

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines.

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THE HOLY LANCE.

THE Crusaders were themselves a miracle of human enthusiasm, and we need not wonder at the narrative of the miracles attendant on them which we find recorded by contemporary historians. Fanaticism was the main-spring of the first Crusades, and the fanaticism is closely allied to credulity and superstition. The spirit of the age in which they took place was favorable to the belief in superhuman manifestations; and the cause in which the Crusaders were embarked was deemed so peculiarly the cause of Heaven, that no Divine intervention in their behalf appeared too astounding for acceptance. It is in the first Crusade especially that we find most frequent instances of this their superstitious credulity and fanaticism for during it, the experienced rashness of the Christians oftenest brought them into straits from which nothing but the invigorating belief in the marked favour of Heaven in their behalf could have sufficed for their extrication. In the later Crusades we hear less of miracles, and more of warlike ability and knightly prowess: the old saying, that 'God helps them who help themselves,' found readier acceptance than the narratives of prodigies. Among the marvellous incidents recorded of the first Crusade, none were productive of such extraordinary and important results as the discovery of the Holy Lance—the story of which we have chosen as the subject of the following paper. The miracle and its attendant incidents will be found narrated at length in the work which we have used as our authority—the able and graphic 'Histoire des Croisades' by M. Michaud.

After a protracted siege of eight months, Antioch fell into the possession of the Crusaders by the treachery of one of its citizens. It was high time. An immense host, such as the East can alone raise; was fast approaching for its relief, under Kerbogha, sultan of Mossoul, a warrior grown grey in arms; and on the third day after its fall, the Mountain-slopes to the north were resplendent with the glittering armour of the Mussulman army, whose myriads soon covered the banks of the Orontes. The Crusaders had no time to revictual the city, and their foraging parties were quickly driven in, or cut to pieces by the Mussulman horse. Despite all the gallant efforts of their chiefs, they were unable to keep the field against their impetuous assailants; and in turn the Crusaders found themselves besieged in the taken city. The citadel of Antioch was still in the hands of the enemy; and the sorties of its garrison, combined with the assaults of the besiegers, placed the Christians, as it were, between two fires. But an enemy more dreadful still was already among them. Famine came, with all its attendant horrors. The chiefs themselves were soon involved in the surrounding misery. Godfrey, as long as any provisions remained with him, freely distributed them to the army, but at last the brave warrior had to sell his sole battle horse to procure the barest means of subsistence. The horses themselves were next killed for food, and roots and herbs were eagerly sought after and devoured by the famishing multitude. Despair seized on every heart, the people hid themselves in underground vaults, and shrank from meeting their fellows in the streets. Antioch was like a city of the dead or a place deserted by its inhabitants. The deepest silence reigned in its streets; and the stillness of the night was only broken by the clangour of the cymbal and kettle-drum from the Mussulman camp. Bohemond, left almost alone on the ramparts, strove in vain to rouse his men to defend themselves. Misery and despair had brought apathy: spiritless, almost motionless, they endured the daily-increasing assaults of the enemy, who now redoubled their efforts in proportion as the prize seemed nearer their grasp.

All seemed lost. But at this fearful crisis fanaticism again woke up in the Christian army, and when all else had failed, saved it, even at the eleventh hour. Weakness and misery had made them superstitious, and prodigies and miracles were not wanting to revive their enthusiasm, and fill them anew with the confidence of victory. A priest, passing the night in a church, had a celestial vision, in which the Saviour, moved by the tears of the Holy Virgin, promised once more to aid the cause of the Christians. A deserter from the city had been met and turned back by his brother, whom he had seen killed in battle at his side, who assured the Crusaders of coming victory; and who said that himself and the rest of the slain would rise up and combat in their ranks. To complete the general enthusiasm, Bartholemy, a priest of the south of France appeared before a council of the chiefs, and revealed to them how St. Andrew had appeared to him twice when asleep, and thus addressed him:—'Go to the church of my brother Peter at Antioch. Near the high altar you will find, on breaking ground, the iron head of the lance that pierced our redeemer's side. In three days that instrument of eternal safety will be revealed to the eyes of his disciples. The mysterious iron carried at the head of the army, will effect the deliverance of the Christians, and pierce the heart of the infidels. Adhemar Raymond, and the other chiefs believed, or feigned to believe, in the apparition: the report quickly spread through the army; and the soldiers said one to another that nothing was impossible to the God of the Chris-

tians. For three days the Christian host prepared themselves by fasting and prayer for the discovery of the holy lance.

On the morning of the third day, twelve Crusaders, chosen from among the most respectable of the clergy and knights, met in the church of Antioch, with a number of workmen provided with the necessary tools, and commenced breaking ground at the foot of the high altar. The deepest silence reigned in the church; every moment they thought to see the miraculous iron. The whole army assembled at the gates, which could scarcely be kept shut, awaiting with impatience the result of the search. The diggers had worked for several hours, and had reached the depth of more than a dozen feet without any appearance of the lance. Evening came, and they had not found it. The impatience of the Christians was every moment increasing. Amid the shadows of night, that now filled the church, one more trial is resolved on. While the twelve witnesses kneel in prayer at the edge of the pit, Bartholemy leaps into it, and in a short time reappears, holding the sacred iron in his hand. A cry of joy bursts from assistants, it is repeated by the army, who were waiting at the church gates, and is soon re-echoed in every quarter of the city. The iron on which all their hopes rest, is shown in triumph to the Crusaders; to them it seems a celestial weapon, with which God himself will scatter his adversaries. Every soul is exalted; they no longer doubt the protection of Heaven; and all demand with loud cries to be led to the combat.

Peter the Hermit was forthwith despatched to the general of the Saracens to propose to him a single combat or a general battle. His proud message was contemptuously received by Kerbogha, and the Christian envoys made a hasty retreat, to escape violence from the incensed Mussulmans. The chiefs of the Crusaders prepared for battle on the morrow. The heralds and the priests ran through the streets to animate the soldiers; the night was passed in prayer and devotion; and the last grain of flour in the city was used for the celebration of mass.

At length day rose on this scene of warlike devotion. The wounded Raymond was left to keep in check the garrison of the citadel, and the rest of the army poured through the city gates into the plain. The sacred lance was borne by Raymond of Aligiles. At the head of the army a portion of the clergy walked in procession, chanting the martial psalm, 'Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered.' The bishops and priests who remained in the city, surrounded by the women and children, blessed from the ramparts the arms of the Christian host; and the neighbouring mountains rang with the war cry of the Crusaders—'Dieu le Veut!—Dieu le Veut.' As they advanced into the plain, most of the knights and barons on foot, and many of the soldiers in rags, they seemed like an army of skeletons, so famine-struck were they all. The whole plain and mountain slopes on the north bank of the Orontes were covered with the Mussulman battalions, among which that of Kerbogha, says an old writer, appeared like an inaccessible mountain. But the enthusiasm of the Crusades set odds at defiance; the exultation of victory already filled them as they advanced against the enemy. Two thousand Saracens, left to guard the passage of the bridge of Antioch, were cut to pieces by the count of Vermandois. The fugitives carried the alarm to the tent of their general, who was then playing at chess. Starting from his false security, Kerbogha beheld a black flag displayed from the citadel of Antioch (the preconcerted signal of the advance of the Crusaders); and ordering the instant beheading of a deserter, who had announced the approaching surrender of the Christians, he immediately set about issuing orders for the battle.

Having forced the passage of the Orontes, the crusaders advanced down its right bank against the Mussulman host, which was drawn up partly on the slopes of the mountains, and partly in the plain, stretching from their base to the river. The Christian army was wrought up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm: the most common occurrences seemed to them prodigies announcing the triumph of their arms. A globe of fire which, after traversing the heavens had burst over the Mussulman camp, seemed to them a foretelling of victory; a gentle and refreshing rain, which fell as they were leaving Antioch, was in their eyes a fresh proof of the favour of Heaven; a strong wind, which aided the flight of their darts, and impeded those of the Saracens, seemed to them the wind of Divine wrath rising to disperse the infidels. The army marched against the enemy in the best order. A profound silence reigned in the plain. Which everywhere glittered with the armour of the Christians. No sound was heard in the ranks but the voice of the chiefs, the hymns of the priests, and the exhortations of Adhemar.

Of a sudden the Saracens commenced the attack. They discharged a flight of arrows, and with barbaric cries bore down upon the Crusaders. But despite their impetuous onset, their right wing, under the emir of Jerusalem, was repulsed and driven back in disorder. Godfrey experienced greater resistance from the left wing, which rested on the mountains; but it, too, was at length shaken and confusion spread through the ranks. At this moment, when the troops of Kerbogha were giving way on all sides, Killidj Arslan, the Sultan of Nice, who had advanced unseen on the reverse slopes of the mountains, suddenly burst upon the rear of the Christian army, and threatened to cut in pieces the re-

serve under Bohemond. The Crusaders, who combat on foot, could not withstand the first shock of the Saracen horse. Humo the Great apprised of Bohemond's danger, abandoned the pursuit of fugitives, and hastened back to support the reserve. The combat was renewed with fresh fury. Killidj Arslan, who had to avenge his former defeat at Dorislaus, and the loss of his estates, fought like a lion at the head of his troops. A squadron of three thousand Saracen cavaliers, all bristling with steel, armed with ponderous maces, carried disorder and terror into the Christian ranks. The standard of the Count of Vermois was taken and retaken, covered with the blood of the Crusaders and infidels. Godfrey and Tancred, who flew to the succour of Hugo and Bohemond, signalled their strength and prowess by the slaughter of numbers of the Mussulmans. The Sultan of Nice, whom no reverses could daunt, still bore up stoutly against the shock of the Christians. When the battle was at its hottest, he ordered lighted firebrands to be thrown among the heath and dry herbage that covered the plain. Soon a conflagration arose, which surrounded the Christians with a whirlwind of flame and smoke. For a moment their ranks were shaken; they no longer saw or heard their chiefs. Victory seemed on the point of slipping from the grasp of the Crusaders, and Killidj Arslan already congratulated himself on the success of his stratagem.

Then, say the historians, a squadron was seen descending from the summits of the mountains, preceded by three knights clothed in white, and covered with dazzling armour. 'Behold' cried the bishop of Adhemar, 'the celestial aid which was promised you! Heaven declares in favour of the Christians! The holy martyrs St George, Demetrius and Theodore, are come to combat with us.' Forthwith the eyes of all were fixed upon the celestial squadron. New ardour filled the hearts of the Crusaders, who were persuaded that God himself came to their aid; the war cry 'Dieu le Veut' rose again as loudly as at first. The women and children assembled on the walls of Antioch, by their cries stimulated the courage of the Crusaders, the priests ran through the ranks with uplifted hands, thanking God for the succour which he had sent to the Christian army. The charge again sounded along the line; every Crusader became a hero, nothing can withstand their impetuous onset. In a moment the Saracen ranks are shaken; they no longer fight, but in disorder. In vain they strive to rally behind the bed of a torrent, and on a height, where their clarions and trumpets sounds the assembly. The Count de Vermandois, quickly followed up his success, assaults them in their new position, and drives them from it in utter confusion. Broken and discomfited, they now only look for safety in flight. The banks of the Orontes, the woods, the plains, and the mountains are covered with fugitives flying in wild disorder, and abandoning arms and baggage to the conquerors.

Kerbogha made his escape to the Euphrates, escorted by a few faithful followers. Tancred, and some others, mounting the steeds of the vanquished, pursued till nightfall the sultans of Aleppo and Damascus, the emir of Jerusalem and the broken squadrons of the Saracens. The victorious crusaders set fire to the intrenchments, behind which the Mussulman infantry had taken refuge, and great numbers of the infidels perished in the flames. Such was the battle of Antioch, in which the Saracens left our hundred thousand men dead on the field, while the Christians lost only 4000.

When the danger was past, the holy lance began to lose its miraculous influence over the troops. It remained in the keeping of Raymond and his provençals, and the offerings which it brought to them as its guardians, soon excited the jealousy of the rest of the army. Doubts were raised as to its genuineness, and And Arnald and the Normans especially distinguished themselves by their vehement outcry against it. In vain miracles in its favor silence its opponents, and discord rose to an alarming height in the army. At last Bartholemy, carried away by his fanaticism and the applause of his adherents, announced his intention of submitting to the ordeal by fire. In a moment calm was restored in the camp. The pilgrims who followed the Christian army, were invited to witness the ordeal, and the host of the Crusaders ranged themselves in a circle round the place of trial. On the appointed day (it was a Holy Friday), a large pile of olive branches was raised in the middle of the vast plain. The flames already rose to great height, when the spectators saw Bartholemy approach, accompanied by priests who advanced in silence, barefoot, and clothed in their sacerdotal robes. Covered with a simple tunic, the priest of Marseilles carried the holy lance, decked with waving flaglets. When he had approached to within a few paces of the flaming pile, one of the principal clergy pronounced in a clear voice these words—'If this man has seen Jesus Christ face to face, and if St Andrew has revealed to him the divine lance, let him pass uninjured through the flames; if, on the contrary he has been guilty of falsehood, let him be consumed with the lance he carries in his hands.' At these words all the assistants bowed, and Bartholemy threw himself on his knees, took Heaven to witness as to the truth of all he had said, and recommended himself to the prayers of the clergy, rushed amid the flaming pile, through which an opening of two feet had been left for his passage.

For a moment he was hid from sight amid the flames. Many a pilgrim began to bewail him as lost, when they saw him appear on the side opposite to that where he had entered. He was immediately surrounded by an eager crowd, who wished to touch his garments, and who exclaimed it was a miracle. But the object of their veneration had received mortal injury. He was borne dying into the tent of the Count Toulouse, where he expired a few days after, protesting to the last his innocence and veracity. He was buried on the spot where the pile had been raised. Raymond and Provençals persisted in regarding him as an apostle and a martyr; but the great majority of the pilgrims acquiesced in the judgment of God and the holy lance, from that day forward, ceased to work miracles.

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THE POETRY OF LIFE;
OR, HOW D'YE DO.

That is unquestionably a fine utterance, 'the open secret is the grand secret'—a divine oracle, full of deepest meaning and import. Compared with this, masonic signs and symbols, 'grips' and pass-words, which bar the uninitiated from the mysteries and secret of crafts and brotherhoods, are but the toys of children. It is in complete harmony with our definition of poetry, that it is subjective rather than objective, a thing of the inner life rather than of the outer world. It indicates that poetry, in the highest acceptance of the term, by which we mean the highest truth in its highest phase of beauty and spirituality, may be lying naked and open around us, and yet be to us a profound secret, 'a spring shut up and a fountain sealed.' The open secret! We have called it a divine oracle, for it is a Hebrew and not a German utterance. It is shadowed forth, nay, explicitly taught to him who has capacity for the highest teaching, in such expressions as 'The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him,' and 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.' We shall attempt, in this paper, to survey a few of the provinces of this widely-open secret, and endeavour to unfold some of its mysteries under the conviction that the great work of life is to convert the open secret into an illuminated revelation.

The popular faith is, that there is far more of prose than poetry in life. Its wine is all drunk in boyhood and youth. Then come the vinegar and the lees, the wormwood and the gall. The boy has gone out of Eden into the wilderness, and cherubim and flaming swords bar return. Memories of the past come not to brighten and bless, but to make darkness visible, and mock him with his irrecoverable loss. The primeval curse is heavy upon him. Labour is a toil and a sorrow. Briars and thorns spring up instead of vines and fig-trees, 'cockles grow instead of wheat, and thistles instead of barley.' The springs of feeling are dried up, or its streams frozen over. The mind also loses its elasticity. Imagination and fancy, stars which rose with the young spirit, set before mid-day, and the trailing cloud of glory, which erewhile rose from the womb of being, becomes a murky cloud, instinct with lightning and thunder. If the intellect grows in strength amid the storms and ungenial weather of life, it lays up truth after truth with little more joy or exultation than the well-to-do practitioner pockets a fee, or the capitalist, who has invested in all sorts of securities, counts and lays by his regularly recurring dividends.

This is the popular faith, and it is sanctioned, indirectly but emphatically, by the sons of genius and the giants of literature. We do not know that any composer has written an oratorio of life. The Creation, the Messiah, Elijah, and others, have furnished splendid topics for Musical genius, but the oratorio of life is yet to be written. The first-class poets have fixed upon the mountain tops of things, and clothed them with the unsetting sunlight of their intelligence. They have chosen for their themes and illustrations the most attractive landscape in creation, solemn passages in the scroll of Providence, striking chapters in individual life. We have odes on childhood without end; comedies, which pourtray the sentiment of young love, the love the flowering season of the heart, tragedies and epics, which strike deeper chords, and exhibit humanity as a fact within an impassable circle of moral and physical responsibilities. The sublime and beautiful, the lights and shadows, the good and evil, the strong contrasts in the world without and the world within us, are enshrined in notes and songs, and glow upon the Canvass and that is poetry. Yes that is poetry and we take it and are thankful. But, by implication that is all that is poetical especially in human life. Only a passage here and there, the intervals being made up of the dullest prose! We have poets who have walked in spirit with the sun and the stars round the circle of the seasons, and returned with the report that at no point of the great circumference was the spherical music mute for a moment. But no poet has written the epic, no composer the oratorio of life. No one has traced the course of that divine spark—the soul that rises with us, our life's star, from its mysterious source in the fountains of morning, through its devious course in sun and shade, to where it sinks in the silent sea in the west and given us the cheering report, that all was musical, or might be musical, in this orbit of humanity.

Thus the popular faith on this point is supported by the practice of aristocracy of mind.