

THE BATTLE OF LEPANTO.

(From *The Knights of St. John*, by E.H.T.)

THE terms were ratified; and on the morning of the 15th August, the Feast of the Assumption, Bragadino, according to agreement, proceeded with two of his officers and a small escort to the tent of the Turkish general to deliver up into his own hands the keys of the town. But no sooner had he entered the pavilion than he and his attendants were treacherously seized on some frivolous pretence; new conditions were imposed; and on the governor's remonstrating against the injustice of such proceedings, Mustapha ordered his companions to be beheaded on the spot before his eyes. Bragadino himself he condemned to a like fate: three times he compelled the noble Venetian to bow his head to receive the murderer's stroke, and as often—as though he would make his victim drink the bitter cup of torment drop by drop—arrested by a sign the executioner's arm. The tyrant had another and a more terrible death in store for one who had for so long defied his most furious efforts; and he contented himself for the present with ordering his captive's nose and ears to be cut off in his presence; which done, he had him loaded with chains, and cast, bleeding as he was, into a dungeon, tauntingly bidding him call now upon his Christ, for it was time that He should help him. Three hundred Christians who were in the camp were butchered in cold blood; the rest of the garrison and the unhappy townspeople, who were already on board the Turkish transports, were reduced to slavery; while the hostages sent into the Turkish quarters before the treaty was formally signed, among whom was Henry Martinengo, nephew of the Count, were subjected to barbarous mutilation. The fortifications were now ordered to be rebuilt; and the Turk compelled his noble prisoner to carry loads of earth upon his shoulders for the repair of the walls, and to kiss his feet each time he passed before him; and not yet satisfied with the indignities he heaped upon him, he had him hoisted up aloft on the yard-arm of a vessel in the harbor, where he kept him exposed for hours to the gaze and scoff of the infidels, and then suddenly plunged him into the sea. At last, after trampling him under foot, he doomed him to be flayed alive in the public square. The indomitable commander, who united in himself the resolute courage of a chivalrous soldier with the supernatural patience of a Christian martyr, amidst his untold agonies betrayed not a sign of pain, uttered not a murmur or a complaint against his torturers, but, as they stripped the skin from his quivering flesh, calmly prayed and recited aloud from time to time verses from the *Miserere* and other Psalms. When the Christians in the crowd heard him breathe the words, *Domine, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*,^{*} they thought he was rendering up his life to God; but there followed in tender accents—as if to show Whose sufferings in that hour of agony were most present to his thoughts, and Whose meek and loving spirit filled his inflexible and dauntless soul—*Pater, dimitte illis; non enim sciunt quid faciunt*;[†] and with this prayer for mercy on his tormentors the brave soldier of Christ passed to receive the martyr's palm. But Turkish malice was not even yet exhausted. Mustapha caused the brave man's body to be cut into four quarters, and each to be attached to the muzzle of the largest guns. His skin was stuffed with straw, and, together with a representation of our Divine Lord and His adorable Passion, paraded through the camp and through the town fastened on the back of a cow. Finally, he despatched both figures as trophies to the Sultan his master, with the head of Bragadino and those of the two murdered commanders. At Constantinople, the skin of the heroic martyr was hung up as a spectacle for the Christian galley-slaves.[‡]

After the fall of Famagosta further resistance was impossible; indeed (to their everlasting shame be it written), the Greek population of the island sided actively with the invaders, and, in their obstinate blindness, not knowing what they did, delivered themselves up to the degrading dominion of the Turks. Everywhere the most frightful scenes were enacted: the Mussulman soldiery broke into the wine-cellars, and, maddened with drink, indulged in orgies too revolting for description. By the command of the renegade Mustapha the tombs of the dead were opened, and their contents scattered to the winds; the images and pictures of the saints were demolished; the churches defiled with abominations so loathsome that the pen of the historian refuses to record them. Friday the 17th of August, the day on which the noble Bragadino suffered, was set apart for the deliberate perpetration of horrors which rivalled in foulness and atrocity the infamous mysteries of Venus, and the bloody rites at which pagans offered sacrifices of human victims to the devils whom they worshipped. A few days after, Lala Mustapha made his triumphal entry into Constantinople with the spoils of a conquest which had cost him 50,000 men.

During the dreadful scenes which accompanied the fall of Cyprus, there were not wanting many who displayed a spirit worthy of the best days of Christendom. F. Angelo Calepius, a member of the Dominican order, has left an interesting and valuable narrative of the taking of Nicosia of which place he was a native. He himself played a distinguished part in its defence; for during the seven weeks of siege which preceded the entrance of the Turks, he was unwearied in his efforts to rouse the inhabitants to an heroic resistance in the cause of liberty and faith. In spite of the continual fire of the enemy, Calepius was to be seen everywhere, attending to the wounded and dying, and encouraging the harrassed and disheartened combatants. When at length the place surrendered, and was abandoned for three days to pillage and slaughter, the zeal and devotion of this excellent man displayed itself under the very swords of the infidels. The streets were flowing with blood; yet wherever the danger was greatest and the heaps of dead and dying lay the thickest, Father Angelo might be

seen, regardless of the ferocious soldiery who surrounded him, administering the consolations of religion to their victims, and endeavoring to comfort them in that dreadful hour by the power of his words and of his very presence.

Among those whose murder in cold blood he was obliged to witness, was his mother, Lucretia Calepia, and almost all his relatives, with numbers of the clergy and his fellow religious; yet the thought of flight or concealment never seemed to suggest itself to him amid scenes which, with all their horrors, offered him a field for his labors in defence of the faith and in aid of his brethren. "He was," says Echard, "a constant champion and defender of the Christian faith." But at length his own turn came: he was seized, stripped of his religious habit, and placed, loaded with chains, among the other captives. After passing through many hands, he was finally purchased by Osma, the captain of a Turkish galley, and carried by him to Constantinople. Before long, however, Angelo so far won the good graces of his master, that he was no longer treated as a slave; he was even suffered to sit at the same table, and permitted to go through the city whenever he desired without restraint, the only condition being exacted from him being, that he should not leave the walls. He had no temptation to do so; for the sole use he made of his liberty was to visit his fellow-captives, to console them in their sufferings, and strengthen them in the faith. There are some men who find their apostolate everywhere, and such was Calepius. True to the great instinct of his order, he was ready, like his great patriarch, "to save souls anywhere, and as many as he could." In those days the chains and scourges of the Moslems were a less terrible danger to their captives than the temptations to apostasy, with which they were careful to surround them. Men needed a living and a lively faith to be able constantly to persevere in the most appalling sufferings, when a few words would purchase for them ease, liberty, and often the highest rank in the sultan's service—for many of the most distinguished commanders were Christian renegades; and Calepius, who knew this, felt that no more fitting field of missionary labor could have been granted to him than he now found in the dungeons and bagnios of Constantinople, confirming his weak brethren, and sometimes winning back those who had strayed, to the profession of their faith.

Meanwhile his order had not forgotten him; his name had long been known in Rome, and Seraphin Cavalli, the general of the Dominicans, who had his liberation greatly at heart, succeeded at length in despatching four hundred gold crowns to Constantinople as the price of his ransom. Calepius was therefore free. He might have returned to Cyprus, or made his way to Rome, where he was sure of an honorable reception; but ease and honor were the last things of which he thought. He had chosen the damp vaults of the slave-prisons for the scene of his ministry, and without hesitation he determined on remaining at Constantinople, and sacrificing liberty, advancement, nay, life itself if need were, for the salvation of his brethren. So there he stayed, a beggar at the doors of the ambassadors and Christian merchants, carrying the alms he collected to the miserable objects of his charity, some of whom he was even enabled to set at liberty, rejoicing as he did so rather at the deliverance of their souls than the emancipation of their bodies. Many renegades were by his means recalled to the faith, and a far greater number preserved from falling. At length, however, his unwearied labors drew on him the jealousy of the Turks: he was forbidden to visit the slaves; but continuing to do so by stealth, he was at length formally accused of being a spy and an enemy to the Prophet. The charge was a capital one; and on the 3rd of February, 1572, he was again seized and thrown into a wretched dungeon. Calepius had never looked for any other result; and joyfully hailed what he thought was the approach of martyrdom, he prepared for death with his usual calmness. It was not so ordered, however; he had many friends, both among the ambassadors and even among the infidels themselves, and his release was at length procured, on the condition, not a little flattering to his influence and character, that he would instantly quit the Turkish dominions. It was useless to resist; and since he could no longer assist his captive brethren by his presence, he determined not the less to devote himself to their deliverance in another way. He passed over to Italy, and became there what he had already been in Constantinople—a beggar for the Christian slaves. Naples, Bologna, Florence, Milan, and Venice, and every other city whether the Cyprian refugees had retired, was visited by him in turns. He pleaded the cause of their countrymen with all the tenderness of a father, and represented their sufferings with so touching an eloquence, that he effectually roused every one to give according to his means. Another Dominican, by name Stephen de Lusignan, of the Royal house of Cyprus, joined him in his work; and together these two men were enabled to ransom great numbers of the captives, devoting their entire energies to this undertaking for many years.

It is at the end of De Lusignan's 'Universal History' that the two narratives of Calepius on the taking of Nicosia and Famagosta are inserted; and it is said that the publication of these memoirs became the means of exciting many to liberal alms on behalf of the sufferers. Some years afterwards Angelo was nominated by Gregory XIII. to the bishopric of Santarini, as a reward for his zeal and perseverance.

So was lost the fair isle of Cyprus to Venice and to Christian Europe: it passed under the dominion of the Mamometan, and to this day it remains subject to the same evil sway; a monument alike of the treacherous cruelty of the Turk and of the disastrous and faithless jealousies of Christian states and princes.

* Dr. Newman thus describes the effects of Turkish domination—"As to Cyprus, from holding a million of inhabitants, it now has only 30,000. Its climate was that of perpetual spring, now it is unwholesome and unpleasant; its cities and towns nearly touched each other, now they are simply ruins. Corn, wine, oil, sugar, and the metals are among its productions: the soil is still exceedingly rich; but now, according to Dr. Clarke, 'in that paradise of the Levant, agriculture is neglected, the inhabitants are oppressed, population is destroyed.'—*The Turks*, p. 149.

* "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

† "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

‡ It was afterwards stolen by a Christian slave and taken to Venice, where it was deposited in an urn in the church of St. John and St. Paul; the martyr's bones were also carefully collected, and buried in the church of St. Gregory.