

CHAPTER IV.

UNANIMOUS were the Knights, those for England being Sir John Bosnel, and Sir John Vaquelin; yet kept to the various ancient customs. As usual in such elections the triumvirate composed of a knight, a churchman, and a servant-of-arms, recalled the three original bodies which have ever formed the order; and the sixteen electors, chosen by all the knightly corps, came out from the chapel three several times, and asked if the order would stand by their election, and were each time answered *yes*, by each of the knights—who, while uttering it, in turn, placed their right hand on the cross on their breast; on which the sixteen returned into the chapel, and soon coming out again, announced Sir Peter D'Aubusson as the new grand master.¹

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. x., anno 1476.

He had been grand master in reality—in the affections of his order. With as sincere and pure joy did the Rhodian population also light bonfires for his election. All dread of Mahomet vanished, since D'Aubusson was their sovereign. His name alone is sufficient eulogy. Eternal in the whole Christian world. He but remounted towards his ancestral source; since if raised to a throne, his house had occupied many thrones—not omitting Dukes of Normandy, and Kings of Saxon England.¹ He had been a soldier from his boyhood, but cultivated letters too; and in his early campaigns in Hungary, had become a Knight Hospitaller.² One of his first acts, was to put himself at the head of a body of cavalry, and visit the whole island—leisurely, inquisitive review, and scarce back into the city, when he directed a circular to the Grand Prior of France, and every other prior, commanders, knights, and all members of the order, to hasten to join him at Rhodes, and participate in the defence against the Turks, who were making all imaginable preparations to invade that island.³

Nor was he not anew supplicated to accept the

¹ Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 470.—Caoursinus.—Codgia Effendi.—Bayle.

² Bouhours: Vie D'Aubusson, i. 16.

³ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxxii.—Appendix, clxvii.

charge of captain general, which he did; and, as that of the treasury was included, it was in fact making him dictator during the siege.¹

In the ensuing May of 1478 there was a chapter general holden in Rhodes,² in which several of the wisest laws were made, as loss of ten years of rank, for whoever obtains a letter of recommendation from a foreign sovereign for any place or dignity in the order—if ever any of its knights could be guilty of such insolent baseness.³ But what illustrated this chapter general most is its ratification of what the public voice had already done, investing D'Aubusson, with absolute power in every respect, not one alone—during the siege.⁴

That long threatening was at last at hand. Yet not quite, for in spite of everything—Constantinople itself, and afterwards Trebisonde, Persia, Negropont, Lesbos, had been but preparations. At Scutari, where the Turks were driven back, so vast a number of arrows were shot, that the townsmen gathering them up, were supplied with firewood for several months—and this too, when artillery and gunpowder were in full use, both with

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. x., anno 1477.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxxii.

³ Statuta de Pænis, xviii. 16.

⁴ Bouhours: Vie D'Aubusson, ii. 68.—Vertot; vii. 82.

besiegers and besieged.¹ The sovereign dictatorial position of D'Aubusson, during the war, corresponded with his military—and indeed after it, by the assent of his subjects. So the supremacy of his rule, there were none to dispute. What would have been his conduct in the more difficult situation of having equals or superiors, is doubtful; but as the case stood, he acted a very noble part, and showed fully as varied talents as almost any one, ancient or modern, and on a greater scale. True, little of his writing remains now, to justify such an encomium. But we have the voice come down to us in several unanswerable documents. When the Turks had nearly filled up the ditch to a level with the ravelin, though his quick discernment suggested at once the proper remedy; yet, for his great modesty he called a council, not of the Hospitallers only, but of all of any esteem of the different nations then in Rhodes—a crowd of the most celebrated persons of nearly every art and science in the Christian world; practical veterans from every nation in Europe, several of them volunteers, many merchants, from all parts of the civilised globe—men of eminent talents, inventions, dexterity, genius, all intensely applied to defend the city, which

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi., anno 1479.

they considered their own—the general property of all countries. Not an individual of them, or the whole, could rival with the grand master in practice, experience, unerring judgment, foresight to distinguish every difficulty, and discover means to obviate it; so that the entire meeting, when they heard his plan, approved it—rejecting their own and everything besides—and unanimously saw he had selected what must succeed;¹ and that opinion went on, always increasing while he lived; so that long after the siege, to prevent financial disasters, the order conjured him to take the administration of the treasury for ever, entirely into his own irresponsible hands—which he acceded to with difficulty; nor for ever, but stipulating for only three years, enough to regulate it completely; as he did, and restored it to responsible ministers as before, rendering them a clear account to the last fraction. Indeed, scarce a single transaction great or small, particularly during the siege, but he directed himself—making his own gunpowder, superintending the building of his own shipping, erecting his own batteries, minutest duties of an engineer, chemical preparations, and secrets of different kinds; and in the hospital, where he was very

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi., anno 1480.

assiduous in visiting the sick individually, exacting the details of progress of cure from the doctors.¹ Not from any indifference to religion—and he certainly thought his own the best—but he would not allow it to be propagated by any but fair means; nor admitted of illtimed arguments, only calculated to produce disquietude and domestic strife, nor proselytism, except when clearly prudent; saying that as sovereign of the island, he had to reign, not over the Latins alone, but the Greeks too—schismatic or not—and to treat both with the strictest impartiality—while as a Christian soldier, he was bound to rest neutral between all Christians. No theologian, he resolved not to enter into the dispute about the Council of Florence and the rites; but, as a temporal authority, to show the self-same treatment to each. But let us take things in their regular sequence. It is said Mahomet regretted that his designs had been penetrated before completely ripe; and wishing for what the proudest of men could not brook asking, he gave orders to his son Zain, then governor of the neighbouring coast of Asia Minor, to send a subtle Greek renegade to Rhodes and propose a truce—to which the able grand master agreed at once; not at all deceived, but desirous of leaving the passage free for succours from Europe. It was

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xiv., anno 1488.

the duper duped. Mahomet's infernal intention was to put Rhodes off its guard, and cool the fervour of the Latin princes. Amongst these was D'Aubusson's elder brother, the Vicomte de Monteuil, who, at the head of a rather large corps, raised and maintained at his own expense, came to volunteer his services; which were gratefully accepted, and himself chosen to a high command in aid of his younger brother, throughout the impending struggle.¹ And indeed there was a sort of friendly rivalry in quickness of obedience, contrivance, industry, and valour between these volunteers and the knights themselves, during the whole siege. There was a good deal about spies (particularly Greeks), and spy-boats, and secret intelligence, and preliminary fence—carte and tierce—on both sides, during the two years that immediately preceded the famous 1480—nor only before iron, but assisting it. The scoundrels were for the most part treated as they merited. Not but some of them had first furnished the Turk with detailed maps, most exactly minute, of the fortifications of Rhodes—maps used in the assaults; when in the long run, the infamous draughtsman was found out, the people would have torn him to pieces, but that his jailors had the mercy to hang him.²

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi., anno 1480.—Vertot: vii. 85.

² Id.: id., id. 1479.

To the spy from Constantinople, who just before the siege had come to separate the natives from the order, offering as an inducement that the Grand Seignor would treat them like the rajahs (their coreligionists), who lived happily under his kind government, and that they might even expect peculiar graces—"Greek and Latin all the same!" cried the Rhodians. "We are all of one belief; it is a mistake to think we are not, our trust being in the same Lord Jesus. We are all Christians, servants of the blessed Virgin-Mother, and will be nothing else. We are no emasculated slaves of a despotism, nor circumcised Jews, nor Egyptian vermin, eaten up by money-dealing and every abomination and vice! But we are stout, able-bodied men, standing armed hand in hand with our heroic brothers from Europe; who, brave knights, have arms also, and know well how to make use of them, nor desire anything else so ardently. You deceive yourselves in thinking to divide us. For in truth we are most faithfully and affectionately attached to these valiant gentlemen, who look upon us as their own brothers, and of their own blood, children of the same family, rather than as subjects or vassals. So do you go your own way, and we will go ours. Do you your worst, and we our duty. With God's aid, we'll beat you. Act as becomes

Turks, and we'll not be backward to requite you. You shall have to do with no effeminate Asiatics, but with us, and valorous knights, and the most excellent soldiers from every Christian nation." Yet was there some rhodomontade in this, perhaps to stir up courage in themselves, and even keep off the enemy by that show, and letting him perceive they were not alone, but leaning on the securest of human protectors; for, in spite of a multitude of exceptions, the Rhodians were rather mild and fickle, or voluble, than very perseveringly valiant. Those undismayed knights seem to have infused their own spirit, during the sanguinary struggles, into the whole population, male and female, and converted them into intrepid veterans.¹

A few days previous to 1480, a noted Ferrarese physician sent an astrological prediction to Corvinus of Hungary, that both Belgrade and Rhodes would be taken by the Turk, which, no doubt, was considered, by the public, as referring to the then present; yet was not, but was unfortunately to be realized several years later.² Yet who rung in the celebrated year but the Pope, in his bull, 1480 dated January, 1480?³ And assuredly its

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi. and xix.

² Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 570.—Appendix, clxviii.

³ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxxiv.

sentiments were as worthy of Christendom's high priest, as of the gallant warriors in whose favor it was written. Nor do we not find some of the same spirit in the letter of the King of England, in the following April, wherein, after speaking of his faithful Irish subjects, and the defence of Rhodes (for which Sir John Kendall, the Turcopolier, was sent to seek recruits in Ireland), the monarch adds, "We command the aforesaid John Kendall, Knight, Turcopolier of the Order of Rhodes, and *locumtenens* for the grand master in England, Italy, Flanders, and Ireland, to attend to that business, with the greatest care and despatch; and whoever aids his commissioners, or John Kendall the Turcopolier himself, will be doing what is very agreeable to us."¹ And a couple of months after, we have a proof that brave and vigilant D'Aubusson was no ways wanting to his fame or his duties, since (after the many circulars he had issued, all in the same sense, for they were many, in hopes some of them might arrive, he knowing that the Turks had intercepted several,² and were bent on intercepting all, as a means of cutting off his communications with Europe)—we still have this, probably the only one remaining, when the terrible drama had already

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxxiii.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi.

begun, but yet succours might still have been efficient—circular to the whole order, as well to those in Rhodes, as to those somewhat dilatory in coming thither, dated May 28th, 1480—showing that all the workings of the Grand Turk had Rhodes for their true and ultimate object, with inexorable hate: “because his insane fury considers our very resistance to his will, and that we resolutely scorn even to hear of tribute, deep guilt; therefore his immense fleet of one hundred and nine sail, or thereabouts, has been surrounding and blockading us from the 15th of last June, and has machinery and heavy artillery, and mortars, and huge preparatives of every kind, for war the most destructive and inhuman. Do not flatter yourselves that we have to withstand an inexpert soldier, or effeminate Asiatics. But we also have abundant means of defence, our troops, knights, stores of every description, and this beautiful city, surrounded with strong walls, ramparts, ditches, bastions, towers, fortified and adorned. The tyrant hopes that by prolongation he may force us to consume all our provisions, and terrify, beat down, attenuate our soldiery; while, with him it is not so, but when he loses any number of his men, others may replace them from the continent. The rabid dragon is in error, and does not see what succours will flow

inundating us from Rome the great, and the various sovereigns of Christendom. Nor knows he how intense, most ardent, is the zeal and incomparable obedience of our brethren, and their invincible courage; which precludes the possibility of any substantial danger to this metropolis and capital of our order, its ark, this sacred city of Rhodes. Our enemy has no idea of our true position, and that the breezes of spring and autumn carry ships, with careful and intelligent pilots, down swiftly through the Lycian current, and straight into our harbour, without the possibility of stopping them. Dearest companions, this is what I assure you of; and you may fully credit me, you that are here. For those others, I implore their aid and command it. Let us hope for succours; but, at all events, feel quite certain of victory. Most distinguished, most honourable confraternity, you see the immensity of our perilous situation; but to us not perilous, from your incomparable bravery. But let those at a distance know that Rhodes is in a state of siege—Rhodes our glory, our delicious home, and proud jewel of our order—this common refuge of all Christians in the East—their resting-place, asylum, garden of delight — the city of ancient fame, and splendour, and magnificence, is blocked and besieged by the Turks! Think of eternal life and your

mighty renown. Come quickly you who are as yet away, into our common treasury, instantly, as an impetuous river into the sea, rush responsions and payments for three years in advance, from throughout all the priories, commanderies, houses, knight's fees, the whole property of the order."¹

Gardens, villas, most verdant hills, orange groves, pomegranates, woods, a profusion of large single trees, an immense number of springs of extremely lucid and delicious water, characterised the suburban district of Rhodes, in D'Aubusson's time.² No wonder, then, that one of its own citizens calls it: "The favourite, sweetest island of the sun, where the air is so pure, and the country so smiling!"³

The truce had not lasted long; for on the 23rd of May, 1480, the Moslem fleet of above one hundred and sixty sail⁴ appeared off Rhodes, and approaching quite close to the city, under the universal gaze, disembarked its mighty land army without opposition—rather with pomp and music, like vic-

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxxv.

² Bouhours: Vie D'Aubusson, iii. 109. Mary Dupuis; for thus the man named himself, and not Merri, as Vertot has; Je Mary Dupuis gros et rude de sens et de l'entendement, selon que je peux voir à l'œil," that is, "temoin oculaire," which may be enough, as to the exterior appearance of Rhodes; but is not when military operations are to be described.—Appendix, clxix.

³ Caoursinus: Orat.—Appendix, clxx.

⁴ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi., anno 1480.

tors coming to enter a conquered city;¹ and two days afterwards, while Islam's batteries were preparing, came before dawn to the walls (escape from the slavery of years as he pretended) a most dangerous clever spy, a German renegade, who was lifted up into the besieged town, and led to the grand master as a Christian refugee; but was in fact a pernicious turncoat, employing even truth itself as a veil of concealment, and to intimidate others—avowing he was a founder by trade, and had founded recently sixteen huge cannons for Achmet, commander-in-chief of the very army before their eyes, the sultan's vizier or general, a Palælogos degenerated into infidel, yet one of the cleverest officers in the world, particularly for artillery. "And," subjoined the diabolical hypocrite with seeming remorse, "I founded many basilisks for him, or double cannon eighteen feet long, throwing balls of from two to three feet in diameter.² But above everything his mortars are stupendously dreadful, and belch huge marble globes of prodigious size. And without doubt you will soon yourselves experience them, and then, indeed, require your utmost precaution. The army is fully

¹ Bouhours: Vie D'Aubusson, ii. 107.

² A cannon (now gone out of use), of forty-eight pounds of ball, of two hundredweight. Engineer's Dictionary.

one hundred thousand strong." But the rope quickly rewarded the villain's scheme.¹

Three thousand seven hundred (some of them the heaviest of all cannon) have battered their walls for several days, to say nothing of the roaring of an infinity of mortars and lighter artillery, which play day and night round the entire city; that shower of bombs fall into it at all hours, exploding, burning, demolishing houses, towers, palaces, entire streets, without exciting the least sign of wish to surrender.²

Yet as to the siege itself, which Beccatini says, lasted ninety-nine days, with the death of above forty thousand Turks;³ but the official document has a little less, with strict exactitude. I know that others have got up a particularised account, reposing on the memory of eye-witnesses. Still I own I am a little afraid of recounting what I have not documentary proof of; nor is there any urgent reason for risking a tedious enumeration of stormings and repulses, in face of the declaration of the author of a diary, who might be of weight did he not deprive himself of it by his acknowledging

¹ Mestre George, he was called by Mary Dupuis, 601.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. xii. If exaggeration, not mine; I give my authority.

³ Storia Ragionata dei Turchi, lib. ii., cap. ii.

no records whatever were taken during that confusion, and no one more in the case to know it than himself, who had for duty to affix the state seal to each document admitted into the archives. In a copy of his book, deposited there to reply to its want of documents regarding that interesting interval, he left these words written: "The city of Rhodes, while blocked and besieged so cruelly by the Turks, in such perturbation and fear, the public acts were not written; but the victory won, the history was edited by William Caoursinus, Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes, which the press has divulged all over the world, but in that interval nothing was written. So it is; William Caoursinus, Vice-Chancellor."¹ Then perhaps just as well keep to the certain, and content myself with giving what is particular enough, and which I think neither Bosio nor Bouhours, nor any of the order's historians could ever have seen (since it was found much later in the archives of Germany) D'Aubusson's own despatch immediately after the siege, to the emperor, as Christendom's chief in temporals—military affairs particularly.² And if, notwithstanding he had been born a subject to the King of France, he directed himself on this occasion to im-

¹ Seb. Paoli, *al Lettore*, ii.—Appendix, clxxi.

² *Cod. Dipl. Geros.*, ii., Num. cxxvi.—Appendix, clxxii.

perialism, it was that he was grand master; nor even alone, but with his consuls or councillors, who also signed; and this is a new proof of the order's perfect neutrality between Christians, and that it recognises for country not merely the individual spot of birthplace, but all Christendom. "Most invincible and serene Prince,—That we address ourselves to your Imperial Majesty a detailed relation of our proceedings at Rhodes during its defence against the Turks, appears to us nowise incongruous, now that the day of fight has had a happy exit, to the honour of the Christian name; and we do not doubt but your Imperial Majesty will derive no small joy from our victorious struggles.

"The Turks having encamped round the city, and explored the situation with great diligence, began beating our walls on every side with heavy guns, and to make strenuous exertions to shake and undermine them, and in short display their intentions: and with batteries of cannon and mortars¹ environed the city, and so far succeeded, that they overthrew nine of its towers and one of its bastions, and hit the magisterial palace with several mon-

¹ At their explosions the whole island of Rhodes trembled. They were heard at Castel Rosso, an islet above a hundred miles from Rhodes; and warriors from every part of Christendom declared they had never seen such tremendous guns and terrific effects anywhere before.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi.

strous balls, so that it partly fell down. But chiefly they thought proper to attack and press the city on three sides, and that their efforts above all should be to destroy the tower of the mole of St. Nicholas, as the surest road, in their opinion, to possess themselves of the city.

“This tower rises like a little citadel out at the end of the mole, stretching northward into the sea as far as the entrance of the harbour, so as to be instantly in full sight of the pilots, who can draw up close to it if they choose, or easily keep off from it. To the west stands St. Anthony’s Oratory (of which the Turks got early into possession, as a sort of suburb, and not defensible), about two hundred paces from the tower, with a little channel of sea between.¹ On an inspection of the site then, the enemy became avid of gaining the tower, and had recourse to every expedient in their power. So to batter it down, they brought three brazen cannons of immense size—so wonderfully immense as to be nearly incredible—that threw balls of stone nine palms diameter, and placed those huge cannon at St. Anthony’s.² Marvellous to relate and calamitous to see, that celebrated work, and that seemed of

¹ Which indeed forms the inner port of Rhodes for galleys, admitting only one galley at a time.

² Es jardins du dit St. Anthoine.—Mary Dupuis.

such astonishing strength, after resisting for some days during which it was struck by three hundred of those enormous balls of solid rock, the greater part of the tower was uprooted from its foundations, and lay prostrate and torn to pieces. At which the enemy exulted and applauded, beating their hands loudly—vain joy, soon converted into sorrow! For solicitous as we were of preserving the tower, on contemplating those extensive and horrid ruins, tried to prop up the remains of it; still further reflection making us perceive the inutility of the attempt after that tremendous crush, we determined on exerting all our vigilance, care, intellect, in defending, not the tower but St. Nicholas's Mole itself. With the utmost resolution, therefore, we set to work, and with a thousand labourers, day and night, and various inventions, were indefatigable, and not to no purpose, dug a deep trench, without a moment's intermission for several days, and with strengthenings of timber constructed a wall on the mole, where the remains of the tower stood; and building round outside, and uniting those fresh works to its middle and very foundations, so as to make one with it (not without enormous expense), erected a new tower and mole that were inexpugnable, and enclosed those that were there before. Then we placed a garrison of our bravest warriors

within the ruins of the mole and tower, and finished the fortifications wholly. And at the root and foot of the same, where the wall stops and the sea is fordable, we placed another garrison towards the west, and similar towards the east, to guard both sides; so it was necessary to watch and protect it in each direction, lest the Turks should pass and attack us behind.¹ We likewise ordered heavy guns to be disposed on the walls of the city, so as to do their duty properly during an assault. Fire-boats also got ready to assail the fleet. Twice did the Turks endeavour to storm our work; in their first attempt they employed a tolerable force, thinking it easy, just at daybreak when the light was dubious. They came in three-oared ships prepared purposely, and fought for a while, but were driven back. Our men had scarcely to leave their labour, and returned to it with assiduity. In the battle seven hundred Turks were killed, as we learned from the deserters. After a few days, with rage

¹ Bosio moreover says, the grand master stationed a body of both infantry and *cavalry* in the nearest ravelin, to prevent the enemy from going round the mole, and putting the town between two fires. The infantry well and good; but what had *cavalry* to do there? How could cavalry act? or were horses nimbler than at present? Use might have still given somewhat of the agility of Acre. Could they, where ours could not? At all events they soon got out of fashion, and gave place to the Spanish infantry.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi.

doubled from that former repulse, the enemy returned, with a body of mariners to reinforce them, and all they had of art and talent, and battered our rising edifice, and threw down some of our unfinished constructions with those huge cannons. But with celerity did we rebuild what they had thrown down.

“They then, to end the business, prepared adequately shaped triremes and corresponding munitions, and with ingenuity added certain transports in the guise of ships of war (called *parendarias* in common parlance), laden with heavy artillery and stone, in order to establish themselves on the mole, where the tower had stood, and annoy the city from that position, destroy, make a breach, take it by storm. They also bring a cloud of flat-bottom boats, from which some of the boldest of them descend easily on the mole; and with admirable artifice determine to raise a swimming bridge, to pass thither across from St. Anthony’s church.¹ But we suspecting it, for many days and nights ever since that first attempt, had laboured with all our strength, mental and physical, and been adding fortification upon fortification, and men and stores of every de-

¹ Un pont de boetes et tonneaux et par dessus clouer tables, planches aix et aultres choses . . . depuis l’Eglise St. Anthoine jusques a la tour St. Nicholas.—Mary Dupuis, 607.

scription to our post of tower and mole, saving no expense whatever; for we conjectured right, that there lay the safety of the city. Therefore a little before midnight, the Turks burning with more ardour than ever, on the 13th of the Kalends of July, attacked our principal position in the profoundest silence, assailing the entire length of our front, at the same time with one energetic simultaneous rush; we however were not asleep, but with erect ears. Finding it was the enemy, our great guns began to vomit, our soldiers to gird on their swords, and every warlike implement showered from the tower and mole, to keep off the Turks, and hard did we fight, from midnight until ten o'clock. The Turks who in a considerable number from boats and triremes, had descended on the mole, were every man of them killed. The swimming bridge laden with them is broken, by the shots from our heavy artillery, and down go all who were upon it, and perish in the waves. Four galleys also, and the transports freighted with the great cannon and balls of stone, are fractured by the discharges from our bastions, and sink. The fire-ships advance against the infidel fleet, and force it to recede. Thus was the Turkish retreat. Nor in the brilliant action had not many of the most renowned of their captains fallen, whose lost was

bitterly mourned for by the army. Deserters after the combat, assure us it was to them a woful day, and two thousand five hundred slain.

“ But when they gave up all hopes of taking the tower and mole, they turned all their labours and power, and intelligence, on an attack upon the walls themselves; and although the city was so shaken and torn by those various deadly engines, that it scarce retained the least resemblance of what it was, still they prefer attempting principally the part from where looking east Jew Street ends, to that which leads to the tower of Italy. Consequently for the purpose of destroying, lacerating, subverting that whole line of wall, they have eight tremendous cannons of the largest size ever seen, disgorging balls of flint nine palms diameter, which never cease day or night, from scourging and scourging those groaning flanks. Nor to augment the terror of the blows, do the noises of guns and mortars halt for a single minute; and the continual bombardment echoes horribly in all quarters. We however, to afford some protection to the women and children, and the weak and infirm, from the cannonade and terrible bombardment, hide them in the ovens, caves, caverns, underground spots in the orchards; so that few of those unoffending creatures were slain by that infliction. The enemy made

use too of another sort of horror—globes of fire, and fiery arrows thrown from the cross-bow or sent off whirling from catapultas, that the houses may be set on fire. We on the other hand, whose duty it was to save the city, chose consulters from persons of the art, to remain most attentive; and they, as soon as ever the incendiary matter fell, applied themselves with the fleetest caution to extinguish the flames. By such remedies we were able to preserve the Rhodians from many mishaps. Nor did not the infidel attempt to approach the city underground; but with many zig-zag ditches covered with earth and trees, to steal into the fosses of the city, wrought with deep occult art; and erected strongholds abundantly, and placed colubrines,¹ upon them and serpentine cannon, from which they kept up a continuous shooting to weary us out, and scatter our ranks; and likewise imagined it was convenient for them to *complete*² that part of the ramparts that lies next the wall of the spur at the salient angle. So brought a great heap of stones, and secretly threw down others into the fosse, and continued doing it incessantly for several days, so

¹ Sort of heavy artillery, throwing a ball of sixteen pounds. The serpentine cannons were hugely long; we are told of one fifty feet long. They threw a fire-ball that went waving and hissing.

² To close: term of geometry.

as to fill up the fosse at last in that spot, and even raise it equal to the fore-wall—like a mound in form of a back, which presented a ready ascent upon the walls themselves. We however, perceiving the enemy's attempt and alive to the danger, saved the city by undertaking a minute examination of all its fosses, as well as anew repairing and provisioning the citadel and the whole range of its defences with the utmost diligence; which the Turks seeing, turned in despair to the wall of the Jewish quarter and other parts, while with the strongest reparations, refortifying what they had ruined, we planted stakes of thickest greenest timber, and covered them with earth and branches of stout tough underwood and thorns, which, compactly uniting, could sustain the force of any machinery, and protected the wall, and held it together, lest it should fall into the city, and afford an easy descent from the walls. Likewise we made similar fortifications of green stakes, laced with earth, to cover our men, and prevent the Turks from climbing up. We also prepared artificial wildfire, and other inventions conducive to withstanding the violent charges of the Turks. We also thought it better to evacuate that part of the fosse which they had filled with stones; but considering that in the short nights of the dog-

days it was impossible to do it secretly, from the jutting out as requisite, we had to content ourselves with working under the stones, and drawing them forth from below, and carry them without the least noise into the city; nevertheless, the Turks nearest the fosse remarking that the heap of stones in it was diminishing, and that they would lose that way of ascent, if they were not very alert, stormed us without delay. Therefore thirty-eight days having been consumed in these labours, during which they had hurled about three-thousand five hundred of those monstrous balls of rock against our walls, the Turks, perceiving they were letting slip the opportunity of getting into the city, hastened to finish what they were employed on; and throughout the entire day and night preceding, and even dawn of the morning itself of the storm, directed eight of their enormous cannons, hurling said rocks without intermission, against the part of our walls close to the new fortification, till it was for the most part shaken, torn, shattered; videttes, sentinels, guards, companies, all killed and swept clear away, that it was hardly possible for one of us to get to the walls at all, save by hiding him with great care; and at the stroke of a bell he descended a little, and at another, mounted. Nor was there time ever given to repair the fortifications, for the

cannon-shots never ceased for a single moment ; so that in that small number of hours three hundred rocks went flying. Scarcely had the cannonade ended, when the Turks fired a mortar erected the day before, as a signal, at which (it being then the seventh of the Kalends of August), their advanced troops rushed forward with a tremendous shout, in a most collected body, and with the greatest speed, and scaled the wall. And it was easy, as we have said—easier than on our side by ladders. Annihilating the post we had left on the upper part of the wall (since it was utterly impossible to resist that first rush), the enemy occupied the place, and planted their colours there before our relief could climb up by the ladders. In the same way the summit of the tower of Italy became Mahometan. But we of the relief ascend by three of the ladders communicating with Jew Street, since the fourth had been broken by our own orders. There was the noise! We opposing the Infidel, and aiding the Christians. Most manly were the efforts of our troops, and the signal valour on both sides. Suddenly, ours wheeling into two corps, facing the foes, drive them back by sheer exertions from the higher part of the wall, to the left and right, which hinders them their running about. And well and most beatifully armed were those Turks;

about two thousand drawn up in tight ranks, who closed with ours. These with all their might endeavouring to expel them, and those the contrary. Still the firm courage of ours could not be moved; but of their opponents three hundred or more were by main force pushed over the inside of the wall, that down they tumbled into Jew Street, where they were every one slain. This infidel van, that had at first scaled and occupied the top of the wall, was quickly re-inforced by their other van, a vast multitude that covered the field, adjacent ruin, valley, ditch, that no eye could easily distinguish ground; for deserters say that the whole storming party mustered four thousand;¹ at which, perceiving a great conflict ready, we raised and planted firm the banner representing our sacred Lord Jesus Christ, and beside it that of our order, directly facing our enemy, and then ensued a desperate battle of two hours. At length the Turks, pressed, broken, wearied, terrified, and covered with gashes, tremble, recede, turn, fly; with such an impetus, that they hinder each other, and hasten their own destruction. There fell in that conquest, three thousand five hundred of them, as exactly as can

¹ Bosio has forty thousand; tremendous difference: par. ii., lib. xii., anno 1480.

be learned by their corpses, which we had gathered from walls, streets, or ditches, and those of their camp, the sea, and sea-shore, and burned,¹ to prevent plague. The flight was contagious, and from one to another, until the whole Moslem army were in decided rout. Our troops, after having pursued the fugitives quite across the plain with much slaughter, seized their spoils, and returned safe and joyous. In these battles we have lost many of our knights and baillies, fighting valiantly in the thickest of the hostile squares. We ourselves, and our companions-in-arms, have had many wounds; but after placing a strong garrison on the ramparts, returned home to render thanksgiving to Almighty God. Nor was it not the Divine assistance that averted such a butchery from ours. No doubt the Almighty sent down the succour from heaven, lest his poor Christian people should be infected with the filth of Mahometanism. Turkish women had prepared the ropes, which, in expectation of the city's being taken, were to serve to

¹ Dedans le boys qu'ils avoient aporte pour leur approuches et remplir les fosses; et tant en y avoit qu'ils mirent plus de huic jours a bruler; et les bonnes femmes qui les veoyent bruler et rendre la grece, les meuldisoient et dysoient qu'ils estoient si gras des figues et outres fruits qu'ils leur avoient menge en leur jardins: et altres choses ne plaignoient. Mary Dupuis.

tie the captives, and got vast multitudes of stakes made, that were to inflict deaths of torture. It had been decreed that every male and female above ten years old was to be put to death, or impaled alive; no exception, but all mortals above that age. The children, without distinction of sex, to be carried into slavery, and brought up Mahometans.¹ The city to be sacked, and its rule reserved to the sultan. But, frustrated in their atrocious design, they scampered off like a flock of sheep. Nine thousand of them are said to have been killed in the suburbs by our artillery, and an innumerable quantity wounded. Amongst those who died of their wounds were German Balse,² and a certain son-in-law of the Grand Seigneur. It ended by the Turks burning their stores, and retiring about a mile from the city, and embarking what remained of their machinery and heavy baggage, and sending some into Lycia, which consumed a few days; and back-beaten, and with marks of

¹ A very remarkable part of the dress of the Moslem going to the assault is the knot of small ropes hanging from every man's girdle, to tie his prisoners. At Rhodes are said to have been eight thousand stakes stuck up all round the city. The boys to be given to the sultan for his Mamelukes, or kept by the soldiers for themselves; the females to the harem.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. xii.

O r Primanus Bassa, as others (perhaps properly) read.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 552.

ignominy they left the Rhodian shores, and retired by Phiscus,¹ and continent, to the ancient metropolis they had come from. May the Omnipotent vouchsafe welfare to your Imperial Majesty.

“Your Imperial Majesty’s humble servant,

“PETER D’AUBUSSON,

“*Master of the Jerusalem Hospital and Consuls.*

“*Rhodes, 13th of September, 1480.*”

For my part, it must be owned, that until I read it, I never well understood the more spun-out accounts, and think my readers will have a completer notion, than if I troubled them about it longer. Save, it seems but bare justice to D’Aubusson to add, he is allowed on all hands to have been the soul which animated that defence, and took a personal and lion’s share in each of its hazardous events, great or small, working like a common labourer, carpenter, engineer, chemist; and having planned his battles like a great general, fighting them like a private soldier, invariably the headmost man; so that he slew many of the Turkish officers with his own hand, and was covered with wounds some of them severe, yet

¹ A port in Asia Minor, opposite to Rhodes, and about eighteen miles from it.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 551.—Appendix, clxxiii.

never permitted them to keep him from action; hearing the opinion of every one with a most encouraging smile, before he formed his own decision as commander-in-chief; but which, once taken, never changed, or even was permitted to be reconsidered. Sovereign dictator; how he survived the fatigue, with such short snatches of sleep, during so many weeks of over-exertion, is a problem which at least shows how little suffices nature.

To cite a few of the many anecdotes told of him in those dreadful scenes suffices. Learning some mutinous knights had spoken of an honourable capitulation, he sent for them, and quietly said, "Gentlemen, if you choose to leave us, do so; there is the port, and however severely blockaded we be, I undertake to send you out of it safe and sound; but should you prefer remaining, listen well to my warning; that, in case you speak a word about capitulating on whatever terms, I will have every one of you put to death!" These, and that he called them *gentlemen*, as if they were no longer knights, and his brethren, struck them with such remorse, that one and all they threw themselves at his feet, and were patterns of valour and discipline ever after. His helmet having been broken from his head by a cannon-ball, he calmly stooped down and put on the hat of a soldier, who had just been killed near

him. To the general of artillery, who besought him not to expose himself so much, he replied with an affectionate smile; "Nay, if it had killed me, you would have more to gain by my death than I to lose;" which passed for a prophecy amongst those who held him prophet, as well as inimitable warrior; meaning he considered Del Carretto worthy of being elected grand master after him, eventually to be the case, as we shall see.

That he had public prayers immediately before and after the siege, no one will find otherwise than laudable; and if he had exposed a miraculous image of the Virgin, which on the loss of Rhodes was transported to Malta, and placed in St. John's Church, that image is said to have been to the Rhodians what Minerva's was to the Trojans; they believed it the safeguard of their home, and that as long as they kept it among them, they had nothing to fear.¹

Though so popular and generally mild, he was sometimes very severe, as when during the siege he resisted every supplication in favour of two deserters, or rather, who only meditated desertion, and had them hanged from the windows of his palace, and their dead bodies flung into the sea.²

¹ Bouhours : Vie d'Aubusson, ii. 106.—Appendix, clxxiv.

² Id. : Id., iii. 140.

The women fought like brave men during the siege, and wore the dress of males.¹ So that not to allow Turks were beaten by women and Giaours, was probably what made Khodgia Effendi's Moslem vanity attribute the discomfiture to the vizier's avarice, in forbidding plunder, that all the booty might go into his own pocket.² However that be, it was a mortal wound to Mahomet the Second, that his great army and favourite had been overthrown by D'Aubusson, who, with all his celebrity, was only a Christian.

Perhaps it was enough for his simplicity not to mention himself, but only that the succours went up by those ladders; yet is it not right in us to add what is known of the full truth, that alighting from his horse, he led those succours up by the foremost ladder himself, and was the first in the whole battle on the wall? and in his heroic efforts received four severe wounds, the last of which was judged mortal by the surgeons, who visited it, but whose prognostics did not make him leave the wall or combat; nor did he fall from the loss of blood until the day was won, and then he was carried to his bed, where, in spite of his violent pains, he received the gallant knights, who presented him

¹ Bouhours: Vie d'Aubusson, iii. 159.

² Id.: Id., iii. 163.

with the Moslem standard from the vizieral tent, and he immediately ordered public thanksgiving for the victory. During three days that his life continued in danger, the anxious citizens crowded the street before his door. And less (it was said), was the joy of the Rhodians when the Turks sailed away, than when their grand master was declared better, and that the surgeons avowed they had been wrong in thinking his wounds mortal; and if even there was something divine in his cure, neither he nor his people doubted but that the Almighty, if He pleased, might do at Rhodes what he had done in former ages. Now for the first time since eighty-nine days,¹ were the town gates opened, and men naturally desired to take a walk into the country; and those who had villas and gardens (and none but the very poorest were without them), to see how much or how little they had been ruined; yet their anxiety to have news of the grand master was so great, that it kept most of them within Rhodes. All his subjects, of all grades, were long in agitation about his wounds, even after the faculty's favourable opinion; for they had at first pronounced them mortal, and his knights, as fit, were the most concerned; nevertheless he recovered, though slowly.²

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xii.

² Id.: .id., id.

Early in the siege, after the first attack on St. Nicholas's, it being necessary to keep a sharp lookout, lest the enemy should disturb the workmen, who were to work seventy hours without intermission, he is represented by nearly all the order's historians in almost the same words, which makes it in a manner certain that they were not dealing in fancy, but relating a well-known fact; and considered very characteristic of the man, which prevents me from daring to leave it out. "His armour (perhaps to be more readily known to his soldiers), was gilt or golden, and kept highly polished and shining, and at the head of the aforesaid chosen, pre-eminently valiant squadron, he sat on his horse the whole night long, without moving, or taking a moment's repose; and the splendour of the moon reflected from that gold cuirass rendered him a clear and highly remarkable object."¹ But as much might have been said of many a knight.

His Italian secretary having with equal penetration and fidelity discovered a plot to poison him (which might have easily succeeded) by two of his domestics, suborned by the Turk; they were hanged, which was not enough for the enraged populace, who had to be given their dead bodies

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi.

to tear to pieces, so extravagantly were they attached to him. Not that the Rhodians were sanguinary, far from it; but it was the enthusiasm of enraged love for their protector.¹

Nor when the siege was over did he neglect to indemnify every one of them for their losses during it, as far as money or his ability could in any way go; and distributed abundance of corn, and exempted all the people of Rhodes in a body from every sort of subsidy and taxation for several years;² and in commemoration of the victory, he built two magnificent churches, one for the Latins, and the other for the Greeks,³ for the Rhodians affirmed that their ancestors (whose example they were resolved to follow), had refused ever swerving from the decision of the Council of Florence,⁴ when Greek and Latin were for a moment united. So are called *devout Catholics* by Bosio, who must have meant the word in its primitive sense of universal; for otherwise he would probably have *Roman Catholics*. Be that as it may, there was a very friendly understanding between the two Churches. At first the selectest Rhodian was

¹ Bouhours: Vie d'Aubusson, iii. 135.

² Id.: Id., iii. 171.

³ Id.: Id., iii. 168.

⁴ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xii.—Platina: iii. 344.

thought little of (on a footing with the mere peasantry, who during the whole siege were only used as pioneers, or spades and shovels) but the knights soon learned to esteem him, and good reason; and more than one Rhodian was admitted into the order. Caoursinus, Ambassador to the Pope, and acting Vice-Chancellor, and though no professed knight, compiler of the statutes, was himself a Rhodian, and was voted what would purchase a fitting house for him and family, besides other decorous presents, on his taking a wife after the siege.¹

Such a small body of Christians against such a stupendous multitude of soldiery, provided with the best implements of war then known, nor in any ignorant age, but in that of gunpowder, mortars, and cannon—no wonder victory was held almost or certainly a miracle. Yet is there nothing of miraculous in D'Aubusson's relation, nor anything unbecoming a military despatch of our own day.

But the names of the heroes, where are they? It is not but they are in the book of eternal life; yet why not in this life too, for the world's example? Alas, most of those worthy and valiant knights were never known on earth, for the lists

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xiii.

were never made, or are lost, except only a few commanders, of whom there was necessarily some record in the various commanderies, and likewise in the chancery for a time, but at length lost in both places.¹

Bosio gives only ninety-two French commanders; knights of all three Languages; thirty-five Italians, thirty-five Spanish and Portuguese, five English, eight German, and eighteen between chaplains and servants-at-arms of various nations. To which five English knights I will add a few on his own authority, though afterwards left out in his list. If meagre be the memorandum of the other Languages, most meagre indeed is the English.

1. Sir John Vaquelin, Commander of Carbourch, killed.
2. Sir Marmaduke Lomelay, desperately wounded, but recovered and became Prior of Ireland.²
3. Sir Thomas Bem, Bailiff of the Eagle, killed.
4. Sir Henry Haler, Commander of Badsfort, killed.
5. Sir Thomas Ploniton, killed.
6. Sir Adam Tedbond, killed.

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi.—Appendix, clxxv.

² Taken from Sir James Heting.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. xiii., anno 1482.

7. Sir Henry Batasbi, killed.

8. Sir Henry Anulai,¹ killed.²

9. Sir John Kendall, Turcopolier,³ one of seven grand crosses, whom the Chapter General of 1478 elected to be more particularly at the grand master's disposal during the approaching siege, whether sent where he pleased, or kept near him at Rhodes. So he despatched Kendall for succours to England, where he had been often resident ambassador, and had him back from thence as fast as possible, after 9th of April, 1480, date of the king's mandate at Westminster; so Kendall might be back at Rhodes in the middle of the next month; and surviving the siege, went in 1489 on an embassy to Rome, where he died, while they at Rhodes elected him thirty-second Grand Prior of England.⁴

10. Sir Thomas Docray, one of the sixteen in the election of D'Aubusson; but outlived the siege, and came by turns to every one of the three grand crosses in the English language; Turcopolier,

¹ Vertot writes Davalas. ² Bosio: par. ii., lib. xii.

³ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi., anno 1478.

⁴ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxxxvi.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii., 561.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. xiv., anno 1489. Kendall giving up the Turcopoliership to another English knight.—Appendix, Num. xxx.

Bailiff of the Eagle, and thirty-third Grand Prior of England.¹

11. Sir Leonardus de Tybertis, whose grand uncle had been thirty-second Prior of England.²

12. Sir Walter Viselberg.³

13. Sir John Rucht.⁴

14. Sir John Besoel.⁵

Not Mahomet II. himself, but his vizier, a renegade Greek, whose baseness was worthy of his sanguinary master, was the person who led and misled the barbarians driven from Rhodes, and merited a worse disgrace than befell him, exile in a miserable village; but the fate of the infuriated despot of whose *lofty genius*, the Decline and Fall chooses to speak, may be surmised; and the surmise may be idle; but others aver that Mahomet II. was indeed a choleric, dangerous savage, who in reply to a courteous ambassador doing no more than his duty in asking "*against* whom such a mighty armament was raised"—and verily it was against his own country—broke out with: "If a hair of my beard knew my secret, I would instantly pluck it

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxlv.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 567.—Appendix, Num. xxx.

² Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 533.

³ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi., anno 1478.

⁴ Id.: id., id., anno 1478.

⁵ Boswell.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. xi., anno 1478.

out, and throw it into the fire;" and inflamed with rage and indignation, levied an enormous army of it is said three hundred thousand men, and putting himself at their head, advanced into Asia Minor with the view of crushing the obstinate island, as ascribing invincibility to himself alone, and that on none of his lieutenants, not even his best, would good fortune condescend to light, but only on his own proper person.¹ Yet in the small town of Nicomedia fell sick, his first real sickness,² and died on the third of May, 1481, a new, terrible example of the ruling passion strong in death, since the frenzied tyrant dictated in a hurry to one of his grandees, to inscribe in Latin on his tomb, *My intention was to take Rhodes, and subdue proud Italy*; and then a moment before vomiting forth his soul (as is given on no common authority), shrieked out "*Rhodes, Rhodes, Rhodes!*"³

¹ Bosio : par. ii., lib. xii.

² Bouhours : Vie d'Aubusson, iv. 176.

³ Caoursinus.—Seb. Paoli : Osservazioni. ii. 553.—Bouhours : Vie d'Aubusson, iv. 177.—Theodoro Cantac Constant.—Appendix, clxxvi.