

Bishop Addo and Bishop Gaddo

By Richard Garnett

Midday, midsummer, middle of the dark ages. Fine healthy weather at the city of Biserta in Barbary. Wind blowing strong from the sea, roughening the dark blue waters, and fretting their indigo with foam, as though the ocean's coursers champed an invisible curb. On land tawny sand whirling, green palm-fans swaying and whistling, men abroad in the noonday blaze rejoicing in the unwonted freshness.

"She is standing in," they cried, "and, by the Prophet, she seemeth not a ship of the true believers."

She was not, but she bore a flag of truce. Pitching and rearing, the little bark bounded in, and soon was fast in harbour. Ere long messengers of peace had landed, bearing presents and a letter from the Bishop of Amalfi to the Emir of Biserta. The presents consisted of fifty casks of Lacrima Christi, and of a captive, a tall, noble-looking man, in soiled ecclesiastical costume, and disfigured by the loss of his left eye, which seemed to have been violently plucked out.

"Health to the Emir!" ran the letter. "I send thee my captive, Gaddo, sometime Bishop of Amalfi, now an ejected intruder. For what saith the Scripture? 'When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but if one stronger than he cometh, he divideth the spoils.' Moreover it is written: 'His bishopric let another take.' Having solemnly sworn that I would not kill or blind or maim my enemy, or imprison him in a monastery, and the price of absolution from an oath in this corrupt age exceeding all reason and Christian moderation, I knew not how to take vengeance on him, until a sagacious counsellor represented that a man cannot be said to be blinded so long as he is deprived of only one eye. This I accordingly eradicated, and now, being restrained from imprisoning him, and fearing to release him, I send him to thee, to retain in captivity on my behalf; in return for which service, receive fifty casks of the choicest Lacrima Christi, which shall not fail to be sent thee yearly, so long as Gaddo continues in thy custody.

"+ Addo, by Divine permission Bishop of Amalfi."

"First," said the Emir, "I would be certified whether this vintage is indeed of such excellence as to prevail upon a faithful Mussulman to jeopard Paradise, the same being forbidden by his law."

Experiments were instituted forthwith, and the problem was resolved in the affirmative.

"This being so," declared the Emir, "honour and good faith towards Bishop Addo require that Bishop Gaddo be kept captive with all possible strictness. Yet bolts may be burst, fetters may be filed, walls may be scaled, doors may be broken through. Better to enchain the captive's soul, binding him with invisible bonds, and searing out of him the very wish to escape. Embrace the faith of the Prophet," continued he, addressing Gaddo; "become a Mollah."

"No," said the deposed Bishop, "my inclination hath ever been towards a military life. At present, mutilated and banished as I am, I rather affect the crown of martyrdom."

"Thou shalt receive it by instalments," said the Emir.

"Thou shalt work at the new pavilion in my garden."

Unceasing toil under the blazing sun, combined with the discipline of the overseers, speedily wore down Gaddo's strength, already impaired by captivity and ill-treatment. Unable to drag himself away after his fellow-workmen had ceased from their labours, he lay one evening faint

and almost senseless, among the stones and rubbish of the unfinished edifice. The Emir's daughter passed by. Gaddo was handsome and wretched, the Princess was beautiful and compassionate. Conveyed by her fair hands, a cup of Bishop Addo's wine saved Bishop Gaddo's life.

The next evening Gaddo again lingered behind, and the Princess spoke to him out of her balcony. The third evening they encountered in an arbour. The next meeting took place in her chamber, where her father discovered them.

"I will tear thee to pieces with pincers," shouted he to Gaddo.

"Your Highness will not be guilty of that black action," responded Gaddo resolutely.

"No?" roared the Emir. "No? and what shall hinder me?"

"The Lacrima Christi will hinder your Highness," returned the far-seeing Gaddo. "Deems your Highness that Bishop Addo will send another cupful, once he is assured of my death?"

"Thou sayest well," rejoined the Emir. "I may not slay thee. But my daughter is manifestly most inflammable, wherefore I will burn her."

"Were it not better to circumcise me?" suggested Gaddo.

Many difficulties were raised, but Ayesha's mother siding with Gaddo, and promising a more amicable deportment for the future towards the other lights of the harem, the matter was arranged, and Gaddo recited the Mahometan profession of faith, and became the Emir's son-in-law. The execrable social system under which he had hitherto lived thus vanished like a nightmare from an awakened sleeper. Wedded to one who had saved his life by her compassion, and whose life he had in turn saved by his change of creed, adoring her and adored by her, with the hope of children, and active contact with multitudes of other interests from which he had hitherto been estranged; he forgot the ecclesiastic in the man; his intellect expanded, his ideas multiplied, he cleared his mind of cant, and became an eminent philosopher.

"Dear son," said the Emir to him one day, "the Lacrima is spent, we thirst, and the tribute of that Christian dog, the Bishop of Amalfi, tarries to arrive. We will presently fit out certain vessels, and thou shalt hold a visitation of thine ancient diocese."

"Methinks I see a ship even now," said Gaddo; and he was right. She anchored, the ambassadors landed and addressed the Emir:

"Prince, we bring thee the stipulated tribute, yet not without a trifling deduction."

"Deduction!" exclaimed the Emir, bending his brows ominously.

"Highness," they represented, "by reason of the deficiency of last year's vintage it hath not been possible to provide more than forty-nine casks, which we crave to offer thee accordingly."

"Then," pronounced the Emir sententiously, "the compact is broken, the ship is confiscated, and war is declared."

"Not so, Highness," said they, "for the fiftieth cask is worth all the rest."

"Let it be opened," commanded the Emir.

It was accordingly hoisted out, desposited on the quay, and prized open; and from its capacious interior, in a deplorable plight from hunger, cramp, and sea-sickness, was extracted—Bishop Addo.

"We have," explained the deputation, "wearied of our shepherd, who, shearing his flock somewhat too closely, hath brought the wolf to light. We therefore desire thee to receive him at our hands in exchange for our good Bishop Gaddo, promising one hundred casks of Lacrima Christi as yearly tribute for the future."

"He stands before you," answered the Emir; "take him, an ye can prevail upon him to return with you."

The eyes of the envoys wandered hopelessly from one whiskered, turbaned, caftaned, and yataghaned figure to another. They could not discover that any of the Paynim present looked more or less like a bishop than his fellows.

“Brethren,” said Gaddo, taking compassion on their bewilderment, “behold me! I thank you for your kindly thought of me, but how to profit by it I see not. I have become a Saracen. I have pronounced the Mahometan confession. I am circumcised. I am known by the name of Mustapha.”

“We acknowledge the weight of your Lordship’s objections,” they said, “and do but venture to hint remotely that the times are hard, and that the Holy Father is grievously in want of money.”

“I have also taken a wife,” said Gaddo.

“A wife!” exclaimed they with one consent. “If it had been a concubine! Let us return instantly.”

They gathered up their garments and spat upon the ground.

“A bishop, then,” inquired Gaddo, “may be guilty of any enormity sooner than wedlock, which money itself cannot expiate?”

“Such,” they answered, “is the law and the prophets.”

“Unless,” added one of benignant aspect, “he sew the abomination up in a sack and cast her into the sea, then peradventure he may yet find place for repentance.”

“Miserable blasphemers!” exclaimed Gaddo. “But why,” continued he, checking himself, “do I talk of what none will understand for five hundred years, which to understand myself I was obliged to become a Saracen? Addo,” he pursued, addressing his dejected competitor, “bad as thou art, thou art good enough for the world as it is. I spare thy life, restore thy dignity, and to prove that the precepts of Christ may be practised under the garb of Mahomet, will not even exact eye for eye. Yet, as a wholesome admonition to thee that treachery and cruelty escape not punishment even in this life, I will that thou do presently surrender to me thy left ear. Restore my eye and I will return it immediately. And ye,” addressing the envoys, “will for the future pay one hundred casks tribute, unless ye would see my father-in-law’s galleys on your coasts.”

So Addo returned to his bishopric, leaving his ear in Gaddo’s keeping. The Lacrima was punctually remitted, and as punctually absorbed by the Emir and his son-in-law, with some little help from Ayesha. Gaddo’s eye never came back, and Addo never regained his ear until, after the ex-prelate’s death in years and honour, he ransomed it from his representatives. It became a relic, and is shown in Addo’s cathedral to this day in proof of his inveterate enmity to the misbelievers, and of the sufferings he underwent at their hands. But Gaddo trumped him, the entry after his name in the episcopal register, “Fled to the Saracens,” having been altered into “Flayed by the Saracens” by a later bishop, jealous of the honour of the diocese.