

CHAPTER III.

WHAT had been a fine town, and strong, in Saladin's day, had now, in a century, become finer and stronger; far stronger than when it had resisted all the forces of Europe for three years. Its villas and gardens already had been somewhat wasted, but not completely. Its fortifications added to by nearly all the Franks of eminence who visited it; amongst whom, St. Louis. The commerce of the East and Europe, during a hundred years, gradually increasing its riches, the treasures of Asia and Europe for or from the shipping that thronged its harbour, everywhere life and industry, buyers and sellers, shops, artizans, warehouses; if seaward, its walls were so thick that two chariots could go abreast, its walls and ditches were all double or treble towards the land, and every one of its gates

was flanked with towers; the towers along the ramparts being never at above a stone's throw distance from each other. Within it, its squares were all spacious and airy; coloured glass in nearly all its houses was what most distinguished it from the whole globe.¹ If no people in all Syria were so effeminate as of Acre, luxurious habits and laxity of morals are they not the almost inevitable evil consequences of great wealth? Streets and houses almost all rebuilt, with a wideness and magnificence till then unrivalled in other countries—otherwise its original features kept to in this, that all the buildings were of white marble or cut stone, all equal in height, with flat roofs and terraces, by which you could walk, or even ride, from one end of the city to the other, without descending, but bridging the streets; the principal of which had silk awnings, transparent enough for light, but of soft tints, and keeping off the sun. If glass was no longer singular in Europe,² yet here it was in far greater abundance, and in almost every window, great or small, poor or rich. Even the ancients had glass, says a very respectable authority; for though it be true that they kept the doors open much more than we do, yet in Pompeia and Hercu-

¹ Corneri Chron.—Bib. Crois., iii. 135.

² Michaud: Hist., v. 120.

laneum, we find that patricians had as fine panes in their windows as the best Bohemian crystal. What M. Taylor affirms in his letter to Chateaubriand, this latter doubles its weight by making it his own. To prevent surprise at Acre's having glass windows fully equal to our own, we must only be contented to consider that city as the great mart for all the commerce of the world in the thirteenth century, and the aggregation of everything that was then splendid in existence, and not as the miserable Arab village before us. It is on the same fifty times sacked and devastated spot, that is all. But the grand commercial Acre in question was razed (and the very ground scraped clean, for having been profaned by the feet of Giaours) six centuries and a half ago; and if Venice became remarkable for large plate-glass, it is likely enough she learned the art from Acre.¹ But stained, or painted glass, with us still somewhat of a singularity and reserved once to a few European cathedrals, was then much used in Acre, and also *pointed* arches, to credit antiquarian tradition, and some recent artists. Not only merchants, and habitual residents of high, or royal rank, there was a continual influx of strangers of all classes, but chiefly the most elevated, from every

¹ Chateaubriand : Itin. de Paris à Jerusalem, ii. 418.

country under heaven, and shows of some sort or other every day in the twelvemonth.—Not to speak of processions more or less religious, there were jousts, tourneys, tournaments, balls, masquerades, assemblies, concerts, parades, and other military displays, horse and foot, from all the services in Christendom, and several of the Pagan or Mahometan too—a perpetual fair and merry-making. Crowds of municipalities; if disorder, they also indicated liberty, independence, patriotism; and that with laudable pride, those of Acre never forgot their distant homes; nor be the same not said, as to the rivalry between Genoese and Venetians, and what was general to all Italians, the separation into Guelphs and Ghibellines; and it was the period of the Republics of the middle ages in Italy.¹ Resort of diplomatists from every nation in the world—if some of these soon disappeared on the darkening of events, as the Papal Legate, yet the greater part of them remained at their post to the last; and amongst these are especially noted the ambassadors of France and England, one of whom certainly, and probably both, were afterwards killed on the ramparts, gallantly heading their compatriots at the bloodiest moment of the siege. And each one had his own law and tribunal, and national flags were

¹ Michaud : Hist., v. 122.

always hoisted, which must have made a very gay sight—commensurate with the variety of splendid dresses and uniforms, and modest, or even wanton females (many of them, no doubt, very beautiful), adorned in the pink of innumerable fashions, mutable or immutable.—Acre was assuredly during no short period the most agreeable hubbub in the whole world.¹ Must all that vanish, and be as if it never had been? Worse! Woe! woe! woe!

Villiers' first act is said to have been a circular to all the knights of the order in Europe, to hurry to join him at Acre, of which this given in the Appendix may have been a kind of specimen, though of the circular itself no copy remains; this we have only presupposing it, and being rather a particular letter to some confidential lieutenant or other high dignitary.² It is to be supposed the delivering him from any contention about dues to the Church, would have given a sort of satisfaction to the grand master at any other time; but he was too occupied then; particularly that bull of Nicholas IV., given in the Appendix, chiefly for
1290 the date: but also because the *quiet* and
prosperous state spoken of in it was in
curious contradiction to the sad fact.³ A few

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 121.

² Appendix, lxxvi.

³ Cod. Dipl. Geros., i., Bolla xvi., 280.—Appendix, lxxvii.

weeks after the breach of truce, and the murder of some Mahometans, as has been related, a meeting of citizens was held at Acre, where, after some fierce and vain debates, the majority resolved to send an embassy to Egypt with presents to excuse the city, and impute the blame to the real criminals, the strange recruits.¹ And on the deputation's design being known, yet previous to regular audience, a privy counsel at Cairo took lamentable cognisance of the business; "it having been decided already that we should take advantage of the least pretext to arm, and finish the ruin of the Christian colonies, (though our emirs began to desire repose, and to wish enjoying the riches acquired in their numerous victories), the treaty was extended on a table before us, to look out for anything to authorize what we desired;² and, after ripe reflection, Fakr-eddin divided with those who found no just reason for recommencing hostilities. "As for me," said Moha-eddin, "I had not spoken one word up to that moment, when turning round towards me, he asked my opinion. I replied, 'Mine? I am always of the sultan's. If he wish to annul the treaty, I declare it null; if to maintain it, valid!'—'It is not of that I speak,' retorted Fakr-eddin; 'we know the sultan is for war.' I

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 125.

² Arab. Chron., 568.

repeated, 'I am of the sultan's opinion,' and I cited an article of the treaty, which said, 'If Christians from the West come with evil designs against the Mahometans, the magistrates of Acre are to repress them.' I added that 'in the present case the magistrates ought to have prevented the murder, or at least have punished it; which, if they were without the power of doing, they ought to have denounced it themselves to us, that we might try to remedy it.' At these words the sultan rubbed his hands, unable to contain his joy, and forthwith he began his preparations."¹

Yet it was no fault of the government of Acre; but most of the scum sent by his Holiness as soldiers, were adventurers, ready for every crime, as our own chroniclers avow; yet if the Saracen had the appearance, he had not the substance of right, and the city was an innocent victim. The ruffianly injurers took to their galleys and absconded, and left the injured inhabitants to be cut to pieces. So it was then; and so shall often be.

Nor had Kelaoun's spies not informed him of the great war breaking out between France and our King Edward, nor of the Pontiff's pusillanimity; and that, though it was reported the French mo-

¹ Makrisi: Vie de Kelaoun.

narch was sending a hundred and fifty thousand crusaders under his son, it had no foundation, and was but a bomb—open the casement, and let it fly out. At all events, they would arrive a great deal too late to save Acre; so that the security, as to any intervention from Christendom, combined with the resolution of his privy council to harden his severity, when summoning the Christian deputies, though his paleness indicated a dying man (and he was indeed to die of that decay within a few weeks), yet those exhilarating news, and the heat of the recent debate in council, gave a feverish colour to his cheeks, and more force to his voice than could be expected from so emaciated a frame. Nevertheless, he heard the deputation out, and their protestations, excuses, and desire of a renewal of truce. “No such thing,” replied he, “most treacherous Christians. Your words are as oily sweet as your alliance with us is false. What poisonous bitterness you hide under such honey! You mean venom, and not having the courage to say it, disguise it beneath a coat of the varnish of whining adulation. Your wicked humours begin to inflame, and you require a copious bleeding, and by the blessing of Allah, you shall have it; our good swords shall be your leeches. There are poisons that taste delicious; but he who allows himself to be deceived into drink-

ing of them, his heart is infected, and he is killed. Alas! your fawning caresses, like those of a wheedling courtesan, have too often taken us unawares, and seduced us into letting our vigilance wax drowsy, and neglect the care of our own security; but, invoking our holy law, our conduct shall be otherwise for the future! What a rage of lying has come upon you, O Giaours! What canine madness deprives you of reason, that you shamefully renounce the good faith of your ancestors? When, with an outside of simplicity, and in the gentlest terms, you gave us your solemn promise, by your trust in that Christ who you say is omnipotent, we believed you; and to the same constant peace which you swore, we also engaged ourselves by the trust we have in our invincible Mahomet; but when we see our people cheated by your falsity, and that, abandoning the truth which you affirm is in Christ, and is the foundation of your religion, you endanger our own dignity and the safety of our empire, what is to be done except not dispense ourselves from duties assumed of our own accord, but promptly take vengeance, and punish your enormous crime? Fully are we persuaded, that if Christ has the power of aiding you, through the faith you have in him, you have not any longer to count on his assistance when you refuse him your

faith, and prove that you have none; but profound is our conviction that by a just judgment of God we shall be permitted to overthrow you. Stand then must our determination, that while you retain and protect traitors who compromise your safety and ours, we must not endure your seductions and lies; so at the appointed hour we shall visit your perverse city, take it by storm, and with the strong hand crumble every resistance, and you shall all perish by the edge of the scimitar. Farewell; only in regard of your ambassadorial functions, we permit and command your being allowed to return safe and sound to those who sent you.”¹

Full of sorrow, the deputies re-entered Acre, and the dolorous recital of their mission took place before a meeting, which included the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the French ambassador, Count de Gresli, and the English Sir Otho de Grandison, and the principal citizens. Nor can it be seen why Michaud adds the grand masters (the Teutonic was in Germany), whereas his authority mentions none of them;² and it is not discordant with sovereign right to give audience in their own house alone; as we shall see the Hospitallers do the very last day of their reign in Acre. Wherefore it is pro-

¹ Arab. Chron., 569.—Michaud. Hist., v. 125.

² Michaud: Hist., v. 424.

bable the city had authority from the grand master, and sent its deputation without referring to any military orders, and received the answer and reported it to their common sovereign; for, however loose the reins of government, he had them from Cœur de Lion.

On hearing the sultan's reply (though astonished at the novelty, and possibly terrified at his late cruelties at Tripoli) they all agreed it was their express duty as Christians and men to stand by each other, and not easily yield this city to the infidel, this only remaining road from Europe to dear revered Jerusalem; but that besides love of the Christian faith, they, who had been always accustomed to fight for their liberty, ought never, never submit to even the least idea of perpetual slavery; that so it was necessary to prepare for an honourable defence, even should they have to die by the barbarian sword; that any other conduct would be an eternal blot on their name; still that they ought to inform the princes of Christendom, and most of all the chief of it—the Pope; and no doubt valid succours would be sent them. And that they should exhort their immediate leaders to solicit universal piety and pity by an instant embassy to the West, since there was full time of which they had only wisely to profit; it being more than six months from this to

next spring; and certainly the Mahometans would, in *this*, keep strictly to their word.

The excellent old Patriarch, at passing the resolution, rose, and casting his eyes towards heaven, his long gray hair flowed back, and crossing his hands on his breast, he rendered thanks to God with sighs: "Blessed be the Holy Trinity that the inhabitants of Acre are of one mind, and on a subject of such importance, have had their spirit enlightened, and their heart. Persevere in this noble determination, O men of Acre! Faith and liberty! This be your banner; and with them you will obtain the Lord's aid!"¹

Villiers let not the opportunity slip of testifying his alacrity by sailing that day itself on the desired embassy. Why must I say all his efforts were ineffectual? Though he may have set out on his mission in August, he could scarcely have reached Rome until the middle of October, so, after Nicholas had written.² But even Rome, like the rest of Europe, was too much taken up with its own intestine squabbles, to have men or money for Palestine. And when he re-entered Acre on the first days of January 1291 he knew full well, (and, though he did not reveal it to every one, lest it might have dispirited them, yet several of the leaders knew) that theirs

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 126.

² Appendix, lxxvii.

must be the very nearly hopeless struggle of a small minority against illimitable numbers. No! The moon is not entirely made of green cheese! Nor lay stress on idle will-o-the-wisps, that cannot but mislead. Hopes in Europe are no better. Calculate but on your own resources. And what are they? Alas!

There were the Templars, but of them little remaineth but glory, though their grand master and his twelve score of knights are worthy of their splendid name. The Teutonics, if you go look for them in the fine German battles; but here are only fifteen under a lieutenant. Other orders, too, there were, but altogether of slender amount. The Hospitallers—and every one of them is to be counted on—all heroes; each may be considered fifty according to the Mahometan superstition, that some Christians have many souls in them; and certainly the vulgar Saracens believed to have seen the same Christian killed several times, and beheld many living men proceed from within one Christian corpse.¹ If authority would do, there are a cloud of authorities, Christian too, to verify a fact that none can credit;² but even so, what of success can

¹ Frustra contra Christianos pugnamus, quia uno mortuo alius statim ex ore ejus nascitur, et ab hoc numerus nullatenus minuitur. Leoben Chron.—Bib. Crois., iii. 197.

² Appendix, ci.

be based on the Hospitallers? We have seen forty of them slain at Tripoli, and that it was held by the Grand Master to have almost extinguished his order in Asia. We do not know of any coming from Europe. But, supposing that some did come, with that self-devotion for which they are celebrated. Let them equal those they were to replace; and Acre, itself, gives sixty; yet, in all, we have only one hundred and forty, and that is the very most. Vertot tells us in one line,¹ that between Hospitallers and Templars, there were killed, at Acre, four hundred of them; and, in the next,² that the Templars lost three hundred there, and only ten of them escaped alive, which leaves the Hospitallers less than one hundred to be killed; and killed they were, almost all. But Vertot was not, perhaps, scrupulously exact, and did not mean to include their leaders, neither Villiers, who survived, nor Clermont or Beaujeu, who were slain. They had hired troops, but with little money they could have few, and their feudal, which used to be their chief forces, lay wholly extinguished. Knights may serve as officers, leaders, examples. But, after all, the main defence of Acre depends on its inhabitants, to whom are to be added five hundred Cypriots, brought by the king of that island, some few

¹ Vertot: iv. 72.

² Id.: iv. 72.

French under Count Gresli, and individuals from Picardy, with one hundred and fifty English under Grandison, as well as a sprinkling of warriors from various places, but not exceeding two score; in fine, the entire came to nine hundred horse, and eleven thousand foot,¹ or, in all, twelve thousand.² If a population, which, after the going away of many, amounted still to one hundred thousand, produced only twelve thousand soldiers, that was noted at the time, and shows Acre was far more mercantile than military.

Time advances rapidly.³ Hard to reconcile divers accounts; one says the assault lasted forty days and forty nights, without a moment's intermission.⁴ In this they agree, that it was one of the most fearful which history records.

Exact in his dealings, Kelaoun, at the beginning of March, finding his feebleness would not permit him to proceed, returned to Cairo himself, but sent on his seven or twelve emirs, with each of them four thousand horse and twenty thousand foot. So even now there were twenty-nine to one, in cavalry, against the Christians, and eight to one in infantry, or more.⁵ Yet these were only an

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 126. ² Bosio.—Vertot: iii. 546.

³ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. i., pag. 1.

⁴ Ebendorfer: Col. Pez.—Bib. Crois., iii. 201.

⁵ Milan Chron.—Bib. Crois., ii. 638.

earnest of what was coming, and to make due preparations, in a vast horse-shoe line, from the sea, at the foot of Mount Carmel, to that on the shore, towards where Tyre lately stood, curving east along the crests of Thabor and Lebanon; that from one extremity to the other, round by the curve line, was a day's journey.¹

The real siege was to be on the arrival of the sultan in person.² Sappers and miners might have begun their burrowing, but little more, and engineers and hatchets begun to hew down the cedars of Lebanon, or in the mountains about Galilee, and the oaks of Naplouse,³ and erect their battering machines; while men and horses refreshed after their march from the Nile, and their cuirasses got burnished, and their arms, that they should glitter well when his Highness arrived, and their chargers be fat and sleek, and restored to all their fierceness and mettle by proper repose and good grooming, food and exercise. So that the multitude of noises and human cries, and the neighing of horses, resounded the whole day through that vast enclosure; and by night the tents in the moonlight, and the challenges of sentinels, inspired a beholder or

¹ Ebendorfer.—Bib. Crois., iii: 200.

² Michaud: Hist., v. 127.

³ Michaud: Hist., v. 128.

hearer, with, it is difficult to say, what deep melancholy.

In the interim, Kelaoun was expiring; yet before it, had an interview with his son Chalil, and in presence of many of his emirs, charged him to promise he would not celebrate his father's funeral rites until after he had taken Acre, and put its inhabitants to the sword; and Chalil swore solemnly to execute the paternal commands. He thereupon urged his emirs to serve his son as faithfully as they had him, and then breathed his last, with devout peace of mind, as they said.¹

As soon as he was a corpse, the ulemas and imams placed him in the middle of a lighted chapel, and kept reciting prayers over his remains, reading verses from the Koran the whole night, to invoke their Prophet against the Giaours; and it may be understood that the same mode was to continue until when the regular funeral should ensue after Chalil's return from Acre, for the which he instantly set out with his entire army according to his oath.² Tremendous were the battering engines now ready, the several pieces of one of which were hardly contained in a hundred waggons. And, had cannons been among them, it would not have astonished

¹ Bosio.—Vertot: iii. 545.—Arab. Chron., 569.

² Michaud: Hist., v. 127.

me; but I am a little so, that there were not, or at least they are not mentioned, for the Mahometans had them before that time—not indeed muskets or light artillery, but heavy guns for sieges—and used them at Algesiras and other places in Spain.¹ However, these exterior batteries, though so huge, and three hundred in number, were only secondary, and rather to cover the attacks of the soldiery than to breach the defences; for which they relied on what was more deadly sure, though somewhat slower and far less noisy. And by degrees their sappers and miners had driven the Christian from all his outworks and fairly demolished them. And now, murderous moles, they had passed under the ditch and undermined a great portion of the main wall itself, and that mine had only to be sprung by firing the wood that sustained it; operation awaiting the moment the sultan should arrive to order it.

It was on the 4th of April,² that the new sultan arrived at Acre, and that the siege really began; though several divisions had been already there above a month; so that those who during it had been accustomed to see masses of soldiery, when they looked

¹ In 1249, and even earlier. Hallam: Middle Ages, i. 254. —The Arabs had gunpowder, and fired it from cannons first of wood, next of metal, in 1230, Mines de l'Orient, Num. i. 248,

² Arab. Chron., 570.

from its ramparts a little after sunrise, saw no one; and, at the sudden disappearance, flattered themselves the Saracens had retreated. But not so, they had only gone to meet their sovereign, and returned with him in most magnificent triumph that same afternoon.¹

At a really fine sight even the humblest-minded becomes poetical, and the chronicler tells us: "Now it was, that splendour was to be seen, and the earth trembled to its centre at the aspect (*rewart*, old Fr.) of such mighty forces moving as far as the eye could reach in every direction. From Arabia had come, and the Nile, Euphrates, Tigris, the different divisions composing that brilliant army and that strange variety of music. And as they passed, the sun was reflected by their golden targets, and the hills glittered to within their cores. The polished steel of their lance-points resembled the shining of heaven's stars on a serene night. And on the host's advancing, it was like a forest for the multitude of lances all held upwards; and well might it be, for they were four hundred thousand fighting men that covered the entire plain and mountains."²

Why talk of the coursers of Khorassan or Tur-

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 128.

² MS. apud Michaud, Hist., v. 425.—It is said to be by a French knight there present.

comania? If surefooted and hardy, slippery is the flagging and intricate the stone work they'll have to scramble up, or down; and on broken walls and the smoking fragments of fallen towers, is where they must charge. Ah, little the Frank battalions, gazing from the ramparts, are aware that sudden death is beneath their feet, where all seems sleeping in its strength! Though discordant and sufficiently rude, yet the music when softened, as now by some distance, was martial; and the sultan riding surrounded by so splendid a staff, and the sacred banner on his right, showed extremely grand.

And when two hours before sunset, he looked upon the innumerable force occupying nearly thirty miles, from the sea on one wing to the sea on the other, and then on the small town facing him, he almost regretted so much pains as superfluous. "A pity we have not our Alma girls here," said the sultan. "For our mercenary hussies to storm it would be laughable, I protest, and more applicable to the case than breaches and Mamelukes! But some one of our black-eyed wenches might perhaps be killed, and inasmuch, as they are Mahometans, it would be a shame to risk the ugliest of them. Still, since the worthless Giaours refused their weasands to my father, I owe his shade satisfaction; so let us stun them to death!"

Whereupon out came four hundred camels with two drummers upon each, and being led down into the plain, raised a monstrous peal. "I would order them to continue all night," cried the sultan, "but that it might prevent our sleeping, and dare say the uncircumcised have already enough; and, on reflection, will surrender at discretion, to sue for which we shall find a deputation of their curs waiting at our tent door by daybreak! Depend upon it!"¹

Yet not thus; but dawn beheld the Christian files as before. So to the miners: "By the sultan's orders, fire the mine!" And towards sunrise there was a hideous crash, and behold a large breach, practicable, if not for others, for Delhis. But when these rushed forward, they were suddenly stopped by a wide deep ditch, till then invisible for a curve in the ground. And they had to be recalled from its edge, where they left a ridge of about five thousand corpses, and many others scattered all over the plain. Then in anger the sultan ordered a general charge of the cavalry, and truly it was a gallant sight. But the same ditch arresting them at every point, they had to retire, after suffering severely from the shots of numerous zemboureks,

¹ Michaud says three hundred camels; but what difference? Hist., v. 130.

and other missiles, from behind the parapet, while they could not themselves return a single blow. And so it was during five successive days of a vast number of charges; the two first days of cavalry, and the three last of cavalry and infantry by turns, or united;¹ till the sultan lashed himself into a rage, and the whole plain a Golgotha. At last the senior emirs convinced him he must give up his idea of taking it by a *coup de main*, and have the ditch filled; for which it was necessary to drain it first, and collect the stones from the neighbouring acclivities. So the sappers and excellent engineers soon succeeded in discharging the water. It was now May.² And the stones had been brought in heaps near the ditch, and fascines, and carrions, and other materials, enormous quantity to the eye, yet not enough, according to the measurement of the engineers, who intended two days longer of such labour; but the impatient sultan forbade all further waiting, and the heaps were flung into the ditch, not without considerable loss from the zemboureks anew; yet, as foreseen, the ditch wanted a full yard of being full; at which the sultan, quite out of his senses, called—and here what is related so surpasses credibility, pure truth as it is, and

¹ MS.—Michaud: Hist., v. 131.

² Arab. Chron., 570.

must be, since from both Christians and Mahometans, that I should abstain from noticing it, were it not that it would be too dastardly in a writer to conceal what such authorities recount—Chalil, in the midst of his Mamelukes and Delhis, called upon the Chages (new sect of Moslem fanatics), and with most impetuous gesticulations thus: “You who entitle yourselves the devoted of Islam, I call upon you to testify it by at once flinging yourselves into the ditch, that my Mamelukes may ride over you!” Nor did the Chages hesitate, but instantly ran and flung themselves into the ditch, and the whole body of cavalry charged over that pontoon of living human flesh.¹ Furiously mad as the fanatics must have been, some similar madness seems to have been infused by them into the Mamelukes and their horses, since they rushed up the breach, though in doing so most of them were necessarily killed. But their riders were incited by the hope of sabring or lancing the Christians; and some few of them they may have butchered; yet it could be but a few, for they soon met again an insurmountable obstacle, even thicker

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 132.—Ebendorfer 3. De Perditione Accharon Civitatis.—Muratori.—Arsenius, who declared he was an eye-witness of what he relates.—Bib. Crois., iii. 201.—Hist., Gen. Concilii Lyons.

than the old wall, a new one built during those short days, with admirable dexterity and steadiness, faced with oak beams, all hung with bales of woollen or cotton, as continued to be much used by those of Acre during the whole siege at the several breaches;¹ when out burst—but an actor in the scene shall speak for himself, who survived his wounds to write, long years after, what he then saw and participated:² “I had been allowed to join the Hospitallers; and, all horse, we had their Marshal Claremont, at our head. At the onset, in such a desperate precipitous spot, and against most able swordsmen, many of us were slain; but that was over in a twinkling, and what I can scarce myself believe, now that I am an old monk writing alone by this feeble lamp, is, that headlong down that breach, and over the bodies in the ditch at full gallop, I followed Claremont, who, like a wolf after a flock of sheep, flew, pursuing what remained of the Mamelukes across the entire plain, and to the very foot of the hills, cutting to shivers every creature on his way.³ My hand trembles, and my heart bounds, and my pale, withered cheeks glow at thinking of the exaltation of that moment. But

¹ Villani.—Bib. Crois., ii. 621.

² Michaud: Hist., v. 133.—Relation MS.—MS. Accon.

³ Michaud: Hist. v. 134.

we had to return; and return we did and slowly, in by that same glorious aperture.

“ From that day out, though I had not the honour to be of the Hospitallers, or even knight, I continued in their corps till I was utterly disabled.¹

“ But the losses of the Saracens were quickly remedied; those of the Christians were irreparable. After a short respite, also that second wall (according to one authority there were double walls and profound ditches, and to another, three walls and ditches, and the walls so thick that two chariots could pass each other²) was undermined, and then we had to maintain our post by dint of hard fighting. We always killed many more of our foe than we lost of ours. Still we were at last reduced to a few. What was worse, King Hugh and his Cypriots abandoned us; it was nightfall, and he said some repose was requisite for his men, who had neither slept nor eaten for three days. I thought I might say more; and my companions, and the marshal, for I do not know how many, but a great many; but his majesty never came back, which did not surprise me, for my right-hand man in the file (a Frank like myself) and my mother were of the same vil-

¹ MS. Accon.

² Eccard: 2, Hermann.—Bib. Crois., iii. 135.—Ebendorfer, 3, Pez.—Bib. Crois., iii. 200.

lage in Normandy, he and I had become great, and I held his horse while he retired during some minutes, and on his return, pointing to a corpse that I had just seen fall, 'overheard (he said) his discourse with King Hugh, who bade him not go on, but join him, for that the Saracens were hastening in at the breach, irresistibly.' To which that black cassock replied, 'If you were going east, I'd accompany you to death; but since your face is turned west, I'll not,¹ but hasten to die with the defenders of our religion and liberties, and leave you the anathema of a martyred priest.' Nevertheless in our cruelly abandoned situation, by the exertion of the Teutonics, who came to our assistance, and Templars, we contrived to keep the post the whole night, and great part of the next day, under reiterated, or rather, never-ceasing charges, and after losing half of our small body, it was only in the afternoon that we were driven from it, but rallied in a street that began with two strong towers, and a massive chain from one to the other,² which we drew, and manning the towers, there was a most desperate struggle which,

¹ Which resembles what the French relate more diffusely of another, Mathew Villani.—Bib. Crois., ii. 625.

² Corneri Chron. Eccard.—Bib. Crois., iii. 135. The main thoroughfare in Acre, leading to St. Anthony's Gate.

with the aid of a parcel of stout citizens, was upheld for two entire days, until at length Heaven sent us victory, and we drove the infidels back through the breach; and on the right of it, lo! my poor friend, who was mighty vigorous sprang from his horse, and seizing three of the enemy, one by one in his arms, threw them clear over the rampart down into the ditch; but the third struggled so, that just as his heels disappeared in the fall, he undid Tom's helmet, whose throat was instantly pierced through and through by the shot from a zembourek; whereupon I also dismounted, but in vain, for the faithful Christian was quite dead. And I too had my share, for while in the act of rising from my knees over his corpse, I was struck on the breast-bone by something very small, so suppose it a zembourek's bullet, which must have killed me but for my cuirass, which however it broke to pieces, and glanced off. As it was, I was dreadfully wounded, nor to this day can I make the least exertion without a spitting of blood, not even ascend a horse; and Marshal Claremont, seeing me drop, got down, and with his own hands examined my wound, and pronounced it severe and dangerous, but not mortal, and added, "Were you not thus, I should tell you to become an Hospitaller, but never attempt it; for you are an invalid

for life, and will require to be always very careful. I am at present your superior, and command you, by holy obedience, to swear to use every precaution not to be killed in Acre; but (as I know you use the pen) to write the truth of what you have seen; and is not this defence for faith and liberty? Both as Norman and as Christian, I wish to be useful, not only during this brief interval, but hereafter by example. So believe it no blameable vanity to tell you to transmit to distant ages how Claremont fought and died, and likewise assure our grand master that we have all done our duty. I think I shall never see you again. That way no more. I have too much to do. You, remember your oath.' "

But he said all that far more succinctly. At such moments mind and lips are quicker, both of who hears, and who speaks. Their words are winged, and their full meaning absorbed with rapidity, and deeply graven. But such was the substance of our irrevocable contract; nor I intend, but to be able to say I kept it, meeting in futurity. That success changed affairs,¹ and something similar a few hours later at St. Anthony's Gate, where the Grand Master of the Templars (who truly had been elected commander-in-

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 134.

chief, for his celebrity as a warrior¹) spoke thus to the Grand Master of the Hospitallers, "Unless we make a diversion, the town is lost. Let us hazard a *sortie*." And as large a body as could be gathered was formed that evening, but not above five hundred, and bravely they attacked the infidel's flank, and would have taken his camp by surprise, had his sentinels been less alert;² but in spite of the discomfiture, the immense disproportion of numbers told, and many of the Hospitallers and most of the Templars were slain, and though re-entering Acre as victors, those were carrying their grand master, badly wounded, and these had too much reason to fear that theirs had been struck by a poisoned arrow;³ which somewhat uncertain as yet, he rode, but very pale. This was on a moonlight night, and the bravest began to be oppressed with a presentiment of destruction, quite imminent, yet not less determined to sell their lives dearly. And, before dawn,⁴ the Grand Master of the Hospitallers convoked not only his order, but a meeting of Templars and Teutonics, as well, and of the surviving leaders of the city, including the sick commander-in-chief himself, and the magnanimous

¹ Bosio.—Vertot: iii. 547. ² Bosio.—Vertot: iii. 550.

³ Michaud: Hist., v. 140.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, i. 536.

⁴ Michaud: Hist., v. 135.

Patriarch, as also the two ambassadors Gresli and Grandison. Nor is it wondrous that every one of them was pale in the first light of morning, since most were wounded, and all of them felt doomed; and that not only themselves, but every human creature in that city had but a few hours to live. Nor was there much to say; nor time for it. But the short debate was wound up worthily by the chief of their common creed, him of the long milky locks, and sweet, wan, unrugged face, their own dear, calm Patriarch: nor spoke of love of country, for he knew they were of all countries; nor reproofed any creature, for all reproof should be extinct; nor praised, for fear of jealousies; nor flattered them with earthly hope, for he knew no one could reasonably have any; and this very moment a paper had been laid before them that their eighteen thousand, soon twelve thousand, dwindled into nine thousand two days ago, had now been reduced to seven thousand—too small a number even to man the ramparts, although none of those heroic bands could be accused of want of exertion certainly; since but yesterday they had left several thousands of Saracen corpses, and two thousand of their own between towers and breach, as counted by those who were charged with putting them into graves, lest a plague should ensue. And in the dead body of

one single Christian knight, the iron heads of forty lances were found. Nor is this strange fact to be doubted, since it is an Arabian, not merely impartial, but unwilling witness, that writes it.¹ "Those twenty thousand are as nothing to the Saracens. But your two thousand, who replaces them? Then what remains, O my dear children, but to die valiantly, and confiding in the Creator, with arms in your hand. Calculate that one Christian is equal to five or six infidels; which will not give you victory indeed, but engage you to put your lives at their just value. Not a single one of you, but would a thousand times rather die by the sword, than be deficient in honourable fidelity to his legitimate prince, and stain his own name for ever. Why not as well in the cause of Christ? Are we not His lieges? Do we not owe salvation to Him? Let each of you think then that he has the cause of Christ to defend by the right of feudal servitude, which is merit and honour; the only difference being, that our earthly lord gives a temporal reward, and He an eternal. Nor fear that for your sins, or some other unknown motive, He will deprive you of His inheritance; and that therefore you may yield to those accursed miscreants, who have no just pretension, since not

¹ Arab. Chron., 40.

a shadow of trust can be reposed in them; but that whatever they pretend, they will infallibly massacre you, either in open war or by treachery, or some horrid torture—they, who always accomplish their threats, never their promises. Since no possible escape from them is left, why then let despair (as to earth) be your weapons, as long as you have the power to make a single struggle; and then recommend your soul to God, in the firm conviction that His tender charity can never be extinguished. His immense love will make up for our defects; and do not doubt but that without further penitence, or suffering after death, your spirit will ascend at once to a blessed eternity. So now confess your sins each to each other; be your death glorious to yourself and useful to Christianity, and be sure of pardon.”¹

Then did every man kiss his neighbour; and many who had been long enemies, died warm friends. Mass was said, and they took the sacrament. Now to your posts!—The Grand Master of the Templars had determined upon his,² and with heavenly resignation and self-devotedness, went straight to the sultan's tent, and had less difficulty than he expected in persuading him of the peril of reducing the Christians to despair; so the Saracen was

¹ Michaud : Hist., v. 427.

² Id. : Id., 129.

willing to take a not intolerable ransom and depart. But when the generous veteran perceived a repugnance in those of Acre, he perhaps was not displeased, lest the sultan should not abide by his promises—the more that renegades were busy¹ blowing and blowing like a fierce desolating wind to heat their hatred to redness against those who were their own former co-religionists; which reminds us of his predecessor's prediction at St. Alban's sentence. Still, though the poison circulating through his veins must have killed him shortly, it is said the illustrious Beaujeu was slain in the ultimate battles; an end as becoming him as the Temple. By a stratagem of one of those renegades, the unhappy breach was left, and by that very gate of St. Anthony's the Mahometans broke into the city; and the rest is one scene of confusion. "I know versions are different, but prefer trusting my eyes corroborated by all I have heard from people likely to be well informed; nor may I shuffle from it. But the last I saw of them was on the rampart by St. Anthony's Gate, where remained at most a thousand men against the whole Mussulman army.² It was dark; but a gleam of Greek fire showed me them all on foot, with couched lances, and Grandison with his

¹ Chron. Estense.—Bib. Crois., ii. 638.

² Michaud: Hist., v. 142.—MS. Accon.

drawn sword; and Gresli stood a little further off, with his behind him in precisely the same way; and within two or three yards of them, was the head of the Moslem column, that rushed impetuously through the gate—and by the yellow they were the Mameluke horse. So I have no hesitation whatever to assert that all the English died in a corps as at Mansourah, and the French also, as well fits that valiant nation. The reverse seems to me idle stories, mere ridiculous inventions, as if English and French could have been cowards, where so many other nations were so brave. Not a true, but a pretended revelation; it would appear to me a trick of the devil! What if iron chains and rings had been thrown into the streets for the Moslem cavalry? They were now covered with corpses, a bitter, albeit rather unsteady footing; and after them, the savage infantry inundated the streets. Not a palace, or square, or house, but was a fort, and had to be stormed; not a lane but was the theatre of frightful carnage, battles, single combats. I cannot exactly tell what day, or if it was day or night; for the Greek fire never ceasing its infernal blaze, it made little difference whether the sun was up or not, for that lurid gleam and the noises continued the same.”

But here other authorities enable me to come to

the assistance of my MS. And to say it was the 18th of May,¹ a sable day in the Almanack of Christian Acre, when in burst the Mahometans, and what of soldiery of the cross survived joined the population in a wild and rapid current that ran in the direction of the House of the Templars in the very inmost heart of the town, down towards the sea; while one hideous crape of death seemed drawn over Acre, and all was fury, dismay, and massacre!

“None thought of sleep, nor can I tell how I existed. But kept steadily to my resolve to see and remember all I could, and do my best to survive. It was bitter cold, rain and hail—strange in that climate — and towards the end of May; but nature itself seemed to have changed, and the elements to sympathise, participate, and emulate the fury of men. And wild stories circulated. Every one ready to believe anything, and I think it would have been dark, but for the Greek fire, and my tread told me there had been hard fighting in that street. And then I saw Claremont come riding slowly (not rapidly as he had passed and re-passed often before), and his direction was that of returning from where the battle at that time was, a desperate defence of the Templars’ residence; but the Christians were so completely losers, that

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 140.

they must have been all killed or gone in some other direction; for except him, I did not observe any one else retreating, and I heard the Saracens approach. He seemingly as much done up as his horse, lay resting on its neck; yet holding his sword, and struck his charger with his heavy spurs and repeated hard checks of the bridle, but in vain, and I had myself known what it was to have a horse so fatigued as not to answer either aids. Claremont's refused, and stood still trembling, and in a moment fell, I thought, dead. But at that, while I was bawling to him now on foot, which either he could not hear from the screeches, or I had not the strength to raise my voice; the Saracens came rushing with a loud howl and charging furiously between him and me; and, not to be ridden over, I stepped under a vault—and they must have cloven him down instantly and galloped on; for when, the next moment, I reached his body, it was all covered with blood and quite dead. And think his spirit must have attended me and kept assiduously protecting me, the rest of that awful period; that ever I got alive out of the wilderness, blackest, direst, most murderous, most atrocious!

“Then I too made for the port, which I knew must be at hand, and walking on corpses and

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 143.

turning from the middle of the street, to where they were in a great number of layers one over another, heaped high at the angles, like bridges, I crossed by them and beheld—would I were rather blinded than ever see the like again—long lines of something of a speckled white, piled up against the wall, and supported by others of the same dirty white, thrown transverse, as if somebody had been opening a passage, but left the sad work not half done; and on approach those spectral white things, lo! they were dead females in their gowns and coifs, dabbled thickly with blood and utterly hideous! ‘O most desolate old woman, whither are you hurrying, and who are these?’ And she hobbling past, ‘Are what you see, but were once a goodly company. I owed them my existence, but their charity ended thus pitifully. So I may now die. What matter where I go? The wildest would scorn to touch me. These were mostly young and beautiful virgins—a whole nunnery, nuns, novices, girls in education, who all following their mother abbess’ example, scarified and furrowed themselves and breasts and faces frightfully with those great scissors, that used to be kept with a long chain and padlock, fixed to the great working table for the whole community. The abbess unlocked it, and, after wounding herself, handed the steel round, and

each of them took it, and inflicted it on herself unsparingly, and being without succour, every one of them bled to death; and better, since they escaped what they most dreaded from some inhuman ugly brute.' Indeed they could not be objects of anything but horror.¹ I now understood what I just had heard, a Saracen cursing most blasphemously at their not having waited to satisfy his lust before they died. And he spoke of the martyrs, as if they had done him an injury, and round from behind the corner of the house came stretched out what seemed a hairy brawny arm, and a large foul hand; and in a twinkling there was no longer that ancient hag, but I heard plunderers in an infidel tongue. And her shrieks were soon drowned by louder shrieks in the quarter towards which I was going.

"But I must get on. I am in too great a hurry to answer many questions. Quickly! What are yours? The way is frightful, but not of length. On! On!

"How describe the harbour whose shipping stood a little out, else the rush of the crowd would have foundered them at once? The boiling oil of the Greek fire, which once it catches hold of the outside of a ship's bottom, all is lost; its stink, and livid

¹ Wadin : *Annales Franciscorum.*, vi. 96.—Michaud: *Hist.*, v. 141. Note.

flames extending to a great distance—stones, iron, brass, every metal devoured and eaten up by it; nor can it ever be extinguished, but by a mixture of sand and vinegar in certain proportions. How horrid its hiss!¹ And though the city was all in a glare from the Greek fire, and that it whizzed terribly, with long traces of greasy blue, along the waves, showing their watery mountains rolling with a terrific violence, yet the sea itself looked dark and gloomy, nor can I be sure whether it was from the tempest, or that it was night; and the ball of Greek fire expanding to the size of a cask, with its several yards of undulatory tail shining and hissing most viciously, died away at last, after piercing more or less into that abyss of obscurity, whose dreadful bellow would have been fearful at any other time. That lasted for I do not know how long; no difference then between day and—it seemed always, night. Days were years, minutes days. Who minded sun or moon? Heaven seemed in a fury, and that it was the end of all things.

“Such a multitude, but chiefly women and children—some of them young ladies of the highest rank, endeavouring to persuade the boatmen to take them—not only offering jewels and money, but even their own persons, and that they would

¹ Vinisauf.—Bib. Crois., ii. 676.—Oliveri.—Bib. Crois., iii. 143.

marry any man that would save them.¹ In the surf thousands and thousands perished.”²

It is said sixty thousand Christians fell then, and may be no exaggeration. Of the rich, who escaped, not at that time, but weeks sooner, it is much to calculate them at twenty-five thousand, mostly women, and children, and invalids. And it can be hardly supposed that the carried into captivity came to another twenty-five thousand. And this leaves one hundred thousand, of whom nearly all must have died either during the siege, or at the final hour, and fifteen thousand, at most, can have fallen in those fair battles; leaving eighty-five thousand for ultimate butchery. All which is on the supposition of the correctness of the usual opinion that Acre contained one hundred and fifty thousand souls when Tripoli fell.

“On! On! You as you like, but I must not stop. But we are close to the shore. Stout to push through such a crowd. Yet even women can do much when desperate, and children themselves, as you now see, for most of these are such. Ah, what their frenzy and wail! And not few of the infants are killed by the press and the carelessness of their own mothers. And now the infuriated Delhis, and the likes, are cutting at them with

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 143.

² MS. Accon.

their scimitars, and pushing their horses after them into the very sea. Driven, pursued, ah, what will become of them? Alas! My God have compassion on them.¹

“Unable in those floods of rain, and pelting hail and roaring wind, to get near the water for perhaps two hours (though no judging of time then, things seemed very long or very short accordingly), so beset was it by that deplorable multitude; not even at the charge of the pitiless Mamelukes, from my fear that my wounded breast would be crushed, did I stir; till there came so tremendous a crash, that one might think it an earthquake dividing the globe, and glancing towards the Templars' Tower, I saw their flag drop, and the tower itself tumble down, at which, believing all Acre was falling to pieces I, almost frantic, flew right through the crowd, and flung myself into the sea, and some paces out, was fished up into a boat. And who fished me was the pious Patriarch; but whose compassion had allowed such numbers to embark, that we shortly went down in the harbour; and better for me, for we certainly should have foundered, and been lost, every soul of us, when out in those boisterous waves; but here, though most of the unfortunates were drowned, and amongst them the

¹ Michaud: Hist., v. 144.

venerable Patriarch himself, yet a few who swam well were saved, and I found myself on board a galley belonging to the Grand Master of the Hospitallers, with a large company of fugitives, and amongst them five of his own knights, all wounded like himself.¹ Fact is, all remaining of Templars had got into that tower, where many of the townsmen's women and children had also taken refuge; and a first capitulation made of what the underground Saracens had already mined, without perhaps the sultan's knowledge; three hundred of his had been admitted, and instantly began to maltreat the females. At which the few Templars, rising like one man, attacked the brutes, and flung them down from the roof dead, and would never hear of capitulating any more. So the sultan was forced to order the tower to be scaled; and when Saracenic multitudes, scimitar in one hand and ladder in the other, were in the very act of scaling, down it toppled, by fortuitous yielding of wooden props in the mine, and Templars, scalers, males, females, it buried them all together."²

How many days or nights after that is not known. Various accounts, each contradictory to the other. Like Saragossa, the streets were fields of battle for

¹ French MS.—Michaud: Hist., v. 421.

² Michaud: Hist., v. 145.

several days, and each house a fortress, and communications cut from one to the other through the walls, and the hole closed up again as soon as the house was taken; and pass on to the next.

“Imprecations were what I could distinguish, as hastily we weighed, and weathering Carmel Cape, the last sounds borne on the storm were hellish laughter, groans of dying men, and the long, long shriek of violated women.”¹

¹ MS. Accon.

ABEYANCE THE SECOND.

WITH grief Europe heard of the fall of Acre, and quickly was it followed by that of Tyre, and all the towns along the Syrian coast, from which the Latin inhabitants who could, fled by sea.

Beyrout was the last Christian town to fall, according to some,¹ but others say Nicopolis lasted two years after.² Glory to the Hospitallers, for of these was the little garrison, whose abandoned valour rendered it inexpugnable so long under reiterated assaults; nor did it ever yield to human arms, but was thrown down by an earthquake,³ which buried the whole—soldiers, citadel, city. Ill-printed, or inexact, Sanuti has Venetians, and truce, and Sycopolis. There were several places

¹ Chron. St. Bertin.—Bib. Crois., i. 423.

² Sanuti.—Bib. Crois., ii. 634.

³ Seb. Paoli: Not. Geo., i. 443.

called Nicopolis, as Prevesa,¹ and in Hungary;² but this Nicopolis was the ancient *Emmaus*.³ The present may be in the immediate vicinity of the same spot; but otherwise no vestige of its predecessor.⁴

Besides the Pilgrim Castle near Tripoli, the Templars built another of nearly that name between Caiphas and Cesarea, of which the ruins still exist. This was a very strong fortress, an outwork of Mount Thabor, and the road to Jerusalem, and was once called Detroit. It fell after Acre.⁵ Its foundations were an old tower that had long belonged to the order of the Temple, and was on the sea-side;⁶ and in the new erection they were assisted by various pilgrims and the German Hospitallers. Many antiquities, and ancient coins, and treasures were found in digging the mountain. The Templars built also a Castle in Acre, the chief⁷ there.

Thus miserable outcasts filled Christendom with their doleful tales, and increased the poverty of

¹ Eusebii Chron.

² Bosio.—Vertot: vi. 322.—Michaud: Hist., v. 210. Bib. Crois., iii. 157.

³ Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 591.

⁴ Appendix, ciii.

⁵ Sanuti.—Bib. Crois., i. 195.

⁶ Pantaleone: Chron.—Bib. Crois., iii. 21, and i. 427

⁷ Vitri: Letters.—Cologne Chron.—Bib. Crois., iii. 136.

every country; and from the fall of Acre, Villani dates the beginning of the decline of the commercial towns in maritime Italy, since from that day out (he says), they lost half of the advantages that Eastern traffic brought. "For Acre was a universal resort, and in the middle of Syria, nay, in the middle of the civilised earth, as at equal distances between Levant and West, and almost on the European frontier, and transit for commerce from all those distant lands, and had interpreters of every language, and people of every class, and inhabitants of every climate; and therefore, in losing Acre, the world lost one of its elements.¹" And the Holy Land, with its thickly populous districts, and its innumerable clusters of villages, quantities of strong castles, and eighty cities inhabited by Franks for the most part, and owing their defence to the Latins,² were all reduced to a devastated wilderness; "state in which it shall remain, please God, until the day of judgment," is the devout aspiration of a Moslem.³

What other circular was necessary than what Villiers had written already? And it had sufficed to

¹ Hist. Fior.—Bib. Crois. ii. 621.—Appendix, cii.—Hallam: Middle Ages, ii. 250.

² Michaud: Hist., v. 147.

³ Arab. Chron., 575.—Michaud: Hist., v. 148.

call the knights of every age and rank, who instantly renouncing everything else, hurried down into the various ports of Christendom with most laudable ardour, young or old, in health or not, no delay, no excuse, but each one striving to be first, and embarking in any ship to be found, and all these put into Cyprus, so that not a day passed but some Hospitallers arrived from Europe. All of them might be bound for Acre, but Cyprus was on their road, and there, alas! learned they had to go no further. The nearly exterminated order reduced to half-a-dozen wounded men, without money, and in proportion, to perfect beggary; this European flow made it revive. The same of the Templars.

Nor in this island, within forty leagues from Palestine, had they not both some property already. Henry II., descended from Guy de Lusignan, was then its king, and so of Norman blood.¹ Nor did he not show it, by the cordiality with which he received the rest of the Templars and Hospitallers after their irreparable loss, and placed them in Limisso, one of his chief towns.² Perhaps it was from pure compassion, or that it was the advice of some evil-wisher, for Pope Nicholas IV. had the repute of loving those peerless knights; but he appears to have taken a most undue advantage of their miser-

¹ Bosio.—Vertot: iv. 4.

² Vertot: iv. 2.—Bosio.

able state, when he proposed uniting the Hospitallers and Templars into one order, whose common grand master, to prevent jealousy, should be elected by neither of them, but by himself, and likewise always for the future by the Holy See.¹ But that project was soon rejected.² The same Pope 1292 showed his liberality by applying to the schismatic Greek Church, to join him in renouncing for a time all religious differences for defence of universal Christianity against the Saracen, and also had recourse to the Pagan Tartars;³ but of the whole powers of Christendom, not one, except the Templars and Hospitallers alone, took any real part in the attempt.⁴ Yet before it there was a general chapter held at Limisso, of who so faithfully responded to the circular, that scarcely ever before, since the foundation of the order, such a number of Hospitallers of all nations as then appeared.⁵ There (it is tradition) the grand master, hardly recovered from his wounds, entered with a sorrowful countenance, yet that magnanimity which usually is seen in virtue, and in a calm and slow tone said, "Of the ancient rule of our order, my

¹ Vertot: iv. 6.—Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. i. and ii.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xv.

³ Michaud: Hist., v. 158. ⁴ Michaud: Hist., v. 159.

⁵ Vertot: iv. 9.—Bosio.

being present may possibly appear an infraction; and therefore, not to scandalise you, cherished brethren, I have some documents to prove I had sworn to the population that, useless as I had become from my wounds, I should endeavour to survive for the purpose of leading away as many as I could from the Acre slaughter, as was likewise my duty, as sovereign of that unfortunate city. And I plead it is an exception no way derogatory to what continues our standing statute, that none shall recede without command, and that a knight of ours made prisoner is a knight dead. With regard to the few of our knights who came with me, they have no excuse to make, since they had my orders, for which the entire responsibility is mine, in consideration of their wounded condition, and that it would be an idle sacrifice of lives. Read these affidavits then; and I am ready either to be deposed, or even suffer death, or obtain your entire approval of my conduct, according to what you may determine, for which I retire."

And after some minutes the whole chapter followed Villiers, and declared him completely vindicated, and humbly besought him not to abandon them.

"Then abandon you I will not, but persevere in being your grand master and loving father; and

allow me to begin by thanking you," as, re-entering the hall, he sat down, "for the promptitude with which you obeyed my orders; and far better than had Divine Providence allowed you to be in time for Acre, since there you could only have increased superfluous deaths, but here you show that Holy Land has not lost all its defenders. But, by the courage that animates you, I see we have still men worthy of the name of Hospitallers, and capable of remedying all our losses; St. John's Acre is indeed ours, as sepulchre of so many of our gallant brethren. It is for you to replace them, and liberate Jerusalem from the barbarian's iron despotism."¹

And observing Limisso to be an open town, with only a well-fortified citadel in the centre, too small for the order's residence, some proposed removing to one of the Italian ports, which was instantly quashed with indignation by the grand master and chief knights, as contrary to the spirit of their institution, which did not permit them to go far from Palestine, but be always at hand, and ready to profit by any opportunity. And this sentiment met universal applause, and was immediately drawn up as a sort of perpetual statute.² And the chapter

¹ Bosio.—Vertot: iv. 10.

² Id.—Id.: 12.

ended by determining to fortify Limisso, and erect it into a regular establishment of Hospitality.

Nor is there any earlier approximation to the naval, than when it was resolved that the ship which had conveyed them from Acre, should be used in learning to clear the coasts from the continual attacks of Saracen pirates. Nor did this prevent cavalry from being the order's principal care still; as we find (even five years later) certain lands set apart for forage for their horses, whereas there is little or nothing about galleys in these documents as yet.¹

Such was the commencement of the navy of the Order of Malta; no auspicious one certainly, to commence in a period of abeyance (which some called decline or extinction), after having lived the trifle of above two hundred years; far from promising future maritime glory.

Fortunately their young efforts were not crushed by the sultan, enraged that the two bodies (Templars and Hospitallers), whom he had thought to have put an end to, were reviving; for the fleet he sent against them was lost, and he himself died shortly after.²

A new Pope, who had been chosen and soon ab-

¹ Appendix, lxxviii.

² Bosio.—Vertot: iv. 14.

dicated, one perhaps too unworldly for this world, even during his short reign found time to praise the Hospitallers.¹ His learned and wily successor, letting himself go to the audacious temptation of what was partly offered to him by the not upright kings of Europe themselves, and the unhappy circumstances of the time, tried to erect a despotism both spiritual and temporal; but whatever he was to others, he imitated his predecessors in being kind to the order—"Claret devotione conspicua Ordo St. Johannis Hierosolimitani"—are the words in his brief to the King of Portugal;² and in another, to our Edward, not dissimilar, as also in Rymer.³ And now Villiers died; yet not in 1296, as Vertot has, for a document shows Sir John Villiers was reigning in September, 1297.⁴

That donations from private persons were still coming to the Hospitallers, and that, though the Teutonics had relinquished their name of German Hospitallers, they bore no ill-will to those they had left, is clear from the Hochsperg in the Appendix; where a father retired from the world, as dead to it from the moment he had joined the Teutonics,

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. iii.—Appendix, lxxix.

² Id. Id. iv.

³ Id. Id. vii.

⁴ Id. Id. x.

witnesses his son's confirmation of his own gift to the Hospital. Later it might be otherwise; but now they had known them too well and recently, not to esteem and love all three of the military orders.¹

Villiers' successor was Sir Otho de Pins in 1298, a Provençal born, but descended from an illustrious Spanish family; and his stem still to be seen at Rhodes.² Yet Sir Otho might have been too old. He avoided deposition from his own knights by very wisely dying on his voyage to seek protection from Rome; and so the election took place of Sir William Villaret, of the 1300 *langue* of Provence,³ and it is the first time I read of that term in the order, into which how, or when it obtained I cannot say; but regret it as implying not union but division, and which, if it bred emulation, did also discord; but what is certain is, that it does not come from the institution, and can at any time be without nicety expunged. Not having that patriarchal sanctity, it becomes a mere passing discipline, to be thrown aside as taken up.

In 1299, the head of the Tartars sent to Boniface VIII. to proclaim Jerusalem free, and all

¹ Appendix, lxxx.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 524.

² Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 461.

³ Seb. Paoli (Cod. Dipl. Geros.): Serie, ii. 461.

Europe; and that the Tartar had liberated it from the Mahometan yoke, and so that the Christians might come back to re-people their lands, and sent letters of the same tenor to the Grand Masters of the Hospitallers and Templars, inviting them to return, and enter into peaceful enjoyment of their former possessions.¹ Villaret was at the time Prior of St. Gilles, and there, nor did he come instantly to Cyprus on his election; but first visited various houses of the order in France, including that of the Hospitalleresses under his own sister. And if it be interesting, we may learn that the dress of these ladies consisted in a robe of scarlet cloth and a cross of white linen with eight points.²

Ever since the Polos had been at Acre, years before its destruction, even further back than St. Louis' crusade, Cyprus had heard of Tartary and of Christian propensities in the Tartars,³ or at least their finest horde; so now a body of Hospitallers, horse, was sent in 1301, in furtherance of the league that had been proposed by Nicholas IV., and these with the Tartars advanced all over Palestine, and had even the comfort to enter Jerusalem, but found it, like all the other towns in those

¹ Treves Chron.—Bib. Crois., i. 331.

² Bosio.—Vertot: iv. 34.

³ S. Bertin. Chron.—Bib. Crois., i. 419.—Appendix, ciii.

parts, lying quite open; the Saracens having razed everything like a fortification in them after taking Acre. And might then have visited *Emmaus*, alias *Nicopolis*, with an intention of taking up their poor abandoned garrison, but it was much too late; no Hospitallers to take—nothing but a ruin of some years, yet not by Saracens, but God, evidently by an earthquake or other natural subversion!

If the khan was, as is said, a person of extraordinary intelligence, and an assiduous reader of the *Cyropediad*, and the life of Alexander, and that those princes were his models, no wonder he preferred Christianity to Mahometanism; for he could not but observe that what is against Nature must be false. All beneficent natural changes are slow and gradual, as the corn, the tree, the human creature. With what invisible slowness does the flower produce the fruit, and this enlarge and ripen! The line of separation you can never find. As the oak is in the acorn, so the grown-up male or female is in the infant. It is but a fair, slow development, without any change of essence, and requires years. But unnatural things are, for the most part, sudden and violent, and, nearly always, wicked or disastrous, like earthquakes or hurricanes. From the creation, the imperceptible progress which has now produced Christianity, has been going on,

and applies to your reason, which asks time for reflection; but the Koran or the sword admits none, but takes you by utter surprise.¹

He and his were soon forced to return to their own country, in consequence of a civil war, and so the Hospitallers had to retreat as well, from evident inability to withstand the Sultan of Cairo, who was coming.²

In the meantime, Sir Gaudin, who had been made Grand Master of the Templars, after him killed at Acre, went with the King of Cyprus to make a diversion on the Syrian coast, and took Tortosa; but in 1302 it was won back by the Saracens, with the loss of one hundred and twenty of the Templars,³ which being considered a great number, prepares us to disbelieve the exaggerations of times at hand.⁴

Not that the fusion of Hospitallers and Templars was in itself bad, but the design of depriving them of their independence for the benefit of a third, reminds you of the lawyer and two clients. And towards the end of 1304, when the two Grand Masters, of whom one was the glorious but un-

¹ Vertot: iv. 36.

² Id.: iv. 38.

³ Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 526.

⁴ Condussevi la maggior parte del suo convento. Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 526.

fortunate Molay, who had now succeeded to Gaudin, spoke to each other for the last time, the greatest difficulty was got over, it is said, by their mutual generosity. They were ready each, to abdicate, for the whole mixed body to elect their chief, who, as long as any of the existing Templars lived, was to be of their order, and, after them, that things were to be as before. But, though the two generous chiefs were agreed thus, not so their knights, whose ratification was quite necessary, and, therefore, the whole plan miscarried, and the substance of their argument was sent, in his own name, by Molay, afterwards, in his answer to the Pope, whether Molay dictated it, or availed himself of that prepared already by his immediate predecessor, Gaudin, who had been elected by the only ten Templars who got alive from Acre, and was succeeded by one of them, Molay.¹

“But my answer shall be simply that I cannot go till after I have settled respecting an island,” replied the Hospitaller, on their second interview that same day; “and many islands being in these seas, no one knows which I mean. None, even of my own knights, except my brother, perhaps in case I should die. But as to you, I will make no secret of it, but present you another offer, since it

¹ Seb. Paoli : Osservazioni, ii. 462.

is no fault of yours, if you do not accept my former one. It is now two hundred years and more that our orders have uniformly been together, or if ever at all separated not for long; and often have we shared the greatest dangers, and fought and bled side by side. Even our rivalry, as some choose to call it, cannot but bind us close; I would have rather said emulation, for we have always had the same cause.¹ If there be any difference in our rule, it is very little. For me I love to think we form but one, and derive from the same stem; and believe you are of similar sentiments, so regret to see you no more. Wishing well to the Teutonics in Germany, their branching off was long before my time. But you and I have always been together, and have both spilled a little of our blood at Acre, and known noble Beaujeu and Claremont. I will tell you, therefore, the island in my mind's eye, is Rhodes,² so famous in ancient ages, and that shall become famous and opulent, and in every way a desirable residence in ours also. Now, with your assistance, we shall take that beautiful spot and strong, and we shall both reside there, as at Acre:

¹ *Nunquam assavit fieri cavalcata contro Saracenos.* Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xv.

² The original has only *quædam insulam*, to which a commentator, after the event, wrote in the margin *Rhodum*; but Vertot has chosen to join both; iv. 64.

Besides, our rule is, as I have said, essentially the same, and it is your duty, as well as mine, to fix ourselves as near Jerusalem as we can. Whereas, if you decide for Europe, I have dark forebodings. Your order, as well as mine, has many enemies, but yours worse; and gives greater food for envy. In Rhodes we should be, as it were, our own masters and have our own good swords to protect us. But in Europe are malicious tongues, stronger than the brightest courage—there called pride and pretension. There your fawning courtier is the hero, and nocturnal falsehood invents what triumphs over the best and bravest. Better in our island of roses, than in Paris with whatever splendour. Think on it well before giving me a refusal. You will reap honour, wherever you go. If riches, these will bring you flattery and ruin. Remember I told you so.”—“We have both our duties,” answered Molay, with pensive sadness, “and you must cleave to your knights, and I to mine. The Morea and the glories of Greece and Constantinople are the dreams of mine. Yet all you observe afflicts me. No doubt of wealth and honours; but what are they to produce? Farewell!”

And the generous pair never met again. He and his Templars embarked for the Piræus that very evening; and shortly after, he of the Hospital

went reconnoitring several of the neighbouring islands.

During which came other letters from the new Pope; and that to the Grand Master of the Templars may have been a sort of duplicate of this. And if he of the Hospital was called only to hide the monstrous enormity, his disobedience was easily pardoned on Molay's being forwarded to Greece, and reaping full success; for the luckless nobleman obeyed, and went into the trap, Poitiers and Paris,—and was lost. Quickness and great secrecy were the Pope's injunctions; and writing in the earlier part of June, he says he would expect to hear their opinion on grave matters relative to the Holy Land, on the 15th of next November.¹

But on his return from the islands, Sir William, finding his knights in ill humour, as ill-treated by the Court of Cyprus, and wishing to be in a home of their own, where they might attend to their duties and have to render an account to none but to their own superior and grand master alone, he thought it best to avail himself of the Pontifical orders, and go to Europe to try to organise a body to aid him in his projected invasion. More especially, seeing he was not to have the Templars,²

¹ Appendix, lxxx.—Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num xvi.

² Sismondi : Repub. Ital., iv.—Appendix, cv.

and that Rhodes, which had once been Genoese, and was now Greek nominally, belonged in reality to Saracen pirates—a bold, fierce, and most lawless race, resembling the Malays of this day, their resistance was sure to be desperate; keeping his secret, and pretending it was a crusade, which, however small, would suffice for his views. But he died previous to his voyage, towards the end of 1306; and early in the next year the order chose another, Villaret,¹ who (his brother or not)² was at all events his near relation, and known to be acquainted with his secret. Sir Fulk de Villaret, the moment he was elected, sailed for France.³ One year is of little importance, yet it is inexact. That letter of Clement was directed to Sir William; though it was Sir Fulk who came to answer it in person, as required. Another brief to Sir Fulk himself, after his return from France, at Rhodes (against which he had advanced, but not as yet conquered, except in some little part), is dated August, 1307;⁴ and from expressions in it, we cannot but perceive the Pope had recently spoken with the unconscious Fulk; who, however, heard nothing

¹ Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 462.

² Seb. Paoli doubts—Vertot affirms it, iv.

³ Bosio.—Vertot: iv. 64.

⁴ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xviii.—Seb. Paoli (Cod. Dipl. Geros.): Serie, ii. 463.

to make him suspect the frightful truth, though abundant ill-will certainly met his ears; but having never had a personal interview with the hapless Molay, he might exert his prudence in the elevated dignity he was now clothed with, to avoid one; and be desirous of removing from that dangerous position as fast as he could, well aware that his own order was exposed to envy, as well as that of the guiltless Templars. Things were already running high, not perhaps publicly, but in the minds of the Pontifical and French Courts; for they captured Molay a very few weeks afterwards, of a Friday on the 13th of October, 1307, although his Holiness did not declare it till the year after; but it was equal to the capture (*capetur*) in 1307. So we have two clear documentary proofs that Sir Fulk was Grand Master of the Hospital early in 1307.¹ In France he soon got what he wanted. A great crusade was impossible; but to gather a body of resolute individuals was easy. He might be in the greater hurry to return, that the courts had a gloomy aspect—though he knew that while the Hospitallers kept at a distance, and clear of inordinate show, their merit to Christendom and the Holy Land would be avowed; but that to be near

¹ Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni. ii., 526.—Appendix, lxxxii, and lxxxiii.

was dangerous. Gratitude was a reed not to be much relied on, happy if not converted into crime. Nor had he even a personal acquaintance with Molay. So Fulk ought not to be suspected; but it was better heave off, and he did so. The financial means were chiefly by a subscription of ladies, particularly those of Genoa, who sold their jewels for that purpose.¹ Some of these Genoese Amazons took the cross themselves, whose cuirasses, made small and with bulges to receive their breasts, were shown in the arsenal long after.² He had only to select the number of warriors he desired from several. Many of the most illustrious houses in Germany³ took the white cross on that occasion. But he was so reserved, and perhaps severe a man, that not one of them dared to inquire where he was going to. So passing Rhodes, to lull any suspicion of the Saracens, he sailed to Cyprus, and there taking all his knights and their effects; sailed again to the astonishment of the King of Cyprus, and every one else. But when out of sight of Cyprus, Sir Fulk veered north-east, and keeping Syria on his right, instead of landing, went into a port on the coast of Asia Minor, and anchored. Immense

¹ Bosio.—Vertot: iv. 79.

² Michaud: Hist., v. 160.—Misson's Italy in 1702.

³ Bosio.—Vertot: iv. 80.

was the wonder of his whole fleet; and not even his own choice knights but wondered where he could be bound for. Thence, however, he appears to have sent to the Emperor of Constantinople, asking him for the investiture of Rhodes, which pride and anti-Latin hate refused, though leave would have been only titular, for the expulsion of the Saracen pirates would not have been a whit the easier. If that the Greek Emperor gave Rhodes to the Hospitallers, ever got into the head of any one, he must now get it out of it; for the fact is not so. Were it, we should have it (as we have that of Charles V.), or some record of it, in these documents. A capitulation gave full time to get away the archives. Not as at Acre. Pirates seem to have been indeed at that time the only real inhabitants of the island,¹ the Venetians having all decamped long before, and most of the Greeks still earlier; later they returned. Nor did this refusal produce much effect on Sir Fulk, whose spies had already made their reports concerning island and capital; so that he had determined where he would disembark. Only it made him declare his project to his followers, unanimous in their approbation. So he let his allies think and call themselves crusaders; and such he called them, to gratify their vanity, and give them the pomp and

¹ Sismondi : Rep. Ital., i. 280.

circumstance of a crusade. His invasion succeeded at first, all the lesser islands and part of Rhodes itself yielding nearly without a struggle; but by little and little, the difficulties grew. The pirates who were at sea came back, and the war became long and bloody. In consequence, the crusaders went away one after another, and Sir Fulk had scarcely any one more than his own Hospitallers to support him, quite ineffectual, had they not paid troops. But to pay them? Yet so strenuous were his exertions, that he engaged the Florentine bankers to advance him a loan of money—a difficult matter in those times; and he had the ability to infuse his own spirit into his little army, resolution to conquer or die. Sanguinary in the highest degree were several attempts to take the city, into which the pirates had at last retreated, after a terrible resistance of four years. But take it he did in the end, what remained of the outlaws escaping by sea, being the first to proclaim their own defeat throughout the islands of the Archipelago, and along the coast of Lycia;¹ still at expense of a great number of his bravest Hospitallers, and one shout of admiration resounded through all Christendom² of *Knights of Rhodes*, a title that was to endure illustrious for above

¹ Bosio.—Vertot, iv. 89.

² Id. Id. iv. 90.

two centuries.¹ A letter from one of our kings in 1309 (I suppose Edward II.), shows what has been already observed, that the order was still considered rather equestrian than naval.² Thus that glorious body of the select of all Christians on the edge of its orbit, or not far from it, wheeled its second course of more than another hundred years under seventeen grand masters.³

¹ Werner : Chron.—Bib. Crois., i. 352.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num xxi.—Rymer.—Bib. Crois., ii., 882.—Appendix, civ.

³ Appendix, cvii.