

HISTORY
OF THE
KNIGHTS OF MALTA.

BOOK III.

FROM THE ELECTION OF THE GRAND-MASTER ROHAN (1775) TO
THE PRESENT TIME.

CHAPTER I.

Rohan elected Grand-Master. Raising of the Maltese Regiment. A general Chapter held. Reforms made in the public Schools, and in the Administration of Justice. The Observatory built; and afterwards destroyed by Lightning. The Possessions belonging to the Order of St. Anthony added to those of Malta. Creation of a new Language called the Anglo-Bavarian. The Restoration of several Commanderies situated in Poland.

NO election was ever so prompt as that which raised the bailiff de Rohan to the dignity of grand-master; he was indeed so universally approved and desired, that it was merely as a matter of form that the ceremonials took place*. This sovereign was of the French language. His father, having been persecuted by the regent of France, Philip duke of Orleans,

* 12th November, 1775.

took refuge in Spain; and his son Emanuel de Rohan, being engaged in the service of that country, attached himself to the infant don Philip, duke of Parma, in whose household he enjoyed the most distinguished posts: these, however, he gave up; more, perhaps, from a sentiment of independence, than from any cause of discontent; and returned into France, whither he had been invited by his family. His stay in that country was not long; and he determined to fix himself in Malta, where he always lived in the most honourable manner, till his nomination to the grand-mastership. Such was the situation of the order, that it required the most unremitting attention. This he perfectly knew, and acted accordingly.

The late insurrection too plainly proved how very little the order was capable of making a defence in the interior of the island; it therefore appeared necessary to remedy the evil. The other Christian powers also felt the necessity of obliging Malta to secure itself against the bold attempts of an interior enemy; and their reasons for so doing appeared to them in so strong a light, that they absolutely threatened to provide for the safety of the island themselves, if the order neglected giving proper attention to its security. That being the case, a regiment of infantry was levied on the same plan as those at that time subsisting in France, except indeed that all the officers were to be knights. As to the soldiers, they might be either Maltese or foreigners. The French government gave permission for recruiting parties to be stationed at Lyons and Marseilles; and the pope granted the same liberty at Avignon.

This command was given to the Bailli de Freslon, an officer of distinguished reputation in the French service; and a better choice could not have been made for forming a corps, which, though particularly useful to the order, might sometimes, perhaps, become troublesome. The regiment was soon complete, and disciplined in such a manner as perfectly to answer the end proposed. The Christian powers were now satisfied, and did not insist that any more regular troops should be levied. This regiment being destined to do duty at the city La Valetta and the different forts, a corps of twelve hundred men was raised for the defence of the country and the coasts: this consisted entirely of Maltese, who were to be incorporated with the numerous regiments of militia, in case of an attack, or of a descent of the enemy.

The grand-master felt the impossibility of succeeding in the plans he had projected for the good of the order, without some more effectual assistance than the power vested in the council, he therefore convoked a general chapter, at which he presided himself, and where the principal objects taken into consideration were the finances of the state, the manner of their administration, and the making a new assessment of taxes on the possessions of the order. The regulations relative to the hospitals were improved, the revenue encreased, and particular days in the week fixed upon for the knights of the different languages to attend on the sick. Though the ships of war belonging to the states of Barbary were destroyed, and they

had nothing remaining but chebecs, the tax for the support of the navy of the order was renewed. The expence of this navy greatly exceeded that of the galleys, and amounted annually to a sixth part of the general expenditure of the treasury. The raising the Maltese regiment being acknowledged indispensable, the pay was regulated. Proper methods were likewise taken to maintain the interior discipline of the convent in its original purity. New military ordinances were published concerning the caravans and other parts of the land and sea service. The punishments inflicted by the ancient statutes on keeping mistresses, on gaming, and duelling, were confirmed and augmented. In short, the greatest attention was paid to every circumstance which could by any means contribute to the glory and prosperity of the order; and it would be almost impossible to mention any of these great assemblies, in which the knights shewed more zeal, or displayed greater talents and skill.

Rohan, whose views equally extended to every part of the administration committed to his care, was convinced there were two objects which particularly demanded the attention of a sovereign, since they contributed more than any thing to render the people virtuous, and submissive to the government under which they lived. The first was public schools, in which youth might be taught respect to the laws; and the second, a strict observance of equity in the courts of justice, which induces the subject to submit without repining to their awards.

The Jesuits, who had formerly superintended the public education of youth, were suppressed in 1769, when the order seized on their possessions, engaging to pay the annuity which had been granted to each of the fathers, and to fill up the professorships in their college, which they had hitherto maintained. This arrangement was a great drain from the public treasury; nay, it amounted to more than its whole revenue*. Rohan, in order to spare the treasury, and at the same time to improve the education of the Maltese youth, instituted another college, encreased the number of masters, and supported the whole at his own expence. He cultivated the sciences himself with great assiduity, and by his example endeavoured to inspire others with the same taste; he also built an observatory on the tower of the palace, and furnished it with valuable astronomical instruments. Such indeed is the constant serenity of the atmosphere, and so mild the temperature of the air in the island, that observations may be taken in almost all seasons; which, joined to the extensive knowledge of the chevalier d'Angost, who directed the operations, gave every reason to hope for the most interesting discoveries: but, alas! all the chevalier's labour, together with the building itself, were destroyed in one moment by lightning; and various circumstances have ever since prevented its being rebuilt. The grand-master had an extremely well-chosen library in his palace, the access to which was never attended by the smallest difficulty. He likewise employed himself in making alterations

* See the expenditure in the chapter on the Finances.

in the courts of judicature; having for two years suspected that justice was sometimes administered in an arbitrary manner. To remedy, therefore, such abuses, and to put a stop to the numerous appeals, which were both tiresome and ruinous to the pleaders, he established a tribunal, from which there could be no further appeal; and this was termed that of the *supreme magistrate of judicature*. It was to assemble twice a-week, and even every day in cases of urgent necessity: it was to be divided into two *rotas*, and composed of a president and six counsellors. In order that every one might be perfectly acquainted with the particular duties he had to fulfil, the Maltese code was published in 1784, and revised with scrupulous attention by the persons most versed in the laws of their country.

While thus employed in making useful improvements in the interior government of the convent, the chevalier Rohan did not neglect attending to those which might prove advantageous to the order abroad; and, during the whole of this time, he was making great acquisitions in different parts. In France he became possessed of the property of the order of St. Anthony. In Germany the circle of Bavaria created a new language for him; in Poland he was reinstated in some ancient possessions; and in Russia he was presented with new ones. The great importance and worth of these various acquisitions I shall now endeavour to explain.

The order of St. Anthony was founded in 1095, and consisted originally of a pious association, composed of some

gentlemen in Dauphiné. The end proposed in its institution was to relieve those unfortunate persons who were afflicted with a kind of leprosy, distinguished at that time by the name of *St. Anthony's sacred fire*. In 1218 this community was formed into an order of Hospitaller friars, whose chief was a grand-master; and it subsisted in that manner till 1297, when pope Benedict VIII. changed the magisterial priory into an abbey-chief of the order, and determined that in future all the members should be regular canons, subject to the rules of St. Augustin. From that time the order underwent no alteration, till the reform which took place in 1634: in 1768 it was forbidden to receive any more novices, and its members were only allowed the choice of being entirely abolished, of becoming seculars, or of being united to some other order. The latter was preferred, and the order of Malta chosen, as the most analogous; the original basis of both institutions being the exercise of religious hospitality. It was not, however, till after various negotiations, and after having surmounted many difficulties, that the two orders were united. The principal conditions of this agreement were, that the whole of the possessions of St. Anthony should be equally divided between the order of Malta and that of St. Lazarus; the former of which was to engage itself to pay a yearly pension to the Antonin friars, who in future were all to become members of the order of St. John of Jerusalem, and to belong to the class of conventual chaplains. The property of St. Anthony was not definitively di-

vided till the year 1781, when the order of St. Lazarus gave up to Malta the portion which had been assigned to it; by which means the latter became sole proprietor of every thing which had formerly belonged to the Antonins.

The conditions of this last division were very advantageous to the order of St. Lazarus, which was thus put in immediate possession of its revenue free from all incumbrance. This was far from the case with the new purchasers, it being calculated that the Maltese treasury would not be entirely reimbursed the sums it had advanced before the year 1879, when the order would enjoy a yearly revenue of 100,000 Maltese crowns*. The knights of Malta entirely neglected their own interest in this transaction, to oblige the king of France, whose next brother (the comte de Provence) had been just named grand-master of the order of St. Lazarus. It was the same motive also which induced them to enter into an engagement to give up the abbey-house of St. Anthony, with the amount of its revenue, to endow the noble chapter of Maltese canonesses, established in the principal residence of the said abbey. The queen of France was particularly interested in the foundation of this chapter.

It was about the same time (1782) that the order made a new acquisition, infinitely more considerable, and of much greater importance. Charles Theodore, elector of Bavaria,

* Value about two shillings each.

having frequently expressed himself most favourably respecting the order, the bailli de Flacksland succeeded in obtaining his consent for the creation of a new language in Bavaria, which was endowed by the possessions formerly belonging to the Jesuits. Such was his adroitness and zeal, that he removed all the obstacles thrown in his way on the occasion; and this language was installed in 1782, under the name of Anglo-Bavarian, and endowed with a revenue of 171,000 florins, which are equal to 151,703 Maltese crowns, or 15,000 pounds sterling. The assessment of responsions was made on this sum.

This new language was composed of the two dignified offices of turcopolier and grand-prior of Bavaria, of twenty commanderies of knights of justice, and of four commanderies of chaplains, or conventual priests. The first taxes, or responsions, were originally laid on the first possessors of benefices, at the rate of two and a half per cent of their neat produce; but it was enacted, that all their successors should pay ten per cent, which would produce, according to the first mutations, a fixed revenue of 15,150 crowns, without counting the *passages*, the *effects of the dead*, the *mortuaries* or *funerals*, and the *vacancies*.

Independently of the above-mentioned acquisitions, the order recovered some of its ancient possessions, which had been very unjustly wrested from it; this restitution gave birth to a new priory, to which Malta owes its present preservation.

A prince of the family of Sanguszko had made an en-

dowment in favour of Malta in Poland, which had been sanctioned by several different diets in the seventeenth century; notwithstanding which, it had been seized upon, to the great detriment of the order. The bailli di Sagramoso, of the Italian language, was therefore appointed minister for the order in Poland; and in 1772 he was empowered to lay claim to the detained possessions. His negotiation was not fruitless; and in 1780 he returned to the convent to announce his success.

This Polish property consisted, in the first place, of two commanderies, which the order had always preserved, though it had ceased to receive the responsions for forty-two years; secondly, of a grand priory; thirdly, of six commanderies situated in the *ordinatie* of Ostrog, paying a yearly sum of 24,000 Polish florins, or nearly 6000 Maltese crowns; fourthly, of eight commanderies of *juspatronat*, otherwise called *patronales*, taxed at 6700 florins: which sums altogether would have made the Polish responsions amount to about 7740 crowns, without reckoning the *passages, effects of the dead, mortuaries, and vacancies*.

Whilst the Christian powers, by these donations, proved how much they were interested in the preservation and aggrandisement of Malta, it is but just to say, that the order, on the other side, gave convincing proof how worthy it was of such favours; for, independently of the frigates sent to the assistance of the emperor, in his war against the Turks, the Maltese squadrons in 1775, 1782, and 1783, likewise accompanied those

of his Catholic majesty. I will not enter into any particulars relative to those three campaigns, which were much more expensive than useful; since they only consisted in bombarding and cannonading some places on the coast of Barbary, the principal of which was Algiers; and plainly proved how very insufficient were the means employed to destroy the retreat of these pirates. It ought, however, to be mentioned, that in 1784 the galleys left Malta on the 6th of May, and returned on the 9th of September, after a campaign of more than four months. It may perhaps appear extraordinary, that though the Maltese galleys had suffered greatly before Algiers, the Spanish fleet having been so much damaged by bad weather as to be forced to retreat into their own ports, the king of Spain should request them still to remain at sea, to defend his coast against the Algerines*. This, however, they did most ably and successfully. It must not be passed over in silence, that Spain had more than a hundred ships of war at that period, and that her naval officers were spirited men, particularly anxious for an opportunity of signalising themselves.

* See Appendix, No. XI. a letter from the Spanish minister of the marine department to the general of the galleys.

C H A P. II.

An Earthquake in Calabria and Sicily; Relief sent thither by the Order. Reception of the Maltese Galleys at Reggio and Messina. Generous Conduct of the Knights; they distribute Provisions among the Poor, and assist the Surgeons in dressing the Wounded. Dreadful Scenes, which presented themselves on every Side. The General and Captains of the Galleys bestow Alms on the distressed Sufferers.

THE Maltese galleys in 1783 were employed upon a very different occasion than the preceding ones, and which I shall describe in a more particular manner. These formidable warriors, who had hitherto attacked the coasts of Barbary, and by fire or sword either consumed or driven the infidels from their habitations, were now become, according to their original institution, charitable hospitallers, who landed on a christian shore to rebuild the shattered dwellings, and restore them to their former possessors.

Intelligence of the dreadful ravages caused by an earthquake in Calabria and Sicily, where Messina and Reggio were entirely destroyed, being received in Malta between six and seven in the evening, orders were immediately given to prepare for sea the galleys, which at that season of the year were already laid up in ordinary. These were fitted out with a degree of diligence and speed, which plainly proved that a much su-

perior motive to that of mere obedience actuated those who were employed on the occasion. During the whole of the night, both master and slave, officer and soldier, worked indiscriminately on board; and the following day they were ready to set sail, provided with every thing which could possibly contribute to the relief of people in such disastrous circumstances. The most able surgeons belonging to the order embarked on board the galleys, taking with them twenty chests filled with medicines, two hundred beds, and a great number of tents. They arrived on the flat shores of Calabria at the close of day, and having cast anchor in an open bay, the general of the galleys dispatched a small boat to make enquiries into the state of affairs. The boat did not return till ten at night, and brought still more deplorable intelligence than what had been already received at Malta. The dreadful consequences of the earthquake extended to more than the distance of sixty miles. Repeated shocks continued to be felt every day, attended by new calamities, and inspiring constant terror. The Calabrians and Sicilians were not only in continual danger of being buried under the ruins of their habitations, but had every reason to apprehend that they should be swallowed up either by sea or by land, both of which presented the most dreadful abysses. Mountains and rivers had entirely disappeared; and the couriers, who were dispatched to Naples, were surprised to find plains in the place of the former, and impassable torrents where there had scarcely been a rivulet.

The unfortunate inhabitants of a small village near Silla, thinking to escape the dangers which threatened them on every side, put to sea; but were presently swallowed up by the raging waves, which, rising mountains high one moment, sank down with equal precipitation the next. These terrible accounts were sufficient to alarm the knights, whose galleys were anchored near the land, in a place which scarcely afforded any shelter. A moment afterwards their ears were struck by cries from the shore, imploring assistance; at the same instant the sea was agitated in the most extraordinary manner, and the galleys experienced a motion entirely novel, but which was occasioned by the shocks felt on land. They immediately removed to as great a distance as possible, without, however, weighing anchor. The rest of the night passed without any farther alarms, and they impatiently waited the dawn of day, in order to disembark the different articles intended for the relief of Reggio*; after which they purposed quitting this perilous coast. The morning at last appeared, and with it the most dreadful spectacle imagination can possibly portray. The heart-rending scene is still imprest on my memory, and I feel myself totally unequal to describe the horrors it presented.

The shore was lined by a great multitude of men, women, and children, half naked, pale, and worn out with fatigue. In

* Reggio, likewise called *D'Olomieu*, stands at the very farthest end of Calabria, in a most delightful situation, surrounded by mountains overgrown with shrubs almost constantly in bloom, which have a charming effect, and which in France are planted in flower-gardens, as very ornamental.

the midst of these miserable objects stood their reverend pastor, who appeared like a tender parent surrounded by his children: such indeed was the respect paid him by his flock, that, notwithstanding their distressed situation, they forbore pressing on the venerable man so dear to their hearts. The general of the galleys having acquainted him with the purpose of his visit, and the assistance he had to offer to the inhabitants of Reggio, this worthy prelate, though he was obliged to provide for the necessities of fifteen thousand persons (two hundred of whom were grievously wounded), was so well persuaded that charity should never be exclusive, that he himself made an exact division of the different articles between his own people and the inhabitants of Messina, forty thousand of whom he knew to be in the greatest distress. He moreover insisted on their being equal partakers of the benevolent assistance offered by the order, and accordingly took only fifty of the beds, four medicine chests, a few tents, and some rice. The knights, having placed these articles in the hands of the venerable prelate, re embarked amidst the acclamations of the Calabrians, who offered up repeated prayers for their safe arrival at the place of their destination.

They passed the Pharos in a very short time, and cast anchor at an early hour in the port of Messina, where they perceived only a few soldiers, and scarcely any Sicilians on the magnificent quay. Hardly any traces remained of the surrounding splendid edifices. There was a large chasm in

the stone-work of the beautiful citadel; and only a single wall was standing of the cathedral, which appeared to overlook the ruins of the different houses, not one of which remained entire. The neighbouring country, covered with crowds of people, presented the idea of troops of wandering Tartars, who had made choice of that spot for their temporary residence. Such were the objects which struck the astonished sight of the knights before they were allowed to land.

The general of the galleys sent to the Neapolitan commandant, and offered the same assistance already afforded to Reggio; adding, that having heard there were numbers of sick and wounded, he would establish an hospital, which in a very short time would be fit to receive five hundred patients. The Neapolitan returned a polite answer, saying, that the king his master having provided for the most pressing wants of the inhabitants, he must decline accepting his offers till he had written to the viceroy of Sicily, who resided at Palermo*.

From this reply, the knights had every reason to believe their Sicilian majesties had cast a paternal eye on their subjects, and relieved their distresses; they therefore prepared to return, as soon as possible, to the inhabitants of Reggio, with

* See the interesting relation sent to the French minister by M. Lallemande, vice-consul of France at Messina, inserted at full in *La Borde*, vol. IV. part i. page 9, where will be found the following passage: "The relief sent by the sovereign was all given to the garrison, which absorbed it entirely. *The Maltese galleys supplied the wants of the sick and poor for some days, with the most praiseworthy generosity. But the most essential services offered by the commanders were refused; for what reason it is impossible to guess.*"

whose unfortunate situation they were but too well acquainted; and they could not but regret that the prelate had, though from the best of motives, deprived his flock of part of the assistance intended for their relief.

But who can describe the astonishment of the Maltese, when they landed to visit the commandant, and passed round the walls of the city, which no one was permitted to enter without a guard of soldiers, to find themselves surrounded by an immense crowd of the most miserable objects, who eagerly caught at the smallest alms bestowed on them! This affecting spectacle induced the knights to make all possible haste to acquit themselves of a duty imposed on them by mere politeness, in order to return the sooner to the performance of one infinitely more important, and which they plainly foresaw would be required of them. They were received in an extremely large barrack built of wood, divided into different apartments, richly furnished, and were presented with refreshments of the most delicate kind: their ears were likewise regaled with military music; plenty appeared to reign throughout every part of the dwelling, and all the surrounding objects seemed calculated to inspire pleasure. The commandant put an end to the audience, by advising the general of the galleys, who had communicated to him his intentions, to return to Reggio, there to await the answer to the dispatches sent to Palermo.

Nothing could possibly be more striking than the contrast between this kind of palace and the miserable habitations

which surrounded it. The unfortunate people of Messina had constructed, at certain distances, different hovels, which were too hastily put together to admit of any choice either of situation or materials. A tolerable tent was sometimes pitched near a wooden barrack: but much more frequently a mere piece of cloth, spread on the ground, served to cover a whole family, who had crept under it for shelter, and there dug themselves a retreat, which but too often, serving a double purpose, furnished them a grave. The partitions which separated these deplorable dwellings, were much too thin to shut out the dismal shrieks of the wounded and dying from the compassionate ears of the knights, who were not insensible to their misfortunes, and who vainly endeavoured to find out a minister who, like the worthy prelate at Reggio, would properly distribute the means of relief. I will not attempt to describe *all* the affecting scenes which presented themselves to the knights who visited these dismal habitations. The surgeons were permitted to dress the wounds of some miserable beings who were at a distance from the rest; and the commandant could not prevent alms being privately bestowed on several of these unfortunate objects. My post on board the galleys frequently obliged me to accompany the surgeons, in order to inspect the application of different remedies, and the distribution of the necessaries sent for their relief. This gave me an opportunity of witnessing scenes which I *scarcely* dare present to the reader.

Here, lay extended a miserable mother covered with

wounds, the hapless remnant of her famished children vainly striving for sustenance from a breast which, dreadful to think of! would yield none untinged with blood.

There, the wretched father; deprived of his children's aid; motionless from his wounds, in which the noxious vapours from the earth on which he lay had generated fungous substances which no kind hand had been stretched forth to remove.

Onward, the heart-breaking sight of children, half-buried in ruins, whom the imperious want of animal food had constrained to attack themselves, inflicting with their teeth wounds which threatened a more painful and more lingering death than that from which they had escaped.

Those whose duty obliged them to visit the dwellings of the unfortunate inhabitants, were still more painfully affected by the profound silence which reigned throughout some, than the deep groans which issued from others; knowing the probability of its cause—that death had already precluded all human aid.

Provisions, as has been already mentioned, were at first privately distributed among the sufferers: but this assistance could not be long concealed; and so great was the multitude of people who continually presented themselves to partake of it, that it was absolutely necessary to decide on some plan to prevent so great an inconvenience. The galleys near the quays were constantly assailed by crowds who braved the strictest prohibitions against approaching them. These

disorders were, however, at last prevented; and permission obtained to distribute soup, meat, rice, and bread, freely and indiscriminately to all who should present themselves at a fixed place and hour. The knights were always present on this occasion, and distributed the provisions with their own hands. This employment was, however, attended with some difficulties, and many unpleasant circumstances, which the cruel situation of the sufferers could alone induce them to support.

Let the reader figure to himself twelve or fifteen hundred persons pressed by famine, crowding impetuously close to immense cauldrons and large baskets, the contents of which thirty or forty knights were endeavouring to divide in the most impartial manner; and he will not be surprised that they were frequently obliged to make use of force to drive back the most importunate, whose avidity it was otherwise impossible to check.

During three weeks that the knights remained in the port of Messina, they were constantly employed in the above-mentioned occupations; and when the general of the galleys had resolved to return, he was so fearful of occasioning any tumult among a people whose necessities had for some time been daily relieved by the order, that he took the greatest pains to conceal the day of his departure. He just touched at Reggio, where he left the different articles the commandant of Messina did not condescend to accept. To these he added a large sum of money from his own private property. He had acted with equal generosity at Messina, and indeed in every place

where he heard of any miserable objects, throughout the whole of that desolated coast. I know not whether I ought thus to divulge the secret benevolent actions of a friend, of whose destiny I am now, alas! totally ignorant; but as I think it necessary to mention that every one of the captains of the galleys distinguished themselves by their charity, I surely ought not to pass over in silence the glorious example given them by their illustrious chief*.

Catania and Syracuse, which had fortunately escaped the havock made by this dreadful earthquake in Sicily, were soon, if possible, in a still more deplorable situation; being in total want of corn, not only in the above-mentioned towns, but in the surrounding country. Thus exposed to all the horrors of famine, they had not much reason to expect speedy relief from Malta; the fleet of which had been much damaged by the late long campaigns near Algiers, and on the coast of Spain, where it had remained after the Spanish vessels had retired into their own ports. The treasury was likewise much exhausted by the enormous expences of this expedition; yet, notwithstanding all these circumstances, no sooner was their distressed situation known at Malta, than the grand-master sent off a large vessel laden with corn, and several boats with biscuits, to supply as soon as possible the immediate wants of these wretched people.

* The bailli de Frélon de la Frélonniere, of an ancient family in Brittany.

CHAP. III.

Decrees of the Assemblies in France against the Order of Malta. Account of the Manner in which that Order managed its Possessions, one Third of which was paid to Government during M. Neckar's Administration. Five Hundred Thousand French Livres sent to Lewis XVI. on his Flight to Varennes. Services rendered to the French Trade. A Petition from the commercial Companies at Marseilles and Lyons sent to the National Assembly in Favour of the Order, which is destroyed, and all its Members cruelly persecuted. A Justification of this Injustice published, and Henry IV. represented as a more tyrannical Monster than Charles IX. Encomiums on the Conduct of Persons who were concerned for the Interests of the Order. The Grand-Master's Manifesto. He preserves a perfect Neutrality.

THE order was in a state of the greatest prosperity, and was continually achieving actions which merited a still farther increase of glory; when it received a mortal blow, and that, alas! from the same hand which had contrived, not only to overturn a throne established for fourteen centuries, but at the same time entirely to annihilate a body which had constantly been its principal support.

The new legislators of France appeared for a moment to respect the property of Malta: but it was too valuable, and the order of men to whom it belonged too hateful, to escape or any length of time the gripe of the oppressors; who felt a

pleasure, and indeed thought it a duty, to possess themselves of it.

The original hospitallers were Frenchmen, and the first knights were likewise of the same nation; consequently theirs were the first languages in the order, and three out of the eight were of that country. If the reader reflects for a moment on the manner in which they managed their possessions in France, and the use they made of their revenues, he will plainly perceive, that they constantly merited the protection of a nation on which they had the double claim of proprietors of land and benefactors.

Nothing could possibly be neater, nor kept in nicer order, than their estates and farms; and houses had been built in most of the commanderies, which not only contributed to embellish the country, but were of the greatest utility. The neatest and most convenient farms were erected close to the most sumptuous edifices, and commissions annually appointed by the chapter of the priories to prevent any of these useful buildings being neglected: they were, indeed, of the greatest consequence to agriculture, and very necessary for preserving the fruit of the farmer's labour.

The laws and regulations of the order were greatly calculated to favour a good administration of its property; since they particularly provided, that those commanders who had improved their commanderies, should be preferably eligible

to more valuable ones. It may then very justly be said, that scarcely any land in France itself was better cultivated than the estates of the order: they were indeed, in many parts, complete models of rural economy; neither the idle nor poor appeared in the neighbourhood, the greatest attention being given to employ the former and relieve the latter. The riches and industry which Malta diffused throughout France ought to have recommended it to the good offices of that country; on which it had still another claim, that of employing its revenues, in all emergencies, for the advantage of those from whom it held its estates. The order, indeed, never forgot that it ought always to contribute as much as possible to the interior and exterior prosperity of the French nation. When M. Neckar demanded, by way of voluntary contribution, the third part of the revenue of every proprietor in France, the receiver for that language in Paris immediately gave in his recognisance, and made the first payments: and when an unhappy monarch, left without resource, with no one to whom he could possibly confide his total want of money, and still less the circumstance for which he required it, addressed himself to the order to request it to employ that credit in his favour which itself had almost entirely lost; it instantly sent bills to the amount of five hundred thousand French livres, the very sum specified by Lewis XVI. The unfortunate event of the flight to Varennes is but too well known; and the order had no other consolation left,

than having employed its last farthing for the relief of suffering virtue*. It had, however, on another occasion, the pride and satisfaction of seeing its last military armaments come to the assistance of the very country which deprived it of the means of continuing them. For at the moment when France deliberated on the utility of Malta, and when the order was perfectly convinced that the legislators had resolved to seize on its possessions, the Maltese galleys on the coast of Provence retook two Marseilles merchantmen which had been captured by the Tunisian corsairs. The only motive for this gallant action was the pleasure of having performed it, for they instantly restored the vessels to their owners, and refused to accept any reward. This noble and disinterested conduct, which sufficiently proved the great importance of the Maltese navy to the French trade, induced the commercial companies at Lyons and Marseilles to unite their efforts, and to apply to the national assembly in favour of the order: but all in vain; the nature of the intended revolution being such as must necessarily draw on its ruin. I once had an idea of retracing successively, and placing in proper order, the different decrees in which mention is made of Malta; but I soon perceived that such an account would carry me too far, and would require a volume of itself. I also thought, that a recital of a succession of laws, in the greatest part of which the order was only accidentally named, would

* The order formerly contributed towards the ransom of St. Louis when taken prisoner by the infidels, and to that of Francis I. when in the hands of the Spaniards.

be both tedious and uninteresting; I shall therefore merely confine myself to making my reader acquainted with the result of these different decrees.

To avoid recurring to a subject so truly painful, I shall here sum up the whole of the laws which deprived the order of its privileges and property; and which in the end drove the knights of Malta from a country where they had no alternative left but the blackest despair or the greatest dishonour, and where they must inevitably have perished from want, or on a scaffold.

In the first assembly, the order of St. John of Jerusalem was only regarded as a foreign sovereign possessing property in France, and as such was subjected to all the taxes imposed on that kingdom.

These first acts still preserved some appearance of justice; since they proved not only the sovereignty of the order, but its right of proprietor in the country. These were, however, soon destroyed; and the legislative assembly enacted that every Frenchman who was a member of an order of knighthood which required proofs of nobility, should no longer be regarded as a French citizen. This act was followed by the decree of the 19th of September, 1792; when, after several debates, which took place more as a matter of form than to discuss the grounds of the question, it was determined that the order of Malta should be entirely annulled, and all its property annexed to the demesnes of France. It is an extraordinary circumstance,

though, alas! but too true, that the ancient advocates in favour of the order, and who till that moment had pleaded its cause in the most disinterested manner, became on this occasion the most violent of its persecutors.

This decree being passed, mention was made of indemnifications, and of bestowing an annual stipend on the knights: but there being no real intention of so doing, the most solemn promises were soon forgotten, and a most effectual method taken to annul them completely; it being required that every one enjoying a pension should reside in the French territories, where all who had the smallest pretensions to nobility were cruelly persecuted, their houses burned, and the proprietors massacred together with every part of their families.

No sooner had the edict passed which deprived the order of its possessions, than all the estates were seized on and ravaged, the houses of the commanders ransacked and plundered, and themselves persecuted. The revolutionary fury did not stop there; the knights were pursued like wild beasts, and many of them thrown into the dungeons entitled *of Public Safety*, where they remained with the axe of the executioner constantly suspended over their heads.

It was after these dreadful horrors, which for some years disgraced France and rendered that country a scene of blood and infamy, that the same nation, more tranquil though equally unjust, determined to declare that those who had fled from such dreadful calamities were the enemies of their country;

and that they ought to be condemned to a civil death, since it was impossible to become master of their persons. The constitutional assembly, in the decree of the third of Brumaire, proposed including in the proscription against the emigrants, the very knights who had retired to Malta; where, conformably to the original decree, they were to have been allowed a pension—a commissary had even been appointed at Marseilles to transmit it to them.

The striking injustice of this decree induced the government which at that time tyrannised over France, to endeavour to justify its conduct, and also that of the assembly. Men were found who had the weakness to enter into such views; and one in particular, whose talents, and the manner in which he had employed them, had ever been the subject of admiration, did not scruple to prostitute them on this occasion to the directory, whose cause he condescended to plead; and in a curious work which he published, and to which he did not even blush to sign his name, he endeavoured to prove, that a military, hospitaller, and sovereign order, was exactly the same as either the Brothers of the Trinity, or the Capuchins—that there was no difference between the orders which begged their bread from house to house throughout Lyons, Marseilles, and other commercial places, and one which ranged the seas at the risk of both liberty and life to protect trade, and to ensure the export and import of the produce of industry, and the necessaries of existence—that the noble ecclesiastical body of

Lyons and Brioud ought to be considered in the same point of view by the maritime towns in France, as the noble order of Malta, which had ports constantly open for their shipping, dock-yards to repair them, and hospitals where the crews were received and attended gratis—that the revolutionary intestine war was that of *good* against *evil*; in which every honest man was called upon to join, on pain of treason against the nation—that the law ought to have a retroactive effect on those who had been allowed to chuse whether they would remain knights or become French citizens, and who in the former quality had quitted France with passports on which was specified the motive of their emigration—that the government which had decreed indemnifications, was at liberty to break its promise; and that those whom it had solemnly engaged to maintain, but whom it had abandoned to their fate, ought rather to have starved in France than to have sought safety and an honourable subsistence in another country—that *passing over to the order of the day* when there was question of a law the existence of which had been sought for in vain, was a much stronger sanction than what had been given to one which had been passed with every form requisite for its full and entire execution—that the celebrated author Vertot, so justly esteemed one of our best historians, had composed, in his History of Malta, *one of the most despicable works possible, in the opinion of a philosopher; and that not only from the subject, but from the manner in which it was treated*—lastly (though

entirely foreign to the question), he is hurried on so violently by the *rage* of eccentric demonstrations, as to endeavour to prove that Henry IV., who conquered the throne of his forefathers as much by clemency and moderation as by force of arms, was a still more odious tyrant than Charles IX., who supported himself in it by persecution, and the dreadful massacre of St. Bartholomew*.

This extraordinary production met with the greatest success, and was particularly approved by the directory. The minister of justice complimented the author on the occasion; and in his congratulatory letter made a confession of faith in regard to emigrants, which may very fairly be interpreted as follows—that a native of Pennsylvania having bought an estate in France ought to be looked upon as an emigrant, if, during the horrors of from 1789 to 1793, he quitted that country to return to his original habitation, were it even become the prey of savages almost as dangerous as the furious monsters from which he had escaped; and if the same monsters should ever accidentally make war in America, and attack the dwellings of his parents or his own, and he should be taken prisoner whilst defending his property, he should immediately be shot as a French

* The author's words are these: "The difference between Charles IX. and Henry IV. is but trifling; and consists in the former's having massacred his people being a king, and the latter in order to become one. Charles wished to force his subjects to turn catholics; and Henry would have been happy to have had them all huguenots. They were both barbarous and sacrilegious from motives of self-interest; but the crimes of Charles IX. were caused in some degree by his mother and uncles, whilst those of Henry IV. were all his own."

emigrant. Such were at that time the barbarous principles of the French legislature: and they still remained in force in 1800; when the knights who were attached to the directory and to the government which succeeded it, made just complaints of being sacrificed to them*.

During this terrible state of anarchy and confusion, the order was nobly defended by knights whose names ought not to be buried in oblivion. The bailiff de la Brillhane, the Maltese ambassador at the court of France, was a man of high spirit and generous sentiments, who constantly protected the order in the most intrepid manner. When M. de Montmorin gave him notice that his life was in danger, he immediately answered: "I am under no apprehensions; for the moment is now arrived, when a man of honour who faithfully performs his duty may die as gloriously on a gallows as in the field of battle."—A dreadful truth, which, alas! has since been but too evidently verified!

This noble-minded man expired suddenly soon afterwards, on quitting M. de Montmorin's apartment, with whom he had had a private conference; and the order has never since sent an ambassador to France.—The commander de l'Estourmelle was named chargé-d'affaires, under the direction of the bailiff de Virieu, minister from the Infant duke of Parma: and these two knights, whose conduct merited universal esteem, remain-

* See Rausijat.

ed firm in their respective posts to the last moment; they, indeed, displayed a constancy and courage worthy of happier times. All respect for the sacred character of the minister from an ally was thrown aside; and Estourmelle's house was forced, his papers seized, his chests pillaged, and his life threatened. The bailiff de Virieu, who was likewise a minister from an allied power, escaped with difficulty from a multitude of armed men by whom he was surrounded. These reiterated insults were followed by another, which sensibly affected the order. The Temple, the principal place of residence for the knights at Paris, and which had been erected to serve as a peaceful retreat for the honourable and the virtuous, was now become their prison, by being appointed the place of confinement for the unfortunate Louis XVI. and his family.

Notwithstanding all these persecutions, Malta preserved a perfect neutrality. It never declared war; and the grand-master only protested in common with other sovereigns against the horrid cruelties which at that time dishonoured France. Sixty French vessels richly laden, remained during almost the whole of the winter of 1793 in the port of Malta. The grand-master was advised to seize upon them; but he only answered, "that the order was instituted to suffer injustice, not to revenge it."

When the English and Spanish fleets were triumphant in the Mediterranean, and the allied army gloriously successful on the continent, the order never took any advantage of these

conquests, constantly bearing in mind, that the knights of Malta ought not to draw their swords against a Christian power, and their ports were open to all. The English and Spaniards were indeed allowed to recruit sailors in Malta; and this permission, which had been more advantageous to France than to any other country in the preceding wars, and even surreptitiously in the beginning of the present one, drew upon the order the most violent reproaches from the directory, which treasured it in its memory as a pretence for going to war when time and opportunity served.

The conduct of the order of Malta on this occasion, as indeed on every other, was perfectly irreproachable, and wants no explanation. Was it reprehensible for allowing its allies to employ sailors whom it had no longer means to support? or ought it to have abandoned them entirely, and suffered them to starve sooner than increase their attachment to the order, by placing them well, and making them happy?

Such a manner of acting was never thought hostile; for had it been so, England might on many occasions, and particularly in the beginning of the American dispute, have declared war against Malta for having furnished the Toulon squadron with eighteen hundred sailors. France did not make war upon Hesse for sending soldiers to England; and the emperor never regarded the Swiss as enemies because they had a large body of troops in the French service, which frequently

fought against him! I do not therefore scruple to assert, that the conduct of the grand-master was not only irreproachable with respect to his permitting his subjects to enlist in another service when he had no longer power to maintain them in his; but I even say he was rather too scrupulous, for he would have acted a much more prudent part had he requested his allies to furnish him with a garrison to support his independence; and by so doing he would have saved the order and his successor from reproach and insult, and his people from crimes and misfortunes.

Though the order permitted its subjects to enlist under different colours, it never hoisted its own, nor ever employed the knights to fight against France. Many negotiations were commenced on this subject, but the grand-master constantly continued firm in his system of neutrality: he even went farther, and never entirely broke through his political relations with the French; a minister from that nation always remaining in Malta, though he was not permitted to send one to Paris. The knights proposed for that embassy were certainly unobjectionable, the first being the commander d'Alonville, who had never quitted France, and the second a Spanish knight acknowledged by his court. The king of Spain, who at that time was attached to the French government, made every possible effort in his favour, but all in vain; till at last, in 1797, a blank paper, signed by the grand-master, was sent to Mr.

Cibon, a man of great probity, and well known for his attachment to the interests of Malta. His orders were, not to employ it as a sanction for being appointed *chargé d'affaires* without the positive decision of the bailiff de St. Simon, who had always remained in France.

CHAP. IV.

The Grand-Master's paternal Reception of the Knights, who retire to Malta. His noble Reply to an Officer of his Household on the Occasion. The Grand Priory of Russia created by the Emperor Paul; it is united to the Anglo-Bavarian Language. The Russian Courier stopped by the French, and his Dispatches made public. The Death of Rohan. Homspech elected Grand-Master. A Plan formed to name the Prince of Peace to the Grand-Mastership. The Order sends an Ambassador to St. Petersburg; his Reception. Paul named Protector of the Order. The Emperor and the whole Imperial Family invested with the Grand Cross of Malta. The Congress of Rastadt. The Order persecuted by the Directory. A Proposal made to incorporate it with the Teutonic Order.

SO general a proscription against the nobles, and the violence with which they were persecuted on every side, forced the knights of Malta to fly for refuge to different parts of the world. Those whose age and infirmities required a peaceful retreat, returned to the convent; whilst others flocked to the different standards, among which the ancient *Oriflamme* of France still shone conspicuous. But the reverse of fortune experienced by the allied powers obliged them at last to repair to their own island, where they rallied their forces to defend their order, the only power to which they could be longer useful.

The grand-master's reception of the numerous knights who retired to Malta was perfectly consonant to the high

opinion which had been formed of his noble and generous disposition. Like a second L'Isle Adam, he received his children with all the tenderness of a good parent; and was so prodigal of his favours, that it might justly be said, he consulted the goodness of his heart infinitely more than the contents of his purse.

When an officer of his household took the liberty of representing to him, that, if he did not in some degree restrain his generosity, there would be nothing left to support the dignity of his court; he replied, with that simplicity which so particularly distinguished his character, "Take care to reserve one crown * daily for the expences of my table, and let all the rest be distributed among my distressed brothers."

Among the various misfortunes which continually befel the order, one glimpse of hope, however, still remained. The grand priory of Poland, formed by Rohan, has been already mentioned, together with the methods he employed for the restoration of the livings belonging to the order, unjustly seized on by that country. These being situated in the *ordinatio* of Ostrog in Volhynia, passed under the government of Russia on the general dismemberment of Poland. The order was too well aware of the risk they ran of remaining constantly in the hand of so powerful a nation not to make known its just pretensions as soon as possible.

Catherine II. was at that time on the throne, and the

* Two shillings.

bailiff de Litta presented her his credential letters, as minister plenipotentiary from the sovereign order of St. John of Jerusalem to her court. He was admitted the same day to an audience with all the princes and princesses of the Imperial family. But in the midst of a negotiation which most probably would have been long protracted, the empress ended her glorious reign, dying suddenly, and Paul I. succeeded to the throne.

The new emperor had ever been a passionate admirer of every thing resembling chivalry, and had always an extraordinary pleasure in reading the exploits performed by the knights of Malta. He had, indeed, conceived a very great affection for this illustrious body of men, and for the great actions which so particularly distinguished them: he, therefore, eagerly embraced this opportunity of gratifying his inclinations.

By the treaty of 1775, the order had obtained an annual revenue in Poland of a hundred and twenty thousand florins of that country, which Paul increased to three hundred thousand, to be paid by the treasurer of the empire. This was more than doubling the income of the establishment, on which the emperor bestowed the title of Grand Priory of Russia, and made it consist of one grand priory, with ten commanderies for the knights, and three for the conventual chaplains. He also permitted the *juspatronal* commanderies, which were now under his government, to be preserved; and allowed his catholic

subjects to found others, on the same principles as those established in Poland.

On the 15th of January, 1797, count Bosbaroko, chancellor of the empire, with prince Alexander Kourakin, vice-chancellor, on the part of the emperor, and the bailiff de Litta on that of the grand-master, signed an agreement, containing on one side thirty-seven articles, and on the other four separate ones, with eight additional ones. The first eight related to the sub-divisions of the three hundred thousand florins* granted as a fixed revenue for the grand priory of Russia, and this was to be arranged as follows: eighty thousand for the grand priory; thirty thousand for the first and second commanderies; twenty thousand for the third and fourth; fifteen thousand for each of the last six; and six thousand each for the chaplains' three commanderies. The responsions were likewise fixed: the grand-prior to pay twelve thousand florins; the first and second commanderies, six thousand; the third and fourth, four thousand; the last six, fifteen hundred †; and the conventual chaplains a thousand each. Twenty thousand florins were also allowed for the expences of the legation; twelve thousand for the support of the chapel and archives; and the eighteen thousand florins still remaining of the three hundred thousand were intended as an annual supply for any

* A Polish florin is estimated at the fourth part of a Maltese crown, or about sixpence English.

† In a separate article, it was agreed that these commanderies were to pay three thousand instead of fifteen hundred florins.

expences which might occur at Malta relative to the grand priory of Russia.

The emperor decided that the order should receive three hundred thousand florins from the 1st of January, 1797, and likewise the first four months of 1798, and this by way of indemnification for the expences of the first establishment; but the commanderies were not to enter into the enjoyment of their revenues till the 1st of May, 1798.

The commanderies could not be disposed of in favour of any Russian who was incapable of being received into the order of St. John of Jerusalem; and all the regulations and statutes relative to the mortuaries, vacancies, responsions, &c. were established in the same manner as at Malta.

The new priory of Russia was incorporated into the ancient language of England, since called the Anglo-Bavarian; and the grand-master, as a mark of gratitude for the good offices rendered him by his Imperial majesty's two ministers, bestowed on them both the grand cross of the order of St. John of Jerusalem. The emperor expressed a wish not only to wear it himself, but that all the princes of the Imperial family should be invested with the same mark of distinction.

The importance of these different particulars, the security of the papers relative to articles agreed upon for the creation of the grand priory of Russia, together with the wish to receive as soon as possible the necessary ratifications from the grand-master and council, induced the bailiff de Litta to dispatch an

extraordinary courier to Malta, who arrived in Italy at the moment when the French invaded that delightful country. He had embarked at Trieste, in order to avoid meeting the army; and on landing at Ancona, he was much surprised at finding Bonaparte, and still more astonished at being apprehended, and his papers seized;—a most extraordinary proceeding against a person who came from a court at peace with the French republic, and who was going to a sovereign equally so. The directory appeared to glory in this opportunity of publishing the contents of the dispatches; and the unfortunate courier, being stripped of every thing he possessed, was permitted to continue his journey.

It was by means of this extraordinary publication of the papers seized in Italy that the intelligence reached Malta of the happy issue of the negotiation with Russia, for the second courier arrived just before Rohan breathed his last. Thus was this excellent prince in his last moments deprived of the grateful consolation of knowing that his efforts in favour of the order were crowned with success; he had, however, the satisfaction, which every generous mind must feel, of having relieved the distresses of his persecuted brethren.

Hompesch succeeded to the sovereignty, and was the first grand-master ever chosen from the German language. This circumstance did not proceed from any want of merit in the knights of that country, which at all times had furnished the most estimable characters, and perfectly worthy of command-

ing the order: but few of the knights resided in Malta, and they almost all preferred living peaceably in their own commanderies; having constantly in view the sovereign principality of Hettersheim, which was annexed to the grand priory of Germany.

The new grand-master, Hompesch, was descended from an illustrious family in the empire. He had the title of bailiff of Brandeburgh before his election, and was minister from the imperial court of Vienna at Malta. Rohan, whose modesty equalled his sagacity, from a diffidence in his own abilities, had formed a congregation of state, from the very beginning of the French troubles. This assembly was to take into consideration the proper means of preserving the government, and to form necessary resolutions, according to the exigency of the times and the delicacy of circumstances. Those knights who were most distinguished for prudence and enlightened understandings were chosen on this occasion. The bailiff de Hompesch was one of the number, and he had ever been remarked as a declared enemy to every species of innovation, and as a zealous defender of the order; his quality indeed of minister from the emperor and king, confirmed the opinion formed of his sentiments. These considerations induced the order to make choice of him to mount a throne, which was no longer easy to maintain. He himself was not ambitious of this distinction; but having once obtained it, the greatest reproach to his memory will most probably be, that he had not suffi-

cient firmness to preserve it. He certainly at that time had no hopes of being elected to the grand-mastership; he was not even arrived at an age to aspire to such a dignity, and it was a conventual chaplain who pressed him to become a candidate. It was not, however, till after repeated solicitations that he consented; and he then authorised the chaplain to make the arrangements, and defray the necessary expences on the occasion. Hompesch therefore did not succeed to the mastership without entering into troublesome engagements, and contracting considerable debts.

It must be universally allowed, that, situated as things were at that moment, nothing would have been more impolitic than to have elected a grand-master from any of the French languages; since it would have exposed the order to the redoubled hatred of the French government, the violence of which against every one of that nation who had preferred remaining noble to being acknowledged a French citizen, was but too well known. There was even a report, which was declared to be a true one, that Bonaparte had formed a plan to raise a Spaniard to the grand-mastership, and that he had made choice of a person called the *prince of peace*, an honorary bailiff in the order. This plan might probably have succeeded, had the prince of Rohan, whose health had long been in a precarious state, died a little sooner; but when the intelligence of the event reached Madrid, the *prince of peace* had contracted a marriage with a princess of the royal family of Spain, and this

grand alliance satisfying his most ambitious views, made him relinquish all idea of the grand-mastership of St. John of Jerusalem.

The first council assembled after the election of Hompesch deliberated on the dispatches from Russia, and the convention already mentioned between the emperor and Malta. These were read with the most enthusiastic pleasure, and unanimously ratified.—In order to give a public testimony of deference on this occasion, and a proper degree of solemnity to so memorable an event, the council determined to send an extraordinary embassy to St. Petersburg. In consequence of which the bailiff de Litta, who as minister-plenipotentiary had already signed the convention of the 4-15th of January, was on the 7th of August (new style), 1797, named ambassador-extraordinary from his most eminent highness the grand-master of the sovereign order of Malta to his majesty the emperor of all the Russias.

The ratification of the council and grand-master, together with the credentials, were carried to St. Petersburg by the chevalier Raczynski. The bailliff de Litta was received on this occasion with all the honours usually paid to ambassadors from crowned heads, and which, indeed, the order of Malta was ever accustomed to receive from every court. He made his public entry into St. Petersburg on the 27th of November, 1797, accompanied by an imperial commissary, and the grand-master of the ceremonies of the court, whom the

emperor had sent to meet him. He was there informed, that he was to have his public audience on the Sunday following, the 29th of November; when he was conducted to the castle, with the same retinue which attended him on his entry, and received with all the usual forms.

His Imperial majesty, in full uniform, was standing under a canopy; the crown, globe, and sceptre, placed on a table to the right, covered with purple velvet laced with gold; the grand-chancellor and vice-chancellor of the empire stood at the foot of the throne, and at a distance the dignified clergy and the synod. The five first classes of the empire assisted at this audience.

The Maltese ambassador then advanced, accompanied by the imperial commissary and the grand-master of the ceremonies; he was followed by the secretary of the embassy with the credential letters, and by three knights, who likewise made part of the embassy, and who carried three cushions of cloth of gold, on which were placed the ancient crosses brought from Rhodes to Malta, the coat of mail intended for his imperial majesty, an ancient cross hung to the Madonna of Palermo, which was thought to belong to the celebrated La Valette, with other crosses for the empress, the princes and princesses of the imperial family.

The ambassador, having made the three usual reverences, advanced to the foot of the throne, and pronounced the following harangue:

“Sire,
“THE sovereign order of Malta, eager to acknowledge its debt of gratitude, and to perform a duty, not only sacred, but dear to the hearts of every one of its members, thus offers up its thanks at the foot of your throne. Your majesty’s benefactions are such as must ever remain deeply engraven on our memory.

“The new establishment, which the munificence of your Imperial majesty has secured to the order of Malta, in the empire of Russia, has been sanctioned in that island with the most lively enthusiasm, and with every sentiment of joy and gratitude. To give a still greater solemnity to our acknowledgments, and to express our homage still more forcibly, his eminent highness, my lord the grand-master, together with the supreme council, have unanimously decreed an extraordinary embassy on the occasion.

“Being chosen by my order for this august mission, it is in quality of ambassador-extraordinary that I am charged to acquaint your Imperial majesty with the universal wish of the whole order that you would deign to become chief of this establishment, and accept a title so dear and so encouraging to us all; a title, indeed, which you, Sire, by your generous sentiments, and the favours bestowed upon us, have already so justly acquired, that of *Protector of the order of Malta*: and as such, we trust we shall see your Imperial majesty invested with the ensigns of an order, equally ancient and illustrious,

ever renowned for its exploits, and venerable from the sanctity of its institutions.

“ His most eminent highness and the supreme council have, therefore, sent your Imperial majesty the ancient cross of the celebrated La Valette, that invincible defender of our island, who bequeathed his name to a city, which he alone had rendered impregnable. This cross has hitherto been religiously preserved in the treasury of our cathedral church, as a precious monument, which constantly recalled to our remembrance the glorious military exploits performed by a grand-master of Malta, who might properly be termed the hero of Christianity; and we now feel a pleasure in offering it to your Imperial majesty, as a proof of our gratitude, as a mark worthy of his piety, and as a happy presage of the renewal of our prosperity.

“ This offer is accompanied by our most ardent vows for the glory of your Imperial majesty, and the happiness of your empire. This august and revered ensign of our order, together with the recollection of our ancestors, and the proofs of valour given by the knights of Malta, will, we doubt not, excite in the bosoms of the illustrious, brave, and faithful nobles of your majesty's empire, an enthusiasm and a spirit of emulation worthy the most glorious ages of chivalry; and the solemnity of this memorable day will constantly recall to posterity the remembrance of the munificence of Paul the First, and the gratitude of the order of Malta.”

The ambassador having finished his oration, presented his credentials, which his Imperial majesty committed into the hands of the grand-chancellor; commanding him, at the same time, to make an answer in his name. This was done by his highness the prince Berborodka, in the Russian language: and the emperor having accepted the title of protector of the order, together with the cross of La Valette, the ambassador resumed his discourse in the following manner:

“ Sire,

“ What a glorious moment for us! when your Imperial majesty, by thus seconding our wishes, reflects a fresh lustre on the order of Malta! Let us, then, whilst we congratulate ourselves on so great a happiness, express our lively thanks, for this joyful event, to your Imperial majesty. With what sentiments of pleasure will ever be remembered in the annals of our history an epoch which restores our hopes, and for ever ensures the happiness, prosperity, and glory, of our order!

“ Condescend, Sire, to add to the many favours already bestowed, that of investing your august spouse, her majesty the empress, with the ensigns of our order. We presume to offer her this testimony of our profound respect—the due homage of valour to virtue. We also entreat, Sire, that you would please to invest the princes of your august Imperial family with the same ensigns; and this favour we shall regard as the first bestowed by your Imperial majesty on the order, in quality of protector.”

The ambassador then took the coat of mail, and approaching his majesty, the emperor put this religious and warlike vestment over his clothes, and the grand-master of the wardrobe fitted it on him; he next presented him the cross of La Valette, which his Imperial majesty placed himself on his bosom, putting round his neck the antique gold chain to which it was suspended.

The audience being over, the ambassador was conducted to the empress, in the same form and with the same retinue.

Her Imperial majesty was seated on her throne, surrounded by her ladies of honour; the grand-master of the court, count Romanzow, standing at her feet.

The ambassador, having delivered his harangue, presented his credentials to the empress, who commanded the grand-master of the court to make an answer in her name.

The Maltese ambassador had afterwards separate audiences of the heir apparent, the grand-duke, and of their highnesses the princesses of the imperial family; after which he returned into the presence-chamber, where the emperor, with the coat of mail and the cross of La Valette, was seated on the throne.

Her Imperial majesty, having received notice from the grand-master of the ceremonies, appeared, followed by her whole court, and, approaching the throne, was presented by the emperor with the grand-cross of the order of Malta; after which the empress took her usual place on the throne.

The grand-duke next advanced without a sword, followed by one of his aides-de-camp. His highness put one knee to the ground before the emperor, who, putting on his hat, drew his sword, and, striking three several times the right and left shoulder of the candidate, took the sword from the aide-de-camp, and presented it to the grand-duke; after which the emperor gave him the accustomed embrace, and invested him with the distinctive marks of the grand-cross of the order of Malta. The rest of the imperial family underwent the same ceremony.

The emperor, being desirous of conferring the same honour on a prince of the blood royal of France, who had proved himself the worthy successor of a hero whom posterity has ever distinguished by the title of *great*, and on whose name he reflects new lustre, immediately invested his serene highness the prince of Condé with the grand-cross of the order, and made him grand-prior of Russia.

The bailiff de Litta preserved the title of ambassador till the 25th April, 1798, when he resumed that of envoy-extraordinary and minister-plenipotentiary from the sovereign order of Malta residing at the court of Russia.

Notwithstanding all these events, the order never lost sight of the critical situation of the island, the threatened attack of the French, the want of money in the treasury, and the means of obtaining foreign assistance; in order to procure which, the grand-master, in the beginning of the year 1798, transmitted a memorial, which was presented by the Maltese minister, en-

treating the Russian court to support the order with its interest throughout the rest of Europe. The emperor, by way of answer to this request, sent orders to his envoys in the different courts to render every possible good office to all agents, either direct or indirect, belonging to Malta. He even carried his attention so far as to declare, that he should look upon every favour bestowed on the order by the different courts as a mark of deference and respect to himself. This was undoubtedly fulfilling, in a most efficacious manner, his engagement as protector of the order; and the good effects of so powerful an intervention were very sensibly felt.

The congress of Rastadt was opened towards the end of 1797; and the French government, as declared enemy of all persons or bodies of men who had the smallest pretensions to nobility, never ceased persecuting the order of Malta, whenever and wherever it had an opportunity of so doing. The knights were constantly proscribed and stripped of their possessions; the Maltese estates in Italy were seized on and declared *national property*, and the directory sold them for its own advantage. The French republic, having never declared itself sovereign of this conquered country, having even established governments which were called independent, ought, certainly, to have left the property of the order entire for the new republics they were forming. But the directory had made a new code of distributive laws, or rather a new mode of appropriating all possessions, either public or private, to itself.

Even robbers preserve some shadow of justice, and divide the profits of their crimes: but the faith preserved among thieves did not exist in this case; every thing that could possibly be carried away or sold being seized on as a matter of right by the French directory, or by those famished vultures who were termed its agents, and who proved themselves truly worthy of their rapacious chiefs. This same directory finished by leaving its victims to all the horrors of poverty and despair, and its accomplices a prey to shame and remorse. What a grievous reflection is it, that it was to enrich such monsters as these that the French army lavished its best blood, and that their generals exposed their honour, and tarnished the glory of their arms!

The directory made every possible effort to destroy the order of Malta in Germany; but the part taken by the emperor of Russia on the occasion had so much influence on the courts of Vienna and Berlin, that the plenipotentiaries from these two powers at the congress of Rastadt constantly opposed all the plans formed by the French minister against the order.

When it was first decided that the congress should take place, the Maltese government fixed upon the bailiff de Truchess to represent it at Rastadt, and to defend the privileges of the order. But, according to one of the articles of the treaty of Campo Formio, none but the plenipotentiaries of the empire could be admitted at the congress. The sovereign order of Malta could not therefore send a representative; and

that being the case, the grand-prior of Germany, as prince of Heitersheim, named the bailiff de Pfürdt to act as plenipotentiary for the order, and appointed the chevalier de Bray his co-operator. This knight was counsellor of the Maltese embassy, and as such had been employed a considerable time at the diet of Ratisbon, where he displayed so much zeal, and such great talents, that he certainly merited to have been more successful on the occasion.

This mission had every possible reason to be satisfied with the conduct of the Austrian and Prussian ministers, and with the constant support they afforded it.

It was strongly proposed, in the congress of Rastadt, to consolidate the order of St. John of Jerusalem with the Teutonic order*; but the war having recommenced, that project was dropped. It certainly must appear a most extraordinary circumstance that an idea could possibly have been formed of confounding so useful an order, and which was constantly rendering the most essential services to the whole Christian world, with one which was not of the smallest utility to any but its own particular members. This union might indeed have been inverted; and such a proceeding would not only have been much more natural, but infinitely more just.

* The order was so far from being averse to this union, that it solicited it as a means of preservation, instead of regarding it as the destruction of the order. Such indeed had been its losses, that it appeared advantageous to be united to such an illustrious order as the Teutonic; which had the same views, both religious and military, as itself. But, on the other side, the order of Malta had not the most distant idea of requesting to be incorporated with it, and by so doing losing its own name, and title to the general interest of all the commercial nations in Europe.

C H A P. V.

The French arm a Fleet at Toulon. The Emperor of Russia makes Preparations for sending Assistance to Malta. Critical Situation of the Finances in that Island; its different Resources. Emissaries sent by the Directory to Malta; their Intrigues. Appearance of the French Fleet, under the Command of Brueys. Generous Conduct of the Grand-Master. The French Admiral fails in his Enterprize. Topographical and military Description of Malta. Enumeration and Distribution of the Forces of the Order. Nature of the War declared against Malta. Appearance of Part of the French Fleet. The Order makes Preparations for defending the Island. Arrival of Bonaparte, who demands free Entrance into the Port for the whole Squadron; the Grand-Master and Council refuse his Request. Bonaparte declares his hostile Intentions in a Letter from the French Consul.

DURING the insignificant negotiations which took place at the congress of Rastadt, the French republic never neglected any means which could possibly favour its different plans of invasion. Malta was a prey of which it never lost sight for a moment, and it had the most zealous agents in that island, with whom it was in constant correspondence.

The French influence encreased every day, from the almost miraculous success of the armies of the republic; whilst that of the order of Malta was extremely diminished, in consequence of having lost many of its possessions. Its finances, indeed, were in a most deplorable state, when France fitted

out a considerable fleet at Toulon. Russia, however, manifested a very ardent desire to afford it relief; and the new arrangements made at that court promised a supply of three hundred thousand crowns to the treasury of the order. Paul I. conceived the design of forming a grand-priory for the ancient and faithful nobles of the Greek church in his dominions. To this he intended to annex eighty-four commanderies, and to give ten thousand roubles every year towards the repairs of the fortifications, with the same sum to the hospital, which, with the *passage fees, the reception of the new commanders, the annual responsions, and the first semestres*, would have enriched the common treasury by more than three hundred thousand crowns. These different sums were on the point of being brought to Malta, and orders were issued out for the first payments to be made. But we will not anticipate the events which prevented the execution of this plan.

France, in the mean time, prepared a most formidable fleet, and bestowed the name of *the army of England* on the troops it was to transport*. But before we take notice of its departure, and the place of its destination, we will just take a view of the finances of the order, and examine how far it was in a state to face its enemies.

The revenue in 1788 amounted to 3,156,719 French livres, and the expenditure to 2,967,503; consequently there was a

* 1798.

balance in favour of the order of 189,216. The surplus, however, existed no longer from the moment the French revolution began; and it was followed by a *deficit* which became more considerable every day, and which was enormous indeed on the suppression of the order in France, in the year 1792. This great event occasioned not only the loss of all the property belonging to the three French languages, but likewise that of the commanderies situated in Alsace, Rousillon, and French Navarre, all of which were dependencies of the two languages of Germany and Arragon.

Some time after the almost general coalition was formed against France, the Spanish and Portuguese commanderies, which had never before paid any taxes to their respective governments, were called upon for a tenth of their revenue; and the commanderies in the kingdom of Naples and in Sicily were subjected to the same tax, and indeed to heavier ones. The order was treated still worse in Piedmont, where part of the property of the knights of Malta was ordered to be sold.

Independently of the losses occasioned by the above-mentioned royal taxes, the paper-money in circulation in Spain and part of Italy was an enormous one to the common treasury, which suffered considerably when it was necessary to realise the revenues due from those countries.

The left bank of the Rhine being ceded to the French by the treaty of Campo Formio, the order was deprived of all its property in these four new departments, and the different new

republics, formed on every side, successively robbed it of what it possessed in Helvetia and the Ligurian and Cisalpine states. If, therefore, these different losses be added to that of the three French languages, which brought in the annual sum of 1,392,974 livres to the public treasury, it will be evident that Malta was deprived of two thirds of its revenue, and that the receipts, which were more than three millions in 1788, were reduced to about one million.

In addition to this deficit, the order had borrowed sums, both in Malta and elsewhere, which amounted to six millions of French livres; and at last its credit was fallen so low, that no one could be found to advance more.

The plate belonging to the men-of-war and to the galleys was melted down and coined into money in 1796; as was indeed part of the grand-master's, together with some of that employed for the use of the sick in the hospital. The greatest attention was next paid to the means of encreasing the receipts and diminishing the expences; but, notwithstanding every effort, the former still continued so inferior to the latter, that many parts of the administration suffered essentially, particularly the navy, which it became so difficult to supply with proper armaments, that it was scarcely possible to equip such men-of-war as were absolutely necessary for keeping off the Barbary corsairs, which continually infested the coast.

The treasury was in daily expectation of assistance, which

would at least have afforded it temporary relief; for, besides the payment ordered by Russia, which amounted to three hundred thousand crowns, sixty thousand piasters (about a hundred thousand crowns) were expected from Spain. These arrived in Malta a few days after the French landed, and consequently became, in a great part, the prey of those merciless invaders. The order had likewise promised itself some extraordinary supplies from Portugal, in which country it still retained its possessions.

Independently of specie, the order had still some other resources left; such as the remaining part of the plate belonging to the hospital, the palace, and the different churches, together with some jewels kept in the conservatory. But the exhausted state of the treasury and the loss of credit were not the only enemies Malta had to encounter: the most dangerous ones, alas! were fostered in the very bosom of the order; and these traitors not only weakened, but rendered entirely useless, the members who were the most particularly essential to its preservation.

I shall abstain from mentioning the names of those knights who were suspected, and indeed loudly accused, of treason; but leave the law to take its course, without anticipating its sentence. I cannot, however, in my account of the surrender of Malta, pass over in silence the conduct of individuals on their different posts; but it is very possible to believe that the

apprehension of danger might, at such a moment, make men guilty of weakness, without suspecting them capable of premeditated guilt. I will also hope that you, natives of Malta! will be found innocent of this foul offence, and that you will never appear in the annals of history as an instance of the greatest ingratitude of which a people can possibly be guilty towards their sovereign. It must ever be remembered, that when you became subjects of the knights of Rhodes, your island contained scarcely fifteen thousand inhabitants, and that your only defence against the frequent incursions of the infidel corsairs was an inconsiderable fort, with one cannon and two falconets. A day seldom passed without some houses being pillaged, and your families enslaved; but, in a short time, your population increased in an unheard-of proportion, your island became the bulwark of the Christian world, and considerable sums were constantly circulated in your country by a sovereign who never levied any direct taxes, but diffused riches and plenty throughout the whole of the island. What then could possibly be wanting to complete your happiness? Nothing, alas! but to value it as you ought to have done, and to sacrifice every thing to ensure its continuance.

Notwithstanding the French plenipotentiaries at the congress of Rastadt constantly professed the most pacific intentions, the apprehensions of the Maltese were far from being removed, and a constant eye was kept upon the different emissaries employed by France; one in particular, named

Poussielque*, was very well known. This man came to Malta on different pretences, and no one was ignorant that he held secret assemblies, and gave entertainments to all the partisans of the French revolution: he was therefore ordered to quit the country, after a stay of nearly three weeks.

The order was informed, at the same time, that the armament at Toulon went on with the greatest activity, and that the ships belonging to that department being not sufficient to contain the troops intended for the embarkation, it was determined to employ those at Corfu which had been taken from the republic of Venice.

Admiral Brueys was appointed to command this expedition; and on his return from the Levant, it was a matter of no small surprise to see him appear before Malta with a fleet of eighteen sail, men-of-war and frigates, which formed in line of battle, and proceeded directly towards the grand port. The admiral, as a cover to his real intentions, was preceded by a sixty-gun ship, which steered with all sails set to Fort St. Elmo, and the captain pretended that he wished to repair a leak which demanded immediate attention. According to the laws of neutrality, it was impossible to refuse his request: he was, therefore, together with a xebec which accompanied him, admitted into the port without the smallest difficulty, and

* He had a cousin at Malta, and went thither himself in January, 1798.—This same man has been since employed as commissary in Egypt. Some important observations of his on that expedition were made public, in the collection of intercepted letters.

provided with divers, caulkers, and other workmen necessary on such an occasion. During the whole of this time, the French shallops were remarked to be sounding the coasts, and examining the most favourable places for a disembarkation. As they approached the land, they were likewise observed making signals to the inhabitants; who, however, did not appear to answer them.

The above-mentioned sixty-gun ship remained eight days in the port; during which time the French consul was not idle, but frequently went backwards and forwards from the city to the fleet: he redoubled his intrigues, encouraged the evil-minded, and the very little opposition he met with in all these secret practices contributed to make him more bold and enterprising. Notwithstanding which, the admiral was of opinion that Malta was safe from a sudden attack. Perceiving therefore that all the ports were well furnished with artillery and troops, he thought it more prudent to set sail. He however imagined it necessary before he went to take notice of the eagerness with which all his wants had been supplied, and the continual attentions paid to him* and his crew: he therefore expressed his satisfaction to the grand-master, whom he quitted, after having assured him of the friendly and pacific intentions of the French government. The minister for the

* These attentions were carried so far, that the grand-master having heard the French admiral wished to present his lady one of the scarce breed of dogs called *bichons*, immediately sent him one by the French *chargé-d'affaires*.

naval department in France likewise charged the Maltese agent at Paris with official thanks on the occasion: it is therefore impossible not to be struck with the treachery of the French admiral, and the perfidious dissimulation of the directory; since a very few months afterwards it shamelessly declared that Malta had been regarded as the enemy of France ever since the year 1792*.

During the eight days that the French fleet was in sight of Malta, the grand-master was at considerable expence. He entirely supported the Maltese regiment of chasseurs, he distributed money among the troops, kept every one at his post, and appeared determined to make a resistance, which unfortunately never took place.

I have given a description of the fortresses and defensive ports of the island in another part of this history; but I shall in this place enter into some short particulars relative to the military topography, which may probably serve to make the events I am about to relate more intelligible to the reader.

The city Valetta may be regarded as the central point of defence; every other place being subordinate to this principal one, which is situated on a peninsula, on an elevated rock, entirely perpendicular in many parts, and perfectly inaccessible in others. It is therefore safe from all attacks on the side to-

* See the proclamation of the directory.

wards the sea. Fort St. Elmo, built at the extremity of the peninsula, defends the city at the entrance of the grand port, and at that of Marsa Musceit; and the part next the land presents two well-fortified fronts. Two cavaliers overlook both town and country, before which is a covert way leading to the *Floriana*, a fortress with a raised battery and walls adjoining the ramparts of the city. Within these walls is a *fausse braie*, improperly so called, from being separated from the walls by a ditch. In the front is a crowned horn-work with a covert way; and on this side the place is perfectly secure. The works of La Floriana are overlooked by those of the city Valetta, which with its two cavaliers commanded the whole country.

The fort Ricasoli and the castle St. Angelo flanked the city, and, by defending the grand port, secured the communication by sea.

Fort Manual and fort Tigné were equally useful to the other flank of La Valetta and the port of Marsa Musceit.

Fort Ricasoli is irregularly built, and commanded by many different heights.

The castle St. Angelo is extremely well fortified, particularly towards the sea. It is small, but may easily be supported by the city. There is, indeed, no danger of its falling, unless La Valetta be taken.

Fort Manual has five bastions, a half moon, and a covert way: it is undermined, and situated in a little island.

Fort Tigné defends the point of Marsa Musceit, and is supported by the city and fort Manual.

The only eminence which can endanger La Valetta is the Coradin; this is however overlooked by the upper part of Burmola, at the distance of about twelve hundred fathoms.

The three other cities, viz. the Burgh, La Sangle, and Burmola, have their respective fortifications, which all have a connection, and serve to protect each other.

The city La Sangle is situate, like the Burgh, on a point of land with a flanked enclosure on one side, and defended by the castle St. Angelo on the other. Burmola is situate in the hollow part formed by the two points of land. The front of both these places is defended by fort St. Margaret, and the Cotoner surrounds the whole of the fortifications. This fortress was never finished, has neither a covert way nor advanced works, and consists merely of simple bastions, many of which have no ramparts.

The old city stands upon a hill, which overlooks the whole country as far as La Valetta. It has no counterscarp on one side, and no other defence than a wall, built on a soil easily undermined, on the other. There is, indeed, a small front with a ditch and covert way; but this is become useless from houses being built upon it; consequently this place could hold out but a very short time.

The great number of different places where it would be easy to effect a landing, and the methods taken to prevent it,

have already been mentioned in the course of this history; we shall therefore now point out the means to frustrate the designs of the enemy, even after a disembarkation had taken place.

The cultivated and inhabited part of Malta is separated from the rest by a chain of hills which cross the island. On the top of these hills an intrenchment has been made, called *Nasciar*. This consists of a simple wall five feet thick, behind which the troops on the different stations were to fall back, if they were unable to prevent a disembarkation: and if no hopes remained of stopping the progress of the enemy, they were to retire into the Cotoner, after having either withdrawn or spiked their cannon.

Forts and batteries have been erected at the two ports of St. Paul and Marsa Sirrocco, in which first-rates may cast anchor; and this has been done to prevent the approach of such vessels by means of a cross-fire. But the land side having no such defence, nothing could possibly be done against an enemy who had once effected a landing.

Towers and redoubts were constructed along the whole coast in such a manner as to communicate almost immediately with each other, and by that means quickly make known every thing that was going forwards; it was therefore supposed that twenty-four thousand men might always prevent a disembarkation, and that with half the number the city

La Valetta would be able to resist the most formidable attack.

The forces belonging to the order consisted of,

- | | | |
|------|-----|-----------------|
| 1st. | 200 | French knights. |
| | 90 | Italian ditto. |
| | 25 | Spanish. |
| | 8 | Portuguese. |
| | 4 | German. |
| | 5 | Anglo-Bavarian. |

Total 332. But fifty out of that number were disabled by age and infirmities; consequently there only remained 282 knights capable of bearing arms.

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|-----|
| 2d. | The Maltese regiment, composed of only | 500 | men |
| 3d. | The grand-master's guards | 200 | |
| 4th. | The battalion for the men-of-war | 400 | |
| 5th. | Ditto for the galleys | 300 | |
| 6th. | Old gunners | 100 | |
| 7th. | Militia, embodied into a regiment of chasseurs | 1200 | |
| 8th. | Sailors belonging to the men-of-war and
galleys, and who acted as gunners | 1200 | |
| 9th. | The militia | 3000 | |
| | Total | 6300 | |

The latter might be increased to 10,000 men, all Maltese capable of bearing arms being obliged to march at the first requisition.

The command of the troops in La Valetta belonged as matter of right to the marshal, and that of the country militia to the senechal. The bailiff de Loras held the former, and the bailiff de Rohan the latter, post.

The four lieutenant-generals who acted under the senechal were the bailiffs de Clugny and Thomasi for the land department, and the bailiff de Suffrein and captain Subiras for the coast. The defence of Malta was therefore divided into two parts.

The old city, being incapable of holding out more than a few hours, was under the command of the governor, who was always a Maltese. The garrison was composed of militia; and the general officer, who would have retired into it in case of an attack, would have taken the command.

The island of Goza was commanded by the governor, the commander Megrigny Ville Bertin.

The island of Cumin, by the chevalier de Valin.

The Red Tower, by the chevalier de St. Simon.

The Melleha, by the commander Bizien.

St. Paul, by the chevalier de la Perrouse.

St. Julian, by the chevalier de Précille.

[These last two stations were under the command of a captain of a man-of-war, the commander de St. Felix.]

St. Thomas, by the chevalier du Pin de la Gué Riviere.

Marsa Sirocco, by the commander de Rozan.

Floriana, by the bailiff de Belmont.

Fort Manual, by the bailiffs Gourgeau and La Tour St. Quintin.

Fort Tigné, by the commander Reichberg.

Fort Ricasoli, by the bailiff de Tillet, during the absence of the bailiff de Clugny.

Castle St. Angelo, by the chevalier de Gournay, major of the grand-master's guards.

The Burgh, by the commander de Gondrecourt.

Isle of La Sangle, by the bailiff de Suffrein St. Tropez, captain of a man-of-war.

Burmola, by the commander Sabiras, ditto.

The enclosure of the Cotoner, by the bailiff de la Tour de Pin.

The intrenchment of Nasciar. The station of the two lieutenant-generals in the land department.

The bastions and the cavaliers were served by the knights, who relieved each other and mounted guard by turns: these were under the command of the commander Axamano and the chevaliers de Brull and Ascona.

The regiment of chasseurs was commanded by the bailiff Neveu.

The regiment of Malta, by the commander Pfiffer, who remained in the city Valetta with all his regiment, except one detachment at fort Tigné, and another at fort St. Angelo.

The grand-master's guards, by the chevalier Guron, the commandant who remained near the person of the grand-master.

All promotions among the subalterns were in the gift of the different commanders.

Such were the means of defence in Malta, and the disposition of the troops at the different stations; which certainly were sufficient to have stopped the progress of the enemy for a considerable length of time.

The order had undoubtedly every possible reason to depend on the valour of its members. *Never to reckon the number of the enemy*, made a part of their oath at their admission. The greatest number of the knights had no longer a country of their own: a barren rock was become their sole dependence; but on that rock they received that consolation which religion must ever afford. The moment was now arrived when their honour and glory were at stake, and to die in their defence was a duty, not an effort. As Christians, they must necessarily defend their altars; and being nursed in the cradle of honour, and bred up to the glorious profession of arms, their career was plainly marked out, and they ought to have sacrificed the last drop of their blood on the occasion. *To die at their posts* was an engagement entered into with all Christendom, of which Malta was the bulwark; and this engagement was likewise contracted with the nobles of all countries to whom it may be said that Malta particularly belonged, from the right they had of being incorporated into the order from their earliest years. The knights might also reasonably depend on a people whose happiness had ever been consulted,

and who were neither ruined by fiscal laws nor harassed by taxes; and on a country, where industry was constantly encouraged, where the sceptre was wielded by paternal hands, where the subject was under the immediate eye of the sovereign, and where all complaints were instantly heard and determined. Gratitude for such goodness was therefore a duty in this people; and it was natural to suppose they would defend themselves against a foreign enemy, whose invasion must necessarily affect the community at large. It was not then so much on the number of the troops as on the bravery of the knights and the fidelity of the people that the government depended. With this united force, manning the bulwarks of the island, which were master-pieces in the art of fortification, the order might certainly have defended itself, or, at all events, yielded with honour. But the war against Malta was of a nature entirely unknown to the knights and other faithful subjects: it was, alas! of the same kind as that which induced the brave Swiss to turn their arms against their chiefs, and to contribute (without knowing the consequence of their conduct) to the destruction of a government always dear to their hearts, the re-establishment of which they have ever since vainly implored. It was likewise the same which overturned the most ancient republic existing, and entirely annihilated its government; and which, still more recently, was on the point of ruining a corps ever famous for the superior excellence of its discipline—the British navy.

The first division of the fleet, which had for some time kept the whole of Europe in suspense, at last appeared in sight of Malta on the 6th of June. Two Greek vessels arrived a few hours afterwards, and, wishing to appear to have sailed from the Levant, had come a circuitous way, to prevent suspicion. They pretended to be laden with corn, bought in the Archipelago, and were accordingly ordered to perform quarantine. These vessels were, in fact, sent to second the evil designs of the revolutionists who inhabited the island, and had on board chests filled with arms.

The sight of this advanced guard of the French fleet caused the greatest disquietude among the knights and people, which the evil-disposed and weak-minded contributed not a little to encrease. The division, which consisted of seventy transports and a few frigates, appeared in full sail before the port, but not within cannon-shot. Commodore Sidoux, perceiving the batteries on the shore both armed and reinforced, expressed not only his surprise on the occasion, but his wishes to preserve the neutrality which had constantly subsisted between France and the order. Several small vessels in want of repairs were accordingly admitted into the port; these paid punctually for every thing which was done, at the same time giving out that the most important affairs called the fleet into Egypt.

Different preparations being made by order of the war-office in the interior of Malta, and which were principally exe-

cuted by the bailiff de la Tour de Pin, general Ardot wrote to the French consul Caruson, expressing his great surprise that the appearance of the French fleet should cause such an alarm, and to request that he would not only remove the fears of the grand-master, but declare formally that he intended nothing hostile against the island, which the French republic had ever regarded, and always meant to treat, as an ally.

In support of the pacific declarations made by the French general, the commander Dolomieu, who was on board the fleet, wrote several letters to his friend Bodon de Ransijat, which contained the strongest assurances of peace and the good intentions of the commander in chief. Great care was taken to make the contents public, in order to inspire the people with false confidence, and induce them to believe themselves in a state of perfect safety.

Ransijat even went so far as to read one of Dolomieu's letters to the grand-master; in which he said, that neither the government nor order had any cause for alarm, and that the expedition was certainly not intended against Malta.

On the evening of the 9th of June the remainder of the French fleet made its appearance, under the command of Bonaparte; who immediately sent to the French consul, desiring him to demand of the grand-master, in his name, the free entry of all the ports for the whole of the fleet and convoy, together with the liberty of landing. Hompesch and the council made

that the laws of the country prevented his request being complied with; but that all possible assistance and refreshments should be bestowed and distributed.

It is impossible to describe the confusion which reigned throughout Malta, when the designs of Bonaparte no longer remained doubtful; and this confusion was greatly increased on perceiving that the French consul, who had been dispatched with the reply of the council, did not return.

The French fleet, extending the whole way from the island of Goza to Marsa Sirocco, appeared to threaten every vulnerable part of the coast. The consul, Caruson, not contented with executing the commission with which he was charged, gave Bonaparte a list of all the Maltese on whose assistance he might depend: the number amounted to four thousand, who promised to join the French, and murder the knights on the first bomb being thrown into the town; that being the signal agreed on for the plot to be carried into execution.

When the attack intended to be made on the following day was no longer doubtful, orders were given for the militia to arm, to pallsade, and to remove all the powder from the Cotoner to the city. These different operations would have required at least eight days to perform, even in the most peaceable times.

The bailiff de la Tour du Pin was charged with the execution of the last part of the orders; and he ordered the com-

mander de Thuisy to second him on the occasion. They had soldiers under them to form a chain the whole way to the sea, with fifteen knights to escort the powder to the storehouses: but the conspirators took care that neither mules nor waggons should be found; and the enterprise became still more difficult the next day, when the same evil-disposed persons had so effectually persuaded the inhabitants of the enclosure of the Cotoner, that if the powder was taken away they must be deprived of all means of defence, that not one of them would assist in the removal: the bailiff de la Tour du Pin, together with the commander de Thuisy and a third person, were therefore obliged to perform, though but imperfectly, this necessary work themselves.

The knights were immediately sent to their different posts, whither they flew with the utmost eagerness. One alone among the number thought it his duty to abandon the order at this moment of universal danger. Bordon de Ransijat, the secretary of the treasury*, *at the very instant when the French began to effect a landing*†, wrote to the grand-master, desiring him to commit the care of the keys of the treasury to another knight, and at the same time to appoint a place for him to remain in during the action; *since neither his duty nor his inclina-*

* The same who has been frequently mentioned in the course of this history.

† It was in this manner he thought proper to choose the precise moment when he refused to engage in the field of battle.

tion would allow him to fight against the French. Ransijat was immediately conveyed to the castle St. Angelo, which was undoubtedly the gentlest treatment he could possibly expect to receive. This bad example was fortunately followed by no other person; and the whole body of the knights, together with the people, seemed determined to defend themselves from all foreign enemies. The nobles, magistrates, lawyers, and rich citizens, all appeared perfectly calm, and gave every reason to believe that, in case of an attack, they would never contribute to impede the measures of government.

On the 9th of June, at day-break, the French appeared in their long-boats, which were filled with troops, and advanced immediately towards the place destined for their disembarkation.

An officer then delivered a letter from the French consul, Caruson, to the grand-master, couched in the following terms:
“ Having been appointed to go on board the admiral’s ship,
“ with your serene highness’s answer to the request made by
“ the French to allow their squadron to take in water in your
“ ports, I am commissioned to say, that the French general is
“ very indignant that only four vessels should be permitted to
“ enter at a time for that purpose: it would indeed, under
“ such restrictions, require a considerable length of time for
“ four or five hundred sail to be provided with water and
“ other articles of which the squadron is in absolute want.
“ The general is still more surprised at your refusal, since he

“ is perfectly well acquainted not only with the permission
 “ allowed to the English*, but with the proclamation issued
 “ by your serene highness’s predecessor. The general is there-
 “ fore determined to obtain by force what ought to have been
 “ granted him according to the principles of hospitality, which
 “ form the basis of your order †. So considerable are the
 “ forces under his command, that I plainly foresee it will be
 “ impossible for the order to resist them. That being the
 “ case, it is greatly to be wished, that, on so important an occa-
 “ sion, your serene highness, through love for the order, the
 “ knights, and indeed the people at large, had proposed some
 “ means of accommodation. The general would not permit me
 “ to return to a city which he shall be obliged for the future
 “ to treat as an enemy, and which has now no resource left
 “ but in the generosity of the general, who has given strict
 “ orders, that the religion, manners, and property of the Mal-
 “ tese shall be most scrupulously respected.”

* The time when the order granted permission for the whole of the English fleet to enter the port, ought to have been mentioned ; but that could not very easily be done. The English admirals were too well acquainted with the laws of neutrality to make a demand inconsistent with them, and respected the law of nations too much ever to violate it.

† If any one had asked the commander in chief what was the basis of the government he served, and which he afterwards destroyed as tyrannical and unjust, he would, perhaps, have been puzzled for a reply.

CHAP. VI.

The French land in Malta. The general Terror on the Occasion. Disorder and Confusion reign throughout the Island. The Troops disregard all Discipline. The Order make a Sally by Land and by Sea. Bonaparte's Harangue to the French Knights who were taken Prisoners. Several Knights killed, wounded, and ignominiously treated. The Grand-Master in a critical Situation. Tumults of the People. The Greeks make an Attempt, which fails. Deputation sent to the Grand-Master. A tumultuous Body of People assail the Palace. The Council assembled. Ransijat delivered. The Capitulation.

AT the close of day, on the 9th of June, the French landed their troops at Magdalen creek; and, on their approach one single cannon shot was fired from fort St. George: the great ease, indeed, with which they took possession of that important place, gave but too much reason to accuse the commander, if not of treason, at least of want of foresight and cowardice.

The fleet continued making signals the whole of the night, and at day-break the French shallops were seen advancing towards seven different points, viz. Goza, Cumino, La Melleha, Salmon, St. George, St. Julian, and La Tombrella; none of which made any resistance except Goza, which was attacked by general Regnier, and defended by the commander De Megrigny. Vice-admiral Blanquet, with his division and the Civita Vecchia convoy, advanced towards Marsa Sirocco creek, where general Dessaix disembarked the general of bri-

gade Baillard, with the twenty-first brigade. The convoy from Genoa landed the troops at St. Paul; and that from Marseilles at Goza.

The revolutionary tactics now began; and the moment the French made good their landing, an universal terror took place: so great indeed was the alarm among the militia, which mounted guard at the forts and batteries on the coast, that they precipitately abandoned their posts. The Birkarhara militia, posted at the battery of Point St. Julian, immediately evacuated that place, which was of the first importance, and took refuge under the cannon at fort Manual. The landing, however, was far from being imposing; for the ships were at too great a distance to cause any apprehension from the effect of their fire: they, indeed, took care to keep out of cannon shot, in order to avoid the red-hot balls.

The French, accompanied by the malcontents and a banditti of villains, ranged through the country, laying waste all before them. The militia quartered in the different villages defended themselves very courageously, and put to death several of these plunderers.

The general of brigade Lasne, and the chief of brigade, Marmont, soon arrived within cannon shot of the city; but the want of artillery forced them to halt.

The inhabitants of the country now began to flock in crowds towards La Valetta, carrying with them all their valuables. As they fled, every possible means was taken to

add to their despair. Treason was talked of; and they were taught to believe that they were abandoned to their fate. They then began to doubt the fidelity of the knights; and the most artful insinuations against their honour were circulated with a rapidity impossible to suppress. Two centuries of submission and respect were thus destroyed in one moment; the voice of the commander was entirely stifled, and the dignity of government no longer acknowledged. The merit of obedience disappeared, and a general insubordination commenced. The people disputed the authority of government. Loud cries succeeded these representations, and complaints were followed by threats. Such were the preparatives to the total disorganisation which took place. All military discipline, and indeed every thing which could curb the passions of mankind, was destroyed; and from that moment nothing could be expected but the most atrocious crimes.

The people declared themselves against the French knights; and the intelligence they constantly received of ill-fortune encreased their violence, and the Maltese soldiers presently imbibed the same sentiments. Advice was brought, that the Nasciar intrenchment was evacuated, and that the regiment of the same name had taken flight, and retreated into the old city, not with any view of defending it, but in order to open the gates to general Vaubois. The *hakem testaferrata* delivered him up the keys, without even being summoned so to

do. The communication between the country and the city La Valetta had been hitherto open; but that was no longer the case after the evacuation of the Nasciar intrenchment. The seneschal established his head-quarters at the Floriana; the bailiff de Clugni took the command of fort Ricasoli, and the bailiff de Thomasi, who with some faithful militia had kept his post for some time, being flanked by a body of French just landed at St. George and St. Julian, retreated with great difficulty into the city.

Between eleven and twelve o'clock at noon the chevalier de Soubiras went out of the Grand Port with one galley, two galiots, and an armed shallop: these vessels fired briskly on the shallops employed in landing the enemy, one of which they sunk, together with a gun-boat. The artillery at fort St. Elmo and fort Tigné being very well served, greatly supported this enterprise; but the calm, which was much in favour of these rowing boats, having ceased, they were forced to make good their retreat.

A sally was attempted to be made with nine hundred men, chosen from among the regular troops; and the soldiers at first appeared perfectly well disposed to perform their duty; but meeting on every side multitudes of terrified runaways, they presently were seized with the same apprehensions, and could scarcely be induced to present themselves before the French. They were soon pursued very vigorously by general

Marmont at the head of the nineteenth brigade, who having overtaken some of the number, the rest escaped with difficulty, and took shelter under the cannon of the city.

These two enterprises were so unsuccessful, that no more of the same nature were afterwards attempted: indeed, when once a landing is effected, they are generally useless, and sometimes even dangerous.

Towards mid-day the whole of the country, together with all the towers, except Marsa Sirocco, were in the possession of the French, and almost all the knights at the different forts taken prisoners and carried to Bonaparte; whose address to them on this occasion gives an idea of impatience and haughtiness of character which never afterwards appeared in his conduct. Eighteen knights, all of whom were French, were brought before him, to whom he instantly said, "What! am I constantly to meet with knights who have taken up arms against their country? I ought to give orders to have you all shot immediately." He afterwards added, "How could you ever believe it possible to defend yourselves, with a few wretched peasants, against troops which have conquered and subdued the whole of Europe*?" After this intemperate

* M. Denon, in the magnificent work he has lately published on Egypt, makes Bonaparte address himself in a very different manner to the knights* of Malta who had been taken prisoners and brought before him on the 23d Prairial. "*Since you were capable of taking up arms against your country,*" said he, "*you must know how to meet death.* I will not accept of you as prisoners; you may therefore return to Malta, and stay there till it shall become my property." I am willing to believe Denon's favourite hero was incapable of hold-

speech, he presently reassumed his usual prudence, of which he had lost sight for a moment ; and gave orders that the prisoners should be well treated, who in future had every reason to be satisfied with the conduct of both soldiers and officers.

Before I quit this scene of confusion, I may surely be allowed to make some mention of all those illustrious victims who fell a sacrifice to the sword of the regicide in those fatal moments. Their place indeed is marked in the pages of history, next to those heroes who have died in defence of their religion and country ; and may the splendor of their glory

ing such false, and such inexcusable language. I will make no remarks on the first part of this discourse, which is a reproach made by all conquerors to the conquered, however unjust the first hostilities : but the words *you must know how to meet death* deserve some observations ; though they do not explain the kind of death they were to meet, to please the commander in chief. As a military man, we must believe he could only mean they were to die sword in hand : yet Bonaparte, as a patriot and a general, could never wish that to be the case ; since by dying sword in hand the French knights, in his opinion, would be guilty of the greatest of crimes, that of treason against the nation. He could not therefore wish his countrymen to become so highly culpable ; besides, it was natural to suppose, that were they to perish in this manner, many of his soldiers would likewise be slain, whose lives it was greatly his interest to preserve. The smallest resistance made by the knights might have prevented the success of his expedition to Egypt ; he therefore could never wish, and still less provoke, them to take up arms. He was unfortunately too well acquainted with the bravery of the French knights, ever to permit them to return to Malta ; and he could not possibly pay a greater compliment to their valour, than by persuading them to enlist under his banners on his becoming master of the island. As to the discourse we have mentioned in this history, which was delivered before witnesses whose testimony cannot possibly be doubted, it was, in strict justice, excusable, and may be thus interpreted : Bonaparte, being surrounded by the spies of the directory, thought it necessary to make use of terrific expressions, though he was inwardly determined (as it afterwards proved) to act with humanity. He might also think it necessary to address his soldiers, whom he was on the point of taking on a dangerous expedition, in terms which indeed were rather presumptuous, but which might possibly tend to animate their courage.

eclipse, if possible, the horrid crimes which called forth their virtues!

An universal disorganisation had, as has been already mentioned, taken place: but for some time the rage and despair of the people were only vented in abuse and tumultuous vociferation; an habitual and ancient veneration for their superiors still withheld the arm of the assassin. But at last all restraint was broken through; a dreadful massacre began, and blood flowed on every side. The roaring of these horrible cannibals resounded in the air, and the most savage joy burst forth. The dwelling of the sovereign himself was not respected, but stained with the blood of his faithful knights. Those who escaped the dagger aimed at their hearts, were treated in the most ignominious manner, and dragged down the bloody steps of the palace. The troops which still continued attached to their duty, had the greatest difficulty in rescuing from these sanguinary wretches those knights who appeared ready to sacrifice their lives to prevent the commission of further crimes. Among the number who fell victims to the stroke of the assassin were, the chevaliers de Montaret, de Valin, Dormic, and Dandelard. The chevaliers de Roux, du Quesnoi, and du Chatelet, were dangerously wounded, and carried to the palace amidst the hisses and insulting reproaches of these butchering people. The chevaliers de Rigaud, de Cornet, and de Guebriant, were likewise wounded by a musquet-shot. Many others were closely pursued, and escaped with difficulty

the torments which awaited them. An armed force, however, at last put a stop to these disorders, and restored some degree of quiet; but the silence which followed gave every reason to expect the most dreadful consequences, since it plainly proved the weakness of the government. Indeed, from that moment all was over, and Malta lost.

Before the close of day, general Baraguay d'Hilliers had possessed himself of the whole southern part of the island. General Dessaix advanced within pistol-shot of the cotoner and the glacis of fort Ricasoli. Some French piquets came towards port Marsa Musceit, and ventured even under the fortifications to reconnoitre whether fort Manual and fort Tigné were in a state of defence; and they approached so near to the batteries, that many were killed by the cannon. In short, the city La Valetta and its dependencies were invested that evening on all sides, and the rest of the island entirely subdued. The city indeed still continued firing cannon during the night, but without any effect.

The whole of the night between the 10th and 11th of June was passed in the most tumultuous manner. Reports calculated to raise an insurrection among the people, were spread with unexampled diligence and treachery. Particular pains were taken to excite the rage of the multitude against the French knights, whom these wretches accused of being in correspondence with their countrymen, and of having left the forts without provisions and ammunition: but the really guilty

were among those whom they regarded as their friends and protectors. The situation of the order was now become critical indeed; for it could scarcely depend on more than four thousand defenders. Weak as were these resources, there were still other circumstances which tended to encrease its apprehensions; for it was impossible not to perceive that the orders were either improperly given, or still more improperly executed. A servant of arms named Jassard, who was chief engineer, and de Fay, who had the direction of the artillery, were accused, when this deplorable catastrophe took place, of not having performed their duty: indeed the favour in which they stood with the assassins and with the lowest of the people, is too ignominious a stain on their characters, for an appeal of whatsoever nature, and to whatsoever tribunal, ever to efface.

Early in the morning of the 11th, these riotous assemblies encreased prodigiously; and forming several different groups demanded vociferously that the traitors should be delivered over to punishment. Unfortunately, the most irreproachable commanders were pointed out instead of the real criminals, who were immediately under the protection of the people. The militia refused to remain in the different forts: not from the apprehension of wanting provisions, for it was perfectly known that they were sufficiently furnished with every thing necessary; but merely from a spirit of rebellion.

The French, during the whole of this time, remained quiet

spectators of all that passed within the city: but they were very well acquainted with every circumstance, and contrived to make the inhabitants believe that they had raised formidable batteries in the course of the night, from which they meant immediately to fire upon the town; when, in truth, they had only begun, and that indeed but as a matter of form, to disembark the ordnance intended for a siege which they plainly perceived they should never be obliged to undertake; for the terror they had inspired was too great ever to be entirely calmed.

On the approach of the French fleet, the Greek vessels already mentioned, and which were supposed to be laden with provisions, were ordered to anchor in the grand port. But the commotions among the people within the city, plainly shewed that the moment was at last arrived for them to declare themselves, and to join the seditious party; in consequence of which, they not only armed their crews, which were very numerous, but distributed arms among those whom they had invited aboard. Instead, therefore, of ill-dressed sailors, well-armed soldiers, who had been hitherto carefully disguised, made their appearance. Fortunately, however, they were first perceived by some troops who still continued faithful to their duty; and who, discovering the intentions of these fresh enemies, fell upon them, together with those among the people who were well disposed to the cause, with the greatest fury; and having killed about twenty, and wounded a great number,

they attacked the rest with such violence, that it was scarcely possible for their commanders to prevent their putting them immediately to death. They were, however, made prisoners and closely confined; the vessels were visited, and the arms and ammunition with which, instead of corn, they were laden, secured.

In the mean time the grand-master used every possible method to regain the confidence of the people, and to inspire the soldiers with fresh courage; he spared neither promises nor offers of money; but without success, for both the one and the other had thrown off all respect for their former chiefs. The patrols, led astray by the evil-minded, without any commanders but those whom they had capriciously chosen for themselves, apprehended an enemy in all they met, and were equally fearful of the inhabitants and the knights. The confusion and disorder were indeed arrived at such a pitch, that the militia shot each other in the streets.

Some of the citizens, joined to other inhabitants of different classes, terrified at all that passed, flew to the palace, and asking for the grand-master, entreated him, with tears in their eyes and in the most respectful terms, to pay some attention to the safety of the city, and the property of the inhabitants; to which he answered, that he would assemble the council and deliberate on their request, since they once more acknowledged the power of their sovereign. A spirited and noble conduct in the grand-master might have brought over the soldiery and the

well-disposed among the inhabitants to his party; and at the same time engaged in his favour the undecided and weak-minded, which always compose the majority. What a lively impression would it most probably have made, had the grand-master sallied forth in the armour worn by La Valette; that armour which must have called to remembrance so many virtues worthy of imitation, and so many duties to be fulfilled! But, alas! it was otherwise decided; and the deputies were informed, that they must defend themselves to the last drop of their blood. It is an undoubted truth, that there are decisive moments on which depends the fate of empires, as well indeed to save as to conquer them; the only skill consists in knowing how to use them advantageously: but an opportunity thus lost, presents itself no more.

The grand-master, who suspected the fidelity of some of the commanders, thought proper to take upon himself the management of their different employments. He therefore gave orders, that the reports should be brought directly to him, and to the assembly of the states, which had been joined with him in the government.

Nearly an hour after sunset a report was spread, that the French had entered the city; and this occasioned a general commotion. Knots of armed men were formed on all sides, and musquets fired from different parts: the alarm and confusion increased surprisingly: the patrols were augmented; but their presence only served to raise the indignation of the

people to a still higher pitch; and, as they could not keep them within any bounds, they ended by listening to their complaints, and being seduced from their duty. The bailiff de Neven, who for thirty-three years had been idolised both in town and country (when, indeed, the love of the people was an honourable distinction), was now fired upon by one of the patroles, and most dangerously wounded.

The step taken by the citizens and others when they addressed the grand-master, proved to the revolutionists that his authority was still in some degree acknowledged; they therefore resolved to destroy the weak remains of his power, and made choice of the night as the most favourable moment for striking this last blow. Amidst the terrible confusion which reigned throughout the city, emissaries had been artfully dispersed in different parts to poison the minds of the people. They therefore prepared the way for the success of their enterprise, by inspiring the multitude with sentiments of terror and mistrust; and discouraging them as much as possible, by representing the dangerous uncertainty of their situation. A numerous band composed of Maltese nobles, lawyers, citizens, and shopkeepers, invaded the palace, and declared, with threats, that they were not in the least inclined to entrust their safety to the care of the order, nor to any measures it might think proper to take for their defence; that they had therefore signed a paper before the Dutch consul, intimating their decided resolution of submitting to the French,

and had charged him to deliver it into the hands of general Bonaparte, without attending to the determination of the order. They likewise added, that it was evident there was treason in the case, since neither the orders issued out nor the plans of defence were ever executed; that provisions were stopped, and the ammunition either taken away or aduterated; that the reports were never faithfully given; and that the massacre which had taken place among the knights and the Greeks was a proof of the people's having contracted a certain savageness of disposition, which in the end might cause a general insurrection followed by the most dreadful calamities. Nothing could be more perfectly true than every thing they advanced;—but they ought likewise to have added, that they themselves were the original authors of all these misfortunes.

The government was perfectly aware of its inability to resist these rebels, who walked triumphantly through the apartments of the palace as if it already made a part of their possessions.

There still, however, remained a considerable portion of the people which as yet had come to no decided resolution; and on these men the government had some degree of dependence. At one moment they seemed decided to repulse the French, and to reject all the schemes and measures they proposed to them: and at another, they determined to continue under the government of the knights; only receiving the French as guests, without permitting the sovereignty of the

order to suffer from that circumstance. They next talked of defending the city, though they believed the enemy already within its gates ; but afterwards refused to fight, since hostilities would only serve to drown the streets in blood, and that without reaping any fruits from their resistance.

Thus were these miserable people tormented by uncertainty, and unable to come to any decision ; because no one could be found possessed of sufficient energy to induce them to make a choice worthy of their ancestors, and of the noble exploits they formerly performed. They therefore remained in a state of nullity and inaction, but too favourable to the designs of the seditious part of the community, who were far from undecided in their plans, being supported and advised by people but too well accustomed to rebellion and crimes of every kind. They continued to create disturbances on all sides, and were encouraged to proceed by the very few obstacles they met with to impede their designs.

Whilst the order was employed in calling together the council, the massacres recommenced, and the firing was heard in the palace. The members who were assembling near the government-house, were grossly insulted and their lives threatened : it was, indeed, with the greatest difficulty that the knights of Castille and Bavaria succeeded in saving the Russian minister (the chevalier O'Hara) ; who, being hurried away by a sentiment of generosity, rushed into the midst of a group of these furious villains, who, when he endeavoured to per-

suade them to return to their duty and to become more merciful, instantly tried to revenge on him the loss of the prey he had succeeded in wresting from their murdering hands.

The grand-master decided, though perhaps too late, on presenting himself to the people, addressing them, and passing through the city to the Floriana, the most advanced post in the island. The congregation of the states, together with the knights who surrounded his person, strongly opposed this measure; by representing that in thus exposing himself, he endangered the order, which must infallibly be destroyed if any of the rebels should succeed in taking away his life. They added, that he was not master of his own person, which belonged of right to the community at large, and even went so far as to make some resistance on the occasion; the grand-master therefore thought himself obliged to give up the point, and to stifle this generous impulse, which, if properly followed, might perhaps have saved the order, or at least have put an honourable end to its existence.

Let us, however, rather pity than condemn those princes, who, being surrounded in such critical moments by weak-minded and insufficient people, are accused of faults which are generally committed by those in whom unfortunately they have placed their confidence.

The council was scarcely convened, before repeated cries of Liberty, Equality, and Long life to Ransijat, resounded in the air. This knight had just quitted the castle of St. Angelo,

and was carried in triumph to the palace. The Maltese rushed into the council-chamber, and repeated what they had already said; insisting not only on some among them being admitted into the assembly, but on seeing a letter which was intended to be sent to the French general to demand an armistice of four-and-twenty hours.

Their orders were immediately obeyed, and some of their deputies accompanied those dispatched by the council to Bonaparte. The assassinations and firing ceased on their quitting the palace, and a moment of quiet succeeded:—but this lasted not long: for the deputies not returning so soon as was expected, the outcries became more violent than ever; a general insurrection took place, and seemed to threaten the most dreadful misfortunes, which were however prevented by the arrival of Bonaparte's answer, announcing that he would enter the city the following day, and that he would then make known, through the medium of the Spanish chargé-d'affaires, in what manner he intended to treat the order and the grand-master. The Maltese deputies were accompanied by one of Bonaparte's aides-de-camp and some French commissioners, who began making the same preparations for the entrance of the French as they would have done had the city surrendered; and this, notwithstanding the grand-master and council had only agreed to treat for an armistice of twenty-four hours.

Bonaparte entered the city the very same evening, and took up his lodging at the marquis Paradisi's, a noble Maltese.

It was generally supposed his first visit would have been to the grand-master, who had sent him word that he expected him to supper; but the commander in chief, on the contrary, thought the grand-master ought to have come in person, at the head of all his knights, to pay him that compliment. The grand-master, however, could not so soon prevail upon himself to wait on Bonaparte; and it was not till after the expiration of several days that, in compliance with the entreaties of some of the ancients of the order, he consented to take a step which he was taught to believe would be productive of general good to the community. The coldness of all parties in this interview, and the indifferent subjects of conversation, do not deserve a place in this history.

The capitulation, at first only partially known, was now made public, and contained the eight following articles; which I should not have mentioned in this place, were it not to make known the persons who signed it, and the punctuality with which it was observed.

ARTICLE I.—The knights of the order of St. John of Jerusalem shall give up the city and forts of Malta to the French army; at the same time renouncing in favour of the French republic all right of property and sovereignty over that island, together with those of Goza and Cumino.

ARTICLE II.—The French republic shall employ all its credit at the congress of Rastadt, to procure a prin-

cipality for the grand-master equivalent to the one he gives up ; and the said republic engages to pay him in the mean time an annual pension of three hundred thousand French livres, besides two annats of the pension by way of indemnification for his personals. He shall also be treated with the usual military honours during the whole of his stay in Malta.

ARTICLE III.—The French knights of the order of St. John of Jerusalem actually resident in Malta, if acknowledged as such by the commander in chief, shall be permitted to return to their own country, and their residence in Malta shall be considered in the same light as if they inhabited France. The French republic will likewise use its influence with the Cisalpine, Ligurian, Roman, and Helvetian republics, that this third article may remain in force for the knights of those several nations.

ARTICLE IV.—The French republic shall make over an annual pension of seven hundred French livres to each knight now resident in Malta ; and one thousand livres to those whose ages exceed sixty years. It shall also endeavour to induce the Cisalpine, Ligurian, Roman, and Helvetian republics, to grant the same pension to the knights of their respective countries.

ARTICLE V.—The French republic shall employ its credit with the different powers, that the knights of each nation may be allowed to exercise their right over the

property of the order of Malta situated in their dominions.

ARTICLE VI.—The knights shall not be deprived of their private property either in Malta or in Goza.

ARTICLE VII.—The inhabitants of the islands of Malta and Goza shall be allowed, the same as before, the free exercise of the Catholic, Apostolical, and Roman religion: their privileges and property shall likewise remain inviolate, and they shall not be subject to any extraordinary taxes.

ARTICLE VIII.—All civil acts passed during the government of the order, shall still remain valid.

Done and concluded on board the *Orient* off Malta, on the 24th Prairial, the 6th year of the French republic (12th June, 1798).

The commander Bosredon de Ransijat (who had forsaken the order).

The bailiff Marie Testa Ferrata,	} all Maltese.
Doctor Jean Nies Muscat,	
Doctor Benoit Schembri,	
Counsellor Bonani.	

The bailiff de Turin Frisani, without prejudice to the right of dominion which belongs to my sovereign the king of the Two Sicilies.

Chev. Philippe Amat, the Spanish chargé-d'affaires.

The name of Ransijat stands foremost on the list; and shines conspicuous at the head of the articles, entitled the capitulation of the grand-master and order of Malta. This timorous and conscientious man, who made such difficulties when there was question of defending his post sword in hand, immediately becomes in a moment of peace bold and audacious, fearing no longer to resume his station, and to give a mortal stab to his order, *though protesting at the same time that he was truly and entirely attached to its interests.* It will, however, presently be seen, that he, together with the Maltese whose names are joined to his, were held in detestation, and absolutely execrated by their fellow-citizens. In vain may they now deplore with tears the effect of their conduct; the evils they have occasioned cannot be repaired; such tears and regrets can neither deceive nor affect any one, neither can they prevent their names being delivered down to posterity among those celebrated villains who have betrayed their country, and caused all its misfortunes.

CHAP. VII.

Provisional Government established in Malta. Conduct of the French in that Island. The Knights are ordered to depart. A general Press takes place for both Soldiers and Sailors. The Grand-Master leaves Malta; the Salary allowed him by the French; his Arrival at Trieste. Dispersion and Fate of the Knights. Paul I. elected to the Grand-Mastership. Creation of a Grand Russian Priory for the Members of the Greek Church. Insurrection of the Maltese; unjust Conduct of the French towards them. Scarcity of Money in the French Coffers. The Ornaments of a Church in the Old City taken away, and put up to Auction. This Event occasions the first Tumults.

NO sooner were the French become masters of Malta, than they established all the laws of the directory, and formed a municipality and a provisional government. The commander de Ransijat was appointed president of this new administration: under the command, however, of the commissary of the directory*; whom he servilely obeyed, and whose yoke was very different and much heavier to bear, than the one this perjured knight had so lately thrown off. Every thing in the public buildings which bore the stamp of nobility, or recalled to mind the celebrated exploits performed by illustrious chiefs,

* The name of this commissary was St. Jean d'Angeli. He had been member of the national assembly, and was a lawyer, handsomely paid by the order, to defend its cause in that meeting.

was broken and destroyed. These new Goths and Vandals likewise threw down with impious hands the busts of those heroes who had graced the annals of chivalry, and which were placed on different elevated spots. It will appear scarcely credible to posterity, that such ravages should take place in presence of an army which contained more than two hundred literati and artists; and whose principal object, according to all appearance, was to make (and that in the most solemn manner) a kind of honourable amends to the arts and sciences, by going into a country where they formerly flourished, and by endeavouring to draw forth from obscurity those precious monuments of antiquity which an ignorant and superstitious people had permitted to remain concealed from the public eye; and by these means they hoped to replace in their own country, what had been so wickedly and so barbarously destroyed. In a very few days, the arms of the order, together with those of the principal chiefs, were effaced not only in all the different inns, but in the palace of the grand-master, himself being present on the occasion. Such an outrage as this, was not even committed by the Musulmen at Rhodes; where honourable marks still remain of the residence of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem in that island.

One of the first acts of authority exercised by these invaders was, to issue out orders for all the knights to quit the island in the space of three days: a few days more were, however, allowed to the old and infirm; but the chevalier O'Hara

was commanded to depart in three hours, and the Portuguese knights in forty-eight.

The absolute impossibility of such a prompt departure made them relax a little, and a short delay was granted. The French knights obtained with the greatest difficulty the slender sum of two hundred and forty livres each (about ten pounds sterling), for the expences of the journey. They were forbidden to wear the cross, though the order was not abolished; and every one of the members was obliged to exhibit the tricolour cockade.

On the second day an act took place which bore upon a class of people who had been flattered with the idea of enjoying a degree of liberty and happiness to which they had hitherto been strangers. Orders for a general press were posted up in different parts; in consequence of which, the sailors belonging to the island, the grand-master's guards, and all the enrolled soldiers, were carried on board the French fleet. The most consolatory promises were, however, made to the wives and children of these unfortunate men; whose anguish was in some degree alleviated by these means. But a few weeks sufficed to prove that very little dependance could be placed on such promises; since the first intelligence they received from their families presented a heart-rending picture of their forlorn situation, and of the profound misery to which they were reduced.

The grand-master, in despair at the continual insults to

which he was exposed, resolved to quit a residence which was become absolutely insupportable: but the moment he made known his intentions, his creditors made a point of molesting and tormenting him.

It was in vain he claimed the plate belonging to his palace; the property of the different languages; and the jewels to which, in quality of grand-master, he had a particular right. No attention was paid to his demands: and they were equally deaf to those made by the ancients of the order who proposed accompanying him in his flight. Ransijat, together with the under-secretary of state Doublet (who had had the effrontery to sell the cypher made use of by the grand-master), announced in the name of the municipality, that a sum of money was intended to be given as an equivalent for the property annexed to the grand-mastership.

On the evening before Hompesch left Malta, Ransijat acquainted him with the arrangements made to facilitate his departure, and with the salary he was to receive. It was settled that he should embark on board a merchantman bound for Trieste, and that he should be escorted by a French frigate till he arrived at a certain point: it was also determined that he should carry away neither plate, jewels, nor archives; but that the French nation, in concert with the municipality, should indemnify him for the loss of this different property, by a sum of six hundred thousand French livres, and likewise secure him a pension of a hundred thousand crowns to be constantly

paid till he was put into possession for life of a principality of equal value.

Three hundred thousand livres out of the six hundred thousand were paid to his creditors ; and he received one hundred thousand of the remainder in specie, and the other two hundred thousand in four bills, for which he was obliged to sign a receipt. This cruel and humiliating interview was finished by the grand-master's requesting permission to take with him three precious articles, which had for a great length of time been consecrated in the church of St. John as objects of veneration, and adored by the faithful with the greatest devotion, viz :

A part of the real cross, brought from the Holy Land ; St. John's hand, presented by Bajazet to d'Aubusson ; and a miraculous image of the Holy Virgin of Philerme. These relics were sent to Hompesch, after having been stripped of all their valuable ornaments.

The grand-master embarked in the night between the 17th and 18th of June, accompanied by his grand-chamberlain (the commander de Licondais), his aide-de-camp (the commander St. Priest), the secretary for Italian affairs (the commander Miari), ditto for Spain (chevalier Desbrull), his master of the horse (chevalier de Saulx), a page (monsieur de Roquefeuille), and two servants of arms (Le Normand and Becker). The other members of the order, who, though not of his household, accompanied him on this occasion, were the grand-com-

mander bailiff de Montauroux, the bailiff Suffrein de St. Tropez, the commander Aimable de Ligondais, the commander de Bordon, the chevalier de Reinech, and the chevalier d'Henneberg.

The French frigate quitted them off Meleda, and they did not land at Trieste till after a most tedious and disagreeable voyage of thirty-nine days. Their stay in this place could not possibly be long; since reasons of the most important nature prevented the principal members of the order from going thither, and from joining their chief. The same reasons likewise occasioned the grand-master's resignation of his office, and his separating himself from the companions of his flight. Comparisons may, perhaps, be made on this occasion, between L'Isle Adam and Hompesch, Solyman and Bonaparte; but I greatly fear the misfortunes and success of the latter, would be but too much eclipsed by the glorious conduct and conquests of the former.

Bonaparte set sail on the 19th of June; leaving a garrison of four thousand men, under the command of general Vaubois, in the different forts of Malta. Some of the knights enlisted under the French banners. I will not attempt to excuse their conduct on this occasion, and still less to condemn them as criminal. Pity is the only sentiment they inspire in my breast; yet I cannot help remarking, that no situation, however desperate, can ever justify the commission of a dishonourable action.

The rich ornaments in gold and silver taken from the churches and public edifices in Malta, were put on board the French fleet, together with the standards and trophies of the order. These treasures, however, did not long remain the property of such merciless spoilers; who, thus deprived of their ill-gotten wealth, had nothing left to console them for having stained their characters by acts of the most shameful injustice, and by the crime of sacrilege. The riches on board the *Orient* were consumed by the devouring flames on the memorable 1st of August in the famous action off Aboukir; and the treasures contained in the *Sensible* frigate fell, on the 19th of July, into the hands of those who, a very short time afterwards, might with the strictest justice be entitled the real conquerors of Malta.

Having thus made known the fate of these stolen treasures, we will now enter into some particulars relative to that of the knights.

Those traitors and cowards who gave themselves up to the directory, have already met their punishment; not only in the stings of their accusing consciences, but in the contempt of the whole world, together with even that of their perfidious enemies. Those who were dragged into Egypt in the suite of the French army, were overwhelmed by every species of persecution and calamity; whilst those who were called forth to appear before St. John d'Acre, were soon taught that neither bastions nor ramparts were necessary to stop the progress of a man who had boasted of having possessed himself

of the bulwark of Christianity in the space of three days: but here the powers of seduction had no effect; and the valour alone of a handful of men, supported by the presence of their courageous chief, was sufficient to confound vain presumption, and disconcert the plans of boundless ambition. Those knights who had taken a part in the new government established at Malta were shut up in different fortresses, and exposed to all the horrors of famine. They, indeed, escaped with the greatest difficulty from the rage of the Maltese, whom they had flattered themselves with the idea of governing, but who pursued them with the violence and hatred which traitors and villains never fail to inspire; and those who, from the articles of capitulation, hoped to return into their own country, and in the bosoms of their families to receive the only consolation left them in their misfortunes, were immediately stopped on arriving in the ports of France, and refused entrance:—this conduct, even from the confession of Ransijat himself, reduced them to a state of such extreme indigence, that several amongst them absolutely perished from want.

But what, in the midst of such changes and misfortunes, was the destiny of Dolomieu and Ransijat?—of the men who so eagerly wished to see Malta in the possession of the French, and who seemed assured of receiving every favour in their power to bestow?—The former, after having greatly suffered in his health in Egypt, and after having been confined for some time in a prison from whence he would have been led to

suffer an ignominious death * but for the joint interference of their Sicilian majesties and lord Nelson, was thought to be sufficiently rewarded by the French republic, which bestowed on him the professor's chair, that the applauses of his pupils might serve as a consolation for the revenue he lost by the suppression of his order. It was therefore to his talents alone, that he owed a scanty subsistence. As to the second, he found himself under the necessity of taking up the pen to reproach France, and that in a public manner, with the kind of horror he seemed to inspire in whatsoever place he presented himself. He likewise reproaches the inhabitants in general with avoiding his society, and his relations more particularly for their coolness towards him: he expresses his surprise at being told by a woman of much respectability, that if he wished to mix in the world, he must expect to meet with many disagreeable circumstances †. After this avowal made by himself, his future destiny may be easily imagined.

Those knights who had remained faithful to their duty, were scattered about in different parts of the globe, and were every-where received with the sentiments of approbation and commiseration which their conduct and misfortunes must naturally inspire.

The favours bestowed on the order by the emperor of Rus-

* The emperor of Russia, in his quality of grand-master, had demanded Dolomieu in order to commence an action against him.

† Advertisement, see page 6.

sia, and the title he had accepted, that of its protector, induced several of the knights to retire into his dominions, where their reception was more than equal to their most sanguine expectations. Intoxicated, if I may so express myself, with Paul's repeated benefactions, they conceived they might with propriety make choice of a prince for their sovereign, who had supported them in so generous and so powerful a manner. But though posterity is ever indulgent to those who in extraordinary circumstances have succeeded in saving a state, though by means equally extraordinary, it is also very severe in its censures on those who endeavour to justify their conduct by vilifying and calumniating that of others.

On the 29th of June the emperor of all the Russias took upon himself the title of grand-master of the order of St. John of Jerusalem. His inauguration took place on the same day; and the knights at that time in Petersburg were admitted to a public audience, and presented him with the crown and regalia of the grand-mastership. The vice-chancellor pronounced the act of acceptance, and all the knights took the usual oaths on the occasion.

After this ceremony, Paul immediately created a new Russian priory for the benefit of the nobles in his dominions who followed the rites of the Greek church. He also made statutes and rules, which differed but in a very slight degree from those of the Catholic Russian priory. An annual revenue of two hundred and sixteen thousand roubles was annexed to this new esta-

ishment; which was to be divided, as follows, into ninety-eight commanderies :

2	Commanderies of 6000 roubles.	
4	Ditto	4000
6	Ditto	3000
10	Ditto	2000
16	Ditto	1500
60	Ditto	1000

The remaining part of the two hundred and sixteen thousand roubles was to be employed for the necessary expences of the order.

On the 1st of January, 1799, the standard of the order of St. John of Jerusalem was hoisted, for a permanence, on the angle of the bastions of the Admiralty at Petersburg, and saluted by the firing of thirty-three cannons.

All the Russian ministers in the different courts received orders to notify the emperor's election to the grand-mastership; and to issue out a proclamation to engage all the priories of the order to enter into his views, and to form one single corps. He likewise invited all the nobles in Christendom who were able to produce the requisite proofs, to enter into this new order of Malta, and assured them of his particular protection.

Nothing now remained for Paul but to possess himself of the chief place of residence of the order; he therefore employed

himself in the means of succeeding in his wishes. His allies, the English, reigned triumphantly in the Mediterranean, and entirely blockaded Malta: but the small number of their land forces prevented their making any attempts against the city and the forts; in consequence of which, Paul determined to send them the most powerful assistance. Prince Wolkonski received orders to embark with a considerable body of men, which were intended to co-operate with the English and Neapolitans in the recapture of Malta, and in forcing the garrison to make peace. This plan, however, was never carried into execution; and by a whimsical circumstance, truly worthy the uncertain politics of the eighteenth century, the very same troops thus prepared to serve as auxiliaries to the English in the Mediterranean, were shortly to hold themselves in readiness to march in order to attack the possessions of that nation in India!

The possession of Malta by the French was an object of too great importance for the English and their allies not to use every possible effort either to retake that island, or at least to prevent their enemies receiving any benefit from its remaining in their power. The Maltese, when once left to themselves, after the departure of Bonaparte, soon perceived the dreadful exchange they had made, and felt their hatred encrease for their new masters in proportion to the love they formerly bore their ancient sovereign. Indeed, they had scarcely groaned under the republican yoke more than three months, before the

inhabitants of the country rebelled against the French, and those of the cities were only kept quiet by the force of arms. The sufferings of these unfortunate people in so short a space of time, and the manner in which they were treated by the French, scarcely appear credible; and I should be fearful of mentioning them, lest the reader should suspect me of partiality or exaggeration, were they not described by Ransijat, president of the French government in Malta, precisely in the same manner. I shall indeed make no change in the author's relation, nor even any reflections on what passed, though the different circumstances give frequent occasion so to do.

1st. Though the French, owing to the prompt surrender of Malta, were but a very few days spread about the country, it is nevertheless a fact, that they committed great outrages, and that the inhabitants had recourse to the commission for the government in order to be indemnified for their losses. The only reply they received (owing, indeed, to the want of means for answering such demands) was, *that the consideration of these matters did not belong to them*. The same answer was also made to the different people who had received express orders to furnish the army with oxen, sheep, hogs, and other articles of provision.

2d. Bonaparte having carried away numbers of Maltese soldiers and sailors, their wives were promised a certain sum every month during their absence: but, owing either to some error in the notes taken on this occasion, or to some other

cause, when they arrived at the expiration of the appointed time to receive their money, they never could obtain it; and, though they came almost every day out of the country to repeat their request, they were constantly sent from one office to another, but without effect:—they therefore returned extremely discontented to their villages or casals.

3d. The funds appointed for the use of the navy being not thought sufficient to support it as formerly, a great many sailors were dismissed; and those who remained not receiving the pay they had been promised, quitted the service, and returned very much offended to their different casals.

4th. The retreat of these sailors reduced those on board the *Dégo* man-of-war and the *Carthaginoise* frigate to a very small number; and, as these vessels were to be sent out of the port in order to protect the Maltese trade from some English frigates then cruising in the canal of Malta, it was thought advisable to complete the crews by employing the very vagabonds who had committed such disorders throughout the country, and they were accordingly taken up for that purpose by order of the municipalities. But this banditti found means to return to their villages, and, notwithstanding every precaution taken to prevent them, continued plundering the country more than ever. They even threatened to revenge themselves on the municipal officers, who were continually applying to the commission for the government to put a stop to such grievances. But this was not easy to effect; and though the greatest attention was paid to

an object of such importance, the plan formed to prevent these disorders was not ready to be put in execution when the revolt took place, to which the disorganisation of the navy greatly contributed.

5th. All the Maltese who had capitals placed in the treasury formerly belonging to the order, came themselves, after the French entered the island, to receive their interest: but they were *put off to another time*; as were indeed all those who presented drafts and bonds for different pieces of work, or for articles furnished for the use of the said order, together with every person who had demands of whatsoever nature on the former government.

6th. All pensions granted to those who had either retired from the service, or quitted their civil employments, were *provisionally* suspended; and it was but a very short time before the revolt, that those persons who were arrived at the advanced age of eighty years, received the pay of one month only, as an indemnification for the whole of their pensions. Four hundred loaves, which were daily given to as many poor women by the old government, together with corn and money frequently distributed among the indigent, were likewise suspended.

7th. By a new regulation, which took place in the *Mont de Piété**, the interest, formerly fixed at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, was for the future to be at 6 per cent; and all pledges, given for sums

* A public pawnbrokery.

exceeding forty Maltese crowns, ordered to be sold, if the interest due was not paid in the course of eight days. This occasioned great complaints; for, added to the encrease of interest, the people had misinterpreted the last article in the regulation, and believed that all pledges which were not redeemed at the above-mentioned time were to be sold.

8th. All copyholds, which had formerly been held for three generations, were now to last only one hundred years: by which means a great number were terminated immediately on the making this regulation; whereas, had the original contracts remained in force, none of the present copyholders could have lived to see the expiration of their leases. Consequently several families in the country, and particularly in Goza, were extremely interested in this new law, which caused the most violent discontent. It is indeed true, that a short time after its publication they determined to modify it in some degree, by making another, which allowed these copyholds to be held for twenty-five and even for a hundred years longer. But this indulgence was subject to new conditions, which consisted only in paying the four-fifths of their value, and that to be estimated by people skilled in such affairs; consequently those who held these leases gained one-fifth part. But the impression made by the first law was so strong, that very little attention was paid to the second; which, indeed, was only made public the night before the insurrection. The only motive for the above alteration was to encrease the revenues of

the national demesnes, in order to provide for the expences of the new government.

9th. Malta being evacuated by the grand-master and the knights, was an immense loss to the inhabitants: for the former owed them about a million of French livres; and almost all the French knights, who made the majority of the six hundred resident in the island, together with the greater part of those of other nations, were very considerably in debt. This event may also be said, with truth, to have deprived the numerous families which subsisted entirely by the favours and employments bestowed on them by the old government, of the means of existence. It certainly was the most dreadful blow the Maltese could possibly receive, and the greater number were entirely ruined.

10th. The officers being quartered in the different houses, very much offended the inhabitants, who regarded this innovation as a great hardship; particularly, as the manners of the country gave them great apprehensions for their wives and daughters, by their being thus obliged, against their will, to permit foreigners to lodge under their roof. They, however, had *not much* reason to complain on this occasion, the *greater part* of the officers having conducted themselves extremely well; so much so, indeed, that the inhabitants appeared really attached to them. But the tax proposed to be laid on to supply the expence of the soldiers' barracks, renewed their discontent; which manifested itself very forcibly in the towns, and

still more in the country, which was likewise included in this new contribution. The Maltese, being ignorant of the customs of other nations in this particular, considered this tax as a very unjust one; and having misinterpreted the sense of the capitulation, imagined it a violation of the said capitulation, which exempted them from all fresh impositions.

11th. From the moment Malta fell into the hands of the French, Sicily obliged all its vessels to perform quarantine; and would no longer permit the *speronaras* and other Maltese vessels, which went as usual to fetch provisions, to enter their different ports. A short time afterwards, the appearance of some English frigates in the canal of Malta prevented the merchantmen from sailing out of the port; and many of them being laden with cotton, bound for Spain, the trade of that article was entirely stopped, which contributed not a little to the universal poverty; since the women were left without means of gaining a livelihood, the greatest part of them having no other employment than that of spinning cotton. The Maltese, who are equally ignorant and superstitious, were likewise extremely offended at changes being made which affected in some degree their religion and former mode of worship.—

In the first place, the plate belonging to the cathedral in the Old City was taken away to be converted into money, in order to pay the soldiers who served in the garrison; but this step afflicted the Maltese most sensibly, particularly as they

expected the churches throughout the island would be stripped in the same manner.

Secondly—The whole of the convents being incorporated into one, many churches were shut up, in consequence of this prudent union.

Thirdly—The new forms adopted in France relative to births and marriages, which were intended to be introduced in Malta, produced a very bad effect on the minds of the people.

All these acts of injustice and oppression, together with such frequent breaches of public faith as were sufficient to induce the most submissive and obedient people to rebel, seemed to be regarded as matters of no importance by the new administration; for he who acted at the head of it, and who has given such an exact account of all that passed, appears not only astonished at the insurrection, but coldly adds, *there was no reason to expect it*:—as if it were possible for any government whatsoever to act more culpably towards its subjects. Where, indeed, can an instance be found of a people whose cattle and other articles of provision have been seized upon without payment, and their houses robbed and destroyed; whose soldiers and sailors have been enlisted by force, and whose wives and children have had their promised salaries discontinued? For my part, I know not the country where the pensions granted to old age, and as a reward for distinguished

merit, have been taken off;—where the creditors of the public treasury have been paid only by words, *and put off to another time*;—where the poor and miserable have been deprived of the bread and alms which were daily distributed among them;—where effects and money placed in *Monts de Piété* have been sold;—where bonds and contracts have been annulled;—where trade and industry have been entirely destroyed;—where the churches have been stripped of their riches, the mode of worship altered, and the religious institutions changed. Where, let me repeat, can a people be found who could patiently support such tyranny and profanation of all they hold most sacred? Is it then possible to regard and treat as rebels those who revolt against such cruel oppressors, who wantonly and boldly violate their oaths and break through their treaties, even at the very moment when they swear to observe them exactly?

I will, however, hope, for the honour of the French army, that Ransijat has exaggerated in his account of its conduct; and I must also believe, for the glory of their commander in chief, that he could not possibly have had so little foresight as he is accused of by the above-mentioned knight.

The French army having taken away all the money which could by any means be amassed together, left the treasury entirely empty; and as none arrived from France, every method to procure a supply was successively employed. Consequently, those which the agents of the directory had put in practice with equal cruelty and success in all the countries through

which they passed—without the smallest consideration whether or not they were friendly or inimical to their cause, submissive to their will, or conquered by the force of their arms—were now made use of in Malta; where the most richly ornamented churches were first shut up, and all the valuables they contained instantly declared national property and immediately ordered to be sold.

One of the churches in the Old City was among the number; but when the tapestry and other rich articles were on the point of being put up to auction, the sale was stopped by the threats of the inhabitants of this ancient capital of the island, who assembled in crowds to prevent so hateful an action. This disturbance, however, lasted but a few hours, and seemed to be appeased. The French commandant, Masson, wrote to general Vaubois on the occasion; but his letter not arriving before seven in the evening, it was impossible any reinforcement could be sent before the following morning,—and it was then too late to save him: for the inhabitants of the casal Zebug having joined those of the Old City in the afternoon, fresh tumults took place; and the commandant, together with sixty soldiers who composed the garrison, fell victims to the fury of the mob, which immediately proceeded to casal Zebug, and put to death the president of the municipality lately established in that place. The insurgents afterwards were dispersed in all the different casals; and the insurrection gained ground so surprisingly, that in twenty-

four hours the whole of the country, together with the island of Goza, were up in arms against the French.

General Vaubois, having received Masson's letter, and being little acquainted with what had passed during the course of the day, sent off a detachment of two hundred men early the next morning in order to reinforce the garrison in the Old City. But when these troops arrived near La Valetta, they were assailed on all sides with such violence, that they were obliged to turn back as fast as possible; having had one man killed and three wounded, amongst whom was an officer.

The three officers of the Maltese chasseurs who had sallied forth at the same time as the two hundred men, in order to assemble their dispersed soldiers throughout the country, were slain the same day; together with the chevalier Bordon, Varranges, and some citizens who were zealous partisans of the French, and who were endeavouring to make good their retreat into the city.

The insurrection in the country had reached as far as Burmola, and broke forth in the eastern part of that place. Several peasants from casal Zabbar and other villages had contrived to enter, and induced the people to rise. An action began which it was impossible to sustain for any length of time, and they were forced to retreat; many French officers and soldiers lost their lives, and two Maltese taken sword in hand were shot in cold blood. This barbarous action had not the desired effect; and, far from intimidating these islanders, it only

increased, if possible, their hatred for the French, whom they now regarded as savage tyrants.

All communication ceased from that moment between the city and the country. The beginning of the blockade and siege of Malta may indeed be dated from the same epoch; and I will endeavour to relate some of the most interesting events which took place on that occasion. Very few brilliant military exploits will appear in this account: which will only serve to shew to what lengths bravery and resignation were carried on one side in defending a place, and in suffering every possible inconvenience and privation.; whilst on the other an equal skill and perseverance appeared in continuing the attack, and maintaining their posts in all seasons, and during the whole time of the blockade of a city which was entirely open towards the sea.

C H A P. VIII.

Malta entirely blocked up by Land and by Sea. A Plan for seizing on the Store-houses for Corn at Girgenti, given to the French. Vain Attempts to bring back the Inhabitants of the Country to their former Sentiments. The French make an unsuccessful Sally. The Knights not allowed to land in the Island. Admiral Nelson summons the Place to surrender. Scarcity of Wood. A second Sally, equally unsuccessful as the first. The Inhabitants of the City put into Requisition. Sale of all Effects placed in the Mont de Piété. An Insurrection intended to take place in the City discovered. Several Priests unjustly imprisoned. Churches shut up, and the Ringing of Bells forbidden. The English take the Maltese under their immediate Protection. Three Maltese sent to demand a Parley apprehended. Situation of the City La Valette, after the first six Months of the Blockade. Price of Provisions. Mortality in the Hospitals.

FIVE days before the insurrection took place in the country, the *Guillaume Tell* man-of-war, with the *Diane* and *Justice* frigates, entered the port, with intelligence that the whole of the fleet bound to Egypt was destroyed. General Vaubois immediately apprehended that the English fleet would intercept all vessels bound to Malta: he therefore determined to examine with the greatest attention the state of the corn in the different store-houses; and found they contained thirty-six thousand salmes, which appeared sufficient to supply the whole of the island during seven months.

Ransijat advised the French general to fit out all the men-of-war in the port, and proceed immediately to Sicily, in order to seize upon the storehouses of Girgenti, which contained from forty to fifty thousand salmes of corn; and at the same time to take possession of those at Vittoria, where there was a very considerable quantity of wine. This proposal was however rejected; and, to say the truth, such an expedition would have been an absolute violation of the law of nations, since France was at that time at peace with the kingdom of Naples. Besides, had this squadron been taken by the English, the troops remaining at Malta would have been trifling indeed. These consisted at first in four thousand men; but had afterwards been augmented to five thousand, the crews belonging to the vessels which escaped from Aboukir having been incorporated amongst them. The whole of these forces was, however, very insufficient for the defence of all the different stations in the island.

Through the defection of the inhabitants of the country, the city was left with sufficient provisions for sixteen or seventeen months: the French forces were likewise enabled to concentrate themselves in the different forts. The insurrection therefore, considered in that point of view, was rather a favourable circumstance; notwithstanding which, the greatest possible pains were taken to induce the peasants to return to their former sentiments. A deputation was sent, with the assurance of a general pardon; but the persons dispatched on this occasion never came back. An attempt of the same nature was made

a second time, which proved equally unsuccessful. Such proceedings on the part of the insurgents, sufficiently proved that no hopes of conciliation remained.

The next day after the second deputation, a Portuguese squadron, composed of four men-of-war of different rates, appeared before the port; which in a few days more was joined by an English fleet of fourteen sail. The admirals of these different squadrons instantly dispatched a messenger to the city, to desire a parley; and to deliver two letters, the one signed by themselves, and the other by Emanuel Vitale, and Xavier Caravana canon of the Old City;—the purport of which was, to demand that the place should immediately be evacuated, and restored to the Maltese. The answer they received was such as might naturally be expected from people who were decided on defending themselves to the very last extremity; and it must be owned, they were in this particular perfectly faithful to their engagements.

The French became extremely irritated and impatient at being thus closely shut up in the fortifications, and by that means deprived of the fresh provisions which abounded in the country. They therefore planned a sally; which would not only supply them with the above-mentioned articles, but at the same time enable them to revenge the death of their comrades slain in the old city. Their project was to attack the *casal Zabbar*, “to lay it waste, and carry off all the provisions and other useful articles they could possibly

“ find *.” The Maltese, however, defended themselves so obstinately, that the besiegers were forced to retreat very quickly into the city: they likewise met with the same courageous resistance near fort Tigné, where they made a false attack.

This expedition (which, indeed, was undertaken rather against the opinion of general Vaubois) having failed of success, convinced the French, not only that it would be imprudent to risk a second, but even extremely difficult with such a slender force to maintain their post in the immense fortifications they were obliged to defend.

The Portuguese admiral, being left alone before Malta, summoned the place a second time to surrender, threatening to bombard it in case of refusal. The inhabitants till this moment had not shewn any inclination to quit their dwellings, though they were at perfect liberty so to have done; but, alarmed beyond expression at the idea of a bombardment, they entreated in crowds to be permitted to leave the city. The request of all those who were not extremely rich, was immediately complied with. The French had already sent away twelve hundred from Burmola, and four hundred from the city Valetta, and all the well-disposed Maltese had dispatched messengers to Hompesch to prevail on him to return once more among them;

* Ransijat makes use of these words, and accuses the French army of carrying on the war in a manner worthy only of savages and barbarians. Indeed, the latter, when they have once possessed themselves of the provisions of a country, seldom extend their cruelty so far as to ransack the dwellings of the conquered.

but as he found it impossible to grant their request immediately, he gave orders for the bailiff de Neveu, with some other knights and Maltese, to embark directly for Malta. During their voyage they were informed that they had better not attempt a landing; they therefore relinquished their design. Other knights of different nations offered to come to the assistance of the besiegers, and to make use of every effort in their power once more to recover the chief place of residence of the order; but they all received the same prohibition, and were ordered not to approach the island.

This conduct of the Maltese towards the knights, was generally disapproved by all those who did not consider that in political affairs no attention is ever paid either to the rights of man, or to those of sovereigns.

On the arrival of admiral Nelson, the French received another summons to surrender; with an offer at the same time of sending back the whole garrison to France, without considering any part of it as prisoners of war, on condition that the city, together with all the men-of war in the port, should be given up to the English. The answer of general Vaubois on this occasion was extremely laconic, and contained a positive refusal.

The besiegers had attempted to raise a battery on the heights of Coradin, but the constant firing from the city prevented this work being carried on; they had, however, contrived to raise another with three cannons in a place

called Samra or Lattochia, which never ceased firing, and which a cannonade of five hours in vain endeavoured to destroy.

The island of Goza having surrendered, a commissioner was dispatched to general Vaubois to inform him of the event, and at the same time to acquaint him that the emperor and the king of Naples had declared war against France: the same commissioner likewise told him, that on the following day a Greek vessel was to be burned within sight of the port, for having refused on going out of the harbour to surrender when summoned so to do by the English men-of-war.

The city was so closely blockaded, that the French were absolutely ignorant of all that passed either in the interior of the island or on the continent. Three small boats from Sardinia, and an advice-boat from Toulon, were all the vessels which had reached them during the space of three months; and these brought neither dispatches nor public papers. The English had very obligingly sent the French officers four of their wives who had been taken prisoners on board a small vessel from Corsica. These ladies spoke in the highest terms of the manner in which they had been treated by the Maltese, whilst the French cruelly ordered all the prisoners taken of that nation to be shot; and having remained six days in the Old City, they gave the garrison some intelligence relative to the principal insurgents, whose names were not even known with any degree of certainty.

The French beginning to suffer from the want of wood, and knowing there was a great quantity constantly kept in reserve in the great basin, determined to take some measures to possess themselves of it. They therefore agreed to make a sally on the Coradin side: which, however, proved equally unsuccessful with their attempt on Casal Zabber; and they were obliged to make good their retreat after a sharp discharge of musketry and artillery, four hundred bombs and balls being fired on the occasion. The Maltese, whom they had ever called and treated as *wretched peasants*, proved themselves worthy of the praises of their very enemies, who could not possibly refuse doing justice to their undaunted courage.

The English, in the beginning of December, again summoned a surrender, again threatened a general bombardment, and again received a laconic refusal. They therefore, on the following evening at half past ten, took advantage of an extremely dark night, and unmasked some fresh batteries towards fort Manual, from whence, and likewise from those before erected, they fired on the city with great perseverance till midnight. The people believed the bombardment commenced, the consternation became general; and what greatly contributed to encrease it, was some balls having entered the city Valette, which had never happened before: and though no one was hurt, the inhabitants imagined themselves no longer safe, and entreated permission to depart. General Vaubois felt much disinclined to let people of fortune quit the city: as to the rest, he did not object to their departure; from which he

thought he should reap no small advantage, since it would greatly diminish the consumption of provisions, which began to decrease considerably. The presence likewise of these malecontents might have been dangerous in case of an assault, when the whole force of the garrison would be necessary to repel the enemy. Besides, by sending these people out of the city, the number of besiegers would be increased; and as he knew there was a great scarcity of provisions throughout the island, so great an addition would inevitably cause a famine in a much shorter time than would otherwise have been the case.

The French, after having exacted heavy contributions from the inhabitants, put them into requisition for all the necessary articles for clothing the troops. These different methods proving insufficient, one still more odious was adopted. The administration, at the request of the French, ordered all the effects placed in the Mont de Piété to be sold, excepting, indeed, those which belonged to the Maltese families who embarked with Bonaparte; and even these were spared at first more from the trifling value of articles pledged by sailors and soldiers, than from any idea of justice, or sentiment of respect for the sacred rights of private property.

Money to pay the troops was not all that was wanting in the present exigence, since it was likewise necessary that those employed under government should receive their salaries; all the gold, silver, and jewels, both in the Mont de Piété and the different churches, were therefore successively seized upon, in order to supply such enormous expences.

The blockade, indeed, had not commenced quite four months when they were forced to have recourse to all the above expedients ; and the inhabitants of the city already began to inspire the greatest pity, “ their countenances, indeed, bore marks “ of the misery to which they were exposed *.” And so heart-rending was the spectacle of their distress, that it even seemed for a moment to affect the most zealous partisans of the revolution, who shewed some signs of repentance for having been the authors of such accumulated misfortunes. But this first emotion of sensibility was presently stifled, and they not only reproached themselves with having indulged such feelings, but “ used all their endeavours to banish every sentiment of compassion from their bosoms.” They therefore approved and applauded all the different operations of the French, and tortured their imaginations to suggest to them all the various methods of extortion which might tend to prolong the holding-out of the place, and consequently encrease the misery and despair of those who unfortunately were shut up in it.

The Maltese resident in the country took advantage of the dreadful situation of the inhabitants of the city, to form a plan which was kept secret with the greatest care, and which was only discovered on the day fixed for its execution, and that by a very extraordinary circumstance.

A small Genoese vessel brought intelligence of the king

* See Ransijat, page 23.

of Sardinia's having been forced to abdicate his crown, and of the brilliant success of the French army in Italy. There were great rejoicings throughout the city on this occasion, and the theatre, which was usually shut up on Fridays, was opened that evening. Boulard, commandant of fort Manuel, and Roussel, an officer under his command, had received permission to go to the play. On returning at night to their quarters, they passed port Marsa-Musceit, where they perceived some men who appeared to make signs for them to approach; they were, however, at too great a distance for their answer to be heard, and their being at that hour on the sea-shore close under the walls of the city was too suspicious a circumstance for the officers to accept the invitation. Commandant Boulard, on returning to Fort Manuel, thought it his duty to dispatch Roussel to reconnoitre. He accordingly embarked on board a very small boat; so small, indeed, that it would not admit of his taking with him more than seven men. On approaching the shore, they perceived a great number of men, some of whom betook themselves to flight, whilst others threw themselves into the sea, and the ditches of the city: they, however, succeeded in taking some of them, and a general alarm being given, thirty-four were apprehended.

This enterprize had been formed with more than usual secrecy, and no one had the smallest suspicion of what was going forwards. Gulielmo, a native of Corsica, aged sixty-four, was at the head of the affair. He had resided in Malta from

his earliest youth, had been constantly employed in cruising, and had taken several rich prizes; so great, indeed, was his reputation in the sea service, that it had not only procured him the command of some Russian vessels in the Mediterranean, but the rank of colonel in the navy of that power. He was in the country when the insurrection first took place, but refused to join the insurgents. Whether his conduct proceeded from an idea that they were not sufficiently in force, or whether he thought he might be more useful to the cause by remaining shut up in the city, no one can possibly determine.

After his condemnation he confessed, that his plan was to stab the centinel and the corps-de-guard, who appeared to perform their duty in a very negligent manner; to have attacked in person, and at an early hour, the palace belonging to the grand-mastership where the French general and his staff-officers resided, and to have seized on all the different posts in the city. Peralta, who had been an officer in the chasseurs, was to have taken possession of that called the Marine. That which was formerly termed Royal (but now named National) was to have been occupied by Damato, late serjeant in the Maltese regiment; and that at Marsa-Musceit by Palis, a perfumer at the office of health. Other persons were destined to attack fort St. Elmo, and the Castille Inn, which commands one of the cavaliers, situated very near that spot. This place once taken, it was proposed to make signals to the insurgents of all that passed in the city.

A sword-cutler named Satarivo was to provide poinards and sabres, and others were to procure cartridges. The former, having revealed many very important circumstances, received a pardon; whilst the commission established to try those who were accused of seconding the enterprise condemned forty-three persons, all of whom were shot. Eleven of the number were inhabitants of the city. Three hundred of the galley-slaves, too, had been gained over; and there is not the smallest doubt but that most of the inhabitants would have joined in the insurrection, the consequence of which cannot easily be imagined. The event, however, would most probably have been dreadful; for the moment the insurgents in the country had perceived any commotions in the city, they would have made a general attack in different parts, scaling ladders having been prepared for the purpose. Two hundred of them crouched in the surrounding ditches, with others secreted in the storehouses of the navy, where they had remained twenty-four hours, waited the signal for the onset. The French were too few in number to make defence at all the different points, and the smallest advantage gained by their numerous enemies must inevitably have caused their destruction.

The greatest part of those condemned to be shot were of the lowest ranks of the people, and not one of them accused a single noble or Maltese baron of having favoured their design. This sufficiently proves how greatly they must have been exasperated, and to what a miserable condition they were

reduced. Indeed, their only motive for rebelling against their ancient sovereigns, had been the hopes of enjoying a large share of happiness from the total change they expected would take place in their situation. As to the nobles and barons, who had great reason to reproach themselves for the part they had taken in the revolution, they were plunged into the deepest despair, without daring to make known their sentiments; but they one and all bore an inward and implacable hatred towards the French, from the moment the latter had forced them to burn their titles of nobility, to which they had the greatest attachment.

Though the priests appeared to have had very little share in the insurrection against the French, the latter still regarded them as their most dangerous enemies; for well they knew the great influence they had over the minds of a devout people, whose mode of worship they had endeavoured to make appear ridiculous and contemptible, though they could not succeed in corrupting the purity of their morals. Two novices of the order of Jacobins who did duty in two different parishes were most unjustly accused, apprehended, their churches shut up, and themselves imprisoned a fortnight in the castle St. Elmo; but at the expiration of that term, their innocence was so clearly proved, that they were set at liberty. The day they quitted their prison they were met by crowds of people, who, kissing their hands, congratulated them on their deliverance, and eagerly flew to bring away their effects from the place of their confinement. In short, so great were the transports of joy manifested on this

occasion, that the French were perfectly convinced of the wonderful fanaticism of the Maltese; consequently, how necessary it was for the preservation of public peace to wink at their prejudices, and to spare their feelings in this particular*.

But, notwithstanding this conviction, the president of the government gave an order for several of the churches to be shut up; by this means preventing the faithful from the free exercise of their religion. They likewise sent off the ministers, in whom the people placed an unlimited confidence, and forbade the ringing of bells, on pretence that they were to have served as signals for the insurrection.

The insurgents were not long ignorant of the execution of their partisans in the city; but as there were several others still remaining who were firmly attached to their cause, they determined on risking an assault. They therefore advanced with their ladders even to the bottom of the ramparts; but disputes arising among themselves, a general confusion took place, and they retreated precipitately, leaving some of their companions dead on the spot.

The besiegers were so ill provided with ammunition, that they raised very few batteries in the beginning, and those but very inconsiderable ones. When, however, they were joined by the English and Neapolitans, who furnished them with mortars and a great provision of powder, they erected others of

* Ransijat, page 81.

much greater importance, which were principally directed against the grand port, in order either to destroy the men-of-war riding in the harbour, or to prevent other vessels from entering it. But, notwithstanding these works, and the vigilance of the squadron which constantly kept at sea, some small vessels contrived to slip into the port.

The French placed their shipping out of the reach of cannon-shot, and masked them in such a manner that they had no further cause of apprehension from the effects of the bombs.

The English, to encourage the Maltese, and to attach them more firmly to their interest, took them under their immediate protection, and sent a commissioner to the French to inform them of their conduct. In twenty-two days afterwards an Englishman, accompanied by three Maltese, went in the same capacity to the Floriana, and presented a letter from one of the officers who commanded the land forces to general Vaubois, to acquaint him, that all vessels going out of the port laden with effects belonging to the Maltese, would be immediately visited, every article seized, and restored to the right owners.

General Vaubois retained the three Maltese as prisoners, and sent back the Englishman with a letter to commodore Ball, expressing his surprise that a commissioner should be sent from a land officer, whose right of addressing him on such occasions he absolutely denied. Commodore Ball frequently

demanded the Maltese; but they were never sent back till the following year, when their deliverance was owing to the English having returned a prisoner named Mary, the wife of an officer in the garrison, who was taken on board *Le Généreux*, and who was sent back in the politest manner the very moment she was demanded by the French.

The besiegers, encouraged by the presence of their allies, planned an assault on the Cotoner, the fortifications of which extended so far, that it was not judged easy to secure it from a sudden attack; but the troops being levied in a mass, and not holding well together, all their attempts on that side proved abortive.

The French paid the strictest attention to the fortifications, and reduced them into a smaller compass, keeping only two bastions, so situated as to be safe from all attacks, and at the same time securing themselves a retreat into the second enclosure of the Cotoner, in case of a reverse of fortune. These works were carried on with the greatest activity, and every body obliged to assist on the occasion; even the priests were not exempted, which extremely scandalised the inhabitants: it was indeed some time before they could obtain permission to quit their employment. This was also the case with the richest people in the city, who, however, were afterwards allowed to send others to replace them.

Though the blockade had only lasted six months, the sufferings of the people were incredible; and were I to relate the

miseries they endured, together with the destitute situation to which the garrison was reduced in so short a space of time, I should most possibly be accused of exaggeration. The numberless requisitions which had taken place, and all upon credit, had robbed the inhabitants of their furniture, and even of their beds, to supply the wants of the troops. They had likewise stripped the merchants, not only of the provisions in their storehouses, but of cotton, ropes, leather, different kinds of stuff, and every article they could possibly find. They did not even spare the poorest little shopkeepers, who were equally subject to contributions. These forced loans had entirely drained the purses of all the inhabitants: which, joined to no interest being paid for funds placed in the university, *Mont de Piété*, and the treasury of the order; to the scarcity of all provisions, except corn and oil (every imported article being reserved for the use of the garrison); and to the frequent denunciations and suspicions which disturbed the peace of mind of the most respectable families in the island, will give some faint idea of the miserable situation of the unfortunate Maltese, whose fate depended on that of the French.

The whole of the wood in the storehouses and basins being consumed, and the troops, nay the bakers, being in want of that article, but one resource was left, which was, to break up all the old trading vessels which were judged in the least fit for service; and this they did without attending, in the smallest degree, to the complaints of the different proprietors. The

consumption of wood was indeed very considerable, amounting to about five thousand quintals a-month, and that merely for the use of the troops and the bakers.

Provisions* continued till the month of March at the following exorbitant prices :

	<i>Liv.</i>	<i>sous.</i>		<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	
Fresh pork.	.	3	8	or	2	10 per pound.
Cheese	3	0	—	2	6
A rabbit	7	4	—	6	2
A fowl	29	0	—	24	10
A pigeon	6	0	—	5	0
A bottle of wine	.	3	0	—	2	6
An egg	0	8	—	0	4

The difficulty of procuring them, even at so great an expence, gave cause to apprehend the most dreadful consequences. The number of sick encreased every day; and though it cannot be said they literally died of hunger, yet they certainly were in want not only of proper food for people in their situations, but of every comfort necessary for the restoration and preservation of their health. The French had not always, as formerly, the power of permitting the inhabitants to quit the city, the besiegers frequently refused receiving those for whom the gates were thrown open, and these unfortunate people

* Before the blockade, the common price of meat was three pence a-pound; a fowl six pence; and wine from two to three pence a bottle.

had no resource but to return to their dwellings, there to perish from want, in despair.

The mortality among the soldiers increased in an extraordinary manner, and caused the utmost alarm; particularly as it was natural to suppose the heats of summer would still more increase it, none of the sick being as yet enured to the climate. The military hospital contained more than six hundred soldiers, the greatest part of whom suffered from the scurvy. This disorder made the most fatal progress; for in the month of March thirty-seven died, forty in April, and ninety-eight in May.

General Vaubois was perfectly aware of the great necessity of using every possible method to preserve the soldiers; for even supposing them all in perfect health, there were scarcely sufficient to perform the daily duty in the city. He therefore visited the hospitals himself, reformed different abuses which had crept into them, attended particularly to the bakehouses, and examined the bread intended for the soldiers. The sick received much benefit from a liquor made with malt; and happily there was a sufficient quantity of that article to enable them to drink abundantly.

There being a scarcity of many of the usual ingredients employed in coining money, general Vaubois resolved on melting down all the plate taken from the churches and *Mont de Piété*, casting it into ingots, and coining it into money. The largest pieces were to be worth twenty louis, or

twenty pounds sterling; and the smaller six livres, or five shillings English. A sufficient quantity was intended to be coined to pay the troops for thirteen months: but the spoils of the above-mentioned places were not nearly sufficient for this purpose. They therefore endeavoured to levy new taxes, which were to commence in the month of June, and amount to three hundred thousand French livres. But the difficulty was, in what manner to raise them, and how to divide them among the inhabitants; for the few rich people who had remained in the island were now become poor, those of small fortune were reduced to absolute indigence, and no one could procure credit.

CHAP. IX.

Enumeration of Vessels which entered the Port of Malta in the first Year of the Blockade. Provisions they contained. Number of Soldiers and Inhabitants who died from September, 1798, to September, 1799. Price of Provisions in September, 1799. The Garrison reduced to Half-pay. The Salaries of different Members of the Administration suspended. The French Soldiers make Kitchen-Gardens in different Places. Capture of Transports with their Convoy. Stoppage of the Soldiers' Pay. The Officers receive a mere Trifle for their Subsistence. General Vaubois has an Interview with the Portuguese Admiral. Departure and Capture of the Guillaume Tell. The Ration of Bread diminished. Wine, Brandy, and Vinegar, likewise curtailed. The Houses in La Valetta visited by Order of Government, and an Enumeration taken of the Inhabitants, who take the Oath of Allegiance to the new Consular Constitution. Price of Provisions at that Time. Table of Deaths from September, 1799, to September, 1800. Departure and Capture of two Frigates. Capitulation and Surrender of Malta.

DURING the first year of the blockade of Malta, fifteen vessels, laden with stores and provisions, entered the port; amongst which were three small ones from Sardinia, the *Bondeuse* frigate, an advice-boat with only ten casks of brandy, together with two neutral vessels driven in by stress of weather, the one *Imperial*, and the other from Ragusa. The whole contained 19,166 salmes of corn, which, with the 36,382 already mentioned in the storehouses of the city Valetta at the commencement of the siege, made altogether 55,548. This quantity was almost

equal to the annual consumption of the two islands of Malta and Goza, which, before the year 1798, generally amounted to 56,581 salmes of corn.

The defection of the inhabitants of the country, joined to the successive emigration of those of the city, had so greatly diminished the usual consumption, that from seventeen to eighteen thousand salmes, still remaining in the storehouse, were judged in September, 1799, to be sufficient for a whole twelvemonth. This calculation was made from the grain distributed in the course of the last months, which had fallen from fifteen hundred and fifty to fifteen hundred; and it was natural to suppose, that so many people constantly quitting the town, together with the great mortality among the remaining part of the inhabitants and soldiers, would cause a still more considerable diminution.

The following is an exact list of those who died monthly, during the course of one year :

Months of the Year.	Soldiers.	Inhabitants.	Observations.
September, 1798	8	108	Independently of the military who died from illness, or from the effects of their wounds, forty-two were killed, five of whom were officers.
October	14	108	
November	20	107	
December	25	160	
January, 1799	35	213	During the whole of the first winter the soldiers suffered extremely from a kind of <i>cecidity</i> (blindness), which seized them at night and left them in the morning. The next year, however, this complaint existed but in a very trifling degree.
February	20	200	
March	37	230	
April	40	319	
May	98	338	
June	131	311	
July	79	233	
August	48	131	
Total	555	2,468	

The population of the city, which had been estimated at more than forty thousand, was already decreased to about thirteen thousand; and it became every day more difficult to supply the necessities even of that small number. In the beginning of the insurrection, bread and corn had been very abundantly distributed; but afterwards only sixty salmes were allowed monthly. These were estimated according to the market price in 1778, which was at the rate of seventy French livres eight sous the salme, making in the whole the sum of 4,224 French livres.

This liberal distribution of corn was still more necessary, because every other article was become extremely scarce, and excessively dear. Butchers' meat no longer appeared in the markets: and the only provisions to be procured were sold at the following prices in the month of September, 1799:—

Articles.	French Money.		English Money.			Observations.
	Liv.	sous.	£	s.	d.	
Fresh pork, per lb.	7	4	0	6	0	A tax had been laid upon fish, and the quantity brought to market was very insufficient for the public use. Whatever was smuggled into the city sold at an infinitely dearer rate.
Salt meat, per lb.	2	10	0	2	1	
Common cheese, per lb.	8	15	0	7	3½	
Fish of the worst quality, per lb. }	2	12	0	2	2	
Of a tolerable kind, per lb. }	3	14	0	3	1	
Of the best sort, per lb. }	3	16	0	3	2	
A fowl	from 52	0	2	3	4	
	to 60	0	2	10	0	
A pigeon	12	0	0	10	0	

A rab-

Articles.	French Money.		English Money.			Observations.
	Liv.	sous.	£.	s.	d.	
A rabbit	11	0	0	9	2	The exorbitant price of fowls, pigeons, rabbits, and eggs, induced the inhabitants and soldiers to employ themselves in rearing chickens and rabbits, by which means they became rather cheaper during the first months of the second year of the siege.
An egg	0	16	0	0	8	
A rat	} from 1 4		0	1	0	
	} to 1 18		0	1	7	
A bottle of common wine	4	0	0	3	4	
Ditto of vinegar	4	0	0	3	4	
Ditto of brandy	8	0	0	6	8	
A pound of sugar	22	0	0	18	4	
Ditto of coffee	26	0	1	1	8	
Ditto of chocolate	18	0	0	15	0	

Beans and other vegetables were likewise extremely dear, and very difficult to be procured. The flesh of mules and asses was much in request, and the people complained bitterly whenever they were deprived of it; but the general took great care to preserve a sufficient number of these animals for the service of the city, and for grinding corn, which employed a great many both night and day.

Notwithstanding all the springs had been turned aside, and the canals which brought water to the city cut away, there was no scarcity of that article, owing to the public and private cisterns, which fortunately never failed.

The situation of the city was so deplorable at the end of the first year of the blockade, that a surrender appeared absolutely certain; yet such was the skill and unexampled perseverance of the French, that it held out still another twelve-month.

Every possible method of raising money had been put in

practice, and no means were left of procuring a supply. It was therefore absolutely necessary to be very careful of the little which remained; consequently the garrison was put on half-pay in the month of August. The salaries of the judges and all the members of the administration were likewise suspended for three months, bearing date from the same time, and the greatest part of those who were employed under them suffered a reduction of half their income.

The French soldiers being thus deprived of fresh provisions, supplied in some degree the deficiency by making gardens in the fortifications of the city, and even in places which were thought impossible to cultivate. By dint of industry, they succeeded in raising fruit and vegetables for their own consumption, and likewise for sale. Such was the exigence of the times, that in the following December their pay was entirely stopped; and wine and brandy, which had hitherto constantly been bestowed, and which indeed recruited them exceedingly, no longer distributed.

Such deprivations were sufficient to have irritated the best-disposed and most submissive troops; but in this case they had no such effect, and did not cause the smallest commotion in the garrison. During a whole twelvemonth there were scarcely twenty deserters, the greatest part of whom were either volunteers or sailors. Much management was employed in acquainting them with the departure of transports with provisions from the different ports in France, and letters were pub-

lished at proper opportunities to announce their speedy arrival. The hopes of the garrison's being quickly revictualled kept the soldiers quiet; and the intelligence they received from time to time of the great victories obtained by the French armies animated their courage, and made them ambitious of emulating their glory, by a most obstinate and unexampled defence.

A number of storeships preparing at Toulon had long been talked of by the French generals. These were to be convoyed by several men-of-war, and their arrival was dairly expected. But the first intelligence they received threw them into despair, the transports being intercepted by the English, and the convoy taken. Admiral Keith gave notice to admiral Villeneuve, that lord Nelson had given into his hands two letters from madame Villeneuve (the admiral's wife), which had been found on board the vessels taken by his Britannic majesty's fleet; adding, that he was happy in sending them to him, and would take care to have the answers properly delivered. General Vaubois, on receiving this confirmation of the dreadful event which had taken place, no longer retained any hope of receiving the necessary assistance. He therefore called a council of war, consisting of all the land and sea commanders, to consult upon the proper measures to be taken in so desperate a situation, since he could not possibly expect to preserve a place for any length of time, where there was an absolute want of almost every kind of provisions.

The result of the consultation was, to send the *Guillaume Tell* man-of-war as soon as possible to France, and with her all the sick in the garrison, together with every other person who was not necessary for the defence of the city. Orders were therefore given to take off her blinds, and put her in sailing condition.

The whole of the nine hundred thousand French livres produced from the gold, silver, and other articles in the *Mont de Piété*, was already expended. Effects to the value of eighty-two thousand livres had been employed for the service of the troops; but there still remained to the amount of thirty-six thousand livres * in other articles which could not be employed for that purpose. The French, therefore, resolved to dispose of them by a lottery, which offered very tempting baits to the adventurers. Eight thousand livres were produced by these means: but the public ceasing to bring any money, the lottery was shut up.

The soldiers, though deprived of their pay, were in a still less deplorable situation than the officers; the latter being reduced to their simple ration, whilst the former found great resources in the cultivation of their gardens, and in the exercise of their industry. General Vaubois, touched by such distress, had at two different times given each of the officers the trifling sum of one pound sterling; but being likewise desirous of bestowing some relief on the soldiers, he contrived to make a small

* One thousand five hundred pounds sterling.

retrenchment in the maintenance of the hospital, and in some other expences equally indispensable and difficult to curtail. By these means, he procured a sum sufficient in the month of June to enable him to give each soldier half-a-crown, and every officer one pound sterling. This assistance, trifling as it was, had an excellent effect on the minds of both parties, who were perfectly convinced the general had done every thing in his power to relieve their distresses.

The general was so well assured of the necessity of diverting the minds of the people, and affording them some means of relaxation in the miserable situation to which they were reduced, that he had retained the company of comedians as long as possible. He was however at last forced to dismiss them, not only from his inability of paying their salaries, but from the scarcity of provisions. Several amateurs supplied their place, and the theatre was attended as much as before.

The situation of the inhabitants now became every day more and more disastrous; and such were the effects of poverty, disease, and frequent emigration, that of forty thousand souls in September, 1798, there only remained thirteen thousand in 1799. These were reduced to ten thousand in the following October, and to seven thousand five hundred in March, 1800. So small a number gave no further cause of alarm to the government; they were therefore allowed once more to make use of bells in their churches, which had been strictly forbidden ever since the discovery of the intended insurrection. It is impos-

sible to describe the happiness of the people on this occasion ; their joy indeed was as great as if they had received the most signal favour, and they appeared for a moment to have banished from their remembrance the idea of all their sufferings. They flew in crowds to the different churches, and invoked the God of mercy with unequalled fervour. Their confidence in his goodness, and their resignation in supporting whatever evils he thought proper to inflict on them, was such as could not fail to affect the most incredulous spectator.

The besiegers continued from time to time to send commissioners on different pretences, but they were always received in the same manner, and a negative constantly given to every proposal to surrender. The Portugueze admiral, the marquis de Nissa, demanded a private interview with general Vaubois, in September, 1799. His request was granted, and he was received at fort Manuel by general Vaubois and all his staff, before whom the general, to his great surprise, declared, that if the smallest mention was made of any thing tending to the evacuation of Malta, he would immediately break off the conference. The admiral therefore, after a short conversation on political affairs of no importance, re-embarked amidst the universal shouts of *Long live the republic ! No capitulation !* He was perfectly convinced, by all which passed on this occasion, that all further negotiations would be fruitless : nothing was therefore left to be done but to intercept all means of relief, since nothing but famine could possibly reduce such determined enemies. Troops were

wanting to make a forcible attack, and the batteries raised by the besiegers were intended infinitely more to alarm the garrison than to give a regular assault. The French sometimes answered their fire, but frequently paid no attention to what passed. The bombs sometimes damaged and threw down houses, but without causing great mischief, very few being wounded, and only four or five killed. The mortars, indeed, placed on the heights which separate the smaller from the larger Marsa, threw their bombs the whole length of the grand port, and greatly impeded the departure of the *Guillaume Tell*. The preparations on this occasion went on with much activity, and the whole was completed without any accident, though the enemy threw several bombs, and fired a great many cannons at the side where the blinds had been taken away.

Vice-admiral Decres, who commanded the *Guillaume Tell*, made choice of the moment when the moon was set to venture out of the harbour. But neither the profound darkness nor the silence preserved on board availed any thing against the vigilance of the advanced posts on the Coradin and Marsa; for she had no sooner cleared the port of the galleys, than signals were made at the same instant from the above-mentioned places, to acquaint the English vessels that she was under way. A constant fire was kept up from the batteries of the besiegers, which continued till near midnight, when she sailed out of the grand port. The English presently discovered the *Guillaume Tell*, pursued her vigorously, and after a desperate

action, which recalled to mind the valour of the old French navy, succeeded in taking her. The French lost two hundred and seven men; a great number were wounded, among whom were admiral Decres and his first captain.

When the intelligence arrived of the last remaining vessel of the fleet destined for Egypt being taken, the French were most deeply affected, and too plainly perceived that they must shortly be obliged to surrender.

All means of subsistence were indeed so much decreased, that, towards the end of April, wine was only distributed to each person three times in a *decade*; and the same quantity of brandy and vinegar twice. The ration of bread was fixed at thirty ounces a-day, with one ounce of paste in a *decade*. Hopes were entertained, that by this arrangement the provisions would last three months longer. Oil was distributed as usual, and there still remained a sufficient quantity for one month.

The general would very willingly have sacrificed all the horses and mules for the use of the public, but these animals were necessary for grinding the corn. It was, however, resolved that when it was once reduced into flour they should be immediately killed, and their flesh properly distributed. In consequence of this determination, all hands were employed to finish the grinding with the greatest expedition.

The government gave orders for the houses throughout the city to be visited, on pretence of taking an exact account of the number of inhabitants, which at that time

amounted to rather more than seven thousand; but the real reason was to examine whether any provisions had been concealed.

The only object which presented itself to the commissioners on this occasion, was the heart-rending spectacle of the most distressing poverty.

Towards the end of June, the provisions were distributed among the inhabitants in the following proportions: each man received daily one pound and a half of bread, the women one pound, children under three years of age half a pound, and those under twelve three quarters of a pound. Whoever preferred having a certain quantity of grain in lieu of the above distribution received twenty-five pounds a-month (one third of which was barley), without distinction of age or sex. This quantity was calculated to be equal to one pound of bread each person.

A bomb-ketch from Toulon, which had been missing for twenty-four days, arrived at last towards the end of June. She was laden with wine, brandy, bacon, and vegetables;—a most fortunate supply for the French, whose spirits were greatly raised, particularly as this vessel not only announced still further assistance which might be quickly expected, but a change having taken place in the French government. No official intelligence had hitherto been received of this event, which general Vaubois immediately proclaimed, and every one swore to observe the new constitution. The joy was universal, and

it was the general opinion that Bonaparte would neglect nothing in his power which could possibly tend to preserve the only remaining conquest of his famous expedition into Egypt. The people resorted in crowds that night to the theatre, where they sung in the most enthusiastic manner some verses composed on the occasion. So violent indeed were their transports, that they appeared absolutely insensible to their miserable situation.

Different articles of provisions, at this time, were increased to the following exorbitant prices :

		<i>Liv. sous.</i>		<i>£. s. d.</i>
Fresh pork, <i>per lb.</i>	. .	8 12	.	0 7 2
Bottle of oil, call- ed <i>Cartouche.</i>	} from	24 0	.	1 0 0
		to 28 0	.	1 3 4
Pound of sugar	{ from	43 0	.	1 16 8
	{ to	48 0	.	2 0 0
Pound of coffee	{ from	48 0	.	2 0 0
	{ to	58 0	.	2 8 4

Large rats, especially those found in the bakehouses, were extremely dear, and in much estimation. Almost all the dogs and cats in the city had been killed and eaten, consequently were become exceedingly scarce. Asses, mules, and horses, had experienced the same fate; except, indeed, a few belonging to the French, which were absolutely necessary for the service of the garrison.

The mortality among the troops and inhabitants had

rather diminished than increased, as will be perceived by the following table. The troops in the garrison, before the departure of the *Guillaume Tell*, consisted of four thousand men.

Bill of mortality from the month of Sept. 1799, to Sept. 1800.

Months.	Soldiers.	Inhabitants.
September	33	102
October	30	100
November	19	99
December	11	60
January	23	44
February	13	42
March	6	30
April	14	27
May	6	19
June	3	16
July	7	25
August	5	22
	Total . 170	596

The moment at last arrived, when no further means of subsistence remained, and when a surrender became indispensably necessary. But before such an event took place, general Vaubois and admiral Villeneuve, thought it their duty to endeavour to save the two frigates lying in the port; they were therefore equipt, and immediately set sail. Two days afterwards the French perceived the *Diane* frigate in the midst of the English squadron. A council of war was then assembled, to consult

on what day a capitulation should be proposed; and after an exact account being taken of the quantity of flour still remaining in the storehouses, it was found that there was only sufficient to last till the 22d Fructidor (8th September). It was therefore the general opinion to enter into a parley with the besiegers on the 17th Fructidor, and the terms of capitulation were accordingly agreed on. In consequence of these deliberations, general Vaubois wrote directly to general Pigot to demand a capitulation; upon which, the latter deputed general Graham, and commodore Martin, who commanded the sea department, to treat on the business. They arrived in the city Valetta at half past eleven in the morning, and a conference immediately took place between general Vaubois and admiral Villeneuve on one side, and the above-mentioned officers on the other. The principal articles demanded by the French were complied with in the politest manner, and general Graham returned to the country to acquaint general Pigot with those about which they could not agree. He soon returned with the answer, and the English generals concluded the definitive treaty that very evening. The articles of capitulation were sent early the following morning to the city Valetta, and at four in the afternoon the English troops took possession of the Floriana, fort Tigné, and fort Ricasoli. At the same time two English frigates, a transport, and two gunboats, entered the port. The next day the whole squadron anchored in the same place, and made all possible haste to fit

out vessels to transport the French troops to their own country. Every thing was ready in two days, and the greatest part of the garrison embarked; those who were not in a condition to be removed were placed in fort Manuel. Their immediate departure was the more necessary, because it was with the greatest difficulty the English could prevent the Maltese from revenging themselves on the traitors who had occasioned the first surrender of the island. The French, indeed, were so perfectly convinced of the implacable hatred they bore to the favourers of their cause, that they particularly stipulated, in the twelfth article of the capitulation, *that neither the soldiers in the besiegers troops nor the inhabitants of the country should be permitted to enter the city till such time as the French troops should be embarked, and out of sight of the port.* The English might undoubtedly have insisted upon terms much less advantageous to the conquered, but their conduct proved that they knew how to esteem and reward as they ought to do so courageous a resistance.

C H A P. X.

The principal Motives which induced the French to undertake the Expedition to Egypt, and the taking of Malta. Contradictions which appear in the Proclamations of the Directory and the Declarations of the French Generals. The Directory destroyed by Bonaparte. Deploable Situation of the Maltese under any other Government than their ancient one. The Christian Powers interested in preserving the Order. Means of re-establishing the Navy. Impossibility of destroying the Barbary Pirates. The Knights alone capable of keeping up a continual War against them. Exhortation to the Knights to return to their original Character of simple Hospitallers, in the different Countries where they may happen to take up their Abode.

MALTA, situated on a rock in the midst of the Mediterranean, was fortified in the strongest manner. Nature and art combined in making it, to all appearance, impregnable; and there was every reason to believe it would have escaped the dire effects of the war, which had already spread desolation throughout the Continent. The inhabitants, happy under the wise and paternal government of the knights, appeared likely to repulse every attempt at a revolution which would tend to destroy it. Yet, alas! as it has fatally proved, neither the strength of the fortifications nor the benevolence of the sovereign could save it from destruction.

I have already laid before the reader the deep dissimulation with which the French government contrived the ruin of

Malta; I will now take notice of the extraordinary circumstances which decided the moment for carrying their perfidious plans into execution, with the motives they alleged in justification of their conduct. Lastly, in pleading the cause of the Maltese and knights, I will endeavour to place before their eyes the cruel misfortunes which must necessarily await them, should they be doomed to an eternal separation.

The members of the directory having made a temporary peace with the continent, were suddenly deprived of the resources with which the pillage of their agents had hitherto supplied them. The riches carried off from Germany, Holland, and Italy, had been as quickly dissipated as acquired. The want of money, and the equal want of credit to procure a supply, soon rendered their situation very embarrassing; particularly as the peace lately concluded left a victorious and discontented army to be paid, young and ambitious generals to be restrained within bounds, and men of letters to be bribed to silence. Thus critically situated, a romantic expedition, worthy the days of chivalry, was imagined: this was calculated to satisfy both army and literati, by presenting to the former the most brilliant prospect of military glory, and to the latter advantages of various kinds. The command was given to a general whose influence was dreaded by the directory; for it was very well known that he had obtained the confidence of the soldiers during war, and was much connected with artists and men of letters in time of peace.

The little remaining money in the public coffers was employed in preparations for this expedition. A considerable fleet was fitted out with unheard-of celerity. The troops, distinguished by the name of the army of England, were embarked on board six hundred transports in the ports of the Mediterranean. The greatest part of these troops, whose hopes had been raised, and who had flattered themselves with gaining immense riches on the banks of the Thames, little imagined they were destined to fight against an allied power, and lose their lives or liberty on a friendly shore.

It is impossible to imagine any thing more truly absurd and ridiculous in diplomatic affairs than the official proclamations and manifestoes published relative to Malta. When the French fleet appeared before the island, the commanders announced themselves as friends to the order, and, as such, demanded free entrance into the port, to take in water; notwithstanding which the French government soon after publicly affirmed, that it had regarded Malta as an enemy ever since the year 1792*. The generals also declared to the knights, that it was very fortunate they had offered no resistance, since, on a signal agreed on with the French fleet, they would all have been instantly massacred. They likewise confessed that this atrocious conspiracy had been long formed by the directory. The commander in chief frankly owned,

* See Appendix, No. XIII. Message of the Directory.

that the principal motive of his precipitate attack on Malta was the apprehensions of its becoming the property of Russia. He might have added with still greater truth, that having left France without money, the gold, jewels, and great riches, of the island, were too attractive to escape the rapacious views of the French troops; and that his ill-manned fleet stood in the utmost need of recruits to furnish to each ship its proper and proportionate complement. On any other occasion, or at any other time, a general might probably have addressed himself to the grand-master, simply telling him, that his enemies (knowing his inability to make an efficacious defence) intended to take advantage of his situation, and to invade the island; and that, to prevent their designs being carried into execution, he would place a garrison in some of the fortresses, which in the event of a peace should be withdrawn. Such a declaration, however, could never have been made by the agents of the directory, who must naturally adopt the language of their superiors. Even the commander in chief, though certain victory seemed to attend his footsteps, at the very moment that he commanded success, was himself bound in chains rivetted by the hands of guilt and tyranny.

Let me here express my sincerest wishes for the happiness of the Maltese people. Ruined by the French, conquered by the English, uncertain of their future destiny, what a cruel situation is theirs! The question at present is, whether or not, like so many other nations, they are to be sacrificed to what is

dignified by the epithet of *the general interest*, and become the property of some continental power? Supposing this to be the case, what must necessarily be their fate?

The moment the Maltese become subject to another sovereign, a garrison of five or six thousand foreign troops will enter their island, and they will be obliged to furnish an equal number of seamen. It is contrary to the political system of the European states to allow arsenals for the navy, and dock-yards for ship-building, in countries distant from their metropolis; and still less will they consent to transport the produce of their industry and manufactures into such countries: it is not therefore to be expected that an exception should be made in favour of Malta. It likewise makes part of the same system, that all subjects of one empire should be indiscriminately taxed, and that such taxes should be equally paid by foreigners and natives. Why then imagine that Malta should be more indulgently treated than the rest of its fellow-subjects?

I have already sufficiently proved that of the hundred thousand inhabitants in Malta, only one-third could subsist on the product of the island; that, consequently, different methods were obliged to be employed to provide for the remaining sixty-six thousand:—that the university was under the necessity of purchasing corn every year to a more considerable amount than what was produced by the whole trade and industry of the island; that without the four millions of French livres

annually expended by the knights, it would have been impossible to have supplied the inhabitants with the most necessary articles of existence; that the order never laid on any direct taxes; and that the natives alone had a share in the civil administration of the island, together with every thing relative to the finances. Where, may I ask, will the sovereign be found, who, at this present moment, will produce from his coffers the above-mentioned sums? Who will contribute to the maintenance of hospitals constantly open for the reception of the sick of both sexes?—Who will daily distribute bread to five or six hundred families?—and who will keep up those numerous institutions, where infancy and old age received gratis all that assistance so particularly necessary at the two most interesting periods of human existence, and which, alas! they might elsewhere vainly implore?—Who, may I likewise demand, will supply the place of the four or five hundred knights who inhabited the magnificent palaces and sumptuous edifices in the city Valetta; and who, in their superb country-houses, constantly employed themselves in cultivating at a great expence the (to all appearance) barren soil of this rocky isle?

Since, unhappily, there exists no sovereign capable of advancing those sums which are absolutely necessary, not only for the prosperity of the island, but to prevent the dire effects of famine, by which it must be annually threatened, I may venture confidently to affirm, that, ere a few years shall be elapsed, Malta will become a burthensome charge to its so-

vereign; who, in his turn, must necessarily be odious to his subjects. Yet, surely, all conquerors who are ambitious of obtaining the interesting title of the benefactors of mankind—a title, alas! given to so very small a number by posterity—must ever be desirous to maintain their newly-acquired subjects in their former happy situation; and, if possible, make them forget by a succession of fresh benefits, those which had rendered their predecessors so truly and so justly beloved.

Russia had undoubtedly formed the wisest plan, when, wishing to add the possession of this island to her vast domains, she determined to preserve the order of St. John of Jerusalem, as the only means of making it a useful and flourishing colony. To this it may perhaps be objected, that though the above-mentioned facts cannot be denied, nor the utility of the order disputed, it would be impossible, after the cruel losses it has sustained, either to support the hospitals, or provide the armaments which rendered its existence so extremely important to the trade of the Mediterranean. Five languages still remain of the original eight which composed the order of Malta;—that of Italy, which unfortunately has lost half its possessions; that of Anglo-Bavaria, and those of Arragon, Castille, and Germany, which have suffered in a less degree. There still, however, exist some benefices which bring in a considerable revenue, and which of late years have been almost exclusively possessed by either princes, or the near relations of popes and cardinals. Let the order then, in future, fix the *maximum* of each com-

mandery at (we will suppose) fifteen hundred pounds sterling, and the overplus of those which exceed this sum be appropriated to the support of the Maltese navy. Should the knights of these languages (which I will not allow myself to suppose) object, that such an overplus would be insufficient to answer the purposed end, let the deficit be supplied by taxing the commanderies in proportion to their respective value. This mode of proceeding will, I am perfectly convinced, be approved by the knights: it is not only just, but absolutely necessary. The age we live in calls for the greatest sacrifices: they are, indeed, become an indispensable duty, since they are not only sanctioned, but commanded, by the sacred laws of both religion and honour.

Should the order once more return to Malta, it would be absolutely impossible, for the first year or two, to maintain the same number of men-of-war as formerly; and the other Christian powers would be unjust to complain of such a deficiency: on the contrary, it would be greatly for their own interest to furnish the knights with some vessels in sailing condition; the corsairs having undoubtedly taken advantage of their absence to range unmolested the Mediterranean.

It has frequently been in agitation to pay subsidies to the order*: but a revenue of this kind could never with propriety be accepted; since Malta would then be a tributary state, and

* See Meyer.

consequently become dependent on a particular power. These subsidies might likewise be stopped at pleasure, which would make the state of the Maltese navy very uncertain. It ought, on the contrary, to be permanent, and always ready to set sail on the first appearance of a Barbary corsair having put to sea. Let no one imagine the utility of the order of Malta to be merely temporary and partial; it is, on the contrary, both constant and general: constant, because the infidels who inhabit the coast of the Mediterranean, interest themselves very little about commerce, the greatest part of them subsisting entirely by piracy, consequently never are at peace at one and the same time with all Christian princes; and general, since it does not merely confine itself to protecting the countries in which its possessions are situated, such as Spain, Sicily, and Italy, but is equally attentive to the interests of America, Russia, Sweden, Prussia, &c. These countries may, indeed, be said to reap still greater advantages from its protection: since some months must necessarily elapse, before it can possibly be known at Philadelphia, Petersburg, Stockholm, and Berlin, that the beys of Tunis and Algiers have declared war; during which time, without the assistance of Malta, the corsairs would seize on the merchantmen of these powers with impunity.

The English and French men-of-war, in honour bound to keep treaties with their allies, which the Barbarians laugh at and break at pleasure, are frequently obliged to remain inactive

spectators of the capture of these vessels, and the cruelty exercised on their miserable crews: whilst Malta, on the contrary, no sooner receives intelligence of the appearance of a corsair, than vessels are instantly dispatched in pursuit; and if they come up with her they seize on all the prizes she has taken, and give liberty to the slaves. The American, Russian, Swedish, and Prussian merchantmen, are equally assured of the protection of the order. This, indeed, is granted them as a matter of right: but it has not even been refused to its most cruel persecutors; whose merchantmen have been retaken by the knights, and restored to their owners, and the crews released from slavery.

Those who are acquainted with the different powers of Barbary, the nature of their government, and their means of defence, must necessarily smile at the various plans formed to destroy them. Few places in Europe, at this present time, are so well fortified towards the sea as Algiers: the sovereign can at any time raise fifty thousand men, six or seven thousand of whom are excellent soldiers, and the rest would immediately march, and greatly annoy any troops who should attempt to land on his territories. All the neighbouring states would likewise unite to make war against any Christians who should venture to attack him in his own dominions; and, sooner or later, an European army laying siege to the capital must inevitably perish at the foot of the ramparts. Nay, even were it possible to succeed, a conquest of such a nature could never be preserved

without sacrificing numbers of troops; since the climate of Africa is still more inimical to an European, than the scymitar of the mussulman, or the balls and arrows of the Arabs and Moors.

People of a more moderate way of thinking, who are well acquainted with the difficulty of taking such a variety of forts extending the whole length of the coast of Barbary, and the much greater one of establishing colonies in those countries, are still of opinion, that nothing could be more easy than to block up their ports; but they do not consider, that, independent of the considerable squadron which must always be maintained to preserve a coast extending from the straits of Gibraltar to Egypt, the navigation is well known by seamen to be particularly dangerous. Even the nations which have been regarded as the most formidable at sea, have no longer any rowing vessels; and the Mediterranean being subject to flat calms which frequently last several days, the best disciplined fleet would be of small avail against galiots and half-galiots rowing four or five knots an hour, and only drawing six feet water.

Were it even possible to carry such a plan into execution, it could never take place without the unanimous consent of all the Christian powers; and this, their different political and commercial interests must ever prevent. Such an agreement could never be lasting; since it must infallibly be broken the moment war was declared between any of the

parties. Malta then is the only power which can continually and indiscriminately pursue all Barbary corsairs; since she is constantly at peace with every Christian state, and can never be induced from either political or commercial motives to form an alliance with the powers of Africa. Though France and Venice entered into an agreement with the order, that its squadron should not enter the Levant and Adriatic, it was only because those two powers refused to admit corsairs of any description into their latitude. They, however, never objected to the ships of Malta pursuing any Barbary vessels which had taken shelter in those seas: and from the moment a Christian power went to war with the Turks, this convention with France and Venice was broken; because the order then became their ally, and accompanied them in all their expeditions.

Were the cause of the knights and Maltese people to be pleaded, and their right to return to their former situation to be discussed, in a court actuated by motives of justice and humanity, it would undoubtedly soon be decided. My most ardent wishes are, that this may be the case, notwithstanding the intrigues and false reasoning of the politicians of the present day, who, intoxicated with the success of their armies, mistake the real interest of their country, to which they cruelly and wantonly sacrifice the peace and happiness of their fellow-creatures.

Before I conclude this work, I may, surely, be allowed to

address myself in the few following words to the knights in general, and still more particularly to those who, like myself, have taken refuge in England, and found an honourable asylum in that hospitable isle.—

Since ye have quitted Malta, most probably, alas! never to return; since ye have left behind you your archives, title-deeds, trophies, and arms; let your virtues shine the more conspicuous, and let them prove to an admiring world, that you still possess that Christian humility, that perfect obedience to your ancient laws, that unalterable patience and resignation, and that spirit of universal charity, which not even the severest misfortunes can extinguish. Let the same men, equally remarkable as warriors and hospitallers, once more dedicate themselves to the service of the poor and sick, and, following the example of Gerard their original founder, erect new hospitals in the Christian world. And, oh! may the zeal with which they serve those who need relief touch the heart of the most obstinate unbeliever, and the fame of their charity inspire those of another creed with sentiments of esteem and admiration! Be persuaded, my brethren, that it is to the memory of your hospitable virtues, still more than to that of your military exploits, that you owe the distinguished protection of one of the most powerful sovereigns in Europe.

Why, then, let me ask, in a country where we have reaped the fruits of an enlightened toleration, and where the most philanthropical insitutions abound—why may we not unite

ourselves in a body, and at least have the sweet consolation in our misfortunes of offering, as in the original houses of the order, an asylum to the poor and sick of all countries and religions? Thus would the benefactions we have received from a magnanimous prince and a generous nation be employed in a manner worthy of ourselves, and of the motives which procured them for us.

In those happy times when the hospitals of Malta were thrown open for the relief of suffering humanity, did it ever occur to a member of the order, to question those who presented themselves at the gates with respect to the country they inhabited, or the God whom they served? No; they, on the contrary, hastened to assure the unfortunate sufferer that the God of mercy and charity was the Deity they adored;—that God who taught his disciples, that the whole universe being the work of his all-powerful hand, its inhabitants were equally his children, and, as such, indiscriminately entitled to every assistance and consolation, during their residence in this transitory world of tears and misery, wherein it was his good pleasure to place them.

To you, seamen of different nations, I may more particularly address myself; since to you the lazzarettoes and infirmaries of Malta have constantly been open. Say then, the treasures you trusted to their care, were they not always faithfully restored? Was any recompence ever demanded for the most unremitting attendance? The knights themselves, whilst presenting you the

bitter draught which was to restore you to health, and which they endeavoured to soften by the tenderest attentions; did they, I say, notwithstanding the difference of your faith, and the ardent desire they must naturally feel to convert you to their own, ever disturb the dying moments of those their pious care could not restore? No; the members of the Greek and Latin church received, on their death-bed, all those spiritual consolations their consciences required. The mussulman himself, in the last moments of his existence, was equally permitted to consult the book of his prophet; and those of that sect were allowed the free use of an enclosure, which was as much respected as if it were situated in the mosques at Mecca and Medina.

If, then, there exists no country wherein the knights of Malta may not reclaim some unhappy being restored to life and liberty by their charitable care, may they equally, in whatsoever nation they fix their residence, still continue to practise that distinguished benevolence, for which they have ever been so justly renowned! and may these same nations have no other cause of regret than that Malta had so long deprived them of such valuable members of society!

Quocirca vivite fortes,
Fortiaque adversis opponite pectora rebus.

HOR.



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