,” replied Baltazar. “ It is foreknown by Allah, but not foredecreed by Him. In all men’s lives are certain

times of danger,—some of greater, some of less : any one of these may be avoided ; some one, it is morally certain, cannot be. Were you to live five hundred years, I could still tell you the epochs of danger that would beset you : but hardly can you have one worse than this."

"Is there no means of guarding against it?" said Leontius.

"I will read you what I can," replied the astrologer, "and you may be able to draw inferences which I cannot. Mars in perigee, and in the corner house,—whereby his influence is tripled : it will be in open strife. Corradiate with him is Sol : but then he, again, is confronted by Saturn. Your danger is also from fire. And then Venus is opposed to you,—now entering the quartile. I see that some time ago Saturn was lord of the ascendant : but then he was held in check by Venus ; now she also is against you."

"What, then, would you have me to do?"

"By no means stir out to-night. Jupiter is powerless ; there is not one star that can render you service. As you value your life, stir not out to-night."

As he spoke, an eunuch entered. "Lord Leontius," said he, "the Sultan desires your instant attendance."

"I will come at once," replied Leontius. "Go on before—I will follow instantly. There, good Baltazar, it is not in my power to act by your advice."

"The evil influences of the stars are even now commencing," said the astrologer. "Mars will be in his perigee in one hour and ten minutes from this time. If you survive that period, let this be your comfort : I see a long course of honour, and glory, and wealth before you. Now go : but I would be well armed. Avoid strife, as far as you can ; but, above all things, avoid fire."

Leontius hastily armed himself ; and on arriving at the Sultan's tent, found several of the Pashas assembled in council. Mahomet himself was standing at

the head of the table, and had been speaking loudly and hurriedly.

“By the Prophet, Lord Leontius, I thought you would never come. We have intelligence that they intend an attack on the mole to-night. You have so well acquitted yourself of your charge in the transport of the galleys, that we intend to give the conduct of the defence to yourself and Achmet Pasha.”

Leontius knelt, and thanked the Sultan, cursing in his own heart the fate which thus led him into open strife when he was most anxious to avoid it. However, it was less dangerous to accept than to refuse the trust; and gathering courage from despair, the traitor received his instructions, and then hastened to join Achmet, who had gone before, at the mole.

The council at Sir Edward de Rushton's metœcia, was short, but satisfactory; and within half an hour from its conclusion, the various noblemen and officers who had assisted at it were on board their respective galleys. Phranza, indeed, and the Great Logothete, Lucas Notaras, by the Emperor's express commands, took no part in the actual operations. He had quoted the line of Hesiod—

“Let men in council, youth in arms engage;  
Prayer is the proper duty of old age;”—

and had represented to them that, while a thousand could fight better, none could counsel so well. It was a sad parting, too, between De Rushton and Theodora: but on these things we must not dwell. We are rapidly approaching that period of the city's history, when private joys and griefs seem of infinitely small importance. Even now, the last assault was preparing; the engineers were at work on their last implements of mischief; the end was drawing very near. For the last time the brave defenders of the Roman Empire acted on the offensive.

Justiniani, who, in virtue of the allies he had brought to the succour of the Emperor, took the lead of the



expedition, chose the Unicorn as his vessel. De Rushton, as second in command, made choice of the Bucentaur ; while Gabriel Notaras claimed the third place, and selected the S. Irene. Faithful to his promise, De Rushton procured Contari leave to serve on board the Unicorn,—Burstow was with him also. The other vessels, seven in number, were commanded by the Curopalata, the Great Drungaire, Galeotti, and other noblemen ; while Choniates, in virtue of his acquaintance with maritime affairs, was allowed the command of the single brigantine that attended on larger vessels.

It was about an hour before midnight that the Unicorn, under easy sail, led the way up the Horn. The strictest silence was enjoined and observed, and the ripple round the bows was the only sound that could have given an enemy warning of his danger. How Mahomet received intelligence of the surprise intended, was never known : but it had reached him early enough in the evening to enable him to be fully on his guard. His galleys were manned ; the mole defended with a picked body of Janissaries ; and a strong reserve posted in the archery ground, to act as necessity should require. He himself, though not intending to take any actual part in the contest, was near the mole, to animate the combaters with his presence, if need should so require.

And now, to all outward appearance, Contari was himself again. He had received his directions ; he had ten Varangians under his special command ; and his particular office was, if possible, to fire the mole. To this end, every one of his men was provided with a kettle of hot pitch, and a quick match twisted round his short pike : a party of native troops were to defend these, and, in their turn, were equipped with axes, chisels, and mallets, for the purpose of destroying, if they could not burn the mole.

“They seem quite quiet,” said Justiniani, in a low voice, to Contari, by whom he was standing.

"Rather too quiet to please me," answered Contari. "I do not see one sentinel's fire all along the Horn: there are none of the usual signs that a great army is there. It looks suspicious."

"Why, what should you suspect?" asked the Genoese commander. "It is absolutely impossible that Mahomet can have received intelligence of our design."

"Without treachery, it is," replied Contari: "only secure us against that, and we shall succeed to-night."

"We shall soon know," answered Justiniani. "Captain, we will board from the larboard side."

"Very well, sir."

"We are only concerned with the mole," said the Genoese, "as you know. The other galleys must take the fleet. They will pass us. Are the grappling-irons ready?"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied one of the officers.

"Be sure to cast off when I give the word," said the other. "Contari, get the men to the gangway. Do you make it out well, Captain?"

"Tolerably well," he replied, at the same time taking the helm. "We shall be abreast of it in a minute."

The grappling-irons were out; the dark lanthorns provided; the combustibles in readiness; the Greek fire prepared; it waited only for the signal. In another moment, creeping gently up to the mole, and giving no further sign of touching it than by the creaking of her ribs, the Unicorn was abreast of it; and Contari, leaping lightly out, made fast the first grappling iron, while the Varangians and other soldiers swarmed over the sides of the vessel like bees, on to the pier.

In an instant there was a blaze; and almost simultaneously, from mole, galleys, and shore, burst the shout of "La illah illa Allah!" echoed from a hundred thousand voices. Lights ran up in every direction on the Turkish galleys; fires, one after another, kindled

along shore; and five minutes had not elapsed, when it became evident that the whole scheme was known, and that the combat would be carried on not in darkness, but in artificial daylight.

“Keep them back! keep them back only for five minutes!” cried Contari, leaping forward into the very centre of the body of Janissaries who were pouring forward to extinguish the fire. Nor was the combat so unequal as it seemed. The mole was narrow: the Christians could, therefore, meet their enemies with an equal front; fresh troops were poured forth from the Unicorn, while De Rushton, seeing the hopelessness of surprising the galleys, ran the Bucentaur alongside of the other ship, and hurried forward his own men over her deck to hold the mole till it should be set on fire. At that first onset, the Varangians had driven the Janissaries beyond the great cannon: if that part of the pier, therefore, could only be kindled, the immense piece of ordnance must be lost. Pitch, grease, and turpentine were dashed over the boards, and into the casks on which they rested; here and there the timbers were fairly alight; in every direction diligent hands were fostering the flames; while, far from losing ground, Contari and Justiniani seemed advancing, and the Janissaries by no means maintained their usual reputation. The other galleys, meanwhile, though outmatched by tenfold odds, steered boldly into the very midst of the Turkish fleet; and a brigantine of the infidels was soon wrapped in a sheet of flame.

Mahomet, meanwhile, seeing that there was great risk of his armament, so painfully conveyed into harbour, utterly perishing, gave orders to Calil Pasha, whom he had retained by his side, that the artillery should be brought to bear upon the mole. The astonished Pasha threw himself on his knees.

“My Lord Sultan,” cried he, “we shall hurt our own troops as much as those of the infidels, or more.”

"I know it," replied Mahomet; "but we shall save the mole.

"I will pray your Highness," pleaded the Pasha, "to suspend this order but for a few moments: it will not then be too late, and we shall avoid the horrible carnage, and save many a brave man who will render your Majesty good service another day."

"Five minutes be it, then," said Mahomet, "but not a second more," and with that respite Calil was forced to content himself.

Leontius, finding that the infidels were losing ground, and giving up his life for lost, was a third time, in the courage of despair, advancing and rallying his men, when he was singled out by Contari.

"I will have that man's life, or perish," said he to Burstow, by whom he found himself in the *melée*. And he attacked him with an impetuosity that showed him to be more eager for the traitor's destruction, than for his own preservation. Leontius, himself no contemptible swordsman, was totally confounded by the shower of blows rained down on him in every direction: yet even from the very vehemence of the attack he might have been better able to defend himself, had not the prediction of the astrologer weighed down all his hopes. Step by step he retired,—guarding himself, however, with great skill and caution, till on the very edge of the mole; and there he was forced to stand at bay: for the crowd of soldiers behind presented an impenetrable mass; and though he would fain have mingled among them, the confusion of the whole scene, and the impetuosity of Contari's attack, rendered it impossible. On the very edge, then, he stood, perilously confronting the Varangian, when, just at the moment that the strife was hottest between them, the flaming brigantine drifted beneath, and the blaze played round and scorched the combatants on the pier. Remembering then Baltazar's warning, and seeing no other hope, Leontius threw away his sword, and, by a dexterous movement, clasped Contari

round the body, and endeavoured to drag him over the side. But the wretched man was no match in strength for his adversary. The Varangian raised him from the ground, and, in spite of his struggles and cries, forced him to the very edge. Here, with the energy of despair, the brigantine glowing and crackling below him, he clutched at a post that was fixed there for the purpose of making a galley fast to,—missed it,—caught the chain that was fastened to it, and at the same moment was hurled by Contari over the side. Still he hung by the chain, suspended over the brigantine: the Varangian raised his sword to cut at the apostate's hands, and force him to relax his hold,—his burning grave yawning for him beneath.

At that moment, Baltazar was afterwards wont to say, the fatal period passed. Baltha Ogli, at the very instant Contari's arm was raised, struck him on the head with the tremendous spiked mace which was his favourite weapon. Helmet and skull crashed together; and, plunging like a diver, Contari fell head foremost into the burning vessel,—sending up a shower of sparks as he came on the glowing timbers, and then disappearing.

"Hold fast! hold fast!" shouted Baltha Ogli. "Your other hand, my lord. So!—Ahmed, a hand here!—that is well!" And Leontius, half suffocated with the smoke and heat, was drawn up, and again stood in comparative safety.

At the same moment, a message arrived from Calil Pasha, that if the Infidels were not at once repulsed, the Turkish cannon would sweep the pile, indiscriminate of friend or foe. Such tidings roused the Janisseries to the utmost; and almost at the same second a blaze rose from the ill-fated Unicorn.

"Burstow," said Justiniani, "there is no time to be lost. Get the men together, and retreat in as good order as you may. Where is De Rushton?"

"In the Unicorn, I think, my lord. I will keep them off, while you embark."

De Rushton had, indeed, hurried into the galley as soon as it had caught fire, for the purpose of getting it off from the mole, and preventing the spread of the conflagration. Then there was a scene of the wildest uproar. The terrified sailors were pushing the burning vessel from the mole; the Bucentaur was pressing into the place that the Unicorn had occupied; the Janissaries pouring forward, and driving the Christians back foot by foot, in spite of Burstow's most vigorous resistance; the other Genoese galleys closed in upon by the whole Turkish fleet; shouts and outcries, commands and inquiries; every now and then a heavy plunge into the sea; wretches supporting themselves by clinging to the mole, or to the sides of the vessels, and crying piteously to be taken in; shrieks from the scorching or burning; clashing of weapons; ejaculations of despair, or shouts of victory.

The ramparts on the east side of Constantinople were crowded with spectators: for the conflagration made the general outline of objects perfectly clear. The Emperor was there in person: so was Phranza, and Lucas Notaras. It had long been seen that a surprise was out of the question, and great had been the wonder that, nevertheless, the conflict should have been continued. Intense was the anxiety, as blaze after blaze shot up into the sky, to know whence it sprung, whether from the mole, whether from the Christian or from the Turkish galleys. Gradually it became evident that the attack was being beaten off; a huge vessel floated burning on the Horn, which some of the old seamen who had been summoned by Constantine to come nearer, declared to be the Unicorn. Then another seemed equally abandoned; till at length four galleys stood across the Horn: evidently the poor remains of the Grecian fleet. Long and anxious was the gaze for their companions: on they came, under press of sail, followed by six or seven of the Turkish brigantines, but crowding all sail, as if for escape, and bearing up for Port S. Peter. Thither

rode the Emperor, followed by his attendants, and the other nobles.

Now again we change the scene.

A lofty, spacious apartment, panelled in cedar, arabesqued with gold,—the floor soft with Smyrniote carpets, the ceiling painted in the Byzantine fashion. One silver lamp, fed with sweet oil of Orfa, made a pleasant, dim light, that fell softly on the silken hangings and golden fringes of the stately bed. Shutters of cedar excluded light and sound; heavy curtains of velvet fell over them; and, in that besieged city, the room was as still, as perfectly hushed, as if it had been placed in the middle of a wilderness.

Long had Theodora in vain endeavoured to sleep. Long had she wearied herself in fancying—for she could not hear—shouts and outcries, and the distant tumult of the battle. She had heard the great church thunder out its summons for the midnight service; she had watched till the *mesorion*, or midway prayers, were chanted, one hour and a half after: but then anxiety, and grief, and weariness had their natural effect, and she slept as calmly and peacefully as an infant.

Towards four o'clock there was a step on the stairs,—a kind of bustle in the house,—a hand on the latch of the door,—and De Rushton entered, worn-out, dejected, spiritless. Quietly, however, he entered, and listened if Theodora were awake; then, gently drawing aside the curtain, he leant over her, watching for several minutes the quiet beauty of her sleep.

“Yes, I will wake her,” said he, at length, as if he had been debating the point with himself; “who knows how many days more we may have together?” He took the small, fair hand that lay on the coverlid, and raised it to his lips,—and Theodora woke.

“Oh, Edward,” she exclaimed, “thank God that you are safely here again! But how miserably fatigued you look! What has happened? Is there aught the matter?”

"We have been defeated at all points," replied De Rushton. "Never was failure greater. Some traitor had revealed the scheme, and they were prepared for us."

"But are you quite safe yourself? Are you sure that you are not hurt?"

"Not in the least, dearest one, not in the least; but it has been a dreadful night. Seven of our galleys out of eleven have been burnt or taken; we have lost four or five hundred men, at least, and among them poor Contari,—and now we have absolutely nothing to oppose longer against the Turks."

"It is sad, very, very sad," said Theodora. "But yet, we may have a better defence than our ships. Tell me, though,—the Exarch Choniates; is he safe?"

"Slightly wounded—a mere scratch—and the brave old man thinks nothing of it."

"Euphrasia was in dreadful terror about him. She has not been so much used as I have to know that those I loved were in battle. But I have that to tell you that will please you much: the Lord Chrysolaras is certainly much better. I saw him quite late last night. Theophrastus said that it would do him no harm; and you, I knew, would be glad I should."

"Most glad, my own love. That is indeed joyful news. I wish you could have seen the Emperor to-night, when he received the tidings of our failure. Great he has ever been; never so truly great as then,—praising the courage and zeal of the men as much as if they had returned from a victory; telling them that he was satisfied that what could be done by human power had been done by them; that he and they were in GOD'S hands; that if He so pleased, He could interfere, even without a miracle, for their preservation; that He might, perhaps, let the city be reduced so far, to the end He might at last stretch forth the Right Hand of His protection the more gloriously."

"Oh that it might be so!" cried Theodora. "But we will trust in Him still."



## CHAPTER XXV.

“ If we no more meet, till we meet in heav’n,  
 Then joyfully, my noble Lord of Bedford,  
 My dear Lord Glo’ster, and my good Lord Exeter,  
 And my kind kinsman—warriors all—adieu !”

*Henry V.*

EARLY on the following morning, De Rushton received an urgent summons from Constantine Palæologus. Bidding a hasty farewell to Theodora, he repaired to the Emperor’s apartments, and there found him in a state of agitation in which he had never before known him.

“ Here is a message, De Rushton,” cried he, “ for a Christian monarch to receive ! Here is a hard strait, if ever one was ! Can you guess the terms the Sultan sends me here ?”

“ I pray your Majesty to tell me,” said the Great Acolyth.

“ Here he sends me certain conditions,” replied the Emperor, “ with which I am to comply, under a penalty of seeing all the prisoners made in the last night’s attempt beheaded before the very walls of the city.”

“ God forbid, my liege ! What are the terms ?”

“ An absolute surrender of the city, with a reservation to myself of the Principality of Chios, or Lesbos, or some other of the Ionian isles ; with a choice to the people generally of removal from Constantinople, with perfect safety of goods, persons, and lives,—circumcision, or tribute.”

“Surely your Majesty cannot doubt,” replied De Rushton, “what answer ought to be returned to such unheard-of insolence !”

“I do not, my lord. My only difficulty is this: will you, or will any one else honestly tell me that it is probable we can hold out the city a fortnight longer? To what purpose, then, resistance? Here we have the option of quite as favourable terms as we can possibly expect, or the bare chance of defending the city successfully, coupled with the certain destruction of at least forty youths, of the best families of Constantinople, in the prime of life.”

“You are to remember, my liege, that the question, taking the darkest view of the case, is this,—how the Great Empire, with its existence of more than two thousand years, shall end most gloriously. All other considerations give way to that. Never let it be said that the last Cæsar was terrified into abdicating his crown and surrendering his capital. My liege, for the fate of those brave men, I feel it as deeply as any man can do; but, so help me God, if I, or any dear to me, were in their place, I would give the same counsel that I now give. Consider this, too: What guarantee have we that Mahomet will keep his terms? If he wishes to violate them, nothing so easy as to find a pretext. A suspected conspiracy—a pretended outbreak—and the soldiery are let loose among the conquered. Turkish perfidy is no new thing.”

“I feel what you say,” answered Constantine, “but I will offer all the terms that honour will allow. My proposal will be this—and Phranza thinks that it may well be made: that the city shall pay an annual tribute of a hundred thousand gold ducats, on condition of Mahomet’s instantly raising the siege; that the extent of the Empire shall be a circle of ten miles from S. Sophia, with such of the Greek islands as still remain to us; and that Mahomet swears on the Koran faithfully to observe these terms. But if he is not satisfied with this, then my resolution is fixed,—to

find a grave within these walls, if I cannot deliver them. And if he lays hands on any one of his captives, I am resolved—and God so help me as I keep my resolution—to put to death the next hour every single Turk now a prisoner in the city: and, as I hear, there are two hundred and sixty of them. Now, Lord Acolyth, will you take a flag of truce, and propose these terms?”

“Instantly, my liege.”

“Remember,” said Constantine, “they are strictly secret. Except yourself and Phranza, no one is acquainted with them: for I would not consult the Great Logothete, because his son is a prisoner.”

“I will take care, my liege.”

Accompanied, then, by Burstow, and one or two other attendants, Sir Edward De Rushton left the city together with the Sultan’s messenger, and in twenty minutes was ushered into Mahomet’s tent.

“I am come, Lord Sultan,” said he, after the usual salutations, “with the Cæsar’s definitive answer to your Highness’s proposals. If our terms be not accepted, the negotiation absolutely ends on our side.”

“It is well,” replied Mahomet.

“On the contrary, my Lord Sultan, it may not be well. An experienced general like your Highness,—and how experienced that is, the events of the last few days have taught us,”—Mahomet looked pleased,—“must know that the city, if taken at all, cannot be taken without great expenditure of ammunition and treasure, and at a loss of human life that it is fearful to think of.”

“You say truly,” replied the Sultan; “all this we have well considered, else should we never have stooped to make proposals at all for a place that absolutely lies in our power.”

“On that point we will not dispute,” said De Rushton; “the event of war is ever uncertain; an European fleet might even now enter the Sea of Marmora,”—Mahomet glanced over its blue waters rather rest-

lessly, and De Rushton saw that he had touched the right chord,—“for we have absolute promises of succour from Genoa, from Florence, from Spain, from France, from England; this I pledge my word as a knight and Christian to be true.”

“You speak of Constantine’s answer,” said the Sultan: “let me hear what it is.”

“It is this, my Lord: he will not surrender the city. He will have a throne within, or a grave under, its walls. But he offers your Highness an annual tribute of one hundred thousand ducats on condition of your raising the siege.”

“Then, by the thirty-seven thousand Prophets,” cried Mahomet, “you may return as you came. Take him my defiance. Two hours I will wait for his reply: if none comes, in the very sight of your walls I will behead every one of my prisoners, by the ruins of S. Nicetas’ Tower.”

“And be well assured,” said De Rushton, rising, “that the next hour the Cæsar will do as much for his, who outnumber yours six to one.”

“He dares not,” said the Sultan.

“Your Highness will see. Before I take my departure, might I crave leave to speak to the Christian prisoners whom you have—that I may bid them prepare for death?”

The Sultan paused.—“No,” replied he at length; “not with all; but if there be any one or two whom you would wish to see, you shall have licence so to do.”

“Then I would name, my Lord, Sir Etienne d’Angouleme, and the Lord Gabriel Notaras.”

“You hear,” said Mahomet to the Interpreter, who stood by, more for the sake of etiquette than anything else, for the Sultan spoke Greek with great fluency, and indeed Latin also. “Let those Nazarenes be summoned here. My Lord, you may retire into the outer tent; your interview with them must be short; but I shall look, in less than two hours, for your return.”

"Never, my Lord," replied the Great Acolyth. And he withdrew.

Presently the two he had named were ushered into the tent, a small party of Janissaries waiting without.

"My Lords both," said De Rushton, "I have a sad task to perform: for I must bid both you and your fellow prisoners prepare for death."

"For death, Lord Acolyth!" cried young Gabriel Notaras, who was barely twenty years of age;—"how mean you?"

"Thus, my Lord: Mahomet has offered conditions to the Cæsar which he cannot accept with honour. The terms it matters not now to particularise; they import the absolute surrender of the city. They are refused; and the Sultan has just declared that, if they be not accepted in two hours, he will behead every one of his prisoners in the sight of the wall."

Young Notaras, though distinguished for his courage during many of the sallies,—and particularly in the last night's expedition,—had never before seen a cold-blooded death approach him by inches,—and he turned away his head.

D'Angouleme, on the contrary, smiled. "Now GOD-a-mercy!" said he: "does the man think to frighten us, or the Cæsar, or whom? Carry back my duty and allegiance to Constantine, De Rushton;—tell him that though, had GOD so ordered it, I had liefer have died on the field of battle; yet falling in his service and that of Christendom, I shall be well content,—and still more so if they give us our choice of apostasy,—for then we shall be martyrs. And one thing more. I would fain have my body of Franks—brave fellows are they all—on the walls, to see me die: they will fight the better for it, De Rushton, hereafter."

"It shall surely be so," replied his friend.

"And what little money I have, or furniture, let it be divided among them,—will you see to that?"

"Certainly I will," answered the Acolyth.

"Then that is all. There is no chance of a Priest being allowed to visit us—for Mahomet has sworn that none such shall enter the camp. But I pray you, let some Latin Priest, if he can be had, be on the walls, and give us absolution."

"That shall be done," said De Rushton. "Come, come," he added, in a soothing voice, laying his hand on Gabriel's shoulder;—"take no shame, Lord Gabriel! It is all natural that you should feel this. Many a man laughs at death in a battle, who shrinks from it on a sick bed. But think of the cause,—and it will seem easy. For God and for the Cæsar. The One will reward you,—the other will lament you. You have the honour of setting us all an example—men, whom the bravest knight might be proud to follow, will now be proud to follow you. Take cheer, my lord!"

"I am most ready to lay down my life," replied Gabriel: "do not mistake me—but you do not—you were ever kind,—I was but thinking of my father, and my brothers, and my poor little Justina. Let them know, I pray you; and tell my father that, if I could see him on the ramparts, it would much encourage me."

"I will not fail," replied his friend. "You must communicate these sad tidings to the other prisoners—for the Sultan will not allow me to see them." As he spoke, the interpreter entered with the information that Mahomet did not wish the interview to be prolonged.

"Then farewell, De Rushton, till we meet in a better place," cried D'Angouleme. "And whatever happens, let not the Cæsar be persuaded by the friends of the prisoners to consent to the Sultan's terms."

"Farewell, my Lord," said Gabriel: "bear my dear love to my father and my brothers, and sometimes remember me!"

Half an hour served to bring the Acolyth into the

Emperor's presence ; with the intelligence that the negotiation had failed. He related what had passed, and then said,—“Have I your Royal licence to do as they wished ?”

“Call out the Franks, my Lord,” said Constantine ; “I will myself go to the Logothete.”

The intelligence soon spread through Constantinople that the last negotiations had failed, and that the prisoners were to die. The ramparts by the Tower of S. Romanus, and the Tower itself, were thronged with spectators ; the Franks were drawn up under arms ; all of the Varangians and the other troops that could be spared were marched forth, to do honour to the gallant end of their brothers in arms ;—men, women, and children flocked together in a tumultuous mass ; here a grey-headed old man, the tears streaming down his cheeks, would find reverent way made for him, by those who knew that his son was among the victims ; here a widow hurried frantically forward, wringing her hands, and uttering piercing shrieks : here a sister came forth to look for the last time on her brother. And still the preparations for death went forward ; the prisoners, who had been conveyed across the Horn, were made to kneel in three rows, about a bow shot from the city walls ; around them a very strong body of troops was drawn up so as to form three sides of a hollow square, and to leave the fourth open to Constantinople ; while other regiments were formed on the same side of the walls, so as to make a sally impossible. From the midst of the space destined to the sufferers rose a tall flag-staff from which floated a white banner, the sign that the time for peace was not over.

The prisoners were so near that they could easily be recognised ; and various comments passed in the crowd on their demeanour.

“That is young Raphael—the son of old Cucullari at the Mint—he behind the Great Constable.”

“He looks pale enough.”

"Hush! that is his uncle, leaning against the breast-work there—he will hear you."

"Two hours, said you?"

"Ay—and better than one must be passed."

"Who is that,—at the extreme left?"

"That,—with his head bent?—I cannot make out.—Oh! that is Isidore Chalcocondylas—a nephew of Gennadius, you know."

"I wonder where Gennadius is."

"Oh! he will not come—he will have nothing to do with the Latins, as more than half of them are."

"The Emperor will kill his prisoners."

"He has sworn it."

"Is it wise?"

"What is there to hope in, but in defying the dogs?"

"Well, well!—Ah! that is young Gabriel Notaras. Now would I give an arm to save him."

"So would I, so would I. A brave young fellow."

A shout rose among the crowd. "Back! back! Out of the way! Stand back! Make room for his Illustriousness!<sup>1</sup> Make way for his Holiness!"

And advancing together, neither yielding precedence to the other, Cardinal Isidore and the Archbishop of Chalcedon passed along the ramparts. The people, as the custom was, knelt as the Archbishop went by, and kissed his hand or his mandyas. Isidore received no mark of recognition except from the Varangians and Franks, who presented arms as he passed. Arriving then at the part of the rampart nearest the prisoners, they turned towards them; and then Isidore fell back a little, in order to show that the Archbishop was first going to pronounce Absolution over those of his own rite. This had not been accomplished without the most decided interference on the part of the Emperor; who urged that in his own nation, and supplying the place of the highest dignitary of the Greek Church, the Patriarch of Con-

<sup>1</sup> *Eminence* was not applied to Cardinals till the beginning of the seventeenth century.



stantinople, the Archbishop of Chalcedon ought to claim precedence over all other ecclesiastics whomsoever.

The Prelate then stood forth on the ramparts : and those of his own rite among the prisoners, though they could not catch his words, bent most reverently, and bowed to those words which they could not hear. "Our humility," said he, "having received by succession from the Apostles the commission to remit, and retain, by virtue of that authority in me dwelling, absolves you from all sins that by human frailty you have committed, knowingly, or ignorantly, in thought, word, or deed ; from ban and excommunication ; from curse of father or curse of mother ; from guilt and from punishment ; in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST."—And the multitude on the ramparts answered, as one man, *Amen.*

Then came the turn of Isidore ; and he, laying aside the red hat, and in his place coming forward, pronounced the Absolution of the Latin Church. "Our LORD," said he, "by the merits of His Passion absolve you from all sin ; and by His authority, and the authority of His blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, and of our holy Lord Nicolas, in this case committed to me, as far as the keys of Holy Mother Church extend, I do absolve you from every sentence of excommunication, interdict, or other censure whatsoever, and restore you to the unity of the faithful of CHRIST, and to the Holy Sacraments of the Church. And by the same authority I absolve you from all sin, confessed, or by human frailty forgotten ; and, as far as I may, I restore you to Baptismal innocence, shutting the gates of hell and purgatory, and opening the doors of Paradise. And this grace remain to you in the Article of Death."

Scarcely had he finished, when the Emperor and the Great Logothete came together on the wall. The crowd bowed low before them ; less, as it seemed, out of veneration for the dignity of the Cæsar, than in

respect to the silent agony of the father. Constantine acknowledged their salutations; the Logothete passed on, fixing his eyes on the ground, till the Emperor stood still, and gazed over the ramparts. Then Lucas Notaras looked too; and clasping his hands together, gazed earnestly on his son, who was still kneeling in prayer. Presently he rose, and evidently distinguished his father and the Emperor; and waving his hand to them, he again knelt, and seemed completely occupied in devotion.

“Take comfort, my son,” said the Archbishop of Chalcedon. “Could the Lord Gabriel live a thousand years, he could never fall so gloriously, or meet death so well prepared, as now. The GOD Who gave him to you at first, now requires him at your hands; only give him up willingly, and the merit which is his, shall in part be reckoned to you. And who knows but that he goes to intercede for the city before the Throne of GOD; and thus to avail more by his death, than he could ever have done by his life?”

“The holy Father speaks well,” said Constantine. “Take comfort, I pray you; and pray, as I shall do, that as he has run the race with glory, so he may reach the goal with joy.”

“You never had a son, sire,” said the Great Logothete.

“But I have had a father and brethren,” replied the Emperor, “and have lost them; would they had been honoured with such a fate.”

It now wanted about a quarter of an hour to the expiration of the allotted time; and even as the Emperor spoke, the white banner, which had hitherto floated in the breeze, was hauled down, and a red flag hoisted in its place.

“Sire,” said Sir Edward de Rushton, “they understand their business. They wish to torture our feelings as much as possible, and perhaps to move the prisoners to apostasy.”

“Which, by GOD’s grace,” said Constantine, “they

will not do. But have you caused our captives, and specially Redschid Pasha, to be informed of their fate? If they have any preparations to make, we will not debar them time."

"Are you constant in that resolution, sire?"

"Most constant," replied the Palæologus. "I have sworn it; and it is but a just punishment of the perfidy and cruelty of Mahomet."

"Then, my liege, were it not well to have them up on the ramparts at once? It would show that we are in earnest; and might give the prisoners another chance of their lives."

"Let them instantly be brought up," said the Emperor. And a messenger was despatched to the granary of S. Theodora, where—since it was now empty,—the Turkish prisoners had been confined.

"They are sent for,"—so ran the murmur in the crowd,—"the Emperor will keep his word."

"To be sure he will—but does Mahomet know it?"

"Yes, yes,—he knows it,—the Acolyth, they say, bore him the message."

"He never will kill his prisoners, then. Why, we have Redschid Pasha."

"What does he care? He will soon make another Pasha, and there will be an end of the matter."

"I am glad we shall have our revenge."

"A useless one, too."

"Not so—not so; it will cut off all further thoughts of negotiation. We must fight when this is done."

"By S. George we must—there will be no quarter from them."

"Here they come—mark! mark!"

The Turkish prisoners were indeed being led forth. It was a long procession; for every one marched between two soldiers. The crowd was ordered to fall back: and a clear space with some difficulty formed for them as nearly opposite the Christian captives as might be.

"I grieve," said the Emperor, "that Mahomet's

cruelty should have brought this fate upon you ; but, as surely as those men die, so surely is your doom sealed. But I would spare you and them, if I can : and to that end, one of you shall have free licence to go to the Sultan, and tell him what I have now said. You, fellow ; you are young ; we give you your life on condition of your taking your message faithfully. Will you do this ?”

“ I will, may it please your Majesty.”

“ And further say thus ;—that if Mahomet is even now willing to exchange the Lord Chrysolaras, or the Lord Gabriel Notaras, or Sir Etienne d’Angouleme for Redschid Pasha,—I am willing to accept the terms.”

The Turk, transported with joy at having escaped what he had considered inevitable destruction, was escorted to the nearest gate, and was eagerly watched as he crossed the narrow space that intervened between the wall and the besieging army. Mahomet, though not to be seen, was believed to be in one of the tents in that quarter of the camp ; and so the event proved. For presently the messenger was seen conducted thither ; while there was evidently a pause of expectation among the Turkish troops.

It was soon, however, at an end. The red flag in its turn descended, and the black banner was run up ; and at the same moment eight or ten of the Janissaries, with drawn swords, approached the prisoners. The excitement among the crowd on the walls became intense ; for two or three Muftis accompanied the Janissaries, and it was evident that the fate of the prisoners was not so absolutely decided, but that they might save their lives by denying their faith.

Advancing to one corner of the first line, the Mufti stood before young Raphael Cucullari,—a Janissary went behind him. The Mufti was evidently speaking ; Raphael replied ; and, almost before the Mahometan teacher could step back, the head of the Greek captive fell on the ground. A thrill of horror ran through the multitude on the walls ; but it was speedily changed

into fresh interest, as the same offer was made to him who knelt next to the corpse, rejected, and followed with the same issue. The third sufferer was Sir Etienne d'Angouleme. He, those that had the best sight said, when the proposal of apostasy was made to him shook his head and smiled ; but spoke not.

"God have mercy on his soul !" cried the Cardinal, when the fatal blow was given : "for he hath died a Martyr !"

"Amen," said Sir Edward de Rushton.

Thus the scene of death went on,—every victim in the first line remaining firm to their faith, till the executioner reached Gabriel Notaras. He had evidently, from the first, suffered more than his brethren, and some were even anxious lest, in the last moment of his life, he should fall away. Not so the Archbishop, who had known him from his youth.

"A moment more," he said to the Logothete, "and his pain will be over. Do not cover your eyes : see, he is looking at you !"

Gabriel Notaras looked up at his father for the last time : their eyes met ; there came a beautiful smile over his countenance ; and the next moment he had done with the siege and its miseries for ever.

Still the work of death went on ; and still the victims fell not away from the faith. At length the Janissaries reached Isidore Chalcocondylas, the nephew of Gennadius, who was one of the last. The spectators saw, with some surprise, that the brief question of the Mufti was succeeded by others ; that presently the Janissary withdrew ; that a short conversation followed, when the young Greek arose, and retired into the tents.

"He hath apostatized ! he hath apostatized !" burst from the crowd ; and neither the presence of the Emperor, nor of the Archbishop could hush the yell of derision and rage that rang along the walls. The prisoner next in order turned round, and spat on the place where Isidore had been kneeling ; and then,

folding his arms, bowed his head to the sword, and with his companion on the other side, closed the catalogue of victims.

"Thank God it was not a Latin!" cried Cardinal Isidore.

"You might have spared the insult," said the Archbishop of Chalcedon. "I might reply—"

"The taunt is unworthy of any reply save silence," said Constantine. "My Lord Curopalata, you will superintend the execution of these unfortunate men, waiting, however, till we have returned. Come, my lords. Sir Edward de Rushton, we have occasion for you at the Palace."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

“ A fancied honour, such as is indeed  
 A rushlight to the sun, or rather say  
 A Will o' th' Wisp, that leads poor fools agog  
 Through quag and swamp.”

*Adrasta.*

THEODORA de Rushton and Euphrasia Choniatis sat together in the little room which Sir Edward had so elaborately fitted up for the reception of his bride. It was the same morning of which we have just been writing ; and at the same time.

“ What have I not to thank God for !” said Euphrasia, “ that my father was not taken, as he so nearly was, last night ! Fancy what would have been his lot now !”

“ It is sad indeed,” cried Theodora, “ to think of that scene, and of those who witness it, and are powerless to help it. The young lord Notaras, too, I pity more than all ; my father had always looked for great things from him. And yet, perhaps, what is greater than to die, in the sight of the whole city, for the faith ?”

“ It is indeed to conquer by enduring,” replied her friend. “ And so the Lord Chrysolaras is better this morning even than last night.”

“ As you shall see,” answered Theodora, “ as soon as Theophrastus leaves him : there is now no danger, neither does he think the recovery likely to be a tedious one. Your news,”—and she smiled,—“ will be his best cure.”

"My father will see him in the course of the day, if he may," said Euphrasia; "and he would have come with me even now, had not the Emperor summoned him on this sad business."

The door opened, and Theophrastus entered. "A fair morning, fair ladies both! but that it must ever be where you are."

"And how find you the Lord Manuel?" inquired Theodora.

"Better and better," replied the physician. "There is no possible reason why the Lady Euphrasia should not see him whenever she wishes it." But as it did not occur to the worthy physician that she might wish it at that moment, even though it involved his own departure, he stayed on.

"You hear of the news toward," said he. "Poor fellows! poor fellows! I had half a mind to see the thing myself; but I am tender-hearted,—too foolishly tender-hearted, indeed. And how is the Acolyth?"

"I have not seen him since he went forth at day-break," replied Theodora, "he was deeply dispirited with the failure last night."

"Between ourselves," said Theophrastus, "that was better executed than designed. However, the Emperor would have it so. Emperors and physicians, you know, are absolute. God help the world else! Now I remember, just at the beginning of this century, or it might be at the end of the last, but that makes no matter—I think it was at Saloniki, but somewhere thereabout, that the Emperor sent for me. God guard us! What was that noise?"

"They are yelling and hooting at something," said Theodora. "Maria! Maria!" And the attendant, who had been in the adjoining apartment, entered.

"Maria! tell Cyril or Theodosius to go forth and learn the meaning of this outcry. It waxes louder and louder."

"Belike," said Theophrastus, "they are hooting the



Cardinal. I saw him even now going towards the walls."

"Now, God forbid!" cried Theodora.

"God may forbid, if He pleases," replied the physician, "but I care very little about it. I have no great opinion of that Isidore; no more I have of that Venetian Doctor, that Galeani—that they have boasted to the sky. He has studied at Padua, and at a place they call Oxford, in France or England, I know not which. I pledge my word as a man of honour, he is the most pitiful trifler with our heavenly science—the most ignorant dog that ever took upon himself the name of physician. Ha! now we shall know."

"Well, Maria!" said Theodora.

"It is young Isidore Chalcocondylas,—he has apostatised," replied the waiting-woman, out of breath with hurry and excitement. "All the others stood firm, however, Latins and all."

"Are they dead, then?" inquired her mistress.

"They are all dead; he was one of the last. And now they are putting the Turkish prisoners to death, as fast as they can."

"I suppose it is a sad necessity," said Theodora de Rushton. "You may go, Maria."

"Yes, madam; but what a grievous thing it is that the only apostate should be a Greek!"

Still Theophrastus lingered on; conversing, if it could be called conversation, on the petty details and scandals of the day. Translate but the talk that would pass current in a morning call of our own times, and it would give no bad idea of that which then served the same end at Constantinople. At length, he fortunately recollected that he had a patient to visit at the further end of the city, by the Silivri Gate, and accordingly took his leave.

"I thought he would never have gone, dear Euphrasia. Maria! send up to the Lord Manuel to inquire if he is ready to receive us."

A speedy answer was returned in the affirmative;

and Theodora, passing her arm through that of her fair companion, led her up the marble staircase.

“You must not tremble so, poor Euphrasia, or I positively will not let you go in. You will agitate him, if he sees you so much agitated.”

“One moment, Theodora, and I shall be quite myself. Now then, let us go in—is he much altered?”

“A little thinner and paler, that is all.” As she spoke, she knocked at the door of the room where the young nobleman lay, and it was immediately opened by the dull attendant, Tryphon.

Manuel was still confined to his bed, though gaining strength fast. He started up in it, as the door opened and turned to that side.

“A fair good morrow, Lord Chrysolaras,” said Theodora, in a cheerful voice, as she entered. “Here have I brought you a visitor, who would fain have been with you before. Tryphon, I will pray you to go to your master’s and see if the drugs are prepared yet.”

“My master spoke of no drugs,” quoth the apprentice. “The Lord Chrysolaras continues on the same treatment; that is to say—”

“But *I* speak of them,” said Theodora; “and I desire you to go and see if they are ready.” And so Tryphon found himself condemned to a long walk half over the city; and, as he verily suspected, on a fruitless errand.

In the meanwhile, Euphrasia had given her hand to Manuel, who, for his part, was devouring it with kisses. What the first words on each side were, Theodora heard not, and we shall not inquire. She walked to the deeply-recessed window at the further end of the room, thus admitting the warm breath of a May morn, and there remained, apparently engrossed, (and she might well have been engrossed,) with the sight of the Turkish galleys lying at anchor in the upper part of the Horn.

“If it be so,” said Euphrasia, as if in reply to something that Manuel had been saying, “it is a very hard

duty. But it is not a duty. I should not dare to speak of myself, because I might well be swayed by my own wishes, and because I will not pretend to know how far the laws of honour extend. But my father thinks that it is not your duty to return—the Lord Phranza also thinks so, and De Rushton agrees with them.”

“Ask De Rushton what he would do in my case,” said the young nobleman, sadly.

“I will,” answered his affianced bride, “if you will promise to act accordingly.”

Manuel shook his head. “One thing I ask you most earnestly,” she continued. “God forbid I should say aught that might influence you from doing what you felt to be right! But do not be led away by a fancied sense of honour, that has no foundation in it. The hardest path is not always the right one, Manuel.”

“Not always, but generally, dear Euphrasia.”

“My father says, that such a gross violation of the laws of nations as this last action of Mahomet’s, releases from all pledges. How do we know but that he might deal with you as with those unfortunate men to-day? And how then could you stand excused from the guilt of self-murder? Remember this—you owe much to your friends—to me you owe something—do not forget this duty, when you think of the other.”

“I will not, love: be assured of that. If the Emperor joins with your father and the Lord Phranza, and, as you say, De Rushton, in thinking that I ought to stay, stay I will. Does that content you?”

“It does,” replied Euphrasia. “One thing more.” And she bent her head over Chrysolaras, and spoke almost in a whisper. “If you go,—which God forbid, you go to imminent danger,—I stay to the same. My father will tell you himself what he wishes—and I am only glad that I can give you a proof of my love that in any other circumstances might well make me blush—but not now. Manuel! you shall not go till you have called me your wife—”

But, in spite of poor Euphrasia's protestations, she did blush most deeply as she spoke the last words.

"Euphrasia," said Manuel, "you have offered what I dared not to have asked. They will say it is selfish in me not to thrust away the happiness you would give me—I hope it is not. More dearly than I loved you before I cannot love you now—but—who is that?" A knock was heard at the door: it opened; and the Emperor entered.

"So well attended, Lord Chrysolaras?" he said; "nay then, I had better retire."

"By no means, Sire. I hope your Splendour will do me the honour to stay."

"And so do I, your Majesty," said Euphrasia, boldly: "for I have a question to ask, Sire, to which none can reply but yourself."

"Ask it, ask it, lady," said Constantine: "it were hard indeed if I do not answer it to my best ability."

"Thus it is, sire. I have pleaded hard with the Lord Chrysolaras not to return to Mahomet, since every one tells him that, since the last act of the Sultan's, his honour does not require his return. And he has agreed to refer the matter to your Majesty, and to be bound by your decision."

"I think," said Constantine, "that for once, fair lady, I shall be able to plead more successfully than yourself; for I shall not scruple to employ a plea that you could not urge. My Lord Chrysolaras, you will, on your word of honour, consider yourself a prisoner till we give further directions; and if you do not give me your word to that effect, when you are able to leave this room, we shall give orders for your committal. Have I satisfied you, lady?"

"I am most bounden to your Majesty," replied Euphrasia.

"And so, I am sure, will my husband be," said Theodora; "for he has grieved himself at the Lord Chrysolaras's obstinacy."

"I willingly submit, sire," said Manuel; "for I am well assured that your Majesty will command nothing which you did not also approve."

"Well," said Constantine, "I must not now stop with you, for every moment is valuable. Farewell, fair ladies both, and happier times! And to you, my lord, a speedy recovery!" And he left the apartment.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*Wal.* The time is not yet come.

*Ter.* So you say always.

But when will it be time?

*Wal.* When I shall say it.

*Illo.* You wait upon the stars, and on their answers,  
Till the earthly hour escapes you. Oh, believe me!  
In your own bosom are your destiny's stars."

*Wallenstein.*

It was the night of the twenty-seventh of May,—Whitsunday: deep repose was on the city and the camp. The moon had not risen, the sky was intensely dark, but the stars shone out full and lustrous. Venus was now almost setting: Mars glowed red and fiery toward the zenith; the constellations seemed to stand out from the infinite void of space behind them: Orion glittered like a giant in golden armour: Cassiopeia shone out in her own peculiar liquid radiance, and the Pleiades in their misty brightness. In the judgment of the Sultan's astrologer, the stars in their courses were fighting against Constantinople.

For there he sat, in front of the Sultan's own tent; none daring to intrude on his studies; Mahomet himself standing reverently by, and expecting the result of his calculations. Sometimes the old man added another line to the tablet lying before him: sometimes he wrote down figures, and combined or divided them: sometimes he gazed up into the sky, as if half admiring the beauty and half reverencing the wisdom of the orbs that had been the study of his life.

At length he paused, and sat in meditation for a

few moments. "Well?" asked Mahomet at length, after curbing his impatience to the utmost of his power.

"Patience, Lord Sultan," said the astrologer. "My calculations cannot be quickened, and must not be hurried. This only can I tell you as yet, which I have told you more than once before,—that the city will undoubtedly fall." He paused, bent over his papers, and resumed his calculations.

Still Mahomet waited on with patience. His faith in Baltazar had always been great; and the remarkable coincidence of the prediction of the astrologer concerning the danger of Leontius with the event, had changed it into the most absolute trust. But the Council of War which had been summoned by Mahomet, though by no means despising the predictions of the astrologer, were yet not at all prepared to be implicitly governed by them,—and thought, to say the least, that the chances of war and the judgment of experienced generals, ought to have as much weight in the decision of the proper time for the final assault, as the calculations of an astrologer.

"I wish the Sultan would allow Baltazar to finish his calculations, another time, before he summons us," said Achmet Pasha.

"They should be worth something when they are finished," observed Baltha Ogli, "for, by the Prophet, they are long enough in making."

"Never a better time than to-morrow, according to my judgment," cried the Pasha of Anatolia.

"Then for that very reason," returned Baltha Ogli, "to-morrow will not be the day. These astrologers can do nothing like other men."

"You seem to place no great confidence in them," remarked Achmet.

"Faith, nor I neither," said Leontius.

"However, my lords, the time is not far distant," said one of the *Sanjaks*. "The Sultan will make the right stars appear, when the right time comes."

"I know not what to say to that," said an old Pasha. "More than once has the Sultan followed Baltazar's opinion rather than his own, and gone the worse for so doing."

As he spoke, Mahomet entered; and, after receiving the obeisances of the Pashas, "I have to announce," said he, "that the infallible skill of astrology predicts a happy day for the assault. The day after to-morrow, at sunrise, we attack the city by sea and land."

"Let the Commander of the Faithful live a thousand years," replied Calil Pasha, "your slaves will obey; and doubt not but that, as Allah has predicted the time, so He will also furnish the means."

"It is on them we are now to consult," said the Sultan. "We are ready to listen to any proposal in furtherance of our end."

"Were it not well," asked Baltha Ogli, "that the Dervishes go through the camp, preaching the meritoriousness of the work, and the certainty of the reward?"

"It is well thought of," replied the Sultan; "look to it. We will ourselves address the Janissaries, and promise them a recompense beyond their hopes. I propose that the attack be commenced in three places more especially: at the Tower of S. Romanus, from the Horn, and from the ruined bastion near the Silivri gate."

"It is well said," cried several voices.

"Achmet Pasha," continued the Sultan, "and the Lord Leontius will attack the ramparts from the Horn. The vessels must be brought up as near as may be to the fortifications, and then the scaling ladders applied. Baltha Ogli, to you we entrust the assault on the Silivri gate. The Pasha of Anatolia will command that on the Tower of S. Romanus, which we intend to be the principal one; and the Janissaries, whom we propose to keep back as a reserved body, we shall ourselves command."

"In that case," said the Pasha of Anatolia, "I shall



crave leave of your Highness that the artillery may play on S. Romanus to-night and to-morrow. There is a breach, it is true, but it is barely practicable yet; and the ditch is very formidable."

"A thousand mules," replied Mahomet, "are even now on their way from the Balkan with fascines. By a messenger just arrived, I learn that they will be here by two hours after midnight,—or sunrise at the furthest. Dispose the artillery as you will. We will visit it at daybreak to-morrow morning."

The news of the intended attack spread like wild-fire through the camp. Late as it was, the Janissaries might be seen in knots, discussing the probable method of the assault; the resistance likely to be opposed; the number of the enemy yet remaining; their own distinction in the operations of the Tuesday. The wild hordes of Bulgaria and Croatia, with their long, matted hair, fierce countenances, and discordant voices, were in full discussion of the plunder and the licence; here and there a ring of dervishes were expatiating on the irresistible necessity that Islam should prevail, or whirling in their passionate contortions and maniacal devotion. Messages passed between the ambassadors of Hunniades and the King of Hungary, who—shame that it should have been so!—were in the Sultan's camp; a Christian slave would go or come with dejection deeper than usual. Gradually, large bodies of men were in motion; new positions were taken up; the Pasha of Anatolia raised his flag a quarter of a mile from the gate of S. Romanus; and, as the night wore on, the heavy roll of artillery was heard in that direction.

Sir Edward de Rushton was seated, late that evening, by Theodora. There had been little done that day. The Turks usually selected a festival as the time of their attacks; but on this Pentecost, except a slight movement in the Horn, all had been still. The service in the great church had been performed with the utmost possible magnificence; the aristocracy and

beauty of Constantinople had thronged it, as in the better days of the city. The Emperor himself had assisted at High Mass; the Archbishop of Chalcedon had officiated pontifically; the day was blue and balmy; the sky all smiles,—the earth all freshness; and now twilight had come down on a scene of comparative peace, and had deepened into dark night. De Rushton sat, as I have said, by his bride, and very sweet had been their conversation. They had been recalling the long-gone days, before Phranza went on his fruitless mission; how first they had known each other, when De Rushton took service in the Byzantine Court; how Theodora had grown up under his very eye; how she had long suspected his love for her; together with all the pleasant questions, and more pleasant answers, naturally rising out of such a review.

As the night wore on, Phranza entered, and was warmly welcomed both by Theodora and De Rushton. "Is there anything new?" inquired the latter.

"Nothing," replied Phranza, "except that Genadius is more than usually troublesome. He has been preaching, I understand, this evening before the Studium. Really this licence must no longer go unbridled. I am no great friend to the Cardinal Isidore myself; but truly, to find him called dog, devil, hypocrite, Ahithophel, Judas Iscariot,—and that on such a festival as this,—is beyond all bearing."

"Worst of all," said Theodora, "on the feast that ought to be the Feast of Love."

"Even so," returned her father; "but there lies his main argument,—the old Double Processionist controversy."

"Well," said De Rushton, "I shall request the Emperor to have him confined to his monastery: there, at least, he will do little harm. If I had my way, to prison he should go forthwith."

"Nay, that would hardly be prudent, either," returned the Great Protovestiare. "Send him to his monastery, say I; and do you second me there."

"Do not you think it strange," asked his son-in-law, "that Mahomet, contrary to his usual wont, has let this festival pass so quietly? He has renegades enow in the camp—Leontius for one—to let him know what day it is."

"It is odd,—and more odd than pleasant," replied Phranza. "It was just so, you remember, before the galleys were transported. Belike he has some new scheme in his head. But I tell you what, De Rushton, —I begin to have better hopes than I have had for some time. The weather is getting fearfully hot,—by the way, how pleasant are those orange-trees of yours, Theodora,—and I am sure the army cannot lie much longer as it is. Some epidemic will break out in it, to a certainty."

"It will only be a respite," said Sir Edward.

"Nay, he cannot return till autumn; and by that time how much may be done! Besides, when they know what the imminency of our danger has been, depend upon it the princes of Christendom will hasten their armaments. Rely on this: if the city falls, Rome will be his next prize."

De Rushton smiled.

"Nay," said Phranza, "if you mean that the Roman Church has a privilege of perpetuity, that need not preserve the city, any more than from the Goths. If Nicholas had only known his true interest, we should long ago have had help."

"Pray God it be so!" cried De Rushton.

At this moment a servant entered. "My lord, the Lochagus Burstow is below, and desires to speak to your lordship."

"Bid him come up," returned the Acolyth.

"Shall I leave you with him?" asked Theodora, rising.

"First let us see what he wants," replied her husband.

Burstow presently entered, holding something carefully in his hands, with "A fair good night, my lords."

“What have you there, Burstow?” inquired Sir Edward.

“A carrier pigeon, my lord. It has a billet round its neck: shall I cut the string?”

“Ay. When did it arrive?”

“But now, my lord. It came right into the guard-house.”

He cut the string, and gave the letter to De Rushton. The pigeon turned its glossy neck about, as if looking for protection.

“Come to me, poor little trembler,” cried Theodora, taking it out of Burstow’s rough hands,—who touched her as if she had been a being of superior kind to himself,—“come to me: it is a shame to employ such innocent creatures as you in such bloody messages.”

“We must not open this, Lord Phranza,” said De Rushton. “It is directed, ‘To the Emperor, with speed.’ I know the hand, though.”

“Let me see,” said Phranza. “Ay, so do I. It is our good friend, yonder,” and he nodded in the direction of the camp; “but we had better go with it at once.”

“Surely,” said Sir Edward. “Burstow, do you follow us: we may want you.”

“Are you going, then?” asked Theodora. “When shall you be back?”

“Soon, if I possibly can,” returned the Great Acolyth, kissing her, “but it must depend on what this note may contain. Something of importance it is, or it would not have been sent in this manner. Do not sit up for me, love: though I hope I shall not be long.”

“Good night, my child,” said Phranza. “I, at all events, shall not come back to-night. Go you to S. Sophia’s to-morrow?”

“I purpose to do so,” she replied.

“Then, after Liturgy, I shall, perhaps, see you again. Good night.”

"This confirms what we were saying even now, Lord Protovestiar," observed De Rushton, as they crossed the First Court. "This mode of conveying intelligence is so perilous, that, unless it had been something of weight, Calil would not have attempted it. Chrysolaras tells me that he never did it without great anxiety."

"Why truly, it might easily fail, take what precautions he will. I suppose he designs a surprise. If so, we may have to spend this night most precariously. But here we are. We must see the Cæsar on urgent business, guard."

"The Emperor is at After-Vespers, my lord," replied the guard. "Please it your Highness to walk into the reception room. He shall be informed instantly on his return."

"Has he been gone long?"

"Nearly half-an-hour, my lord; he cannot be much longer."

"Well, we must wait, then," said Phranza: "but the delay is vexatious. At S. Irene's, is he?"

"Yes, my lord."

"We will wait for him, then, here, good fellow." And they took one or two turns up and down before the entrance. But they had not to wait long. Fifes and hautboys presently rang out, and, with a small guard of Varangians, the Emperor, and a few officers of his household, returned to the palace.

"Good evening, my Lord Phranza," said he. "Good evening, Lord Acolyth. I love not to miss After-Vespers on these great Festivals. Any thing of importance?"

"I rather think there is, sire. A despatch has arrived."

"Has it?" asked Constantine, understanding to what he referred. "Have you opened it?"

"No, my liege."

"Then follow me instantly." And leading the way into a small room used by the First Secretary for the

despatch of business, Constantine seated himself; and, having desired that every one should leave the apartment, said—

“From Calil, is it?”

“Yes, my liege,” replied De Rushton. “It arrived by a carrier pigeon but now, and is addressed to your Majesty.”

“Read it,” said Constantine.

Sir Edward read—“The Emperor is informed that a general assault of the city is to take place at day-break on Tuesday morning, both by sea and land. The attack will be made in three places: Baltha Ogli, the Bulgarians and Croatians, at the Silivri gate; the Pasha of Anatolia, with the Anatolian and Roumelian troops at the breach by S. Romanus’s Tower; the Sultan will command the Janissaries there in person, as a body of reserve; the galleys in the Horn will be commanded by Achmet Pasha and Leontius. This intelligence is certain. The number of troops employed, as near as the writer can ascertain, fifteen thousand Janissaries; two hundred and fifty thousand ordinary infantry. Every effort is being made to ensure success. If this attack can be repulsed, the city is safe.”

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ We must straight employ you  
Against the general enemy Ottoman.”

*Othello.*

WE have now reached the evening of Whit-Monday, May 28, 1453. A night and a morning, and the destinies of the great city will have been accomplished; the long line of its princes will have ceased for ever; its heroic actions and its dark crimes have passed away from real existence; itself, equally with the account of its fall, be a tale that is told. But yet, on that fair evening, it existed; its emperor and its princes were a living reality; its churches were unprofaned; its monasteries inviolate; it retained the impression of primeval times, and, amidst the changing West, exhibited the stamp of the immutable East.

“ Whither away ? ” inquired Phranza, as he met Sir Edward de Rushton on the ramparts, near Port S. Peter, about six o'clock on the evening of this, the last day of the city.

“ To the Emperor,” replied the Acolyth,—“ at S. Romanus’s Tower—he wishes me to visit that, and the other positions which will be attacked to-morrow, with him, while it is yet daylight.”

“ I will go with you. What have you been doing this afternoon ? I have not seen you.”

“ I have been arranging for the defence of this side, as well as may be. It seems that the old breaches

made when the Latins took the city, have only been skimmed over, never thoroughly repaired. It is a fortunate thing for us that no very heavy artillery has been brought to bear upon them."

"But there will be more men needed here than anywhere else," replied Phranza. "Those ships can throw their scaling ladders right on the walls—no ditch—no double wall."

"Yet, somehow, I have a presentiment," said De Rushton, "that the greatest danger will not be on this side. Those four towers that have been thrown down by S. Romanus, must give them great spirit. Have you been there lately?"

"Not since this afternoon's cannonade, which has been brisk enough. The Emperor has been there in person. I have had enough to do in lodging the ammunition where we shall want it. We shall have plenty of that happen what may."

"These matters will finally be arranged in the Council. But now, Lord Phranza, let us talk of what more immediately concerns us. What can we do for Theodora? We may not have another opportunity of discussing this in private."

"We must so arrange," said Phranza, "that if we both fall, which is likely enough, she must not be left—and that, whether we fall or survive, she may at once be found. In the first place, I thought of giving Barlaam directions not to leave her. He is an old man, and not fit for active work; but he has some strength in him yet—he loves her as he would his own child,—and he knows every street and lane of Constantinople as well as my house."

"So be it," said Sir Edward. "Of all men, next to myself, I would rather leave her in Burstow's charge; but that cannot be. However, we must make preparations for the worst. If the city falls to-morrow, and we fall too, is she to attempt to fly from it, or to hide herself in it?"

"To hide herself," said Phranza, "might secure her



for the time ; but it would involve almost certain destruction afterwards. And yet, to attempt to fly in the midst of a sack, were equally vain. Ah ! here is the exarch Choniates : he has a daughter too to preserve. Let us take him into our counsels. Good evening, sir."

" Good evening, my Lords. Are you bound to the Emperor ?"

" Even so."

" So am I. Shall I join you, or are you occupied ?"

" Join us by all means," said Phranza. " You have an interest in what we were discussing, for you too have a daughter. The question is, supposing that the city falls to-morrow, how are we best to provide for their safety, as that, whether we survive or not, they may have the chance at least of escaping the horrors of the sack."

" In the first place," said Sir Edward, " if the Exarch thinks fit, the Lady Euphrasia, and my own wife had better be together,—safer so than separate ; and they will cheer and comfort each other."

" I am beholden to you, Lord Acolyth," replied Choniates. " And the Lord Chrysolaras, though he is unable to take part in any active preparation, yet may well be a safeguard to them, if things go ill to-morrow."

" Then thus be it," said Phranza. " We may beat off the dogs, and then all is well. But, if the day seems to be going hard with us, Theodora and Euphrasia shall conceal themselves in the ice-house of my gardens. There is a large empty vault there, where it would not be easy to find them. Barlaam shall have his directions to keep as near the place as he can do with safety, and take the best care of them that he may. Your wife, Exarch ? were it not well she bestowed herself there also ?"

" She is in far less danger than the others," said Choniates, " but still it might be well for all their sakes."

"Then it is probable that some one of us,—the Exarch, you, Lord Acolyth, Chrysolaras, Burstow, or I shall survive. Whichever of us does (for Burstow we may trust as ourselves,) shall engage to pursue the best course he can, at whatever danger to himself, to set them free. It must be done to-morrow night, if at all. Let us therefore resolve, each and all of us, to meet near the ice-house, if the city is taken, at midnight. If by that time none of us appears, Barlaam must conclude that we have all either fallen or been made prisoners, and do his best, as circumstances shall direct."

"Let us call up Burstow," said Sir Edward de Rushton, "and tell him the plan." And the Lo-chagus, who was in attendance on the Acolyth, and following him at a short distance, was at once summoned.

"Burstow," said Sir Edward, "we have been talking over the best means, if the city is taken to-morrow, of providing for the safety of the Lady De Rushton and the Lady Euphrasia Choniatis. It is not the first time that I have given you proof how implicitly I trust you. We have settled that we cannot do better than thus:" and he told him the plan.

"I do not know, my lord, that anything can be safer, on the whole," replied Burstow, respectfully; "and for myself, I call GOD to witness that, if I am the survivor, I will do as much for those two ladies as I would for my own daughters, had I any, and were they in the like case."

"I believe you, Burstow; I believe you from my heart," replied the Acolyth, much affected with the man's earnestness.

"But I must see the ground first," said the Lo-chagus, "for I have never been in the gardens of the Lord Phranza; and I should wish to see them by daylight."

"That you shall do," replied Phranza; "and, if Sir Edward de Rushton has no present need for your ser-

vices, at once: for the sun cannot want above an hour to setting."

"Oh! he can go directly," replied Sir Edward.

"Go to Barlaam, then," said Phranza, "and you may tell him all that has passed. He will take you into the gardens, and you can decide how best to act. I need not say, not a word to any person except to him."

"The rack should not tear it from me, my lord," returned Burstow. And, with a low obeisance, he departed.

"There I believe him," said the Exarch. "I only wish that poor Contari could also be here to-day."

"The great question is, if they are fortunate enough to escape from the city, where are they to fly?" asked Phranza. "Two places most recommend themselves to me; either to the Court of Thomas Palæologus, in the Morea, or Lesbos."

"England, England, my good lord," said De Rushton. "The Morea and Lesbos will be Turkish states in a few months; in my own country I can assure you an honourable asylum, and your daughter a place not unbecoming her rank and situation."

"But so distant!" said Phranza.

"A Venetian merchant vessel will make the passage in four weeks," answered De Rushton; "and there we shall be safe—wherever else not—from Mahomet and his hordes."

"Well," said Phranza, "if you survive, the plan has my consent; if not, my sentence is for Lesbos. What say you, Exarch?"

"I am for leaving it to Providence," replied Choniates. "Only let the principal danger be over, and the rest will follow easily. I am just from the Lord Chrysolaras. He is up, and declares that he will put on his armour to-morrow, if he can do nothing else."

"He can be of no use in the defence," said De Rushton; "but, if he can go forth, he may be of great service, by carrying intelligence, should matters go against us, and so giving them timely warning."

“After all,” observed Choniates, “we may be needlessly alarmed.”

“God grant it be so!” cried De Rushton. “But I tell you, Exarch, I expect as fully, that this time tomorrow will see Constantinople in the hands of the infidels, as if an angel from heaven had said so.”

“The worst is,” said Phranza, “that this popular frenzy as to the final deliverance of the city, does not incite the crowd of those who might fight. If Genadius told them to defend their walls, and the city should be impregnable, I could excuse him for fanaticising his hearers. But to declare that the Turks will enter at the breach, and that the supernatural assistance will not come till they are in the square of S. Sophia—this is to cut away our last chance indeed!”

“And they fully believe him,” said Choniates. “If the Turks succeed, S. Sophia will be thronged with women.”

“I fear so,” replied Phranza; “they will rush to it as into a net.”

They now turned one of the towers that defended the northern wall, and came upon the crowd of labourers employed, to the very last moment, in strengthening and repairing it. “There is the Emperor,” said De Rushton; “we must learn from him his own plans.”

## CHAPTER XXIX.

“ And therefore, as I prosper in this guile,  
Write me, or write me not, a prosperous man.”

*Chapman.*

BURSTOW, on leaving the consulting friends, bent his way with all speed to the mansion of Phranza. The streets were nearly deserted; the men, with scarcely an exception, were either talking of, or gazing at, the works on the ramparts; the women, engaged in passionate lamentation, or in contriving schemes of safety at home. The Lochagus, accustomed from his youth to imminent perils of all descriptions, gave not a thought to the dangers of the next day as regarded himself; but he fully felt them for those over whose welfare he had promised to watch. With Barlaam he was but slightly acquainted; but he felt that he was a man who might be relied on; and was not a little pleased at meeting him in the court of the Palace, before arriving at Phranza's metœcia.

“ Well met, Sir Steward!” said he: “ my errand concerns you.”

“ How may that be?” inquired the old man.

“ Let us walk up and down here,” said Burstow, “ and I will tell you.” Which he proceeded to do in as few words as possible.

“ Well,” said Barlaam, when he had heard the tale, “ I have but a few drops of blood to shed, and but a few years to live; but both one and the other were well spent in such a cause. Come to me into the garden. We can there talk the matter over better; and I can show you the ice-house.”

Accordingly, they went into the gardens of which we have spoken more than once already; and while walking up and down on the terrace where De Rush-ton had first confessed his love for Theodora, they debated the whole of the matter.

In a thick clump of shrubs, laurel, arbutus, and holly, the ice-house of which Phranza had spoken was concealed. Six or seven steps led down to it; and the excavation itself was divided into two apartments which, on reaching the bottom, presented themselves respectively on the right and on the left hand. They were allotted for the reception of two different kinds of ice. For the modern method of cooling wine, by plunging the bottles in ice, was unknown at that time in Constantinople, though, I believe, practised by the Spanish Moors at a much earlier period. The Byzantines employed the ancient way, that of dropping a piece of pure white ice into the wine itself; and for this purpose the best was, of course, needed; while for the more ordinary uses of preserving fish or meat an inferior kind answered equally well. During the troubles preceding the siege, such pure ice was not to be procured; and the consequence was that the store-house for it in Phranza's garden was at the present time empty,—it was that on the right side, and quite dry.

“This will do well; this will do very well indeed,” cried Burstow, when Barlaam introduced him to the spot. “It will be a hard thing if any one thinks of coming here at all that first day; and still harder if they try to break it open when they find it locked. You have the key?”

“Ay,” said Barlaam: “but it only opens from the outside.

“That is unfortunate. You must invent something to keep it fastened on the inside, then—I have plenty else on my hands.”

“Now,” said the old steward, “we clearly understand each other. If, which God forbid, the city is

in imminent danger of being taken to-morrow, of which I am to gain intelligence as I best can—”

“The Lord Chrysolaras will take care of that,” interrupted Burstow.

“Ay, well—so he may—so much the better if he does—but it is always as well to be independent; but, however, if the city is in imminent danger, I am to see that the Lady Theodora, and the Exarch’s wife and daughter are safely concealed here, and then to lurk about myself, where best I can, till night-fall. At midnight I am to expect further instructions from you, or from my lord, or from Sir Edward De Rushton, or from the Exarch, or the Lord Manuel; and, if I have none, then I am to follow my best judgment, and serve them if I can.”

“Even so,” said Burstow, turning and ascending the steps. “The place strikes cold. It were well, good Barlaam, if you put in one or two bottles of wine, and some other refreshment: if they are long confined there, they will need it.”

“I will do so,” replied Barlaam, closing the door and locking it. “Shall I see you again to-night?”

“I think not; I must go look for the Acolyth; he is on the ramparts somewhere with the Emperor.”

“God speed you then! Whatever happens, I will do my best.”

“And not a word, for your life; one word might spoil all the plan.”

“No, no,” said the old man. “You may trust me for that. Not a soul is the wiser for what has passed between us this evening.”

They had not long entered the house when the laurels in the thickest part of the shrubbery might have been seen, had any spectator been present, to move, and cautiously and quietly Zosimus emerged from them.

“Not a soul shall be the wiser, eh?” said Zosimus. “But one man I wot of shall be all the richer, and another all the happier. If now I could only find

the means of getting to the Lord Leontius, I might make any bargain I pleased with him. But it must be to-night; to-morrow may be too late; the bird may have flown, or which is just as likely as not, Leontius may be killed. Well! I am sorry for her, too—for she has ever been kind to me; and I would rather have the money for keeping my secret than for giving it up. However, that is impossible. It is a duty to take care of oneself. Besides, I have heard out of Scripture, or if not there, out of somewhere else, that charity begins at home. And so it is a duty to do this; but I am sorry for her, too.”

Zosimus, having arrived at this conclusion, set his brain to work, how, with the least risk, he might make his escape to the Turkish camp. For as to returning, that he thought safest not to do, till the Infidels should enter Constantinople. We must follow him in his operations.

Although the upper part of the Horn was in the power of Mahomet, the lower, namely that towards the chain, was held by the Genoese and Venetian merchant vessels, which either belonged to the inhabitants of Galata, or were there for purposes of traffic. There might be as many as thirty of these. The owners of several of them had been importuned to lend them to the Emperor on the night of the vain attempt to fire the mole, but the greater part had declined; and indeed the larger portion of these vessels was unfit for such service. To the Seraglio Point therefore, (now, as always, we use the name anticipatorily, as being more intelligible than that of Chrysoceras, as it was called from the harbour,)—he bent his way; and on arriving at the landing place, requested permission from the soldier on guard, to have a boat to go on board the Bucentaur.

“You are the Lord Phranza’s servant?”

“I am; I have a message from him to the Captain of the Bucentaur.”

“I dare not let you go without a pass, but I dare



say my superior will," replied the man; and calling out the corporal of the gate, he stated the case.

"Oh, ay," said the corporal, coming out, and looking at him; "it is Zosimus, is it not? To the Bucentaur? Very well; only take care that you are back before sunset, for then we double-lock the gates, and, I promise you, we shall have no mind to unfasten them."

"I will be back before sunset," cried Zosimus; "no fear of that. But how in the foul fiend's name am I to get a boat?"

"You must e'en row yourself," said the corporal, as the other knew he would. "You don't imagine that my men are going to row you?"

"They might do worse," said the other. "But I can manage very well. Just help me to launch this boat, good fellow," to the man to whom he had first spoken, "and I will give you a bottle of wine for your pains."

"Have with you then," said the soldier; and by the united efforts of the two, the boat was soon launched, and Zosimus fairly afloat.

"I will give you five piastres when I come back," cried he, as he pushed himself off. "Get the wine, if you list, now. Where does the Bucentaur lie?"

"Just on the other side of that galley—not the nearest one—but next to that with the Venetian flag at her mast-head."

"Ay, ay, I see," said he; and he rowed out in that direction.

"That fellow will never be back before sunset," said the soldier to the corporal, who was listlessly leaning over the breastwork, "if he does not get on faster. He rows as if he had never handled an oar before."

"I wonder Lord Phranza could not find a better messenger. However, if he returns later, he may get in as he can."

In process of time, but not without great delay (for he rowed slowly on purpose) Zosimus came alongside of the Bucentaur.

"Hallo!" he cried, "hallo! Is Sir Edward de Rushton on board?"

"Sir Edward de Rushton!" repeated the officer of the watch. "Not he. Why should he be?"

"Why, he is somewhere in the Horn, and I thought as this was his ship in the attack, he might be here now."

"Not been here all day," said the officer.

"Well, then, I must look for him somewhere else. What is that vessel yonder?" And he pointed to the one which lay nearest to the Turkish fleet.

"The S. Francis."

"I will try there, then." And he pulled for it in the same deliberate way as before, and asked the same question, with, of course, the same result.

"Then I must get back," said he. But, instead of doing so, he now bent to his oars in a far different manner from before, and the little boat flew right up the Horn.

"That's odd now; that's what I can't understand," said the sailor who had replied, from the S. Francis, to the question of Zosimus. With which sapient reflection he went below.

To any one that had leisure to contemplate it, the scene that now presented itself to Zosimus was magnificent. He was half way between the Turkish and Genoese galleys, and nearly a mile from each. Not one single boat, except his own, specked the Horn; its waters lay before, behind, around him like a sea of glass; showing that wonderful radiation and combination of colours, depth below depth, dark purple, living green, transparent gold, that a sunset in such a climate sometimes calls out. For the sun was almost at the goal of his long bright course that day; sinking lower and lower behind the towers of Galata, and flinging their dark shadows further and further into the Horn. Before, like a winter forest, rose the innumerable masts of the Turkish galleys, and an army of crescents glowed in the evening light; behind the

Genoese merchantmen rode at broader intervals; to the left the Imperial City seemed a mass of gold, flashing back the last rays of the sun; before, the Horn lost itself in the distance, and blue soft hills melted away into the sky. Sounds there were too, mellowed indeed as they floated over the water, but though mellowed, not of peace. A distant roar from the great city, ten thousand different noises blending into one confusion; from the Turkish fleet, more distinctly, riveting of beams and clamping of joints; and from the right bank, the occasional word of command, the occasional gallop of a party of horse.

There they lay,—the besieging army and the besieged city, and the quiet waters between; both lit up in the same glow, both gradually hushing into the same peace. For the sun set not more peacefully on the Pentecost revels of merry Sherwood, or the Vespers of quiet Brittany, than there, on the morrow's scene of strife.

The sun dips below the earth. One night more, and the empire will be with the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchies. Yet it lingers, half above the horizon, as if for one more glance at the Palace of the Cæsars, and as the Greek historians love to call it, the firmament of brightness, the earthly heaven,—the wonder of the archangels,—the throne of God,—Christian S. Sophia's.

Now it has set.

Instantly, one solitary cannon boomed from the ramparts of the Contoscalion. It was the sunset gun. As instantly from the eastern shore of the Horn arose the cry—"There is no God but God, and Mahomet is the Prophet of GOD! Come to prayer! Come to prayer!"

## CHAPTER XXX.

“The great wheels  
Turning but softly, make the less to whirr  
About their business ; every different part  
Concurring to one commendable end.”

*Chapman, Edward III.*

“Now, my Lords,” said Constantine, when Phranza and De Rushton joined him and the party with him near the tower of S. Romanus ; “we have well nigh done all that in us lies, and our last preparations are all but complete. Once more we propose to visit the points of attack ; but we would fain first decide the various commands for to-morrow.”

“I think, my liege,” said Justiniani, “that the enemy’s principal effort will be made where we now stand. It is true, the wall along the Horn is weaker in itself, and is less perfectly defended ; but then the number of men that can be brought to bear upon it is comparatively few. If they conquer, it will be by positive physical force ; and by the enormous waste of life which nothing can support, but such an army, and no one have the heart for, but such a prince.”

“I agree with the General Justiniani, sire,” said De Rushton. “The Anatolian troops are the flower of Mahomet’s infantry : he himself is to be here with his Janissaries : the preparations which even hence we can see making are on no ordinary scale. Here the principal stress of war has been, and I have no doubt will be.”

"Add to which, my liege," remarked Phranza, "that the very circumstance of the only tangible advantage they have gained having been obtained here, is, in itself, a sufficient reason for a wise general—and that no one will deny Mahomet to be,—to press his good fortune in the same direction."

"The very fact of the reserve here, and not elsewhere," said Galeotti, "proves as much in my opinion."

"We think so ourselves," said Constantine; "and therefore here is our place also. Justiniani, we share the command on this side with you."

Justiniani bowed. "I will do my best, Sire, to deserve the honour."

"For you, my Lord Great Logothete," pursued the Emperor, "we shall ask you to command at the Silivri Gate; and you, my Lord Cantacuzene, will also take your station there. My Lord Acolyth, your place, and that of the Lord Phranza, will be the side of the Horn. Whichever may be the principal attack, it is certain that your courage and your skill will there be tested to the uttermost."

"Its principal advantage, my liege," said Phranza, "lies in the fact that they can there, and there only, advance their scaling ladders to the very walls. To make the place tenable at all, we must have the largest disposable force that can be spared."

"You shall have all that the necessary defence of the other positions—and the Silivri Gate will not ask much—can leave," replied the Emperor.

"Sire," said De Rushton, looking out northward, "those droves of mules import no good, I fear—yonder, coming in to the north and north-east. They are loaded with fascines; if ever I guessed right, I am right now."

"The ditch is deep yet," replied the Emperor, "notwithstanding the multitude of dead bodies and of rubbish that have been thrown into it. But we will take order for this. Let commands be issued that the paving-stones from the nearest streets be taken up at

once, and disposed in heaps along the parapet—say from the tower of S. Dionysius to the bastion of S. Nicetas,—a hundred and fifty or two hundred in each. They are weapons that any one can wield: See to it, Burstow,” for that worthy officer had just come up.

“I will, my liege.”

“I think, may it please your Splendour,” said the master mason, advancing towards the Emperor, “that we have done all here that man can do—at least, on such short notice. All the shaken pieces have been rebuilt in the inner wall; the outer stones are clamped with two-inch iron; and the earth and lime in the centre, is very strongly bedded. What further would your Majesty have us do?”

“We will go towards the Horn, Ducas, and you shall run your eye over the works there. We will go round the ramparts, my lords; for Nicephorus promised to have two new machines ready by this evening, and we gave him our word that we would visit them.”

They accordingly proceeded eastward along the ramparts. The royal party now might consist of nearly twenty persons—all of most consequence in the defence. Constantine, according to his invariable custom, wore the Imperial purple, though he knew that it rendered him a conspicuous mark for the assailants. As they were on their way, a *ballista* in the besieging camp twanged; there was a loud hum in the air; and the ejected stone struck the wall about four yards in front of the foremost of the party, blinding them with dust, but embedding itself innocuously in the repaired wall.

“Not so badly aimed, my liege,” cried the Acolyth.

“It proves Ducas’s work, and proves it good,” replied Constantine; which was all the notice taken of the occurrence.

On reaching the angle that the Horn made with the northern wall, the sound of hammers and sledges over-

powered every other noise. In a rude shed, put together of massy timber, Nicephorus Spartalides, no mean engineer, had established his manufactory. Seeing the Emperor approaching, from the sooty aperture that served as a window, he came out, in his leathern apron and wire mask : the latter of which he removed as he made a respectful, but somewhat brief reverence to Constantine.

“ Well, good Nicephorus,” said the Emperor, “ are those engines you promised to have ready finished ? ”

“ They have been finished this hour, my liege,” replied the engineer, “ and by midnight, please the Panaghia, I will have another complete. They are on the wall ; please your Highness to step up, and see them tried ? ”

“ I shall be glad to see them,” said the Cæsar. And he followed Nicephorus up a narrow flight of steps, cut in the thickness of the wall, to the top of the rampart,—in his turn attended by the rest of his courtiers. The two machines stood side by side ; the one like an enormous crane, with wheels running in horizontal grooves, and a ponderous chain hanging in front of the wall ; the other a tangled network of slighter chains, cables, and pulleys, towering twelve or fourteen feet into the air, and furnished, on a flat iron plate, with four large stones, each weighing half a hundredweight.

“ This,” said Nicephorus, laying his hand on the latter machine, “ is a ballista of my own improving, so as to discharge three or four stones successively by means of a double motion concealed in this shaft. Shall I try it ? ”

“ By all means,” said Constantine.

“ I will but call some of my men, Sire,” said Nicephorus : and he went down to the smithy.

“ The sun is setting,” observed the Emperor. “ How still the Horn is ; and but one boat, that I can see, in the harbour ! ”

“ Bearing a message, I suppose,” cried the Acolyth,

“from the further side. It is a Greek-built boat, too; I marvel where the dogs took it.”

“A Greek in it, too,” said the Emperor; “either a deserter or a renegade.”

“Here, Peter and George!” cried the engineer, reappearing on the wall, “wind me up this ballista as far as it will go. What shall I aim at, Sire? The galleys, I fear, are too far off.”

“Aim at yonder boat,” replied the Emperor. “It is rather a small object: the more your skill.”

“I will try it,” said Nicephorus, running his eye along the moveable rod that served as the point of sight, and adjusting it to the boat in which Zosimus was pulling lustily forward, and congratulating himself at having made his escape. The evening gun boomed as he said, “There, be quick, men!”

The hairy giants stretched and strained; Nicephorus went on adjusting the lateral motion as the boat flew forward, till at length the clicking of the machine ended with a sudden catch, and Peter cried, “Ready!”

“See, now, my liege, if the new motion answers not,” said Nicephorus, still following the motion of the boat, and then hasping down the rod, and calling “Now!”

Whirr, whirr, went the machine; the handle flew round like a mill wheel, the pulleys buzzed, the chain jarred, and the first stone flew out, and struck the water a few yards in advance of the boat, covering it with a shower of foam; the rower plied his task for his life.

“Missed!” cried De Rushton, the machine still running round.

“Wait, my lord!” said Nicephorus, as the engine, which had seemed to slacken, seized the second stone, and whirled it forth. This time it only missed the head of the boat by a few inches; but the water that was dashed into it had almost swamped it.

“He shall not get off, however,” cried Nicephorus, seizing the directing rod, as the engine was about to



discharge its third load. And he was right ; the missile crashed down on the boat's stern ; it sunk like lead ; the rower disappeared, but rose in a few seconds, just as the fourth stone dashed furiously into the water by his very side, and sank him for a second time.

"Bravo ! Bravo, Nicephorus !" was the general exclamation.

"I wish I had killed the dog, though," said the engineer.

"But what is your other machine ?" asked Constantine ; "it seems quite on a different principle."

"It I cannot so well show your Majesty now," replied Nicephorus, "but I hope it will do good execution to-morrow. It is for flinging stones or spars along the outer face of the wall, and parallel with it, so as to destroy them by wholesale when they bring up their fascines."

"Down with it at once then, to S. Romanus' tower," cried Constantine. "We shall have good need of it to-morrow, if ever men had."

"It goes on wheels, as your Majesty sees. I will send it down thither, and see it properly fixed this evening."

"Do so," said Constantine ; "but attend at the palace at midnight ; it may be that we shall require your advice. Now, my lords !"

They passed along upon the Horn. The galleys were now in motion, or getting into motion ; as well as the deepening twilight permitted to be seen, the sails of some flapped lazily against the mast ; those of others bellied out : they were clearly going to take up a position nearer to the walls. Constantine pointed it out, and merely saying, "Does that betoken the work ?" passed on some distance in silence.

"What have we here ?" asked he, as, on arriving at the Fanar gate, sledges, chisels, and saws blended discordantly together.

"The smiths and carpenters are at work there, my

liege; it was injured by a shot from the great gun this afternoon."

The Emperor went up to the men. Here, for the first time, torches had been lighted. "A life may hang on every blow, good fellows!" said he.

"They'll hang safely enough, Sire, then," said the head smith, bluntly.

So, with a kind word here, and an exhortation to diligence there, praise for the deserving, and sympathy for all, Constantine passed on, till he came to the landing-place at which Zosimus had embarked. After a few inquiries had been made, "Your servant has not returned, my lord," said the guard to Phranza.

"My servant returned! How mean you, then?"

"He that your lordship sent to the Bucentaur,—Zosimus, my lord."

"I never sent him to the Bucentaur," replied Phranza. "Is he gone to it?"

"Nearly an hour agone, he came down and said that he had a message from your lordship to the Bucentaur; so we helped him to a boat, and he promised to be back by the sunset gun, which he might have been. We saw him pull to the ship, and then he went on to the S. Francis, and a comrade of ours, who came along the wall not long ago, thinks that he saw him pulling on to the Turkish galleys: at least, from what he says, I think that it must have been he."

"Was he by himself?" inquired Sir Edward.

"Yes, my lord."

"The boat painted green?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Narrow built, and long?"

"The same, my lord."

"Then, depend upon it, that was the same man whom Nicephorus sunk. Some treason is hatching. I know the fellow, Lord Phranza, and should long ago have made you acquainted with some of his doings, had not weightier affairs somewhat put him from my mind."

"It looks like desertion, certainly," said the Cæsar.

"I always thought him honest," said Phranza ; "but he lied most foully to-day, if he says that I sent him to the Bucentaur."

"Well, the man is drowned, and there's an end," remarked Justiniani.

"I think not," replied De Rushton ; "firstly, because, as our western proverb goes, he is fated to a drier death ; and, in the second place, because I rather imagine that I saw him rise after the last shot and strike out ; and he certainly can swim."

"He can do us no harm," said Constantine. "Good night, good fellows, and keep careful watch."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

“O stay, slave!

As thou wilt win my favour, my good knave,  
Do one thing for me that I shall intreat.”

*Love's Labour Lost.*

WE left Zosimus at the moment that the evening gun fired. “That is well,” said he to himself; “now I am out of the way of danger, for no one will think of inquiring after me when the gates are double-locked for the night.”

As he spoke, the heavy plunge of the discharged rock covered him with foam. He turned, and was near enough to the shore to distinguish those who surrounded the machine by which it had been discharged; among them, to his horror and dismay, he beheld his master. Nothing doubting but that the whole sum of his treachery was discovered (how it could possibly be, he had neither time nor inclination to discuss,) he bent steadily to his oars, and the boat danced over the puny waves into which the waters had been agitated by the fall of the mass of rock. Scarcely had he breathing time after the first danger, when the second missile deluged him with brine, and filled the boat so much, that he was in considerable apprehension of sinking.

“Merciful Panaghia!” cried he, “they are determined to kill me! Only save me now, and I vow to say nothing about the business I came upon; no, indeed, I will get back as quickly as—”

Here there was a tremendous crash, and Zosimus

was precipitated into the water. Sinking for a moment by the suction of the sinking rock, he soon recovered himself, and struck out boldly for the Turkish side. Just as he was beginning to congratulate himself on having escaped the worst, another rock narrowly avoided striking him, and a second time deluged him with water. Now he gave himself up for lost ; a machine discharging missiles so continuously, he had never before seen, and how many more it might contain, he could not guess. Gradually recovering courage, as minute after minute passed away, he struck out with the more confidence, and in a quarter of an hour from the destruction of the boat, landed safe, but well-nigh exhausted, on the eastern side of the Horn.

His adventure had not been unobserved ; and, as he scrambled up the shelving beach, a mounted Janissary rode down towards him.

"Your business ?" cried he in a menacing voice.

"It is with the Lord Leontius," said Zosimus, boldly. "Conduct me to him."

"I shall take you to the guard-house," replied the Janissary, "and you may tell me your name. If he chooses to see you, he can ; but you may mean mischief, for aught I know."

"Well, well, do as you please," said Zosimus. "My name matters not ; but tell him I come from the Lord Phranza's, and I warrant you he will owe you no great thanks for not taking me to him at once."

"I will run the risk of that," replied the soldier, "come you along with me." And accordingly Zosimus was conducted to the guard-house, a rude, log-built erection, not far from the water's edge, but nearer to Galata. A regiment of Anatolian troops was quartered close to it. The soldiers were engaged in discussing the morrow's assault, or in cooking their suppers ; and the camp fires began to glitter pleasantly here and there among the deepening obscurity.

The Janissary left Zosimus with his comrades, and went in search of Leontius; and they after one or two idle questions and sneers at his unfortunate plight, left him to dry himself at the nearest fire, only so far troubling themselves about him, as to keep an eye that he should not escape. Presently a dervish, tall, thin, and gaunt, approached the tents; his tall cap and loose vestments soiled with dust and sand; his beard untrimmed; his eyes glaring and bloodshot; his cheeks hollow; his feet bare: he seemed rather a maniac escaped from chains, than a teacher come to instruct. The soldiers seemed to know him, and to view him with more awe than pleasure; the loud voice was hushed; the noisy quarrel was broken off; the unseemly story came to an end; and whispers might have been heard of "Peace! peace!" "Here is the dervish Solyman!" "What brings him here to-night?" "Hush, he is going to speak!"

He began in a low, quiet voice; gradually it waxed louder and deeper; he worked himself up into a frenzy, he gesticulated, he raved.

"Moslems!" said he, "Allah has ordained the fall of yonder city. Its fate approaches, hour by hour, minute by minute; it has resisted Chosroes, it has laughed at the Caliphs. From all eternity has it been written that it should fall before Mahomet. Allah is great! Sons of the faithful! they that fall to-morrow shall die for Allah and the Prophet. The Prophet will intercede for them; Allah will reward them. Safely they shall pass over that dreadful bridge (and the dervish shuddered) that hangs between heaven and the seven hells, sharp as a razor, slippery as glass; that bridge whereon the tempest ever beats, to precipitate the trembling soul into the abyss beneath; that bridge whereon to stumble, is to dwell in darkness and fire for seven thousand years; that bridge which all must pass,—which none can pass so gloriously as they that fall for the faith. Allah is mer-

ciful! For them that are destined to perish to-morrow, shall I bemoan them? Shall I not rather congratulate them? Happy shall they be as the bird let loose from the cage; free as the wild goat on the Balkan. Even now are the houris beckoning to them; even now Tuba is stretching forth its branches of immortality for them; even now the Prophet, whose will is one with Allah's, foresees their victory and their reward. They, and they only, that fall for Islam, are admitted into the fulness of the Divine Beatitude; they only penetrate into the sixth heaven; they only taste of pleasures from which other believers are excluded as unworthy. To these joys Allah invites them that fall,—purchased by so short a pain,—enduring to eternity. For them that live, a Paradise upon earth,—for them that die a Paradise in heaven!"

And he was proceeding in the same strain, when the Janissary who had gone to seek Leontius, returned with an expression of countenance which justified Zosimus's assertion with respect to the feelings of that nobleman, now an all-important personage in the Turkish camp; since it was clear that the city would never have been won, without the transportation of the galleys, and that transportation never devised, but by the brain of Leontius.

"Sir," said he to Zosimus, "the Lord Leontius requests your attendance in his tent. Have the goodness to follow me." And he led him through one after another of the intersecting alleys that divided that portion of the camp, till they reached a tent of large dimensions and luxurious equipment. The Janissary entered; Zosimus followed.

"My lord," said the former, "here is the Greek."

"You may withdraw, then," said Leontius, looking up from the table at which he had been engaged in writing. "Good evening, Zosimus; you wish to speak with me?"

"I do, my lord. I have this afternoon become pos-

essed of some information which I think your lordship would give something to know."

"Tell me what it is," replied Leontius, "and I will tell you what it will suit me to give for it."

"The general opinion in the city is, that it must be taken to-morrow."

"Is that the news?" inquired Leontius, with a sneer.

"No, my lord; but it leads to it. I think so myself; I can see that your lordship does. Now, I think that your lordship would be glad to know, if this be the case, where you may take the Lady Theodora Phranza;—I should say, the Lady Theodora De Bushton."

"What, is she married?" cried the renegade.

"About a week ago, my lord."

"To take her!" said Leontius passionately. "I would give this hand to do it; and doubly now, if it were only to break that accursed Acolyth's heart." Then more coolly, "Name your price, if you really can do this."

"I can do it," said Zosimus, boldly; "I know the place where she is to be concealed; and I can tell you who is to be concealed with her,—the Exarch Choniates' wife and daughter, if your lordship knows the man."

"I know him," said Leontius. "As I said, name your price."

"I had rather hear your lordship's," replied Zosimus.

"A thousand gold amuraths."

"I thank your lordship," answered the Greek, with a bow; "my price would be somewhat higher. "I could not think of taking less than five."

"Dog!" cried Leontius, in a fury, "I will tear the secret from you by some other means."

"You could not, my lord," returned Zosimus, coolly, "if you were to try; and you will not try, because—"



“Because of what?”

“Because I should let every one know that I could offer the pearl of Byzantine beauty for the Sultan’s harem; and that you, for the sake of retaining her for yourself, were putting me out of the way. Judge whether your slaves would obey you then!”

Leontius paused. He was a coward by nature, and rather profuse than avaricious; and now love, such as it was, and hatred, about the character of which there could be no mistake, came to the assistance of his cowardice.

“You are talking nonsense, Zosimus,” said he, “and you know it. But time is precious; and I had rather give the extra sum you demand than spend it in teaching you sense. The five thousand amuraths shall be yours, if I judge your information to be such as gives me a fair chance of becoming possessed of the lady you mention.”

“Put that down in writing, my lord, or rather put down that you will give it me on becoming possessed of her, and I will lose no time.”

“This will do as well,” said Leontius, who did not exactly wish that the infamy of such a bargain should, by any possibility, attach to him: and he sat down, and wrote something hastily at the table. “Listen,” said he: “I promise to give to Zosimus, a servant of the Lord Phranza’s, five thousand amuraths, on the capture of the city of Constantinople.”—“Now, tell me,” he continued, “and rest assured that if your tale is not satisfactory, I will myself stab you to the heart; and if not true, I will find means to punish you hereafter; for you do not leave me till its truth or falsehood be discovered.”

“Very well, my lord; I am perfectly content. This afternoon I chanced to be in Lord Phranza’s garden, when I saw old Barlaam the steward, and a Varangian officer they call Richard Burstow, coming down the great steps together, and in very earnest conversation. I have picked up one or two secrets in

my time that have stood me in good stead, as your lordship knows very well:" here Leontius's colour heightened: "and I thought I might do so now. So I hid in a clump of trees that is close to the main walk, and could hear tolerably well what they said, as they walked up and down. Some words indeed I lost, at the two ends of the walk; but the sum and substance I can swear to—"

"You may dispense with that, good Zosimus; I should not believe you the more if you did."

"No, my lord, the feeling is mutual. No offence, I hope. The long and short of the matter is this: the lady, on the first alarm, is to be concealed, with those two others I mentioned, in one of the reservoirs in Phranza's ice-house, which is empty and quite dry. Barlaam is to keep watch in the garden, concealing himself as he best may: and at twelve that night, when every soldier will be in the full riot of licence, De Rushton, or Phranza, or one or two others whose names I could not catch, are to steal down to the place, and proceed as best they can—if no one comes, Barlaam is to conclude them dead, and act for himself."

"You deserve the money, Zosimus, if this be so," cried Leontius. "But you must be content to remain where I can get at you till the city be really taken."

"And I will then conduct your lordship to the place," said Zosimus. "Give me enough to eat and drink, and keep me out of the way of cannon balls and ballistæ, and I will stay as long as you please."

"Ho! Ahmed!" cried Leontius. And a Janissary entered. "Ahmed, let this Greek be carefully kept, in some secure place, till the city is taken. Let him be well tended, and have what he wishes, but on no account be permitted to escape."

Zosimus, therefore was carried off; and Leontius remained sitting in the same position for several

moments, revolving his own dark plans. "It must be so," he said at length. "Baltazar told me that if I survived that night I should have wealth and honour to the very end. The plan seems very probable. I do not think she can escape me. But I will see to that anon, when these estimates are finished." And he again bent over his task.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

“ If we do meet again, why then we'll smile,  
If not,—why then this parting was well made.”

*Julius Cæsar.*

SINCE her return to Constantinople, Anna Patellari had lived in the most obscure and retired manner. The sale of some jewels had provided her with the necessaries of life, and she was desirous of escaping public observation, as well because the infamy of her husband was known far and wide through the city, as because the share she had taken in his liberation, though only suspected, would not bear legal inquiry; and she was anxious to avoid giving occasion for it. She lived, then, in an obscure lane in the very heart of the city, in the house of a poor woman to whom, in the days of her prosperity, she had been kind, and who now showed her gratitude by attending her former benefactress with all possible zeal and devotion. She had not even ventured to see Theodora; not even when the infant, from whose birth she had hoped to win the affections of her husband back, was taken from the world.

But now, when rumours were rife in the city of imminent danger, when she had not another friend to apply to, and her heart was failing her both with sorrow for the past, and fear for the future, she determined to obtain an interview with the friend of her childhood. Accordingly, at dusk on the same evening, the events of which are detaining us so long, she threw around her such a cloak as was worn by women of the lower orders, and went out; bending her steps

by the most circuitous and least frequented streets, to the palace. It was absolutely necessary, however, that she should pass the great place of S. Sophia ; and there, to her astonishment, a dense crowd of people were assembled. While endeavouring to make her way through them, she found that Gennadius, still the popular idol, was standing on the western steps of the Cathedral, and preaching ;—and, though all her aim was to pass as quietly, and with as little observation as might be, she could not help catching now and then some fragments of his discourse.

“Now,” said he, “where is the succour ye hoped for from the Azymites ? Now where are the promises of Eugenius and Martin ? Your religion you have sold ; your faith you have bartered ; the blessing of your birthright is gone,—and all for this mess of pottage,—for these miserable two thousand Genoese, who, far from delivering us, cannot deliver their own selves. Months ago I foretold this, and it has come to pass ;—the great and the wise of the city bade us look to Europe for help ;—to Europe we looked, and a broken reed it has been indeed ! Months ago I bade you to stop your ears from hearing of the accursed union,—not to say, peace, peace, when there is no peace ; to chase the red hat from your city ; and then I told you that you should dwell in safety, and the place of your defence should be the munitions of rocks : that bread should be given to you, and your waters should be sure. But I tell you to be of good comfort yet. God hath not utterly cast off this place, beautified by the Patriarchate, or glorified by the end of so many that now wear the martyr’s purple, or the confessor’s crown. Ye are mighty yet, prelates of the past ! Alexander, and John Chrysostom, and Atticus, and Proclus, and Tarasius, and Germanus ! Ye plead our cause before the Throne of GOD. And GOD can deny nothing to them,—but above all to the Ever-Virgin Protectress of this temple. And mark my words : to-morrow S. Sophia will be like a triple wall

of brass to those that have taken refuge in it ;—thus far shall Islam go, but no further ;—the Angel of the LORD, that shall descend to-morrow to the Pillar of Constantine, is even now furbishing his sword for the battle : deliverance is even now arising for the LORD's people."

So he harangued, as Anna with some difficulty made her way through the crowd, and entering the palace court, presented herself at De Rushton's dwelling. Greatly surprised was Theodora when she was told that the Lady Patellari in such a garb, and at such a time, desired to see her ; and could scarce find voice to give the order, " Let her instantly be conducted here."

" Oh, Anna," she cried, when their first long embrace was over, " why did you not come to me before ? Oh, if you knew what pains I had taken to find you out, till at last I was fain to believe that the report of your return to the city could not be true !"

" Dear Theodora," said Anna Patellari, " how could I come to you ?—I, whom every one would point out as the wife of Leontius the traitor,—I, whom above all things the Great Acolyth must abhor !"

" You do him wrong, dearest Anna. He pities you ; he would help you in every way he could. And if there be any that dares to reproach you for another's guilt, his shame be on his own head. My happiness, Anna, you have diminished, by living in secresy, and, I fear," she added more hesitatingly, " in want, while I had abundance and luxury."

" Once," said Anna Patellari, " I was on the point of coming to you—it was when my poor baby was taken away from me. That is now two months ago. But I did not do it then ; and since that time never have I had the courage till now."

" God be thanked that you would come at last !" cried Theodora. " He knows I have need of comfort for to-morrow."

" It was that which brought me," said her friend.

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"This may be the last night we shall ever meet. If the city is taken, as every one assures me it will be, to-morrow, I hope it will be for the last time. For to know that it was my husband who directed the most successful operations, will fill my cup of grief to the full."

"Stay with me, stay with me, dearest Anna, till the day is decided," said Theodora. "For both our sakes, stay!"

"I cannot, Theodora. I could not bear to meet your husband; nay, my very stay might be the means of involving you in danger."

The door opened, and De Rushton and Phranza entered.

"Lady," said the former, "they told me you were here; and I am most truly glad that, in the moment of danger, you should turn to your real friends. It would have been wiser, it would have been better, had you done so long ago. But we must take precaution for your safety; not indeed so much threatened as that of others; for once let it be known that you are the wife of Leontius, and not a Turk will raise his finger against you. Only you must not expose yourself; the first heat of the sack in the more distant parts of the city will respect no one. The Lord Phranza and I were even now consulting what was best for you—"

"May she not be with me?" inquired Theodora.

"No," replied De Rushton; "it were wise neither for you nor for her. If, lady, you take my advice, you will accept the Lord Protovestiare's offer, and keep quiet in his *metæcia*, where you shall have fitting attendance."

Anna could but just speak her thanks through her tears.

"Then, if the city falls," said Phranza, "be sure that my mansion will be taken possession of by no one under the dignity of a Pasha. As soon as you shall find that that is the case, ask boldly to speak

with him, and tell him that you are the wife of Leontius. You know not, as well as I do, what influence there now is in that name. It will preserve you from insult all over the city,—that is, if you only take care to be where there are spectators. The fear of being informed against by any will keep all in awe.”

Some arrangements, consequent on this offer and its acceptance, then took place; a servant of Sir Edward's was despatched to the lodgings which the Lady Patellari had occupied, with intelligence that she would not return, and instructions to bring the few things which she possessed there. Phranza repeated his advice, and convinced himself that she understood it; and then proposed to escort Anna to her apartments, under pretence that she must be fatigued, but in reality to afford Sir Edward opportunity for the conversation which he knew he was desirous of having with his wife.

When they were left alone, De Rushton seated himself on the couch where Theodora was, and drawing her to him, said, “Theodora, love, this may be the last time that we shall ever be together alone. Will you promise me, when I cannot be with you, to obey to the letter what I am going to tell you to do?”

“Do not speak so, Edward; do not speak so; I cannot bear it.”

“But, love, would you not rather hear the truth? Whoever deceives, let us be true to ourselves, and to each other. Be my own wife; and, as I trust you to God, so you trust me to Him. It does not make matters the worse to look them in the face.”

“No,” said Theodora, sobbing, “but—but—”

“But you thought all this time you had been making up your mind to this danger; and when it comes, it comes to you like a strange thing. Did I ever deceive you? Did I ever flatter you with the hopes that we should be finally successful?”

Theodora made no reply; but only hid her face in



her husband's shoulder, and nestled more closely towards him.

"Let us first make up our minds to the danger, and then let us see how much ground we have for hope and for comfort. Theodora, I have no more doubt that by this time to-morrow Constantinople will be in the hands of the Turks, than if that morrow were already past. Always," he said reverently, "excepting the case that GOD interferes by a miracle."

"But why may He not?" asked Theodora.

"Far be it from me to say that He may not," replied De Rushton. "But did He interfere to save His own city Jerusalem, when it first fell before the Saracens, or from Saladin? His ways are not our ways. It may be so; GOD grant it be so; but humanly speaking, the city is doomed, and doomed to-morrow. Now, to say that any persons now in it can escape without imminent danger, were most false; but all have a chance; and a chance that very much depends on themselves. Your father and I have been talking over what you must do; and this is what we have decided on." And he told her of the plan.

"How much care you have taken for us all!" cried Theodora. "But oh, Edward, if at midnight you should not come!"

"Well, dearest one, then you must conclude that I am a prisoner; and if so, they will only be too glad to let me ransom myself. But your father, or I, or one of the others will undoubtedly come; and whoever it is, Theodora, for my sake, for your own sake, for all our sakes, lose no time in making vain inquiries after me or your father, but go at once."

"It will be the hardest thing I ever did, if GOD so orders it," said his bride, "but I will obey you; I give you my promise that I will go at once, or act as we shall be told."

"Then," said Sir Edward, "the great difficulty is now over: how to dispose of you,—of you both, I mean,—for, for Manuel's sake, I love Euphrasia as a

sister. I do not think you can possibly be discovered for many hours after the capture of the city. But we must talk of other things, for time presses. What jewels have you?"

"All that belonged to my poor mother—shall I fetch them?"

"If you can do it at once." And Theodora returned with them in a very short time. Even for the Court of Byzantium, they were remarkably choice; and in Western Europe might have been the envy of a queen.

"This is very fortunate, love," said her husband. "These you will be able to take with you—whereas money and plate are useless to us now. I tried this afternoon to purchase jewels, but there are none left in the city—all bought up. Why, those two rose-diamonds must in themselves be a fortune. Do not conceal them all together: for, depend upon it, strict search will be made for jewels by the Turks; and to be in poverty, in a strange land, would indeed be a hard fate for you."

"Oh no, not if you and my father were with me," cried Theodora.

"But suppose we were not," said De Rushton gravely. "But I hope the best, love,—I believe the best. Now there is another thing. If we both are fortunate enough to make our escape together, of course our home is England. If anything happens to me, I should have wished that you went there nevertheless; you would have had a warm welcome from my father at Rushton, and my sisters would have loved you as if you had been one of them always. But your father is all for the Morea or Lesbos. So you are safe, of course it matters comparatively little where; only one thing I have done, that you should know. I have written to my father, Sir Henry de Rushton, telling him of our marriage, and preparing him to love you dearly. This letter I have entrusted to the captain of a Venetian merchantman, who proposes to sail for

Italy with the first fair wind ; and thence, in process of time, there is no doubt that it will safely reach England. It might be necessary, you know, that our marriage were known and acknowledged there ; and I have therefore procured a counter signature of it from the Cardinal ; it might affect more than ourselves."

Theodora blushed, and presently said, "But I shall hear of you to-morrow, Edward ; you will let me know how things go with you. It will be so dreadful to have the long hours go on, and not a word."

"Most certainly, love," replied the Great Acolyth ; "and Lord Manuel will be of great use to us both. He will be well able to bear messages ; though certainly not to take any part in the defence."

"But oh, Edward, do not be rash to-morrow ! I do not wish to say anything that might hinder you from doing your duty ; but do not throw away your chance of life, and mine of happiness. We have been, even with all the misery of the siege, so very, very happy together."

"And so we shall be yet, my own love—I feel persuaded of it. All the care that I can take of myself, I will ; of that be well assured. Dearest, all my fear is for you. I am not afraid for you while you are concealed, only for the few hours that it will necessarily take you to get free from the city. You know not what a fearful spectacle to-morrow night will be. God grant you never may."

Theodora turned very pale, and shuddered ; but presently, throwing her arms round her husband's neck, she whispered something into his ear.

"No," he said, very solemnly ; "no : nothing can justify that, even if it comes, which GOD of all His mercy forbid !—to the very worst, nothing can make self-murder right. We may resist to the very utmost—we may provoke others to take away our lives ; but to lay hands on ourselves is to shut ourselves out from salvation. Do not think of it, Theodora ! The

very thought is dangerous. Will you promise me this?"

"I will," she whispered.

"And now," he said more gaily, "I think that I hear the Lady Choniatis and her daughter. Most probably I shall see you again to-night; but I will bid you good-bye now, in case I should not be able."

He folded her in his arms; and had but just released her when Burstow entered the room, to announce the arrival, under his escort, of Maria and Euphrasia Choniatis.

"Bid them come up," said Theodora. "We shall be better here." And Sir Edward went down stairs to fetch them, and spoke as cheerfully as he could.

"A fine warm evening, madam. Dear Euphrasia, you must let me call you so now, for you must learn to look on me as a brother. Manuel and I are as good as brothers; so the rest follows, does it not? Theodora is upstairs; please you to come?" And he led the way.

They were presently joined by Manuel Chrysolaras, and shortly afterwards by Phranza; and the whole scheme of concealment was gone over and over again. The last person that joined the little party was Nicetas Choniates, and shortly after his arrival supper was served. The servants were, however, dismissed, that the conversation might be the freer; and in telling over the events of the day, and the fears of to-morrow, an hour, or an hour and a half, slipped away.

"Lord Acolyth," said Phranza at length, "were it not well that we attended the Cæsar? It must now be hard on the fifth hour of night, and the council is summoned for midnight."

"One thing more," said Theodora, "I had almost forgotten it. What am I to do in respect to the servants, and more especially Maria?"

"You may depend upon it," said De Rushton, "that they will give you no choice in the matter; they will take refuge in S. Sophia, the moment the danger is

imminent ; even had they the choice of concealment, they would not accept it."

"You are right," said Phranza ; "and God grant that they may be right, too. But counsel them against it, Theodora ; bid them rather hide themselves where they may till the first madness of the sack is over."

"And whatever happens," added De Rushton, "the plan we have made holds. We may, or may not, any of us meet again ; but till midnight, to-morrow, Theodora, I charge it upon you, do not stir from the ice-house. If we once lose trace of you, it may be ruin to all. Promise me this."

"I do most solemnly," she replied.

"And you also promise it, Euphrasia," said Manuel.

"I do."

"Then we have nothing to do but to say farewell. Theodora, love, I promise to see you after the council if I can," said De Rushton, "but you must go to bed, —and to sleep if you may. So must you," he added, turning to Maria Choniatis ;—"and you, fair Euphrasia."

"I will try," replied Theodora. "We all will try."

Then came the parting ; and a bitter parting it was. Phranza at length, laying his hand kindly on De Rushton's shoulder, said, "Come, my good lord, come ! This is sad work—let it be short."

And he and the Acolyth, together with Chrysolaras, who insisted on accompanying them to the council, and the Exarch Choniates, were soon on their way to the Cæsar.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

“Before my God, I might not this believe,  
Without the evidence and true avouch  
Of mine own eyes.”

*Hamlet.*

AGAIN we must avail ourselves of our privilege as historians, and convey our readers into the bed-room of the Lady Theodora De Rushton.

It was nearly midnight. Maria was occupied in disengaging her hair from the chain of pearls, which, after the custom of the times, she wore twisted in it. Theodora herself seemed utterly weary and wretched; yet she was speaking earnestly.

“You must, if you choose to do it, Maria; I cannot hinder you. But I wish you would for once hear advice. Your master thinks it madness to suppose that S. Sophia, in case of the worst, will be any defence.

“My master is a Latin,” said Maria, rather pertly.

“You forget yourself, Maria;—and what is due to me. My father is not a Latin—nor the Lord Manuel Chrysolaras,—nor the Exarch Choniates;—and they all think so too.”

“Gennadius says, madam, that God will never permit the Turks to pollute the Great Church. Before they do that, deliverance will come.”

“I know he does, Maria. But if holiness could have protected any place, surely it would have been the Holy Sepulchre! yet the infidels twice took it.”

“He has told us the truth from the beginning, and

he will not deceive us now," said Maria. "He said that the Latins would not help us; he said that we should be reduced to extremities; has he not spoken the truth?"

"He has," replied Theodora. "What he said was not unlikely to come to pass, and it has come to pass. But is this sufficient reason, think you, for believing him in prophesying a miracle of so wonderful a kind—and that has hardly happened since the beginning of the world? Is it enough to make you blindly trust your life and honour to such a vague uncertainty? For you must know, that if S. Sophia be not supernaturally protected to-morrow, it will be the very centre of danger; you will be taken as in a trap, the prey of the first soldier that happens to see you."

"You cannot frighten me, madam," said Maria.

"Silly girl," replied Theodora. "I am most grieved that I cannot. But remember,—your ruin will lie at your own door; I have warned you."

"But suppose, for one moment, that what Gennadius says should be true," Maria pleaded.

"In that case," replied her mistress, "if you conceal yourself here, you will be equally safe. If he speaks truth, you are none the worse for taking my advice; if he speaks falsely, you are ruined by not attending to it."

There was a pause of some minutes, during which Maria proceeded with her mistress's toilet. At length she said, "My mind is made up, madam; I shall go to S. Sophia's."

"Then GOD preserve you!" replied Theodora. "I have done what I could." And there was another pause.

"You shall sleep in the room that opens from this," said the Lady De Rushton. "I do not like being so entirely alone."

"Very well, madam."

"Light the small lamp—I do not want much light—and then leave me."

· Maria did so : and having wished, and been wished by, her mistress, "good night," she betook herself to old Anastasia, a kind of housekeeper under Sir Edward's steward, to bewail with her the Azymite tendencies of her mistress, in that she would not give credence to the words of Gennadius. This they did at some length,—and with the help of a bottle of choice wine, of which Anastasia partook more liberally and Maria more sparingly, they arrived at the conclusion that there was no cause for apprehension, except to those who pertinaciously rejected the warnings of Gennadius.

In the mean time Theodora had knelt before the icon of the Panaghia, and had committed herself and her husband to the mercies of her SON. She rose with a lightened heart, and, after some half-hour's sad, yet not altogether sad, thoughts, closed her eyes.

How long she had slept she knew not, when it seemed that something awoke her. She thought that it was De Rushton entering ; but the room was empty. The little silver lamp was burning on the table ; strange noises from time to time echoed over the city ; but the house was perfectly still, and not a single ray of light found its way in at the edge of the curtains to be the forerunner of day. Theodora felt uneasy,—she knew not why ; she thought of ringing a bell that was within reach, and that would have summoned Maria, but for a mere causeless alarm she would not disturb her rest. So, for some moments, she thought of her husband ; what he might at that moment be doing,—whether he would return that night,—whether, or not, there was any hope that she might see him while the strife was yet raging on the morrow.

While she was thus employed, she started to hear the curtains rustle on the side from which she had turned ; but instantly looked round to welcome De Rushton.

What she saw instead might have been—since it is



the pleasure of our age to explain all such appearances so—an optical delusion, a trick of the fancy, an over-excited imagination, or whatever else the reader may please to call it. But she herself was perfectly convinced, to the end of her days, of its reality.

She saw her mother, as she had last seen her, in her shroud; her face pale and expressiveless, only the eyes open as if mechanically; the hands clasped on the breast, the feet drawn together and pointed downwards. Theodora gasped for breath; she would fain have cried out, but her terror prevented her; a deadly chill came over every limb; her eyes were, as it were, fascinated to the figure that stood motionless at her side.

“Theodora!” it said, in a low deep voice, like her mother’s, but yet how changed! “do not go to the ice-house to-morrow. Be not terrified; you will never see me again in this world.” And even as it spoke, the figure seemed gradually to melt away into air.

For some minutes Theodora lay in a speechless agony of terror, not daring to stir hand or foot, and hearing nothing but the violent beating of her own heart. At length, by an effort of desperation, she seized the silver bell, and rung it loudly.

Maria entered; and was shocked at the terror displayed in Theodora’s countenance.

“What is the matter, my dearest lady? For the Panaghia’s sake, what is the matter?”

“I cannot tell you—indeed I cannot,” said her mistress, wildly. “Help me to dress—give me anything to put on—I am but going to the Lady Choniatis.”

Maria was now almost as much terrified as her mistress; but she saw clearly that it was no time to make inquiries. She assisted her to dress partially, without saying another word except—“Shall I ask the Lady Choniatis to come here, madam, and tell her that you are not well?”

“No, no!” cried Theodora. “Do not leave me! I

am quite well; but do not leave me. There, light another taper, and come with me to their room."

Theodora made her way along the corridor which led to the apartment occupied by Maria Choniatis. Euphrasia slept in an adjoining room. She knocked at the door, and surprised her guest equally by the time of her visit, and by the ghastly paleness of her face.

"Now leave me, Maria," said Theodora, "but come again in a quarter of an hour. Leave me, and go back to your room."

Then would Maria cheerfully have given half her money to have heard the conversation that she doubted not was to ensue. But wild and obstinate though she was, her good principles prevented her endeavouring to listen; though I will not say that it was without a struggle that she obeyed her mistress's orders.

As soon as she was gone, Theodora De Rushton, throwing herself on her knees by the bed side, and hiding her face in the pillow, sobbed so violently and hysterically as to alarm beyond all measure the good wife of the Exarch.

"For Heaven's sake!" she cried, forgetting her usual awe of the Lady De Rushton's superior rank in the kindness of her own motherly feelings, "for Heaven's sake, my dear child, what is the matter? Has anything happened to your husband, or to your father?"

"No, nothing," sobbed Theodora; "but—" and the violence of her feelings quite overcame her.

Maria Choniatis saw that something unusual had happened. Hastily, therefore, wrapping a shawl round herself, she hurried to Theodora, and threw her arm around her as she knelt.

"Whatever this is, my dearest child," she said, "you must not give way to your feelings so much. Tell me, if you can,—or shall I send for your husband? Barlaam, you know, could go in a minute."

"I will tell you," gasped Theodora. "I came to tell you."

"I must go and get you something to take," said Maria Choniatis ; "you will be worn out."

"Oh no, no! pray do not leave me!"

"Then I will not. I will but open the door, and call Maria."

In the mean time Euphrasia, who had been aroused by the violent sobs of her friend, opened the door. "Mother, may I come in?"

"Yes, yes, let her come in," said Theodora, "She must hear it too."

At that moment there was so tremendous an explosion on the other side of the Golden Horn, that the house seemed shaken to its very foundations.

"Blessed Panaghia!" cried the Lady Choniatis. "Euphrasia! something fearful has happened to the Lady Theodora; stay with her, while I go and seek for some wine."

"Dear Theodora," said Euphrasia, "what has happened? How your heart beats! What is it? Will you not speak to me?"

"I will tell you," replied Theodora, making a great effort to be calm, "when your mother comes back."

She kept her word; and related what had happened. Euphrasia and her mother were beyond measure amazed.

"Are you sure it was not a frightful dream?" asked the latter, at length.

"As sure as that I am now standing here," replied Theodora.

"Well," said Maria Choniatis, "whatever it was, whether fancy or reality, I think it amply warrants your sending for Sir Edward. Without first seeing him, we must not, of course, venture to make any difference in our arrangements. It is a wonderful occurrence, whatever it be; and if it should be a Providential warning, it were most unwise and wicked in us to neglect it."

"I will send, then," said Theodora. "I can send no one, I think, better than Barlaam."

“And in good time,” cried Euphrasia, “I hear Maria coming along the corridor.”

It was even so. “Maria,” said her mistress, as she entered the room, “desire Barlaam to go instantly to Sir Edward de Rushton, and to say that circumstances have occurred of that importance, as to make me most desirous of seeing him, though it were but for two minutes. What is the time?”

“About the seventh hour,” replied Maria.

“He will probably be still at the Council, therefore it was not to meet till midnight. But bid him make all speed.”

Barlaam, with as little delay as could reasonably be expected, was on his way to the Cæsar’s more especial court of the Palace. Constantinople at that moment presented a spectacle awfully beautiful. All along its northern side, from the Seven Towers to the upper portion of the Horn, the sky was aglow with the thousand fires of the Turks; troops of beasts were arriving every half hour with loads of fascines; ten thousand men, frequently relieving guard, were bringing them up to the edge of the ditch, as near as the engines on the walls would allow them to approach in safety; sappers and miners were at work; spades, mattocks, pickaxes, mingled their discordant sounds: the whole then known art of attack was exhausted in the parallels and approaches. Dervishes, through the live-long night, moved from post to post—from advanced-guard to advanced-guard—from soldier to labourer—from Anatolian to ally. In the Horn, the galleys were already moored close to the walls, eighty in number, and the whole preparations for the storm on that side were most ably planned, under the incessant vigilance of Achmet Pasha and Leontius. One hundred and sixty scaling-ladders had been prepared: each was given in charge to a sergeant, and was attended by two bearers; each was to be followed by twelve picked soldiers, armed with poleaxe spears and matchlocks, or, in some instances, with what, for lack of a better

word, we must call wheel-locks :. though the real wheel-lock was first used by the soldiers of Leo X. The four extreme galleys on either side contained the forlorn hope ; the captains of the guns and their mates were busy in fixing the artillery after the clumsy fashion of the day, while fires blazed high and bright on deck, where the smiths were plying their trade, or heating their shot red-hot for the deadly duty of the morrow. The ghastly glare of so many fires, threw a lurid light over the city : domes and towers looked rather the creatures of a dream, than the reality of existence ; uncouth and pale shadows fell crossways in the streets ; darkness seemed to have fled for ever, and yet it was scarce light that had come in its place.

So passed Barlaam on, through the flickering brilliancy of the Ottoman fires, till he reached the Cæsar's apartments. There he learnt that Sir Edward had attended the Emperor to S. Sophia's, where he was now engaged, but that undoubtedly he would return to the Palace before he went forth to his position.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

“ At midnight held they council high,  
How best like Christian chiefs to die ;  
How the great Empire, ending fast,  
Most gloriously should fall at last :  
For all that night, by torch and lamp,  
They labour in the invader's camp.”

*The Loosing of the Four Angels.*

IN the great audience hall of the palace, the nobles of Constantinople and the chiefs of the allies were, for the last time, assembled.

A council it could hardly be called ; for all counsel now was evidently too late. No one had aught to propose ; no one had aught to suggest : but at that last moment the degenerate aristocracy of Constantinople seemed to have caught something of the fire of their Roman ancestors ; and, not being able to conquer, were prepared to die. Not one talk of surrender ; not one hope of quarter ; not one expectation of assistance, except immediately from heaven. They met like men that had done with this world ; that had now but the last act of life to perform, and were determined to perform it well ; that looked on the sufferings and toils that might yet be their lot, as matters of most trifling importance, when one day more would end them ; that had taken their farewell of earthly scenes, and were treading on the confines of another world.

No one bore this appearance more strikingly than

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the Emperor himself, as he stood at the head of the council-table in the act of speaking. His calm, stern brow,—his piercing blue eye,—the firm determination of his mouth,—the paleness of his cheek,—all showed how much he had suffered ; how much he had overcome ; how much he was yet prepared to endure.

“ My lords,” said he, “ nobles of Constantinople ! barons, and knights, and esquires of the west ! It is needless for me to say—what you see for yourselves—that the last scene of the tragedy is at hand. We who are here met, can bear, like men, to hear the truth. We do not deceive ourselves with any hope that to-morrow’s resistance can be ultimately successful. But yet we shall defend ourselves to-morrow,—I am not less sure of you, than of myself,—as if even now a European succour were in the mouth of the Dardanelles, and we had but to hold out the city till it could arrive. Nobles of Constantinople ! it is we whom GOD has called by every tie of blood and honour to take care that, in its fall, this city shall not shame the glories of its earlier days. As in the life of a private man the last moments confirm its honour or its disgrace,—as the behaviour of a few hours may tarnish past glory, or go far to redeem past shame,—so it is with us. We shall soon be matter of history, equally with Justinian or Basil,—with Heraclius or Romanus. It is in our power yet to maintain their renown ; it is in our power to show that the blood of martyrs and of warriors which has from age to age been poured forth for this city, has not been shed in vain. Or, if we are false to each other and to GOD, we may not only ourselves descend as traitors and cowards to all ages, but we may implicate many a glorious name in dishonour ; and, so far as the spirits of the blest can grieve, we may cover them with sorrow, who have laid down their lives for us their posterity. This is the task, then, to which GOD calls us to-morrow ; not to conquer,—which we cannot,—but to endure,—which we can ; and, by

enduring, to win for ourselves immortal renown in this world, and, as I well trust, everlasting glory in that which is to come. Think, then, that to-morrow thousands of just men made perfect, who have departed from this very city to their reward, will be spectators of the conflict. Think that they will be ready to receive your spirits, and to carry them to their own happiness. Think that they are still invisibly with us,—nerving our arms, strengthening our hearts, putting wisdom into the weak-minded, and courage into the timorous; and that, as they are with us now, so to-morrow may we hope to be with them.

“And for you, barons and knights of Europe, if you have less stake in this last contest than we have, the more do we owe you for leaving your own halls to defend ours; the more merit may you claim from your labours, and, doubtless, the more reward. I may never again—I never shall again—be able to thank you for your zeal in this city’s service: but what the Cæsar cannot repay, the KING of Kings will doubtless recompense. To you all, Varangians, Franks, Genoese, Barbarians, Venetians,—to you, my Lord Acolyth, to you, Lord Great Hetæriarch,<sup>1</sup> to you, Justiniani, to you, Galeotti,—I give my best thanks; to you also, Sir Conrad Wolfenstein,—to you, Sir Fernando de Payva,—to each and to all of you. Whatever brave hearts and skilful arms could do, that have you done. The fate of the city was not to be averted: if it had been, your courage would have averted it. GOD has otherwise ordained, and to Him we submit.

“There remains but one thing for me more to say, and then I have done. If there be any here present that I have injured,—if there be any that I have offended, knowingly or ignorantly,—if there be any who thinks that I have injured or offended him,—

<sup>1</sup> Hetæriarch: this was the officer who had command over the auxiliary forces not Varangians or Franks; and who thus stood in the same relation to these that the Great Acolyth bore with respect to the former.



then I ask that man's pardon, as heartily, as truly, as I shall ask my own at the throne of GOD before to-morrow's sun sets."

Who can describe the scene that followed? Phranza, who noted it with no incurious eye, confesses that he could not. The tears, the embraces, the mutual confession and forgiveness of wrongs; the cries to GOD for help; the firm resolve to resist to the very last; the sure trust in Providence; the determination that, if the Roman Empire should perish, its fall should not disgrace the iron hearts of the republic, nor its piety, the patient endurance of the martyrs—the high bearing of Frank and Varangian, the stern resolution of Byzantine courage:—he, who was an eye-witness saw these things, but could not describe them; and who else would venture the attempt?

Nearly an hour thus passed, and then the bells of S. Sophia thundered their summons to its last Liturgy. Emperor and noble, baron and knight, all ranks and degrees of men poured into that glorious church: choir, nave, and narthex, aisle and gallery, were full to overflowing. Archbishop and bishops for the last time put on their magnificent vestments within its walls; for the last time, the Mystic Lamb was slain: for the last time 'again and again in peace supplication made unto the LORD;' for the last time 'with thousands of Angels and myriads of Archangels, with Cherubim and Seraphim,' was the Triumphal Hymn sung.

The Liturgy was finished, and Communion was over—nothing now remained but to make the end glorious.

Again the council met for a few brief moments in the palace.

"Now, my lords," said Constantine, in a more cheerful voice,—“we have only to take our posts, and to hold them out as long as GOD shall give us grace. Three hours yet have we more before the assault begins;—if anything yet remains to be done,

we have still time. Before morning, I trust to have visited all the posts in succession: each one of you I shall see separately: never altogether again as now. Therefore, my lords, GOD bless you all, and give us all a meeting where there is no more war!"

No one trusted himself to speak: though there were indistinct murmurs of "GOD bless your Majesty! The Panaghia guard the Cæsar! GOD preserve the Palæologus!"

So ended the last Council of the Roman Empire.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

“There is no doubt that there exist such voices,  
Yet I would not call them  
Voices of warning that announced to us  
Only the inevitable.”

*Wallenstein.*

“WHAT is it, Barlaam?” inquired De Rushton, hastily, as the old man plucked his sleeve, on his leaving the palace.

“My lord,” said the Steward, “the Lady de Rushton begs that you will come to her, on business of infinite moment, though it be but for two minutes.”

“I cannot,” said Sir Edward, hastily. “I must be at my post instantly—I ought to be there now.”

“It is no common thing,” pleaded the old man. “The lady Choniatis was up, and so was the lady Euphrasia—it is no common thing that would have made them send me forth on such a night.”

De Rushton hesitated; and then the thoughts of his own Theodora in distress, which he might perhaps alleviate, prevailed.

“I will go,” said he, “when I have spoken to Burstow. Hasten on before and say so.” Barlaam, joyful to have succeeded, lost no time in obeying.

“Burstow,” cried the Great Acolyth,—“I shall be at the Fanar gate in twenty minutes. Meantime, go to Nicephorus,—borrow a horse from some of the guard,—and ask him to meet me there at once. My mind misgives me about that gate. Lose no time,

and then come back to me either there, or at Port S. Peter's."

"I will, my lord," replied Burstow: and he set forth on his errand.

Meanwhile, De Rushton, with rapid steps, hurried to his own *metœcia*.

"The Lady de Rushton is in her own parlour," said Barlaam, meeting the Great Acolyth at the door:—and the latter accordingly bent his steps thither, and found Theodora and Maria Choniatis seated together.

"Oh, Edward! thank God that you are come!" cried his bride, springing into his arms.

"What is it, love? What is it?—It is something terrible; I see it by your face—tell me, dearest Theodora—let me know at once."

"Oh do not make me go to the ice-house! My dear husband, do not send me there! For the Panaghia's sake, do not!"

"Not to the ice-house, Theodora?—Why not?"

"I have seen my poor mother this very night," answered his bride. "I saw her by my bedside, as plainly as I see you now, and she told me not to go thither. Do not send me there—I am sure you will not!"

"Your mother!" cried De Rushton. "What! do you mean her spirit?"

"Yes," replied Theodora.

"My own love," he said tenderly, "you are worn out with grief and anxiety; believe me,—this is nothing else but fantasy. You had been thinking of the ice-house—you had been thinking of your dear mother."

"No—no," cried Theodora, vehemently: "you cannot persuade me so. Most clearly I saw her,—most plainly I heard her; so far from having any objections to the plan you proposed, I thought it excellent. It is a warning from God, and woe be to us if we neglect it."

De Rushton was much distressed. "Theodora," said he, "if it were possible to make a new arrangement, even now, for the sake of your comfort I would do it, though I am well persuaded that this is nothing but fancy. But listen to reason. To do so, I must find your father, and Choniates, and Burstow. I know not where to look for them—I could only send for them at best, for my own post I must not leave: I might not find them before the attack really begins, and then all would be confusion; dear love, I must act by my own judgment,—the plan must go on—I should never forgive myself else."

"I thought," sobbed Theodora, "I thought you would have listened to me."

De Rushton bit his lip, in great perplexity how to act.

"My dear love," he said at length, "supposing this was not fancy, but reality. How know we but it may not be a device of the enemy of all, to ruin your happiness?—If such things are permitted, nothing more likely than that he should attempt them."

There was a pause of nearly a minute. At last Theodora spoke.

"Edward," she said, "I will trust you now, as I have trusted you till now."

"Thank you, dearest one," he replied. "Whatever happens, GOD bless you here and for ever!" and he pressed her to his heart.

"Farewell, my lord!" cried Maria Choniatis. "I will not leave her alone again."

De Rushton hurried out. It was now nearly two o'clock: and, as he mounted the ramparts, he noticed the first faint silver streak of day breaking over Galata. Passing along toward Port S. Peter, he met the Emperor with Phranza.

"The very man!" cried Constantine. "My lord, Gennadius is even now preaching to a large crowd on the Contoscalion. Will you go, and desire him to retire to his monastery? If the supernatural assist-

ance which he promises is not to come till we are driven into S. Sophia's, it follows that the less resistance, the speedier rescue: and be well assured that so the populace will take it."

"I go, Sire," replied De Rushton. "But perhaps the Lord Phranza will look to the Fanar gate: notwithstanding all we have done to it, it is reported not safe: and I have desired the smiths to attend to it."

"I will, De Rushton," replied Phranza. "But pray you, lose no time, for the mischief this man does is incredible."

"I will go with you," said the Emperor: "it is an important post."

As they were hastening along the ramparts, Burstow came up to them. "Another message, Sire; from the Turkish Camp: I have the billet with me, the bird is in the guard-house."

"Why, that may tell us of some change of plan," cried Constantine. "Where is the nearest light?"

"At Port S. Peter's, Sire," replied Burstow.

"Give me the letter, then, and follow us," said Constantine. "If we were on the other wall, those fires would give us light enough to read it."

They reached the Port, and entered the guard-house. The man, who seemed to be on the alert, received the Emperor with the usual reverence.

"Be so good," said Constantine, "as to leave us here for a few moments. I have a despatch to read."

The guards withdrew: and then the Cæsar cutting the string which fastened the billet, eagerly read it.

"The Emperor,"—such was its tenour,—"is informed that the Sultan has promised his troops three days' plunder of the city, with no other restrictions than that of the public places;—the persons and property of the inhabitants to be alike at their disposal. The soldier that shall first mount the walls, is to be rewarded with the government of any province of the Empire at his option. This notice is given in order that the inhabitants of Constantinople may not be

deluded into expecting quarter, if it be taken by storm ;—the Sultan's word being pledged to the contrary."

"This must be known," said Constantine, at once. "Nothing can be more useful in exciting them to resist to the last."

"Assuredly, Sire," said Phranza. And he thought bitterly of the increased danger to which Theodora would be exposed.

"Guard !" cried the Emperor. The corporal of the watch entered : and made the ordinary obeisance.

"Corporal," said Constantine, "I have received intelligence that Mahomet has promised his troops three days' sack of the city, without a single restriction of private property or persons. What you have to expect, you know : what your wives and daughters, too, have to look for. I should wish this to be known to the several posts,—and by their means, generally."

"Shall I send immediately, Sire ?"

"Such is our wish," replied the Cæsar.

"Demetrius," said the corporal,—"go you with this message as far as S. Nicetas' bastion, and tell them that it is the Emperor's pleasure it be passed on. You, Lucas, as far as the Contoscalion, and bid them in like manner send it forward."

"We will beat them yet, please God, Sire."

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

“ Forgive, brave dead, the imperfect lay !  
Who may your names, your numbers say !  
What highest harp, what lofty line  
To each the dear-earned praise assign :  
From high-born chiefs, of martial fame,  
To the poor soldier's lowlier name ?”

SCOTT.

A BRIGHT, blue morning. The leaves rustling and dancing in light: the southernly breeze breathing gently from the Asiatic shore: larks in the air; the glad waves of the Bosphorus dancing as if for joy: the dew thick on lawn and bush; all nature waking up to the beauty of a May sunrise.

For the sun is not yet risen: there are hues of gold and crimson in the East, that announce his coming; even now the clouds that wander through the sky like sheep, are testifying his approach; even now grey is kindling into purple, and purple brightening into fire,—but he himself is yet below the horizon.

Dark, terrible squares of infantry, half-moons of cavalry, engines of unknown names and hideous shapes; piles of fascines, trenches, embankments, parallels; labourers plying the spade or pickaxe; carts rattling up with fresh loads of earth; here and there the quick sharp roll of a drum,—then the echo of a fife, further to the north-east, the distant blast of a trumpet; troops moving near to the bastions; files deploying into lines: lines connecting themselves



into one extended girth of the city: the rabble of the army in the fore front; Croat and Bulgarian, the hunter of the steppes of Bessarabia, and the fisherman of the Sea of Azoff, the wild sons of Dalmatia, the banditti-like troops of Bosnia, the slim, dark, sallow Armenian; the brawny Wallachian, the well-knit, agile Arabian; the indolent Anatolian. Such was the scene to the north of the city, from the Seven Towers to the bastion of S. Nicetas.

On the walls, soldiers crowded closely together; the Roman forces thinly scattered among Varangian, Frank, and Barbarian: banners fluttering,—crosses glistening,—chiefs marshalling the defence,—engineers directing the balistæ,—the captains of the guns pointing their artillery,—trumpets braying,—bells pealing,—drays rolling through the streets with fresh cargoes of stones,—armourers riveting up armour,—knights once more hurrying round their posts,—here and there a monk exhorting to martyrdom,—here and there a wife reluctantly tearing herself from the arms of her husband,—a low, hushed tumult through the city,—streets empty,—roofs crowded,—churches thronged,—(the tidings of the three days' sack had spread like the Greek fire,)—mothers and daughters,—men on the verge of the grave, and boys scarce able to take care of themselves,—all laboured in tearing up paving stones and loading the carts.

To the east, the galleys resting close under the walls; their dark shadows dancing on the green waters of the Horn. Heaps on heaps of scaling ladders; piles on piles of pole-axes; wheel-locks; match-locks; snap-haunces; quick-match for the cannon; flints for the guns: the opposite side of the harbour deserted; boats plying busily from galley to galley; the Genoese arms flying from the Castle of Galata.

The sun is fast coming to the horizon.

Close to the Tower of S. Romanus stood the Emperor, Justiniani, one or two of the domestics, the Archbishop of Chalcedon, Choniates, and Sir Edward

de Rushton; the latter of whom remained with the Cæsar till the last moment. The Emperor that day wore chain armour, with his head defended by the *coif-de-malles*; just as a crusader might have done two hundred and fifty years before. As to the Acolyth, he was in a plain suit of plate; *epaulieres* on his shoulders; *palettes* below the arm-pit; from hip to thigh he wore *taces* of six lames; his knees were defended by *genouailles*; his feet by pointed *sollerets*; his hands by gauntlets, that had *gadlings*; his head by a plain bonnet, from which hung a *tippet* of mail; the sword-belt alone was ornamented with golden *quatrefoils*. His father had worn this suit at *Agin-court*, and his son wore it now. Manuel Chrysolaras was there; but he was not equal to the fatigue of armour, so he contented himself with a light helmet, and a Venetian brigandine.

"Gentlemen," said Constantine, "to your charges! and God be with you! My Lord of Chalcedon, we recommend ourselves to your prayers. It cannot be two minutes before the sun rises; and with the morning gun, I suppose, they charge."

As he spoke, there was a singular motion in the foremost line, compared afterwards by those that saw it, to the spiral twisting of a rope when suddenly stretched out to its full extent. The next moment, with one long, loud, discordant yell, combining a hundred languages in one shout, all round the city the lines fell in, commencing the general assault by sea and land. The cannons thundered from the galleys—the *balistæ* whizzed from the walls—smoke rose high and volumed thick—a thousand shouts mingled together—multitudes, multitudes poured into the ditch: men and fascines rolled into it together,—the hinder ranks poured over the former, themselves poured over by the hindmost, treading and trodden on, crushing and crushed—the breath of life trampled out of the bodies that served but as a bridge—the ditches gradually filling with a mingled jelly of flesh,

clay, and broken faggots. Volleys of stones from above—men hurrying on with rocks for the insatiable balistæ—Varangians gorging cannon with their deadly load—marksmen aiming at the foremost assailants—a Babel of broken orders, hurried exhortations, shrieks, screams, execrations, shouts.

“Bid them point the artillery better from S. Nicholas’s bastion, Justiniani.” “I will, my liege.”—“Out of the way, there! Out of the way—red hot shot!”—“Captain, another dray towards S. Margaret’s bastion; they have no stones.”—“I have none to spare.”—“Where shall I get one?”—“God knows!”—whirr, whirr, from the next balista.—“Bravo! engineers! as dead as Adam!”—“Out of the way, my liege; that imp of the devil is aiming here.”—“Lord Hetæriarch, go to the angle of the Horn, and bring me word”—a roar of cannon from somewhere out by S. Peter’s Port.—“Hot work, Justiniani.”—“All right, sire; the pieces wanted depressing.”—“S. George the Nicephorus! The Virgin the Protectress!”—“What’s the shout?”—“Blown up a galley.”—“Who?”—“De Rushton.”—“There’s a fellow at the wall.”—“I’ll make sure of him.”—A shriek, as a well-directed stone crushed in his chest;—a heaving in the half dead, half living mass of mingled bodies and clay in the ditch—a fresh roar of cannon from the Horn—blinding clouds of smoke—cries of “S. Luke for Genoa!”—“What’s that, Justiniani?”—“I don’t know, sire—run, some one—you, fellow, and inquire.”—“Well, Lord Hetæriarch? how goes it?”—“Gloriously, sire; they are beating them back everywhere.”—“S. Edward for England!”—“Flanders and the Lion!”—“S. Christopher for Wolfenstein!”—A tremendous crash, as a discharged rock struck the bastion of S. Nicetas.—“Somebody down.”—“Who’s that?”—“Young Cantacuzene.”—“Dead?”—“Dead as he can be.”—“Don’t let his father know.”—“There’s Mahomet!”—“Where?”—“Yonder, in a straight line with this side of S. Romanus.”—Bang,

bang, bang, from a new battery.—“The foul fiend seize those engineers!—“Nicephorus, cannot you do something there?”—“I’ll try, my liege. Peter!”—“He is just carried off, master.”—“George, then, wind away—so—that’s about it—loose all!”—A tremendous crash.—“Well aimed, Nicephorus!”—“I will but run to the Horn, sire, and be back again; they may want me more there.”—“Do not be long.”—“No, sire.”—“We shall win the day yet, Justiniani.”—“God willing, very soon, my liege. Faster, men, faster, men! they are swarming thick up! Three days’ free sack.”—“They are getting too close; more stones this way.”—“Are more coming in?”—“Here’s another dray.”—“That’s well, that’s well.”—A fresh roar of cannon—a loud shout from the Infidels—eight or nine large stones falling from S. Nicolas’s bastion.

Such was the first onset on the north side.

Now we turn to see what was doing at the Horn.

When De Rushton, hurrying from the Emperor to his post, arrived on the harbour wall, the conflict was already in its full heat; and far more hand to hand, than in any other quarter of the city. The mariners and soldiers who served on board, absolutely reckless of life, were planting their scaling ladders on the parapet, and rushing up to the most assured destruction: the brave defenders of the city seized the tops of the ladders, and flung them back; or clove the mounting soldier in twain with the tremendous battle-axe.

“De Rushton! De Rushton!” came the cry, as he advanced to his post.

“S. Edward for England! De Rushton! De Rushton!”

“Phranza, who is at yonder petraria?”

“Calliergus.”

“Burstow, to him, and bid him bring it here: we need it more.”

“There’s a man’s head over the wall.”

A struggle for the ladder: shrieks, cries; back it falls, splashing into the water.

" Aim at Leontius ! aim at Leontius ! engineer ! "

" I have aimed at him four times already : the dog must have a charmed life. "

" Master gunners, fire higher ! " shouted Achmet. " You waste your shot. "

" Carpenters, this way ! " cried Leontius : " make fast this ladder to the deck while we hold it up. "

" Back with it, men ! back with it ! " roared Choniates. " S. George the Nicephorus ! Back with it ! "

" Hold on, slaves, for your lives, " from below.

" Stones this way, stones ; pass them hand over hand. "

Loud shrieks from the workmen and carpenters, as the volley crashed in among them.

" Try again ! try again ! " cried Achmet. " A province for him that first mounts the wall. "

Eight or ten ladders, held up by main force ; a huge Bulgarian by the parapet, grappling, struggling, with a Greek : he heaves him up : the Greek clutches at the breastwork. " Help ! help ! for God's sake ! " " De Rushton ! De Rushton ! " The Bulgarian looses hold ; the Acolyth is on him ; they clasp each other in that deadly embrace. De Rushton is off his feet ; he will surely be dragged over ; his right arm is pinioned by his foe. Burstow is rushing up ; ere he can reach him, the knight has disengaged his dagger of mercy ; it is in the Bulgarian's throat ; he falls, a senseless mass, into the sea.

And that was the conflict by the Horn.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

“ Certain tidings of the field.  
Good, if heaven will !  
As good as heart can wish.”

*Henry IV.*

DEAFENED by the unceasing roar of the cannon, and the hubbub and tumult of the general assault, Theodora de Rushton sat with Euphrasia Choniatis and her mother on the morning of that Whit-Tuesday. From time to time Barlaam had gone out to obtain what news he could ; but being unable to make his way among the hurry and crush of the walls, and equally incapable of taking in, by his own observation, the position of affairs, they had obtained nothing but a series of the most vague and unsatisfactory tidings, picked up from those who were no better acquainted with the subject than were they on whom they bestowed their information.

But, towards ten o'clock, Manuel Chrysolaras made his appearance. Bursting into the room, with joy in every feature of his face, his countenance told them the news he had to announce, before he could speak.

“ You have good news, Manuel,” cried Euphrasia. “ I am sure you have.”

“ Excellent news, thank God,” replied Chrysolaras. “ In every one of the places they have assaulted, the Turks have been beaten back. Most decisively by the Emperor, at the Tower of S. Romanus, and at the Silivri gate ; but De Rushton has also done wonders, though the odds were greater.”

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"And he is quite safe?" cried Theodora.

"Quite," replied Manuel; "at least he was a quarter of an hour ago."

"Thank God! And my father?"

"Quite safe also," said Chrysolaras: "and at this moment out of the way of danger; for the Emperor has despatched him on some errand to the Con-toscalion."

"Then do you really think they will beat them off?" cried Euphrasia.

"Good faith, I do," returned Manuel. "And there are they, doing wonders for the Emperor and for the Faith, and I, like a sick woman, can only stand by and look on."

"And I am so thankful that you can do as much as that," replied Euphrasia; "and so should you be also; a week ago we should neither of us have believed it."

"My daughter speaks wisely, my lord," said Maria Choniatis. "We have all great reason to be thankful that you are able to do so much; and we, more especially that, on such a day, we have the safety of your protection."

Thus they talked for nearly half-an-hour, and Bar-laam was called up to hear the good tidings. In the meantime, the thunder of the cannon and the shouts of the onset went on without the slightest interruption; till at length, Manuel Chrysolaras, growing impatient to be at the scene of action, though he could not join in it, took leave of his affianced bride and her friends, and again went on to the ramparts.

The attack had now extended much further along the Horn, and almost stretched as far as the Seraglio Point; but yet not one real advantage seemed to have been gained by the assailants. As Manuel came in sight of the first balista in this direction, there was a momentary lull in the storm: and looking round him, he caught Burstow's eye.

"Well, Burstow! how goes it?" cried he.

"Excellently well, so far as the city is concerned,

my lord. But I tell you what, Lord Manuel," he added in a lower voice. "I have seen something just now that I did not at all like."

"What, good Burstow?" replied Chrysolaras, looking round him, as if he expected to see some advantage gained by the Mussulmans.

"No, not that way, my lord," replied the other. "What I mean is this. Twice this day I have seen Zosimus in the galleys: and once I saw Leontius holding a most earnest conversation with him."

"It is strange enough, Burstow; but he cannot hurt us."

"Well, my lord, I hope not; and I don't see how he can; but at all events, I think he will try. Stand forward there, lads, stand forward there," exclaimed he, as a trumpet brayed loudly out, and the attack recommenced with increased vigour.

"One word, Burstow; what would you have me do?"

"I would make inquiries—this way, this way, good fellows—empty the dray there—inquiries of—the foul fiend seize you, Nicetas—why did you loose so soon?—if—stand out of the way, my lord—that fellow has his engine this way—crouch down—so—I would go back to Lord Phranza's house, and make particular inquiries when and where Zosimus was last seen. Something might be gathered from that."

Chrysolaras resolved to do so; but he thought that it might be as well in the first place to make the circuit of the walls, as far as the Tower of S. Romanus; in order that he might judge for himself how the defence was succeeding. A quarter of an hour brought him to the side of Sir Edward de Rushton, now heated, jaded, and anxious; but still giving out his directions with undiminished vigour, and exposing himself with the most undaunted courage.

"How goes it, De Rushton?"

"Not well—the dogs have fixed the ladders, and we cannot throw them back."



It was as he said ; from one of the galleys, that on which Leontius had placed himself, a scaling ladder of unusual strength had been so securely lashed to strong uprights and cross bars at the bottom, that the utmost efforts of the besieged were insufficient to force it back. And now the conflict waxed very hot indeed ; the Varangians passed a stout lever under the upper rounds of the ladder, and strove to wrench it up ; others endeavoured to shatter it by rolling down heavy stones on it ; on the other side Bithynian archers, the best in the camp, singled out the most active of the defenders, and tried every part of their helmets and cuirasses ; and woe to him in whom they were found wanting ! These were opposed by fresh showers of stones, boiling pitch, melted lead ; while yet again others endeavoured to fire the stern of the galley, as it lay alongside of the walls. At length a lucky stone lighted with such force on one of the uprights that it crashed, and the assailants abandoned it as useless ; but at the same moment two others were erected, a little on one side, in its place.

“ You see how it is,” said De Rushton ; “ they will do for us by mere numbers.”

“ God grant otherwise,” cried Manuel. Then, finding that he could render no service where he was, and not forgetful of his errand, he passed onward towards the northern wall.

Here also the defenders seemed worn and harassed, —thinned in numbers, though not to any great extent, but certainly exerting themselves with less spirit. On the other hand, the mound of earth and dead bodies was perceptibly rising higher. Every man that dropped did good service by his death, as raising the bridge by which his more fortunate companions hoped to enter the city : the whole Turkish force pressing, as far as the eye could see, onwards to the walls, heaved up and down like the billows before an easterly wind ; human barriers seemed almost useless against even the dead weight of such a mighty mass ; it was

impossible to distinguish private or officer; all that could clearly be seen was, that the great Standard of Islam floated about half a mile from the walls,—that the Janissaries were not yet in action, and that the Sultan, mounted on his white horse, an iron mace in his hand, was waiting the proper moment when, with this his reserved force, to put forth the strength of his empire in one final charge.

“I hope your majesty is safe,” cried Chrysolaras, in a momentary pause.

“Quite safe,” replied Constantine—“but the day”—in a lower voice, “I fear is going hard with us.”

“I trust not, Sire—they who can keep this multitude at bay for so long must be invincible.”

“The men have done wonders,” said the Emperor, more loudly; “if I could reward every man that I have seen with my own eyes, as he deserved, all the gold of Constantinople would go over and over again. The news, Cantacuzene?”

“If your majesty is hard pressed,” replied that nobleman, “we can spare some assistance; for the attack has almost ceased at our post.”

“That is well,” said Constantine. “None can need it more than we.”

Having seen this seasonable help arrive to the defence of the most sorely pressed point, Chrysolaras, in obedience to Burstow’s advice, went back to Phranza’s house. Here he instituted the most diligent inquiry among the servants how and where Zosimus had been last seen; and one and all persisted in asserting that Maria was the most likely person to be able to afford him information, as she had certainly been in conversation with that slave no very long time before he disappeared. To the *metæcia* of De Rushton, therefore, the young nobleman next betook himself; and after satisfying those whom he had left there that a gallant defence was still being made, though he did not deny that the besieged were hardly pressed, he said,—

"Lady Theodora, you have, I think, a servant named Maria."

"I have," replied Theodora.

"If it please you," replied Chrysolaras, "I would fain speak with her—I will give you my reasons afterwards."

Theodora, though rather surprised, caused Maria to be summoned; and she, no less wondering than her mistress what the call might mean, was told that she must answer some questions which the Lord Manuel wished to propose to her.

"Pray," said he, "yesterday afternoon, before Zosimus left the Lord Phranza's house, had you not some speech with him?"

"Yes, my lord," she replied: "what an if I had?"

"That presently. Was it at the Lord Protoves-tiare's house, or here?"

"There," answered she; "my mistress had sent me to fetch some things thence of which she stood in need."

"I did so," remarked Theodora.

"And what time was it?" inquired Manuel.

"It was about the eighth hour."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure; for before I set forth thence, the bells of S. Sophia rang for the ninth hour service."

"Did you speak with him long?"

"Not I," returned Maria, giving her head a little scornful toss.

"How long?"

"He only asked me why I had come there—and—and—I really cannot tell exactly what he said, my lord."

"Where was this?"

"In the vestibule."

"And when you left him, where did he go?"

"Into the garden."

"Did you see anything of the Varangian Burstow that afternoon?"

"Yes, my lord ; he was walking with Barlaam up and down the terrace in the front of the Lord Phranza's house."

"Did you notice if he went on walking there?"

"No, my lord ; they both went into the house."

"That will do, Maria." And the servant left the room.

Theodora, who did not know, as Manuel did, that Barlaam and Burstow had discussed their plan while walking in the garden, could not conceive the purpose of these questions. Nor did Manuel explain himself, but merely observing that he should wish to see again how the conflict went on, he set forth to the harbour wall, for the purpose, if possible, of expressing his fears to De Rushton.

A glimpse of the truth had flashed into his mind. It appeared that Zosimus had been in Phranza's garden, much about the same time, and probably at the very same time, that Burstow and the house steward had been discussing the question where the Lady de Rushton was to be concealed : immediately after this, Zosimus, without any expressed reasons, deserts to the Turkish camp : he makes his escape from the city by an absolutely false pretext : he is next seen in communication with Leontius, the very man of all others who would gladly receive or purchase any information as to the Lady Theodora. To what suspicions did all this give rise ! And then, coupling the facts he knew with the warning which Theodora had received on the preceding night, and to which Chrysolaras had always been disposed to attach more credit than Sir Edward, he became seriously alarmed ; and, as we have said, set forth hastily in search of his friend. It was now nearly mid-day.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

“ Now, Polyphron, the news ?

The conquering army

Is within ken.

How brook the men the object ?

Cheerfully yet : they do refuse no labour.”

*The Bondman.*

THUS again Manuel Chrysolaras found himself on his way towards the harbour wall ; but, the aspect of affairs was indeed changed. There was no longer the struggle to plant the scaling ladders on the one side, nor the almost superhuman efforts to throw them down on the other ; the walls were comparatively deserted both by assailants and defenders ; and the whole efforts of the Mahometan troops were directed against the Fanar gate, that very gate concerning which Sir Edward de Rushton had expressed so much anxiety on the preceding night. The woodwork of this gate, originally very strong, was now much decayed through its great age : it had been erected in the time of Latin domination, and had, occasionally since, been clamped and pieced, patched and plated, joined and riveted, till the original work was almost gone. But such a mass of junctions and patchings was ill calculated to resist a vigorous and persevering onset. This gate could not, of course, be attacked, till the Horn was in the hands of the invaders, and therefore, till the transportation of the galleys, no particular attention had been paid to its defence ; while after that period, there had not been time to make a new gate, though the work was actually in hand at the last assault.

Between the fifth and sixth hour, Zosimus had requested to see Leontius; and on being, sorely against his will, brought on to the galley where that nobleman was, he told him in as few words as possible, that the attack had much better chance of success if directed against the Fanar gate, which, to his certain knowledge, though of great apparent mass, possessed no real strength. Having satisfied himself by more minute inquiries that such was the case, Leontius allowed Zosimus, who had been all the time of the interview in an agony of fear, to return to the other side of the Horn whence he had come. As the gate opened too close to the sea to permit operations of any magnitude to be carried on between the walls and the water, the renegade gave orders that two galleys should be moored opposite to it, at some little distance from each other, and from one to the other was stretched a platform of planks, rendered more solid by another flooring laid crosswise. Meanwhile instructions had been despatched to bring the largest sized piece of timber that could be found on the Galata side of the Horn; and, in less than half an hour a prodigious cedar was dragged down to the beach by three teams of horses. Here a body of men were soon actively engaged in rolling it into the sea; twenty or thirty boats presently had it in tow, and though Nicephorus sank five or six of them with that new petraria which he had promised—and he had kept his promise—to have ready by midnight,—yet, notwithstanding, the tree was brought over in triumph, and preparations were made to hoist it on deck.

At this instant, Chrysolaras arrived at the scene of action; but soon found that, not even to speak of Theodora, could he withdraw De Rushton's attention from the conflict before him. Already on the platform had been erected the frame from which the ram was to work; already the smiths were riveting the chains from which it was to be suspended; already the diminished violence of the attack in other quarters

showed that a fearful assault was intended in this ; and De Rushton, knowing what he knew, had no scruple in requesting the Emperor to spare Nicephorus to a point than at which, he felt sure, there could be no greater peril.

"In good time, Manuel," cried he. "Go to the Emperor, and request him to send Nicephorus here with all speed. I shall hardly else be able to hold out."

"But, De Rushton—"

"Nay, go at once, Manuel—I have no one that I can spare well but you,—and the danger presses."

Chrysolaras, finding that it did indeed press, set forth with speed on his errand ; though sadly beginning to feel his own weakness and the exhaustion consequent on such fatigue endured before perfect recovery. De Rushton counted the moments till his return. For though he and Burstow themselves pointed every balista, though with promises, and threats, and entreaties, he incited the men to do their utmost, though such volleys of stones had been thrown down on the assailants that now to procure fresh pavement the drays had to go as far nearly as to the old cistern, and were already beginning to interfere with those that were supplying the Emperor's side,—though the corpses of the Moslems were piled high and thick under the walls and in the galleys, and that without any advantage, as on the other side, to the living assailants, still the work went on. The cedar was hoisted on the platform : a kind of light work of defence was run up to protect those engaged on it,—a framework of wood, covered with thick wet mats ; the smiths were already engaged in clamping on its head, a tremendous block of iron, a cube of more than two feet. Two more galleys were now ordered to take their position behind the other two, and another platform was constructed on them, in order to give room for the play of the ram, and the motions of those that worked it. Then came the heaving of five hundred arms, rearing the monstrous engine into its place :

the galleys rolled under the unusual weight; the platforms groaned and creaked: here and there a plank might give, or a clamp start, but the work stood good; down came the light mat-work that concealed the preparations; and the enormous beam stood ready hung to play upon the devoted gate. Before the besieged could well tell what system of defence now to resort to, it began to vibrate, under the united pull of two hundred arms; backwards and forwards moved the beam, slowly at first, acquiring increased velocity as it proceeded, till at length Leontius gave the signal "Now!" and it swang full on the Fanar gate.

At that first stroke it crashed through one panel, and stove in clamp, plate, and chain: the whole work tottered and quivered on its hinges; and for a moment De Rushton imagined that an entrance to the city was forced. But at that instant Nicephorus arrived upon the ramparts, panting and dripping with heat.

"What's this? what's this?" cried he. "By S. George! but you should have sent for me before! Run for sacks, sacks and ropes,—and send up some cart-loads of earth. Hurry them, Burstow, or the gate will be in. Lord Acolyth, where are the masons? They must begin a wall behind the gate—give way, give way,"—to the engineer—"I'll work that myself."

But before any of the directions could be obeyed, the ram had been pulled back a second time, and a second time had swung upon the gate. Vain were then the great studs of iron, that knobbed it over like a rhinoceros's hide; vain the double clenched stan- chions, and cross-riveters six inches thick; vain, that once the oak which supplied its wood had been the glory of the Balkan; vain, that the staples had been trebly hammered out, and the iron the strongest that Hungary could yield. Splinters of wood, bars, bolts, plates, knobs, fragments of iron and stone came flying forth on the inside, as if chased forth by a whirlwind: the wall itself shook and groaned; and the head of



the ram came right in,—the first thing from the Turkish camp that entered that day.

Nicephorus hastily discharged his balistæ, with such good aim that fourteen or fifteen of the assailants were killed or knocked down, and the action of the ram most materially retarded. The sacks had come up; some held them open; some threw spadeful after spadeful of earth into them as the carts rattled up to the rescue of the gate; some attached ropes to their mouths: some heaved them over the sides; and the third stroke of the ram was deadened by the interposition of these flying bulwarks. To Burstow was intrusted their management, while Nicephorus superintended the construction of the more solid defences. By his direction close to the gate, and in the thickness of the wall, ten or twelve carts were piled, the upper ones being heaved up by main strength on the top of the lower ones; while behind, masons and labourers were busy with another wall, the materials being obtained from a house that was hastily pulled down to furnish them. Thus, should the ram be successful, a sort of extempore barbican was formed, the thickness of the wall in this, serving as the flanking walls of a regular defence; or, if the comparison be made with the modern system of fortification, the thickness of the wall formed the bastions, the new wall the curtain, while the upset carts might be regarded as a rude sort of *tenaille*.

But, notwithstanding these efforts, the end was very fast approaching.

However, in the meantime, the inner wall rose higher, and the gate was more effectually protected; and Nicephorus, having now performed his office at this post, was anxious to return to the Emperor.

“How go things there?” inquired the Acolyth.

“He will not hold out very long,” said Nicephorus. “The only chance is, that they may abandon the attack. If they do, we may be saved yet; for the loss of life must have been tremendous.” With which words he hurried back to his original position.

De Rushton, though not feeling any immediate apprehension for the safety of the Fanar, on hearing the opinion of Nicephorus, determined that it would be better for Theodora to retire to the hiding place. Manuel, who had been detained a few minutes by the Emperor, came up at this time; and confirmed the report of the engineer.

"The wall," said he, "is in ruins in three different places; nothing but the most resolute courage keeps them back; how long this hand-to-hand struggle may last, it is impossible to say."

"Then," replied Sir Edward, "go and see them in safety; it is high time. You can come back again, and carry word a second time, if necessary."

"I will," said Manuel,—“but”—

"My lord," said Burstow, "put some cross-bow men at both sides of the gate—it will not stand many more blows—those two first quite did for it."

"Demetrius," said De Rushton, "twelve cross-bows on each side—good men, if it may be. Stay,—I will mount the wall myself"—for at that moment he was superintending the new erection.

"But, De Rushton"—cried Manuel, as he sprang forward.

"When you come back," replied his friend, without waiting to hear what followed.

"Only one word, De Rushton—for God's sake, stay one moment!" But De Rushton was gone.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

“And such concealment as the place can offer,—  
No thanks, I pray,—is yours.”

*The Picture.*

FINDING that it was absolutely impossible to have an explanation with the Great Acolyth, and doubting whether, in that critical state of affairs there might not be more danger in altering the plan than, even were there any ground for his suspicions, in adhering to the old one,—Manuel Chrysolaras hurried back to the *metæcia* of Sir Edward de Rushton.

The city now began to present a very different aspect from that which it had borne when he had last passed through it; the doors and windows of many houses were shut; women were no where to be seen; the church of S. Sophia was filled with the greater part, others attempted to conceal themselves in cellars, outhouses, courts; a death-like stillness prevailed in the streets and lanes; and presented a strange contrast with the incessant thundering from the north, and shouts from the east.

The *metæcia*, when he reached it, seemed deserted; he therefore hurried up to the room where he had left Theodora and her companions, and found them in a dreadful state of agitation.

“Is it taken? is it taken?” cried Theodora and Euphrasia together.

“No,” replied Manuel; “it is not taken,—and

there are even hopes that it may not be; and De Rushton and the Lord Phranza are safe; so, I hear, dearest, is your father. But they think that it will be best for you to conceal yourselves now, the Emperor being so very hard pressed."

"All the servants have left us," said Theodora; "and we scarcely knew what to do—we were afraid something might have befallen you."

"No," replied he; "I came the first moment that it was thought well—better a little too soon than too late. If any favourable change occurs, I can return and let you know."

They all rose to follow him, and without another word, through open doors and deserted passages, they accompanied him into the garden; and then, through the paths we have before mentioned, into that which belonged to Phranza. The flowers were blooming as gaily as if all had been peace; the birds, indeed, terrified by the incessant roar of the artillery, were silent; a lurid haze, from the rising smoke drifts, had gathered over the sun; the air felt close and sulphureous; but, had there been no uproar and tumult to tell a different tale, one might have imagined the on-coming of a thunder storm in a sultry day of July.

Barlaam was already at the ice-house, whither he had previously betaken himself to make sure that there was no one near the spot whose presence might be dangerous. Manuel went first with his Euphrasia,—at Theodora's request: she herself followed with the Lady Choniatis. The old steward met them on the steps that led down to the ice-house.

"God send you safe!" said he, in a voice trembling with emotion: "forty-six years have I eaten your father's bread, lady, and if I can save you by laying down my old life for you, most thankful shall I be so to do."

"I believe you, Barlaam," said Theodora, holding out her hand to him, which the steward kissed as reverentially as if it had been that of a queen.

“Please you to go in?” said Manuel to Theodora.

She trembled very much; but, without any further reply, she walked down the steps into the room prepared for their reception. Barlaam had done what he could to make it comfortable: some thick matting and cushions were spread on the ground: a couple of bottles of wine, some small loaves, and a pasty, were placed in one corner; with the one or two other requisites of the day for a satisfactory meal. The place was not absolutely dark,—for a slit towards the roof admitted some portion of light; and though chilly, it was not at all damp. The Lady Choniatis came next; then Manuel, after tenderly kissing Euphrasia, followed her down, and looked round him.

“Barlaam has done what he could,” said he, as the old man entered; “and, what is more, he has had an interior lock put on. That is capital indeed.”

“I had some difficulty to get it done, my lord,—for not a locksmith could I find last night—they were all engaged on the walls. But it is done, as you see.”

“Now,” said Manuel, “I must go: if the defence holds out, I will return in an hour: and if it lasts as long as that, I really believe that it will be successful altogether. If not, I shall hardly dare to return here till dusk,—perhaps not till midnight. Still, do not be alarmed if no one comes even then. Barlaam may not feel it safe to watch too close; he may not find it possible to communicate with you; but you are perfectly safe where you are, for a day or two at least; and you have a good store of provisions. The very earliest moment we can return, be you most sure, we shall; and Barlaam has his instructions, and will know what to do. Now then, GOD and the Panaghia bless and take care of you all.”

“Manuel,” said Euphrasia, “I have one favour to ask. It is that you will give me that dagger you wear.”

“That dagger, love? Why?”

"I do not like to be without something of the kind," said Euphrasia, "in case of the worst."

"But not—"

"Be at rest on that point," said Theodora. "We will defend ourselves, by God's grace, as far as we may lawfully do; but no further. Our lives are His; and He only can take them."

"Then there it is, dearest," said Manuel, unbuckling it, and giving it to Euphrasia. "Take care how you use it—it is a Damascus blade, and would wound deadly."

"Farewell, lady, and GOD be with you all!" said the old steward.

"Lock yourselves securely in," added Manuel, "and I need not tell you to keep quiet. Farewell, Lady Theodora; farewell, Madam; and now, my own dear Euphrasia, good-bye indeed!"

They heard the key turn in the lock, and then proceeded on their way; Barlaam to the thickest laurel plantation, to keep watch,—Manuel to the Fanar gate.—Before we accompany the latter, as we shall do presently, we must transport our reader for a few moments on board the galley of Leontius.

Much about the same time that De Rushton had despatched Manuel to Theodora, Leontius had summoned Zosimus a second time to his presence; and the unhappy Greek, though in mortal terror at crossing the strait, had no choice but to obey. Arrived on board, he experienced some satisfaction in being told to go below; where, in a few moments, he was joined by Leontius.

"Now, Zosimus," said the latter, "I have every reason to believe that the city will not hold out two hours: if we cannot force our way in here, the Sultan will do it on the north. The great thing is, not to miss our prey. Now, it may be very possible that I shall not at once be able to leave my command, and go to Phranza's house: I shall therefore put twelve men under your directions, men whom I can trust,

and you will take them to the place you have mentioned, and secure the girl. In the meantime, you will stay where you are."

"But, my lord"—began Zosimus, in great fear.

"Peace, fool!" cried Leontius; "don't you think that your wretched life is of as much importance to me now as to yourself? Ay, and more. You are safe enough. Ho! Walid!"—and a soldier entered. "Walid, this is the Greek who will direct you what you are to do. You have your instructions, you know."

"Ay, my lord."

"Then see you obey them. The Greek will remain here until the city is taken."

"And when we have the lady, my lord, what are we to do with her?"

"Best confine her for the present where she is," answered Leontius. "But take care, if you possibly can, to put that meddling servant who is watching, out of the way. Don't let him escape you."

"No, my lord."

"I must on deck," said Leontius. "You will be found here, Zosimus. Walid, you had best get your men together."

Leontius in another moment was cheering on his troops to a fresh attack of the gate. Walid followed him to execute his orders, but apparently not very well satisfied with the part he had to play.

"By the Holy Flight!" cried he, as he left the cabin,—“but this is a knavish business!”

## CHAPTER XL.

“They had the hearts of freemen to the last ;  
And the free blood that bounded in their veins  
Was shed for freedom with a liberal joy.”

*Philip von Artevelde.*

WHEN Manuel had left the gardens of Phranza, he hurried with all speed towards the Fanar. On his way thither, he met the Curopalata, apparently going towards the palace.

“Have you heard, my lord ?” asked the latter.

“Heard ? No. What ?” cried Manuel, almost expecting that all was over.

“They are falling back from S. Romanus,” replied he ; “the Emperor and Justiniani have fairly driven them off.”

“Now GOD be praised !” cried Manuel. “I must go and see for myself.”

“I would gladly come too,” replied the Curopalata ; “but I have an errand to the Palace. Good morning, my lord.”

With a hasty “Good morning,” Manuel hurried along to S. Romanus. Mounting the walls, he found that the report was perfectly true. In all directions the Turkish troops were drawing off ; leaving a clear space round the walls, only occupied by the dreadful debris of so tremendous a fight. Chrysolaras soon recognised the Emperor, Justiniani, Cantacuzene, Choniates, and several of the Domestics standing together ; and made his way up to them.

“Sire,” said he, “permit me to congratulate your Majesty.”



“They are beaten off, good faith,” replied Constantine; “but they will return again. However, God be praised for the respite. We only want rest.” Then, raising his voice, “Gentlemen,” said he, “do not let us deceive ourselves. Mahomet will make one effort more; but it will only be one. Only drive back that! Only exert yourselves as you have hitherto done, and not only will the danger be at an end for to-day, but the assault, I may say it confidently, will not be repeated. None but Mahomet could have borne the waste of life that we have seen these last few hours, once; but neither he nor any one else can bear it twice! Doubt not but that the Virgin Protectress of this city has wrought this miracle for us: for nothing less than a miracle it is that such a handful of men as we are should have driven back that enormous force. As her intercessions have obtained this help for us, so, be well assured, they will not be withheld now. Let us make good the walls but for one hour more, and we shall have present safety, and future reward, and glory to all ages of posterity!”

A loud shout ran along the walls as he concluded; and, looking at the fixed resolution displayed in the countenances of nobles and men, considering the wonders their courage had already wrought, seeing the fact that the Turks were in full retreat, Chryso-laras did, at that moment, entertain the idea that the defence would prove successful.

“If they do not beat us to-day,” thought he, “they never will.”

At that moment Mahomet raised the gigantic mace which he carried that day. One long loud shout pealed up from the Janissaries, “There is no God but God, and Mahomet is the prophet of God;” and rushing over the wilderness of corpses that lay before them, they threw themselves with vigour, surpassing that of all former assaults, on the breaches. Fresh they struggled with wearied men, unharmed with wounded; the flower of the Ottoman host with the

last remains of Byzantine courage, fighting under the eye of a Sultan, fighting for rewards almost beyond the hope of avarice, fighting with all the invincibility of assured victory. Meanwhile the batteries opened a deadlier fire; the petrarixæ and balistæ showered down their missiles thicker: the trumpets, fifes, cymbals, drums, and atabals rang out together: and the conflict was renewed as if it had only then begun. The firing ran all round the city: mole, galleys, and lines vied with each other: the smoke hung low and rolled thick; and scarcely could the various cries of resistance or despair be distinguished in the general uproar.

“A province to the Janissary that first mounts the walls,” shouted Baltha Ogli.

Striving and struggling among the foremost ranks—stepping over corpses—clinging to parapets—stones rolled fast and furiously from above—pole-axes, spears, and pikes heaving and pushing—match-locks flung away as unserviceable in the hand-to-hand agony of battle;—battle-axes swung, cut-and-thrust swords hacking and piercing.

“A province,” cried Baltha Ogli again. “A province! Who will win it?”

“I will,” cried a gigantic Janissary of the Sultan’s life guard, called Hassan, springing up at the walls. Thirty picked men followed him: Franks and Greeks poured in to the attacked spot, grappling and grappled with, using daggers and shortened swords, clubs, maces, and hatchets on both sides: distant workmen, yet repairing the walls, ran up with spades or pick-axes or shovels,—eighteen of the invaders have paid the venture with their lives—Hassan still struggles forward—he holds his buckler over his head—his scymetar sweeps right and left with the vigour of a flail,—he stoops and rises,—darts forward and dives down,—strikes and parries, still pressing onward, till at length he is on the very edge of the breach.

“Down with him! down with him!” was the cry;

but with a gigantic effort of strength he heaved himself on to the wall, and was instantly struck down. He rose again, and cried "The Province! The Province!" standing the first man that day on the Christian bulwarks. From the bastion of S. Nicolas to that of S. Nicetas rose the cry, "There is no GOD but GOD, and Mahomet is His prophet!"

"S. George for the city! Down with him!"

"S. Luke for Genoa!" cried Justiniani, running up, and throwing himself into the *melée*.

A few moments of wild uproar,—and the bloody corpse of the gigantic Janissary was hurled down among the ghastly mass of his companions. But what he had done, others felt might be effected by them.

And now, in all parts, the foremost Janissaries were swarming up over the walls. For some minutes yet with swords or axes, or whatever came to hand, the Greeks made good the defence; rolling over the assailants in the ascent, or thrusting them back as soon as they made it good. But then the aspect of affairs was changed; it was no longer the Janissaries fighting up the walls, but fighting on them; and, by twos and threes they swarmed up to the support of him who had been the first to make good his footing.

The Emperor cast a look of despair on Justiniani.

"The outer wall is lost," said the latter, coolly—"we must make for the inner."

"Lead on," said the Cæsar.

At this moment, an arrow pierced the gauntlet of the Genoese leader. He turned pale with the exquisite pain—caught at the breastwork as if fainting, and gasped out,—“I must retire and get my wound dressed.”

“No, for GOD’s sake!” cried the Palæologus: “hold out a little; the wound is a scratch; let us make good the inner wall; we well may.”

“I can come back, Sire!”—and he withdrew.

“Curses on him!” cried Chrysolaras. “Gentlemen, retreat in good order: the day may be ours yet!—make the inner wall good!”

"Take care of yourself, Sire," cried Galeotti, hastening past him.

"Cowardly dog!" shouted Cantacuzene.

The shout ran along the ramparts—"To the inner wall! to the inner wall!"

The Franks and Barbarians began to fly fast. Fresh Janissaries are pouring in. Still Constantine, with the little body of faithful and devoted friends that surrounded him, was fighting his way, step by step, backward to the second wall.

The native troops rallied—and for the last time rose the shout of "The Cæsar! The Cæsar! The Virgin the Protectress! A Cantacuzene! A Cantacuzene!"

The Varangians, who served in that part of the city, now formed in a compact body round their Emperor. And thus, notwithstanding the fearful and rapidly increasing numbers that poured in from without, Constantine, Cantacuzene, Choniates, and Chrysolaras, made their way down in good order to the space between the two walls.

Here, however, was the last remnant of military arrangement. The pent-up crowd of victorious Janissaries, flying Franks, Greeks eager to fight or to save themselves,—soldiers, labourers,—all pressing forward for the gate of S. Romanus, all crushing, pushing, agonising onward, broke up every appearance of a regular retreat. Pell-mell, Turk and Christian hurried forward together—there was hardly room for blows,—shrieks arose loud from the wounded and weak, as they were trodden under foot—the rest was a hideous confusion of unintelligible sounds.

Still Chrysolaras kept by the Emperor's side, as they were whirled onwards to the gate of S. Romanus. While they were yet thirty yards from it, he heard the stroke as of a heavy blow, and saw Constantine reel forwards as well as the press permitted. A dagger had struck him on the shoulder: the hand that raised it was never known.

"Is your Majesty much hurt?" asked Chrysolaras in terror.

The Cæsar replied not, but untied the purple robe which he wore over his armour.

"I trust your Majesty is not seriously hurt?" still more anxiously he inquired, as now they were both sucked into the vortex of the crowd to be ejected on the other side of the gate.

He heard Constantine's last cry of anguish, "Is there not one Christian who will cut off my head?" when he was rolled by a wave of the crowd from the Emperor's side—dashed against the wall of the gate—had a struggle for very life—and at length found himself far within the inner wall.

None ever again beheld Constantine Palæologus living. Whether, as some say, he was cut down by two blows from a Janissary, or, as others, was trampled under foot in the crush through the gate, or whether he turned round upon the enemy, and was pierced with a thousand wounds, was never known. Certain alone it is that, somewhere in the interval of time between the descent of the outer wall, and the passage of the gate of S. Romanus, that brave and royal spirit fled for ever.

## CHAPTER XLI.

“ Farewell !—God knows when we shall meet again.  
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins  
That almost freezes up the heat of life.”

*Romeo and Juliet.*

As soon as De Rushton had despatched Manuel with his directions, he felt considerably more at ease, firmly convinced that Theodora was now in safety, whatever might befall him. With voice and action he encouraged the masons, on whom he felt that the ultimate maintenance of that post must depend; for the defences adopted against the battering ram could only, by their very nature, be temporary. Leontius and Achmet Pasha, who had now joined his fellow chief, bent their whole efforts to counteract the devices of Nicephorus. The ropes that held the sacks they cut, by sharp hooks fixed at the end of poles; the besieged in their stead employed chains,—and the Turks hooked them out of the way, so as to leave room for the ram to play upon the gate. Others, with long poles hoisted up the sacks as they descended; and thus it came to pass that, though not more than one blow out of three told with full effect, the gate was already little more than a skeleton, and the besiegers were preparing to enter.

Leontius gave orders that the beam should be directed on the hinges; and after one or two vigorous efforts, the upper hinge already much shaken, was drawn from its sockets, and fell in among the rude barricade which had been erected behind it.

Sixty or seventy of the bravest soldiers at once poured into the breach. But the marksmen on the wall let fly so swift and deadly a shower of arrows and quarrels among them, that, entangled as they were in that barricade, few could extricate themselves, and they perished by inches, shot through and through by the incessant vigilance of the defenders.

A second set of men rolled onwards to take their comrades' places, but with such dreadful carnage that Leontius found it necessary to recall the soldiers.

"Back, men! back!" shouted he, "try it with fire."

A lighted torch was soon applied; but, as soon, the vigilance of the Varangians threw buckets of water on the kindling mass. At first the conflagration seemed to spread; but De Rushton hit on the proper remedy.

"Wet earth! wet earth!" cried he; "that will damp it most effectually."

There was a mound of earth on the ramparts, whence the sacks had been filled;—this was soon saturated with water: and twenty arms were busily engaged in dashing the hissing mud on the consuming mass. The blaze was checked—the smoke grew denser—the flames smouldered—the scheme had failed.

"Shift the ram a thought forward," roared Achmet, "and try it with that."

The ram was soon brought to bear on the barricade; the carts and spars that composed it were soon shivered to atoms; the Turks were preparing to rush on to a third hand-to-hand conflict; when suddenly from the north-west came a roar of shouts and voices, —and a wild doleful cry spread through the streets.

"All lost! all lost! fly! fly!"

In fact, when Chrysolaras, hurried through the gate of S. Romanus, had been able to turn himself, with the intention of joining in the defence of the inner wall,—he found that all hope of resistance was at an end. Infidels clustered on this wall in equal numbers with Christians;—hundreds and thousands of the besiegers were pouring in; the city was taken.

All that remained was, if possible, to reach De Rushton, before the tide of war should sweep that way. Fortunately a saddled horse was tied at the door of a house at hand; it had belonged to one of the domestics, who had been despatched on several errands that day to the more distant parts of the city, and leaping up, Chrysolaras rode like a madman to Port Fanar.

He reached it as that wild cry came rolling there.

"All's lost, De Rushton."

"Where is the Emperor?"

"I don't know—I saw him wounded—he was borne off by the crowd. Save yourself!"

"Save yourselves, Varangians!" shouted De Rushton. "Form in square—stand together—and they will presently give quarter!"

But commands were useless. East, west, and north, the Christians scattered; the Turks poured in in tolerably good order, and soon joined their brethren who had entered by the breach of S. Romanus.

"To Phranza's house," said Sir Edward, seeing this to be case. "We can hide in the gardens!"

Keeping in the van of the crowd, they sped forward for life and liberty: but they were forced to turn and wind so often, that it was fully a quarter of an hour before they could emerge near the palace, and then, to their dismay, they found a multitude of Turks already pouring into it.

Scarcely had the gate been fairly forced, when Zosimus with Walid and his party were hurrying forward to Phranza's house. They met with no obstruction, being so far in front of the tide of war;—and on arriving at the *metœcia*, found every door wide open, as if all the inhabitants had made their escape.

While they are pressing on under the directions of Zosimus, we will return to the icehouse in order to see what its tenants have been doing.

For some time after the departure of Manuel and the steward, no unusual sound was to be heard. The



roar of the cannon still continued, indeed, but did not increase, or rather began to slacken.

"Do you not think," inquired Theodora, "that the firing is less sustained than it was some half-hour ago?"

"It seems to me so," replied the Lady Choniatis; "God grant it be a happy omen!"

"For my part," said Euphrasia, "I cannot but hope that God would never have stirred up the heart of Constantine to such a brave defence, had He not intended finally to crown it with success."

"At all events," replied Theodora, "let us hope; and, if the day goes against the city, let us pray that our dear ones may escape the ruin."

"There can be no doubt at all about the matter, now," cried Euphrasia, a few minutes afterwards, "the firing has ceased altogether."

"Hush!" cried Theodora; "Hush! there are steps!"

As she spoke, a slow feeble tread was heard on the stairs leading down to the icehouse;—and then a knocking at the door.

"Lady! lady!" cried the voice of Barlaam, "good news!—The Turks are retreating!"

The door was thrown open immediately.

"Are you sure, Barlaam?—Are you quite certain?" burst from every one.

"Most certain," replied he;—"I was even now in the second court of the palace, when the Lord Curopalata entered on some errand from the Emperor; and he told me they were in full retreat from the north side;—and he was but just from the wall himself."

"Now God be praised!"

"God be praised indeed," cried Barlaam, "for this is far more than I had expected,—or than any one else did!—Hear you not, too, that the cannonade is almost entirely at an end?"

"I do indeed," replied Theodora.

"It might be as well," said the old man, "neverthe-

less, that you confined yourselves a little longer to this icehouse;—too much care can do no harm.”

“We will stay, we will stay, Barlaam; but we need not go back again just this moment.—It is like being buried alive.”

“Keep near the place,” said he, “however.”

They did so; and the steward again went into the court. Even after their short confinement, the change from the chilly darkness of their prison to the blue sky and summer air was delicious;—and they stood enjoying it and conversing together for perhaps a quarter of an hour.

“Do you not think,” Theodora asked at length, “that the shouting to the north is louder?”

“No:—is it?” said Maria Choniatis.

Before another word could be spoken, the thunder of the final assault had begun round the city. The terrified girls, dismayed at a roar of artillery far louder than they had ever yet known, flew back into their hiding place: they locked the door,—and clung to each other as if seeking protection and comfort. Presently, the steps of Barlaam were heard coming down the stairs.

“Lady!” cried he, “make up your minds to the worst.—The Janissaries are being led on by the Sultan himself.—They say nothing can resist them.—I may not be able to come to you again. God preserve you!”

## CHAPTER XLII.

“ For all the fiends that tenant nether hell  
Are loosed, and work abroad.”

*The Silver Age.*

ANNA PATELLARI had spent the night in restless misery. It was not that she feared so much for herself;—death she would have welcomed but too gladly;—from dishonour she doubted not that her husband's name alone would protect her. But she returned again and again, with cruel pertinacity, to the idea, that, but for his arms and counsels, the city would not have been reduced to such tremendous straits,—that his name was never mentioned in Constantinople without a curse,—that she was regarded for his sake with scorn and detestation, that whether the defenders or the assailants of the city prevailed, she must be equally an outcast, equally miserable.—She had fallen into a broken sleep, when the roar of the assault aroused her to the consciousness that the crisis of the city was come. She rose directly;—refused all offers of refreshment from Barlaam; and, as the morning wore on, she determined, in impatience of the event, to go forth into the streets. She did so,—and they were nearly deserted;—the one or two women that she saw were hastening to the Great Church, and thither, almost instinctively, she also bent her way.

As she drew nearer to S. Sophia, the crowd thickened; women of all ranks and ages, and from all quarters of the city, were pouring up the western steps, and entering the magnificent porch.—At the

foot of Constantine's pillar, whether from a fanatical feeling, or from pure chance, a poor man was seated, and scarcely any passed him without thinking that it was he to whom the Angel of the LORD would give the sword of deliverance, and bid him to exterminate the host of the unbelievers.

Anna, who had all the excitableness of her countrywomen in its full extent, began to catch the infection of terror,—and to share also in the confidence that in the Church alone would she be safe.—She resolved on entering too, and there awaiting the crisis;—and with eager, yet trembling feet, she ascended the fatal steps.

It seemed as though a judicial infatuation had fallen on the city. Never, perhaps, was so much beauty before assembled in one place. The long dark hair and full black eye, and statue-like loveliness of the Chian or Lesbian maidens; the more fragile form and more languishing features of the high-born lady of Constantinople;—the auburn ringlets, and Saxon charms of the Circassian:—the commanding stature, and clear dark complexion, and proud bearing of Albanian or Acarnanian beauty. Nave, choir, galleries,—all full; the Holy of Holies alone gave sanctuary to two or three Bishops, and to some of the Priests;—the Primitivus, the Sacristan, the Great Economist, the Charophylax, the Master of the Ceremonies, and several other dignitaries of S. Sophia;—a few less known ecclesiastics were also there; but it was remarked with some surprise, that Gennadius was not among them.

“But he is helping us with his intercessions,” so it was whispered round, “though he is absent in body;—his prayers can ascend to the throne of GOD, as well from his cell in the Studium as from the soleas<sup>1</sup> of the Great Church.” And the wild feeling of security grew stronger;—the moment when the Turks

<sup>1</sup> The soleas, according to the most probable opinion, was that part of the bema, or Holy of holies, which projected beyond the iconostasis, or altar screen, and which was distinguished from the rest of the Church only by its elevation.

should enter was eagerly longed for;—every heart beat high in the expectation of certain succour;—and those who were posted in the gallery of the Narthex fixed their eyes steadfastly on the pillar of Constantine, that they might announce the joyful tidings of the angel's descent.

The massy walls and gates of S. Sophia deadened, in a great degree, the uproar and violence of the assault;—and yet, from time to time, some heavier burst of artillery, or louder shout, carried terror even thither. Towards mid-day, however, all seemed quieter;—and hope again began to take possession of some hearts, that the former part of Gennadius's prophecy would be unaccomplished, that Constantinople would be spared, like a second Nineveh, on its repentance; and that the deliverance of the city might be effected by natural means rather than by a supernatural interposition.

It was not long, however, before the last assault of the Janissaries, the thunder of which seemed to shake the massy fabric of that august temple, dispersed such thoughts.—The vast multitude fell on their knees, imploring the mercy of GOD, and the intercession of the Panaghia;—and as the noise grew louder and more incessant, wails, sobs, and shrieks burst from some of the fainter hearted.

“Fear not! fear not!” cried others;—“we are safe; we must be safe, Gennadius has said it;—a hair of our heads cannot perish!”

Presently, those who were in the western gallery, and among them was Maria, beheld a crowd of fugitives pouring into the square of Constantine.

“They are flying! they are flying! the Turks! the Turks!—Holy Mother of GOD! The Turks are in the city!—Bar the doors! bar the doors!”

The women who stood nearest to the silver gates attempted to bar them, but the massy fastenings were far too heavy for their arms. Several of the Priests advanced; and, through their superior knowledge of

the bolt-work, and greater strength, the door was secured.

In the square there were none but men; driven hither and thither, slaughtered like sheep, crying in vain for mercy, uttering doleful shrieks, cut down by the scymetar, or felled by the heavy mace. Their shrieks were prolonged or re-echoed from the gallery.

“The angel comes not!”

“They are in the place of Constantine!”

“How long, O LORD, how long?”

“Merciful Panaghia!”

Terror began to heighten, but confidence did not yet wholly vanish.

“He will come! he will come yet!”

“But they are pushing past the Column!”

“He only tarries.”

“It is our want of faith.”

“He will come, notwithstanding!”

“Is the sky clear?”

“What is that shout?”

An awful one for those that had fooled away their chance of escape.

“*La illah illa Allah!* To the Great Church! To the Great Church! *Mahommed resoul Allah!* To the Church!”

“They are rushing up the steps,” was shrieked from the gallery.

“Merciful God!”

“Oh that the angel would appear!”

“He will never come.”

“He *will* come.”

“Pickaxes and crows!” from without; “pickaxes and crows! *La illah illa Allah!* Run to S. Romanus! Run to the Fanar!—They have barred the door—pickaxes! pickaxes! bars! bars!”

Wild confusion in the interior. Doleful shrieks—mutual reproaches—curses on Gennadius—faint efforts at believing that help tarried—a lamentable chaos of cries.

“What shall I do?”

“What will become of us?”

“Let us get up into the dome!”

“Impossible!”

“Into the Emperor’s vaults!”

“It will only be the surer destruction.”

“Holy Mother of GOD! They are breaking in the doors!”

“This way! This way! Pass them hand over hand! Pickaxes this way!—Tear off the hinges! Beat in the panels! By the Flight! it is pure silver! Stand back! stand back! room! room!”

Crash, crash came the iron bars on the richly wrought plates of silver that clenched the cedar doors. Those that were on the other side started back;—the crowd pushed forwards towards the Holy of Holies;—the holy doors of the screen were opened: women clung round the altar itself,—nuns clasped the pillars of the dome that hung above it. Bishops and senators knelt by the side of the lowest of the people; many thronged up the gallery stairs, thereby adding to the dreadful press that already filled them; and still the shouts came louder from without, and the blows fell heavier on the doors.

Anna Patellari stood nearly in the midst of the church, trembling with agitation, and bitterly ruing the folly which had tempted her from the comparative security of Phranza’s mansion. A thousand fears came over her mind,—that she would not be heard,—that she would not be believed,—that she might be carried off without regard to her protestations, and her subsequent silence be secured by her death.

One tremendous crash,—and the doors fell in.

Who can describe the scene that followed? Hundreds by hundreds of Infidels pouring into the already over-crammed church; fair girls, who had scarcely left their father’s mansions but for the carpets and hangings of the palace, or for the silver lattice work of the women’s gallery in the church, in the grasp of Bulga-

rian or Anatolian, Janissary, or officer; sweet faces, that had never been more rudely visited than by a father's or a mother's kiss, now despoiled of the long silk veil, insultingly gazed on,—in cases of resistance struck with no light hand;—arms, that had never felt a heavier chain than the bracelet of diamonds, bound tightly together by the girdle or the veil;—gentle forms, accustomed only to the bed of down or the gemmed litter, thrown over the bloody shoulder of some gigantic infidel, and borne from the church, while sobs, curses, useless prayers for mercy, wild and piercing shrieks filled the dome, and seemed to cry for vengeance from the judgment-seat of God.

“You are my captive!” cried a Janissary, clutching the shoulder of Anna Patellari,—and at the same time tearing off her veil, to serve as a cord for binding her arms.

“I am Leontius's wife! I am Leontius's wife!” sobbed poor Anna.

“By the Holy Flight,” laughed the soldier, “then he must get another.—Come, come!”—And he was raising her, in spite of all her struggles, in his arms, when the Archbishop of Chalcedon, who had been made prisoner, and was now tightly bound with cords, being dragged to the door, passed her,—and attempted to save her.—“Soldiers,” said he, “if you touch her, it will be at your peril!—She is the wife of the Lord Leontius, the favourite of the Sultan!”

“By the Thirty-seven thousand Prophets, then,” said the man, “she shall tell no tales!”

“But others may,” said the prelate.

“Take me to the palace! Send for Leontius! I will give you jewels,—gold,—anything!—only save me, and take me there!”

The Janissary paused, and debated the matter with himself. Avarice prevailed.

“Well,” said he, “I will take you there—if you are his wife, well and good—if not—come along at once.”



He unbound her arms, however ; for there was something in the manner of the Archbishop of Chalcedon that told him he was speaking truth. " You must show me the way, though, for, by Mecca, it is a large city ! "

As they were passing out at the silver gates, a tall brawny Croat, dripping with Greek blood, and with a deep hideous scar over his own brow, still bleeding, passed them, carrying off Maria, whose struggles were so violent that, immensely strong though he was, he had tied her feet as well as her hands, and even so had some difficulty in carrying her with both arms.

" Oh, save me ! save me ! " shrieked the poor girl, recognizing Anna. And as the Croat descended the western steps, still she could hear the same agonizing cry, waxing fainter and fainter in the distance. " Oh, save me ! save me ! "

## CHAPTER XLIII.

“ Hold, daughter ! I do spy a kind of hope  
Which craves as desperate an execution  
As that is desperate which we would prevent.”

*Romeo and Juliet.*

“ Now then, lead on,” cried the captain of the little party that was under the direction of Zosimus, as the first roar of the sack was somewhat lulling, as the shrieks were less piercing or better stifled, and as quarter was being offered and accepted.

“ I will,” replied the slave with a trembling voice. “ But remember that, if you lose me, you lose all clue to your object.”

“ Never fear, never fear,” cried Walid, for that was the name of the leader. “ Your miserable carcass is safe enough. To-day is not for such as you. Lead us on.”

The walls towards the Horn, where so lately that tremendous struggle had been carrying on, were now silent and deserted. Brave Nicephorus Spartalides lay at the side of his newest petrarria, calm and still ; the first time for many a long day. The undischarged machine showed that the Turks were on him before he knew that the city was taken. Following the course of the ramparts, slippery here and there with blood, and in some places almost blocked up with corpses, the party, which consisted of twelve men, hurried onward to the palace. But, when they came to the garden gate, the ruinous walls, the heaps of

paving stones torn up and ready for use, and the varied wreck of terrible and desperate defence, made further passage next to impossible.

"I must lead you round by S. Sophia," said Zosimus.

"Quick then," cried Walid: "or others will be beforehand with us."

They struck down then into one of the narrow streets which ran behind, and parallel with, the palace wall. Here and there they passed a bleeding corpse,—the victim of the sack, not of the battle;—here and there a wild shriek rang out from some of the houses, where a door burst in and a shattered shutter showed that pillage and rapine were doing their work. And still, as they went, rose a great roar from the city, a Babel of all frightful sounds, amidst which might sometimes be distinguished the notes of a trumpet, a solitary cannon, or a loud cheer. Once they met a drove—it is the only word that can express the thing—of the captives,—nuns, tradesmen, daughters of the high court-officers, priests, all yoked together, all goaded forward by the Janissaries, all hurrying on to their fate.

But when they came to the great square of Saint Sophia, every inch was thronged with a vast, yet orderly multitude. It needed no second glance to show that the Sultan was there in person. Struggling onwards through the press, the party of Zosimus had soon approached the great western doors. There sat Mahomet on the same horse which had borne him through the day: Pashas, Imaums, and Janissaries were grouped round him: a costly wreck of pictures, and jewelled crosses, and chalices, and priestly vestments, lay by the Silver Gates: soldiers were pouring into the huge pile,—the sanctuary desecrated,—the altar already overthrown,—carpenters and blacksmiths beating down the great iconostasis, the glory of Byzantine Art: a thousand profane hands and tongues polluting the very place where, only a few short hours

before, the Christian Sacrifice had been offered, and Constantine and his little band of warriors had commemorated Him as a SAVIOUR into whose presence they had now passed as a Judge.

Near, but rather behind, the Sultan, was a company of prisoners:—two of them men of the first importance,—Lucas Notaras and George Phranza. Of the rest, in whom he was more particularly interested, Zosimus could see none. De Rushton, Choniates, Chrysolaras,—where were they?

“Ha!” cried Mahomet, in answer to the report of some Pasha who spurred up with intelligence,—“that is news indeed! Say you so? Where is it? Where is it?”

At the same time the crowd to the south-west of the square struggled this way and that way to open a pass. A stillness came over the whole multitude.

“Hush! it is the Emperor!”

“Make way! Make way!”

“Back! back! Give room!”

On a rude kind of litter, six sturdy men bore a corpse right onward to the Sultan. It had been stripped of whatever armour it might have worn:—the upper cloak had been rudely torn away: the figure was that of a man of some fifty years of age: the face, kind and commanding even in death, wore the sharp expression of anguish which is always consequent on a steel wound. The litter is set down; and one of the bearers says briefly,

“May it please your Majesty, it is the Emperor.”

Mahomet turned to the captives. “Some of you must have known Constantine,” he said: “was this he?”

Phranza stepped forward.

“Sire,” he said, “this is none other than he who, two short hours ago, was an Emperor. The golden eagles on his shoes are sufficient to tell the whole world as much—but *we* shall never forget his face. God rest his soul!” he added, as he threw himself on

his knees and wept bitterly: "he has died like a Cæsar and like a Martyr!"

"Let his body," said Mahomet, after a pause, "be taken honourable care of till we can order his funeral. We do not war with the dead. Now follow me!" And attended by the chief Pashas, he dismounted from his horse, and entered S. Sophia.

"Now then, on!" said Zosimus. And putting himself at the head of his party, with some little difficulty they traversed the square, and approached the entrance to the palace. But then, "Back! back!" was shouted by the gigantic Janissaries who already stood as its guard.

"It is a servant of the Lord Leontius," said Walid.

"It may be a servant of the Prophet's, for aught I know," replied a Janissary: "but, by the Flight, if he comes one step nearer, he shall go to join his master."

"It matters not," said Zosimus, in a low voice. "I can lead you in by a safer way."

Keeping then to the right, they pressed forward to the *stable gate*. The sun, though it was at the end of May, was beginning to get low; the streets were already in shade; the outcry and uproar had become duller and deader; passion and hate had in some degree done their work; and meeting but a few straggling soldiers, the party came in front of the gate to which Zosimus was directing them. It was barred and bolted; but there was no guard; and forcing the wicket, they easily entered into the precincts of the Palace.

"Now be careful," said the slave. "I will take you straight to the very place; the rest must be your business."

As he spoke, they turned a corner of the buildings. The trees of Phranza's garden were quiet in the evening twilight; a rich yellow seemed to sleep on their topmost branches; one wall,—one weak door, is all that intervenes between the pursuers and their victims.

“Zosimus!” shouted a voice from the window of the *metœcia* to the left.

The slave looked up and saw Burstow; at the very same moment there was a flash,—a report,—and Zosimus had passed to his account.

“After him! after him!” cried Walid. Several of the soldiers tried to find an entrance into the *metœcia*; the rest gathered round their guide, and strove to raise him.

“It is useless!” said the captain. “The man is as dead as Ali. This is a bad day’s work for us. How are we to go on?”

“We have no chance of succeeding now,” cried one of the men.

“We must back to Leontius instantly,” said Walid. “He may have some clue that we have not. But let us first get the man that fired the shot.”

A wise resolve; but not so easily executed. Some time was lost in breaking into the *metœcia*: more, in scouring its passages: no promises or threats could then hinder the soldiers from helping themselves to the moveable pillage: and when Walid had again got his men together, they learnt at S. Sophia that Leontius had been despatched to the Tower of S. Romanus, for the purpose of preserving some degree of order, and of providing for the safety of the public buildings. By the time that Walid had reached the house in which the renegade nobleman was reported to be, the sun had set. At that same moment, from the roof of S. Sophia, the muezzins made their first proclamation, “There is no God but GOD, and Mahomet is the Prophet of GOD! Come to prayer! Come to prayer!”

## CHAPTER XLIV.

“That galley was their fate : the waves, though rough,  
Were gentler than the foe ;—so on they bore  
As one that sought a harbour, not the deep.”

*A Fair Quarrel.*

BURSTOW was standing by Sir Edward de Rushton at the moment in which it was quite plain that the city was won. “If we do not save ourselves,” said he, “we have no hope for the rest.”

“You are right,” said De Rushton : “but the Emperor first.”

At that moment a wild shout passed along the fugitives.

“Constantine is down !” cried Lucas Notaras, as he was borne along the crowd.

“Save yourself, De Rushton !” said the Great Drungaire, rushing past him as he spoke. “I saw the Emperor fall.”

“We cannot save *him*, my lord, and we may *them*,” said Burstow.

Guided by the Varangian, to whom every lane and alley and blind court of the city was known, they sped forward across its utmost width—diving through this court, turning through that passage,—scaling this partition wall. Three long miles they had to pass : and twenty minutes served to set them, panting and exhausted, before the gate of the palace. The hurricane of the invaders was still far, far behind : and here, as yet, all was peace.

“All’s lost, Barlaam,” said Burstow, as they met

the old man at the entrance to the *metœcia*. "Now, my lord, you go to the ice-house—leave me to bring you news. You may be everything to them,—and I can do the work best alone."

"Open the door! open the door! it is I!" cried Sir Edward, from the outside of the ice-house.

Who can describe the terrors of those two next hours? By Sir Edward's desire, Theodora and her companions concealed themselves in the remotest corner; he himself and Barlaam remained close to the door, in order that, if a party of plunderers should burst in, they might be the only prisoners or the only victims. Even into those dark cold vaults the cry of the sacked city penetrated; sometimes louder, sometimes fainter,—till at length it seemed that a certain degree of order was restored within the precincts of the palace,—and the little light that the ice-house admitted began to grow dimmer.

"Take courage, dearest," said Sir Edward. "I trust that the great danger is over. No doubt the Sultan will take up his quarters here as soon as possible, and then all these gardens will be held sacred."

"And then—?" inquired Theodora.

"And then," said her husband, "we must take counsel whether there be any chance of escape otherwise, or whether we must throw ourselves on the Sultan's mercy—for without mercy he is not—and crave to be ransomed. But we will give Burstow till dusk; if he fails us then, I myself must go out.

So in few broken sentences of hope or fear the time passed on. Now it was quite dark within; and by applying his eye to the key-hole, Sir Edward could see that twilight had come down without.

Just as he was about to venture forth himself, a quick, but rather heavy step came along as from the *metœcia*: and then Burstow's voice—"Quick! let me in!"

Dark as it was, there was light enough to make De Rushton and Barlaam start at the disguise of their



companion. He wore the long loose robes of a Derwish—such as those which even now flit about the gardens and corridors of the *Merlevi Khaneh* in Mahometan Constantinople. Under his arm he bore a huge parcel, which he flung on the ground, and forthwith began to uncord.

“Now, my lord,” said he, there is not a moment to lose. If we can pass in any disguise, we can in this. Here are four dresses: the Lady de Rushton and the rest must put them on without a moment’s delay, and so must you. The Genoese and Venetian vessels are even now sailing from the Horn. I have promised a fellow at the garden gate one hundred amuraths if he will put us aboard,—and I think I can trust him.”

“Have you heard of my father?” said Theodora, with a trembling voice.

“He is a prisoner, lady, but unharmed. I have heard nothing of the Lord Chrysolaras; and I think I should have heard, had any ill tidings been known.”

“And my husband?” inquired the Lady Choniatis.

“And the Exarch,” returned Burstow, after a short pause, “is well, to my certain knowledge. But I will pray you to be quick. I am pretty sure,” he continued in a lower voice to Sir Edward, “that we did Zosimus no wrong by our suspicions. But, whether or not, he will do us no more.”

“How is that?” inquired De Rushton.

Burstow related the fate of the traitor. “Now, my lord,” he said, “I know not what ready money or jewels you have with you; but you will want all. The Genoese ships are the only means of escape; and they ask prices for passage that are enough to ruin an emperor.”

“My wife has jewels with her, amply enough to pay for all.”

“I know not that, my lord. But if it be otherwise, leave me to my fate. I never thought to have survived this morning; and I would not, but that I knew I might be useful here.”

"No, Burstow," replied the Great Acolyth: "please God, we will all be saved together. But how did you mean," he added, almost in a whisper, "that the Exarch was well to your certain knowledge?"

"Why so he is, my lord. I saw him fall myself between the walls; and, Single-Processionist though he were, I will not doubt that he who dies for Christendom dies a martyr."

"Poor Choniates!" said De Rushton. "And Chrysolaras?"

"Nay, there I told the simple truth," replied Burstow. "I know nothing of him; yet I have heard the names of all the great prisoners, and have seen most of them: for this dress will take me anywhere."

It was soon put on by all. "Now," continued the Varangian, "whatever happens, keep silence, and leave me to speak. There are some of this sect under a vow of silence, so that you may well pass; only keep close to me, and let me explain all."

Through that lovely and still beautiful garden, now trodden by them for the last time,—through the western gate of the palace,—along the outer terraces,—and not a single hindrance to their passage. Lights gleamed from some of the metœciæ,—a stream of officers was pouring in through that which had been the principal entrance of the Cæsars,—wild cries, but now principally of horrid mirth and revelry, still rose from the City,—a bright glare here and there towards the north, the reflection of some accidental or malicious fire; but unharmed, and almost uninterrupted, they reached what now is the Yali Kiosk, close to the Golden Horn. Here there was a guard of five or six soldiers.

"Leave the talking to me," said Burstow again: "there is no real danger, if we only keep our own counsel."

"No one passes this way," said the corporal of the guard.

"Allah is great," began Burstow, in a low key,

waking up his tone as he went on into something between a screech and a howl,—“and the servants of Allah are great also. For this we have waited, for this we have watched, for this we have prayed, and now we have seen the Commander of the Faithful seated in the palace of the last of the Cæsars. Let be! Let be!—Allah’s servants shall pass where there is no egress for other men: woe be to him that opposes their going out and their coming in! woe be to him——”

“Better let them pass, Hassan,” said one of the soldiers. “They did good service yesterday.”

“Pass on, then,” said the corporal; “but, by the Thirty-seven thousand Prophets, you shall find it easier to get out than to come in.”

Drawing their hoods as tightly as possible over their heads, the two fair girls and the Lady Choniatis followed Burstow: Sir Edward came last. And there before them lay the Horn—how different a sight from that of the morning, and yet how beautiful! Six Genoese or Venetian galleys were standing out to sea; even from the shore their crowded decks were distinctly visible;—the sails, seen from the west, were snow-white against the evening sky: and beyond rose the domes and walls of Galata, from which the Genoese flag was still floating. It was well that the fugitives knew not the full meaning of that hubbub of sounds which came over the water from the north-west. There the last vessel was weighing anchor: a crowd lined the beach, pushing, struggling, agonising forward to the only remaining means of safety: everything forgotten but the preservation of self or family; mothers with frantic shrieks imploring the captain, for the love of the Panaghia, for the mercy of God, for the Wounds of CHRIST, to take them on board—to take their daughters and leave themselves—to take but one daughter, the fairest of the flock; men frantically endeavouring to scale the sides, and pushed down by the sailors with boat-hooks; a guard with

drawn swords defending the passage on to the narrow plank, across which lay the highly favoured few; multitudes turning away in silent agony, others shrieking in despair; all homeless, houseless victims at their pleasure to the savage hordes who held unbridled riot that night in Constantinople.

At the point of the Horn where they were now passing, the contest had been furious; and many a mangled corpse gave token how well the city's defenders had here done their duty. Here and there some of the lowest camp followers were prowling about, and stripping the dead; but still not a soldier, much less a man of any rank, to be seen.

"Burstow," said Sir Edward, "look you to the Lady Euphrasia; I will take care of the Lady Choniatis, and of my wife."

"I will, my lord; and now, by our Lady's Grace, we shall soon be at the place."

Along the extent of the beach, as far as eye could reach, there was but one other boat beside that which lay off the stairs of the Garden gate. The other was anchored some distance to the north.

"Now, my man," said Burstow.

"Wait a minute," said the renegade Greek to whom it belonged. "The money first, or I put not out this evening."

"One hundred amuraths," said Sir Edward, with difficulty suppressing his indignation; "here they are."

At this moment a party of Turkish soldiers were seen advancing from the north—an officer, apparently of rank, moving a little before them. Burstow's quick eye instantly recognised Leontius.

"I said so," replied the boatman, "but prices have risen since; and now you pay two hundred, or you set no foot aboard."

"I will," said De Rushton, "but not one farthing more: and mark you, sirrah, unless you receive us at once, I will inform against you to yonder officer, whoever he is. If we perish, so shall you too."

The argument seemed to have its effect. The boat was laid alongside: Theodora had stepped in, Maria Choniatis was following, when Euphrasia happened to look at the line of prisoners who were accompanying the advancing party, and forgetful of her disguise, exclaimed :

“Manuel ! Manuel !”

“By Mahomet !” cried Leontius, “that is no Der-vish ! Seize all the party !”

There was a short, sharp struggle. Barlaam was unarmed, and fell at the first onset ; De Rushton and Burstow might easily have saved themselves, would they have relinquished Euphrasia : it was for her they fought. Manuel, a fettered prisoner, could only look on. A few minutes settled the conflict. Euphrasia was torn away, and ridding themselves of one or two of their foremost opponents, the Great Acolyth and the Varangian leaped into the boat, and pushed off.

“By heavens,” cried Leontius, as Theodora, in her eagerness, let her hood fall, “it is Theodora Phranza ! Five thousand amuraths to the man that takes them ! There is yet a boat !”

It needed no second offer. Four of the most active soldiers threw themselves into it, and pulled off.

“Burstow,” said Sir Edward, “take an oar—give me the other.—Now, slave, row for your life : for I am very sure that, if they come up with us, that moment is your last. Burstow, for GOD’S sake, if you ever tried at a thing, try now !”

Deck, cabins, hold, forecastle, of the *Pearl of the Adriatic* were all crowded : here a mother pressing the baby to her breast—all that remained to her from a wealthy and happy home :—here a wife clinging to her husband’s neck, frantic from the loss of her family :—here a sturdy man, his hat pulled down over his eyes, and his whole frame strongly convulsing,—here a girl,—almost thrust on board, and left a stranger in an unknown world. By the helm stood three or four knights in low, sad talk : an ecclesiastic was among

them,—to whom each would now and then turn with deference to hear or to offer a remark.

“By the Holy Face of Lucca!” cried the captain, “here is another boat!—Do the fools think that we have room for an ounce more on board?”

It was as he said. A small boat was bearing right onwards to the galley, rowed with main strength, but with little skill. There were three rowers;—and two ladies were the freight. But not fifty yards behind another boat was seen in full pursuit, the waves foaming beneath the efforts of her four rowers, while there were shouts and cheers from a small party on the shore.

“There is something more than usual in this,” said Cardinal Isidore,—for the ecclesiastic was none other than he. “Take them on board, for God’s love, Captain!”

“Not I,” said the Captain:—“the Pearl should not take another passenger for all the wealth of Venice.”

“Galley a-hoy!” shouted Burstow. “Passengers!”

“The foul fiend take you!” roared the captain in answer.

“Five thousand crowns for a passage to Venice!” cried Sir Edward.

“Not if you offered fifty thousand,” said the captain. “Beggary knaves, I dare say!”

“By S. Mary,” said Cardinal Isidore, “it is Sir Edward de Rushton.—Sir captain, this must not be. Gentlemen, you will not allow it.”

“So it is, by S. George,” cried Sir Maurice D’Argenson, one of the best French lances in the siege. “Look ye, captain: lie-to, or my dagger and your breast shall become better acquainted.”

“If I must, I must,” replied the captain: “but I will have the money somehow.”

The galley lay-to, but not a whit did the Turks relax their pursuit. The boat is under the vessel’s side, when the pursuers are upon it.

“Your hand, lady!” cried D’Argenson. “Keep the dogs off one second, De Rushton, and you are safe.”

The Great Acolyth and Burstow grappled with their assailants. Theodora was pulled up with main force, and then Maria Choniatis.

“Now then!” cried D’Argenson, leaping into the boat, and discharging a furious blow on one of the Turks.

But these had no fancy for a hopeless conflict. They pulled off, and then, exhausted and fainting, lay to on their oars.

“And so they are lost after all,” sobbed Theodora, as soon as the first wild burst of joy at her own deliverance was over.

All that the Historian can further relate, is contained in the following documents. A letter :—

“Georgius Phranza, Great Protovestiare of the Empire, to the most excellent Sir Edward de Rushton, at his Castle of Rushton, in the Island called Britain, greeting.

“A messenger from your island, that has been charged with ransom, is waiting to return thither,—and by him, the august Sultan permitting, I also write. You shall know that, by the favour of my ever-potent master, I have not only ransomed myself by the revenues of my estates in Naxos, but have also set free the Lady Euphrasia Choniatis, and Manuel Chrysolaras, who had lost well nigh all in the siege. They were married in the winter, just before Apocreos,<sup>1</sup> and they propose to sail incontinently to England. Whether I shall ever behold my daughter again in this world, as yet I cannot say. I propose at present,

<sup>1</sup> Apocreos answers to our Sexagesima, and was so called from the fact that flesh was forbidden after that Sunday. Marriages also, though not strictly forbidden, were at least thought scarcely respectable.

under the Sultan's favour, to dwell at Hadrianople, where I shall draw up some short history of the reign of Constantine, and of the great siege. Our august Sovereign tolerates the Orthodox worship, and has promoted Gennadius to be Œcumenical Patriarch. I send my blessing to my daughter, and so bid you hearty farewell.

“From the Court, this sixth day of May, 1454.”

And a certificate :—

“Knowe alle menne that Constantine, sonne of Sir Edwarde de Russhetone, Knyghte, and the Ladye Theodora hys wyffe, was baptizyd by mee, John Tremlette, p'ish priest of Russhetone, thys viii day of November, the yere of our LORD GOD one thousand foure hundred and fifty-three.”





MAY, 1857.

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