

A decorative border with floral motifs in each corner and a wavy line running along the sides.

# THE DYING MONK.

A Narrative of Fact.

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*NEW EDITION.*

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## THE DYING MONK.

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SUPERSTITION, self-righteousness, and hell, have their own martyrs as well as *truth, faith, and heaven*. The angel of darkness clothes himself as an angel of light. He has also a Bible of his own ; he has a thousand forms of religion, suited to the various tempers of mankind ; he has millions of pseudo-evangelists and false teachers to seduce the poor sons of Adam—now with the grandeur of the Roman liturgy ; now with



the various forms of a dead Protestantism ; now with blind worship of the God of nature ; now denying, now admitting, God's existence ; now quoting, now questioning, the Holy Word. Satan has been *a liar from the beginning* ; a liar, saying, by VOLTAIRE and PROUDHON, "There is no God !" a liar, in the Indian smashed to pieces by the car of Juggernaut ; a liar, in the monks—the victims of their fastings and macerations—thinking to propitiate God, in atoning for their sins with their own blood ; heinous to His sight, and impure to His holiness ! So foolish is man ! So much is he deceived !



For, being *without Christ*, he is *without God*; and thus also *without wisdom*. Having Satan for *a teacher*, human tradition for *a rule of faith*, even possessing the Bible of God, but without *the Spirit of God*, man is going from delusion to delusion. But, if the wicked enemy of God and souls tries still to put enmity betwixt the Creator and His creatures, there is a HOLY ONE, Whose office was *to reconcile the world unto God*. Satan, through *lies and sin*, leads man unto *death*; Christ, by *truth and grace*, gives man *eternal life*. Satan's religion ends with doubt of God's mercy, or with such a false peace,



produced by works of righteousness which man has done, as will be followed by eternal despair. Christ's religion gives "*the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.*" Satan's evangelists say to one sinner, "Thou art *worthy* of eternal glory. Thou art not *as other men are.*" God says in His Word, "There is none righteous, no, not one"—"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and Christ says, "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." To another sinner Satan says, "Thine iniquity is greater than may be forgiven." God's merciful Word says, "The blood of Jesus



Christ His Son cleanseth us from ALL SIN !”

Thesereflections were the topics of various secret conversations between two monks, thirsting for *truth and grace*, shut up in one narrow and almost naked cell, furnished, however, with a rough table, on which were placed the sculptured image of the dying Saviour on the cross, and at the foot of the cross a *real* skull from a human body, as a daily memorial of that awful sentence of death, which God’s justice delivered against man, when all communion was broken off by sin. On the pale and fleshless brow of the skull was written the



divine verdict, "DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SEALT THOU RETURN"! Over the crucifix, hanging on the naked wall, there was a skilful copy of the Madonna of Rafaello; and on the top of the frame, with diabolical perversity of application to the Virgin Mary, was there this superscription—"LET US THEREFORE COME BOLDLY UNTO THE THRONE OF GRACE, THAT WE MAY OBTAIN MERCY, AND FIND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED." Heb. iv. 16. A few books on divinity and ecclesiastical history, a bedstead in the form of a coffin, and a straw *palliasse* within it, on which was lying a young 'but



dying monk, in the last stage of consumption ; such is the picture of that monastic cell.

That victim of *the wages of sin* was possessed of a noble and intelligent mind. Naturally, he was kind, sincere, and upright, of gentle manners, of superior education, and still simple and humble as a little child. For a year he had been sinking day by day, and his last hour was rapidly approaching. Blameless concerning the moral and spiritual discipline of the convent, zealous as Paul in keeping the ecclesiastical ordinances, foremost *in will-worship*, and voluntary *humility, and punishing the body*,



he was often pointed to by the superior as *a model of holiness* to the young clergy. The people used to trust with confidence in his prayers (his mediatorial prayers), and the learned divines saw in Father EGIDIO a future and eloquent propagator of the faith of their holy mother, the Roman Catholic Church. He was only twenty-two years of age.

It was on the noon of the 29th of June, 1846, that the monk appointed by the superior to attend on the patients among the monks of the convént, in C—o, of the order of *St. Francis* (in the states of Sardinia), called out hastily at the door of my



cell, saying, "Father EGIDIO is dying! A copious effusion from the lungs will send him into the other world! Oh, he will not be touched even by one flame of the fire of purgatory! No; he has always been so good a follower of our most holy patriarch, St. Francis. Make haste! please, reverend father; you are just in time to give to him the holy absolution."

I ran quickly into the cell of my young and now dying fellow-monk. I was not his *confessor*, and so was somewhat astonished that he wished for me. But when he saw my face, he said, with an anxious glance of his eyes, and



with a feeble voice, "Please shut the door." I did so. But again, with his eyes turned toward the door, he asked if it was well secured. I replied, "Yes, my brother, fear not; no other being listens to us but God, the great searcher of all hearts."

"Oh, dear Father FERRERO, my only friend on earth!" exclaimed he, "not for me are such precautions. I have nothing to fear from what man could do to me. I have few moments to live; but for you, for your security, I feel anxious. . . . Oh, tell me again," he then earnestly proceeded, "Oh, tell me again of that sweet comfort, of that secret



peace of conscience, of that peace with God that you told me of three days ago, when I asked you why you read so often in the Bible. I am dying now! You have nothing to fear from me. Oh, tell me frankly before God, Who sees us and hears us, Is our doctrine in harmony with the word of God? Are we saved partly by our own works, or by grace only? Has all my past life; all my prayers, and zeal, and devotedness; all my fastings, penances, and macerations of this dying frame; have these all been rather a crime, been rather self-destruction, than a meritorious sacrifice? Oh, I see my works of superero-



gation all on the balance of the sanctuary, but they weigh nothing, *nothing!* I see no redemption resulting from my works. God turns His face away from me. If grace and mercy do not take the place of His terrible justice, I am lost, I am damned! Help me, Father FERRERO. I fear His holy countenance. ‘*Si iniquitates observaveris Domine! Domine! quis sustinebit? quis sustinebit?*’ (‘If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?’ Psalm cxxx.)”

“No one, my dear EGMIO! no one!” I exclaimed. “But,” continued I, “let me go on with



the psalm : ‘ *Quia apud, te propitatio est !* ’ Do you understand that, Father EGIDIO ? There is forgiveness with God. ‘ *Apud Dominum,* ’ dear EGIDIO, ‘ *miseri-cordia ; copiosa apud eum re-demptio !* ’ There is mercy with the Lord, and with Him is plentiful redemption.”

“ Yes,” replied he, in an agonized voice, “ yes, I want God’s mercy, God’s forgiveness.” Then looking at the crucifix, he exclaimed, “ That blood, the blood of Jesus, of which you told me—speak, Ferrero, speak again ! ”

He would have said more, but the painful anxiety of his mind,



the sorrow of his broken heart, and the weakness of his frame, now waxing cold in the approach of death, closed his faltering lips. Yet his eyes continued fixed on mine, whilst my hands embraced both his, and he waited anxiously for a word of peace. “Yes,” replied I, “the divine volume tells poor sinners that *by grace we are saved, through faith*; faith in what Jesus has done for them on the cross. Remember what I read to you the other day : ‘ *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*’ Oh, how are we deceived ! How



foolish ; trusting in *our works*, when God Himself has said, ‘ *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.*’ Romans iii. 20. ‘ By the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified.’ But hearken, ‘ *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*’ Here is plenteous redemption, abundant grace, eternal forgiveness. Oh, go, dear Father EGIDIO, to the true *throne of grace*. You remember that on that throne which is set forth in the epistle to the Hebrews, there is *not a woman*, but THE SON OF MAN ; *not the mother*, but THE



SON OF GOD. Seated at the right hand of the divine majesty of God, He is the merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, having made reconciliation for our sins. Mark that. It is not written that our fastings, or our prayings; that our abstinence from secular employments or enjoyments; that our macerations, penances, or all our rites and sacraments—that these can **SAVE US FROM THE WRATH TO COME, or CLEANSE US FROM OUR SINS.** No, no! most solemnly, no! Only **THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST CLEANSETH US FROM ALL**



SIN. It is not written in the Scripture of truth (which our *Council of Trent*, with astonishing inconsistency, admits to be the *first rule of faith*), that *Mary*, or *Joseph*, or *Peter*, or *Filomena*, is a mediator between God and man, or an advocate with the Father. No; but it is written expressly, by the divine pen of the only infallible and ever-living *Theologian*, the HOLY GHOST, that ‘*there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all.*’ And, again, ‘*If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and*



*He is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but for the whole world.'* My dear EGIDIO, you are convinced that you are a sinner ; then be convinced, too, that what this Book says (pointing out to him the passage, as it stood in the VULGATE) is true indeed : '*Fidelis sermo, et omni acceptione degnus, quod Christus Jesus venit in hunc mundum peccatores salvos facere, quorum primus ego sum.*' (Epis. B. Pauli. apost. 1<sup>a</sup> ad Timotheum, i. 15.) This passage, dear EGIDIO, tells us that JESUS is a Saviour for the vilest sinners. Only believe what God's word says. Only trust in the value of Christ's



perfect sacrifice, in that precious blood to which God is no stranger, and in a few moments more you shall be with Him, with Christ, in paradise."

As the thirsty one drinks with delight from the source of fresh water shown to him flowing from the top of the welcome rock by a fellow-traveller just refreshed therefrom, so my most beloved fellow-monk drank joyfully *the living water*, flowing from the Rock of Ages, JESUS CHRIST. And, powerless in voice already, yet still strong in perception, he gave me one glance from his dark and intelligent eyes—so sweet and smiling, that it remains engraven



in my mind, even as the mid-day sun, through the power of the light, engraves the beautiful objects of nature with utmost precision upon the skilfully prepared tablet.

A knock at the door of the cell was now heard. I opened it. The superior of the convent, accompanied by the physician, then came in; but, seeing that the poor patient already had the sweat of death upon him, the superior hastened off to give the order for the tolling of the bell. This was to gather together the monks around the bed of this their agonized fellow, that they might pray according to the



*Ritual*, on that solemn and mortal occasion. When all were assembled—partly within the cell, and partly outside the door—they knelt down, and unitedly repeated, with many other similar invocations—

“ Sancta Maria, ora pro eo !  
Sante Michael, ora pro eo ! ”

(Holy Mary, pray for him !  
Holy Michael, pray for him ! ) &c.

The superior then asked me whether I had *confessed* him. I answered, “ No ! ” Supposing that the patient was enduring such agony as prevented the making of his confession, he then, ac-



according to the *Ritual* and *sub conditione*, gave to him the papal absolution; after that he sprinkled him with holy water. Father EGIDIO, meanwhile, with his cold fingers grasping the Bible, which lay upon his knees, shook his dying head. The superior, and all the monks present, excepting myself, attributed this shaking of the head to *delirium*, and without suspicion the EXTREME UNCTION was ministered to him. This unction, as directed in the *Rituale Romanum*, is applied to seven parts of the person; viz., to the eyes, ears, nostrils, lips, hands, feet, and loins. Every time they touched him with the



oil, Father EGIDIO seemed to *protest* against the ceremony, and both with his hands and dying eyes manifested that he had no *fellowship* whatever in such a ceremony.

At last, making an extreme effort, my beloved brother-monk collected all his strength, and with one last sweet glance of the eyes towards me, and another towards his crucifix, he cried out with distinct and most impressive voice, his countenance meanwhile beaming with heavenly peace, "*Bone—Jesu!—vulnera—tua—merita—mea!—Sì—sì—mea—Jesu!*" And then, with arms across each other, and eyes lifted



up to heaven, he forthwith fell asleep through Jesus. “*Oh, good Jesus, Thy—wounds—are—my—merits! Yes, yes, mine! O Jesus!*” Such was the last confession of Father EGIDIO.

According to the law of the order, a circular note was sent to each convent in the kingdom, saying, “Father EGIDIO is no more! His life was holy! But by an inscrutable counsel of God he died without the sacraments. May God have mercy upon him!” Only a few days after this I was removed from that convent, and sent away to another, where I was placed under the zealous vigilance of a rigid superior.



For six long and painful years after all this did I still remain within that system of delusion and self-righteousness. As Nicodemus, knowing Christ, and even knowing much more than Nicodemus—knowing, by faith, the value of Christ's precious blood, but being too *cowardly* to confess Him publicly, fearing still the face of man.

Dear reader, do you know to whom belongs that concise, short prayer—that eloquent and heavenly prayer that was uttered by my dying friend?

“BONE JESU ! VULNERA TUA, MERITA MEA !” It was one of the last echoes of *justification by*



*faith*, the last notes of the evangelical trumpet of an earlier age. They were the words of another monk, even of the great father and doctor of the eleventh century, St. BERNARDUS. Oh, may those words, *Good Jesus, Thy wounds are my merits!* be repeated by thousands, yea, by millions of souls—whether Catholic or Protestant; with the living faith of my departed fellow-monk and brother in the Christ may they be repeated!

Dear reader, in Father EGDIO there was a perfect model of that religion which consists in the “form of godliness,” without “the power thereof.” He was



the martyr of penances and austerities. Before men, he was a spotless angel; but all his *bodily exercise* profited him nothing—gave no peace, no rest, no power to the soul. Faith only, faith in the *mystery of godliness*—GOD MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH, is the source of true and real *godliness*, that which “is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

Father Egidio found, at the last, that all that he had done to atone for his sins, and to please God—all his own righteousness—had been to God “*as filthy rags* ;”



and that nothing else than faith, faith in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, could cleanse the sinner from his sins. God gave to him a joyful transit, and he is waiting now in peace for the redemption of his body—waiting with all those who believe in Jesus for His hastening and glorious return, “Who of God is made unto us WISDOM, and RIGHT-EOUSNESS, and SANCTIFICATION, and REDEMPTION.”

GIOVANNI FERRERO.

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