

LEGENDS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

The Lion of Brussels

Mater Amabilis—Mother Most Loving

At the period of the first agitation caused by the pretended reformers of the sixteenth century, there was a lion in Brussels, concerning which the following curious anecdote is related. The fact, perhaps, is of equal merit with the lion of Florence, which has obtained the honor of being represented in painting.

The lion in question was taken during the last wars of Charles V. in Africa, tamed and apparently submissive but, as is generally the case, in appearance only. Yet it was not confined in a cage, but suffered to go at large, and occasionally followed its master through the streets like a dog and so accustomed did the people become to his calm and gentle behavior, that his appearance excited no alarm. He was however, greatly respected ; it was held to be prudent not to seek a quarrel with him, as a lion is always a lion, with his fearful claws and terrible teeth. This truth had not, it appears, sunk deep into the mind of a little child. Alas! childhood is ever thoughtless. The boy, Daniel Pinus, was of noble family ; and, accustomed daily to hear warlike exploits spoken of in his house as examples to inspire him with courage, the child thought that fear was a cowardly feeling never to be indulged in. At the time we write of, being between five and six years of age, he was walking by his mother's side in Carmelite street, when he perceived the lion approaching in his usual quiet manner, taking no notice of anything around him. The child, who had disengaged his hand from his mother's, thinking that it would be a great thing to boast of, having braved the lion, on his approach struck the animal a smart blow on the head with his Cane. The lion shook his mane ; and, forgetting his education, sprung on the child, seized him round the middle, roaring with such fury as to alarm the neighborhood. The civilized lion had disappeared ; in his place appeared the furious host of the African deserts.

At this terrible sight, the poor mother fell on her knees. She knew not how to relieve her son from his perilous position; an imprudent act might cause his immediate destruction. She sought the aid of the Mother Of Mercy and seeing before her the Carmelite church, in which was established the pious and celebrated confraternity of the Scapular, in which the most noble gentlemen and ladies Of Brussels were enrolled, she rushed into it; and throwing herself at the feet of Our Lady of Carmel, cried out with vehemence,

"Mary, Patroness of the Scapular! I give you my child. Do you take him from out of the lion's jaw, and he shall be consecrated to you forever This was the work of a few seconds. Scarcely had the prayer been pronounced, when the lion suddenly became appeased, dropped the child gently, and quietly continued his walk.

This event made a deep impression on the mind of the child, who warmly seconded his mother's vow. Daniel Pinus consecrated himself to our Lady of Carmel, and spent his life in the service of her to whom he owed his preservation. Sanderus adds, that the child's parents, in order to commemorate the event, presented to the church a magnificent altar frontal, on which the adventure was carved, with this inscription, "De ore leonis, libera nos Domine!" "From the lion's jaw deliver us, O Lord!"

It is also recorded that the lion lost his liberty after this accident. But, alas! the Carmelite church fell in the destruction of churches in 1796. The confraternity of the Holy Scapular was transferred to the Church of our Lady of Help, where also the image of the Holy Virgin of Carmel is still venerated.