

## BOOK THE THIRD—RHODES.

## CHAPTER I.

WHY a defence of the Templars, triumphantly defended and fully, long since? To go over the ground so nobly trod by Raynouard were at least superfluous. Whoever accuses them after that, it can only be to display his own erudition. Five centuries had not been able to prove their guilt, and now it is utterly disproved, however hard to prove a negative.<sup>1</sup> There is not a reasonable and well-informed man in Europe, who thinks them guilty of any one of the enormities imputed to them. They were perhaps somewhat haughty, and exaggerated their wealth,

<sup>1</sup> Michaud: Hist., v. 428.



accumulated (yet for how short a time, a few months!) in Greece; which was folly, but no crime—crime were a wicked misnomer. I will not say, not challenging disgrace the most opprobrious, and imprisonment, and tortures, faggots, death—for these make one shudder with horror and indignation; but not even the lightest and most mitigated chastisement. Quite the contrary, they merited high praise for their virtuous and valiant actions. Their true and only crime was, their much-overrated riches. But the Templars had faults! Indeed! What a discovery! How profound! Societies of mortals should have none! Whatever their faults, they were not to be mentioned the same day, with their most barbarous murder, but entirely disappear. Their rent-roll was great, no doubt; and now that Palestine was lost, its resolute defenders become resident in Europe, had no longer necessity for expenditure that invariably devoured their income. Far from hoarding money, they had been frequently obliged to borrow by selling, or mortgaging some of their property, or on many urgent occasions during the holy war, accept charity; not for themselves, but for the benefit of the entire body of Franks. If their estates were to be curtailed, could that not be done without such base, hideous, merciless ingratitude? Their amazing



self-devotedness during the last dying struggle—Acre alone—death-rattle of Syria—might have spared them such palpable inventions; even had they fallen into material misdemeanors—which is not proved in law, but the very reverse, far more innocence than could have been expected from soldiers exposed to the numerous temptations of a martial life; nor may it be unfair to consider some indulgences a compensation nearly due to frequent distress and danger. Ascetic heroism is too rare a combination to require. But finally no discreet jury but would have acquitted the Templars. The question for any further trial could be only of what damages, for so slanderous an indictment. But open court, or fair defence, not an atom had they of either. How league with the very Saracens that slew them? Secret friends of who sawed them asunder? Of who hoped to annihilate their order at Acre, and were very near doing so? Had it depended on Philip le Bel, the Hospitallers had fared like the Templars. The Teutonic were safe in their native Germany. But the snare was evidently set for both the others. That ultimate conversation in Cyprus had been their crisis. So the Templars deciding for southern Europe, sealed their destiny, and Rhodes saved the Hospitallers. It is clear the Pope was far from inclined against



the warriors he eulogised as they deserved, at the very moment he was inviting them into his clutches. From which I am far from deducing any malignity of intention in him, but a weak and ineffectual dislike of what he had promised; and therefore he hesitated for a whole year, from when Le Bel had all the Templars through his dominions thrown into prison as malefactors in one day in 1307, which creates a confusion of dates; some historians counting from that kingly, and others from the Papal condemnation. The Pope had weighty displeasure,<sup>1</sup> at what the king had done, seized on the Templars to burn them, and confiscate their property, in 1307; and only in 1308 his Holiness consented to condemn their entire order. Bsovius, Gurtler, and all the annalists of that unhappy body, are of one accord on this point. The miserable Pontiff made several attempts to free himself from his horrible promises; but they had been the price of his tiara, and his abject nature was too eaten up by ambition to descry any way but executing it. It seemed to him necessary; as if crime and injustice can ever be necessary. Not that Clement wished worse to the Templars, or better to the Hospitallers, but, as he condemned one, he would have condemned both—abandoned

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, iv. 526.



both to the flames, if required. It might be partly age's feebleness; and piety leaveth to a dotard that not warrantable excuse, but unenviable palliation. At such fearful and extravagant iniquities imputed to his venerated order, well might unfortunate Molay, as full of wonder, make a great sign of the cross, and exclaim that such enormous inventors merited what is inflicted on liars and coiners among Saracens and Tartars. What punishment is that? To have their paunches ripped open, and their heads cut off.<sup>1</sup> They had read what purported to be his avowal, and was not. Even his had been constrained under tortures; sad tribute to the feebleness of human nature, and his imagination tried to relieve him from those horrible agonies of corporal pain; but still worse words had been forged afterwards, and feloniously inserted into that doleful cry; so he boldly denied the whole, retracting what he had pretended, and declaring those other fictions too grossly false ever to have occurred to his disordered brain, and utterly and extravagantly untrue, and invented by them-

<sup>1</sup> Prima e secunda Vita di Clemente V.—Vertot: iv. 132.—Muratori—Platina: iii. 179.—The Templars went by Sicily to Greece, says Bosio. Why that round-about? At all events, what time to get *ricchissimi* in Greece by their savings *d'ogni anno*; since they left Cyprus in 1306, and were in France in 1307? Bosio: par. ii., lib. 1.



selves. But they were the very men who owed him most gratitude in this world, and, far bitterer woe, unworthy chief ministers of that sacred creed for the defence of which he had devoted his whole life to exile and danger; he who wanted neither wealth nor rank, but had them both from birth, as of one of the richest and noblest families in Burgundy. And if he had now become Grand Master, was it a step higher? Had he not been born a prince? Or whither does the Grand Mastery direct him? And not Mahometans his execrable assailants, but Christians. And who will now deliver him to the flames, after all they could to force him to disgrace himself by a false confession, and, what is still worse, succeeded in a certain fashion! But turn from such abominations. Yet what historian whose lot bids his passing that way, but is in honour and conscience bound to fling his tribute of execration on the murdered creature's grisly cairn? How exaggerated had been their wealth and numbers, was soon shown; for though France was the head quarters, and almost home to the Templars, they were found not thousands, but about seventeen score. Nor could it well be otherwise, since only ten got alive from Acre, and when, after a reinforcement from Europe, they lost one hundred and twenty in the Tartar war, it was held to be little



less than extermination;<sup>1</sup> and the property all confiscated to the crown did not much enrich it. It was in almost that kingdom alone, that the truth was put to a proper test; for though a year later, the Templars over the whole world were condemned by the Pope, and their order abolished, yet their estates were variously disposed of, in each different country. Spain passed them over to the order of Calatrava. Many kings shared them between their nobility and clergy. Many confiscated them partly, and partly doled them out in gifts to crusaders. In Germany having who resolutely demanded a trial, they were tried and acquitted.<sup>2</sup>

Woe to the corrupted! Worse woes to the cowardly! That our wicked enemy triumphs is not from our want of strength, but from our arrant cowardice! As the Pope abolished the whole institution, what availed their being proved innocent, except saving those individuals from the flames? As to their estates there, they melted away. Those in Portugal were given to the order of Christ, created on purpose.<sup>3</sup> But no example that the persons of the Templars were subject to any capital punishment, except in France; nor their entire

<sup>1</sup> Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 526.—Forsell: iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Vertot: iv. 163.

<sup>3</sup> Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 533.



property confiscated to the crown, except in France. So much astute wickedness at the time renders it hard to affirm whether it was or not with Villaret's free consent; but certainly it has that appearance, and bears his name and signature in full, and those of divers of his chiefs, a power of attorney, with the vote of all the knights assembled in council by the sound of the bell at Rhodes, as is the custom, naming a commission to go to Europe and receive the goods of the Templars.<sup>1</sup> It was in the 1312 second sessions of the Council of Vienna, on the 3rd of April, 1312, that in the presence of the King of France and his brother Valois, and three royal sons, the order of the Templars was abolished, and their property decreed to the Hospitallers;<sup>2</sup> so that whatever occurred up to that moment, could have been but a temporary expedient and almost private transaction in comparison.<sup>3</sup> In England the order indeed was abrogated with a sigh; for England was Catholic, and what the Pope suppressed, it suppressed. But our king decided that 1313 their property should go to their natural

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xxix.—Appendix, cix.

<sup>2</sup> Platina: iii. 190. Note M.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. i., anno 1312.

<sup>3</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. iii. Giun. Vatic. Secret.—Appendix, cliv.



heirs, and that it was for the parliament<sup>1</sup> and judges to declare who were such.<sup>2</sup> And so they did, for on an appeal from a family, one of whose ancestors in Ireland had left a considerable tenement to the Templars, and that family wishing to take it back, the full courts at London sentenced otherwise, and that the lands devolved to the Hospitallers, as in the case of a father who survives his son.<sup>3</sup> And in strict conformity with this is the English sovereign's command.<sup>4</sup> And it is a sign he had some entrails of pity in his composition, that he thought of allowing a daily allowance to the Templars; though it fills us with commiseration to think how gentlemen could exist on so wretched a pittance, and to what severe straits they must have been reduced to accept it. But it consoles a little, and has something I know not what, of sweet mercy, that of all Englishmen he selects the Prior of the Hospitallers for that charity, and ends by entreating him to execute his commission well; for that otherwise he should be much embarrassed to find another capable of easing his royal mind of future trouble re-

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xxvi.—Rymer.—Appendix, cx.

<sup>2</sup> Id. Id. xxx. Id. Id. cxi.

<sup>3</sup> Lodge.—Sir William Betham.—Rot. Bi.:—Rolls and Records.

<sup>4</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xxxi.—Rymer.—Appendix, Num. cxii.



garding those afflicted knights.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere economy might have been one reason for killing them; for if they lived, could it have been on air? And they who were once so opulent, had now nothing; so that Molay had not threepence to fee a lawyer to defend him. The scoundrels gave him leave to have one, because they knew they had rendered him unable to avail himself of it.<sup>2</sup> While such were the nefarious transactions in Europe, Sir Fulk Villaret had been accomplishing the conquest of Rhodes, rather I should say the liberation of its native Christian population from their lawless tyrants, those Mahometan pirates. What became of the Colossus of Rhodes? Nothing of it was left, the rocks telling where its feet had stood. An earthquake threw it down, and its pieces remained on the beach for about a century, until in an incursion of Arabs, a Jew bought the fragments of brass, and carried them away, nine hundred camel loads. Objections that it would have fallen into the sea, savour of the hypercritical; for strange things are brought about by earthquakes.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xxxiv.—Rymer.—App., cxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 532.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. i., anno 1307.—Vertot: iv. 126.

<sup>3</sup> Anciently, to be a Rhodian was a distinction, and some called themselves such who had not been born there. Bosio: par. ii., lib. i., anno 1309.



ancient tapestry of D'Aubuson showed terribly fierce assaults. More would be certain about the taking of Rhodes, were it not for the great fire in the archives there.<sup>1</sup> Next was to reduce, or rather visit (for that was enough) its dependencies, the islets of which there are several, the principal being the ancient Coos, country of Hypocrates and Apelles, since Lango, at present Stanchio, erected into a fief in favour of persons who had distinguished themselves in the last Rhodian war, not without commensurate obligations and charges regarding galleys and troops. At its conquest in 1314, it was confided in administration to the Langue of Provence, though afterwards, by the general chapter held<sup>2</sup> at Avignon, in 1356, opened to the whole order.<sup>3</sup> Nor is it not to be observed that this is the first time Langues are spoken of, and seem to have crept in clandestinely; for neither at Jerusalem, Acre, or even Cyprus, are they mentioned. Nor did they fail to produce bad crops from their very beginning, though only seven at first, while most dignities were common to the whole order, at least in 1318.

Calamo, renowned for its honey, had two ex-

<sup>1</sup> Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 492.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. i.

<sup>2</sup> Id.: Notizie, ii. 498.

<sup>3</sup> Bosio: par. ii., lib. i., anno 1317.



cellent ports and abounded in fresh watersprings, and, to Villaret's surprise, showed a tolerable commercial town close to the ruins of a fine city. Calchi was fertile, with a strong castle to keep off corsairs. Lero gloried in its quarries of marble. The soil of several of those islets was rich. One was splendidly wooded. Another famous for wines. Another drove a good trade in sponges brought from the bottom of the sea by divers—nor could any youth be married, until he was able to remain a certain number of minutes deep under water. But chiefly one was prized for its ship-carpenters, who had the art of building light craft renowned for swiftness all over the Levant, sail, oar, or both ways. One of the smallest islets, though designated as magisterial, because considered more peculiarly assigned to the grand master, as forming part of his private domain, St. Nicholas del Cardo, is by Bosio called Palma, and in another place, Palmosa, and that is Patmos.<sup>1</sup> ("Patmos, now Palmosa, where St. John wrote his revelation.")<sup>2</sup> And if it be so, however sterile, it is interesting to a Christian. Or are there two islands of the name of Patmos—one near Stanchio, and one

<sup>1</sup> Bosio: par. ii., lib. i., anno 1314. His words are clear; "Lisola del Patmo, modernamente detta Palmosa."

<sup>2</sup> Comp. Geogr., ii. 12.



close to Samos?<sup>1</sup> The question then is, which was of the writer of the Apocalypse? for that is the one which belonged to the Hospitallers.

Nizara (Porphyros), famous through all the Levant for its mill and building stones, had been likewise noted for its hot baths, and for its delicious fruit of all sorts, soon became as it were a second Rhodes, having a beautiful town, ornamented with marble columns and statues, in signal abundance; and afterwards a grand cross of the order resided there, and it rose to be a bishop's see, suffragan of the Rhodian Archbishopric.<sup>2</sup>

After which review, in the company of Anthony De Beck (who it is doubtful whether he was or was not a member of the order, but then Papal legate, and at one time Bishop of Durham),<sup>1</sup> Villaret returned to Rhodes eager to indulge in a life of luxury and repose from his devoirs. But that was not yet to be, and the pirates who had escaped, had roused their Mahometan brethren of Asia Minor—among whom a thriving Tartar horde, and it is possible with some Comnenian blood. Yet the celebrated Ottoman had to retreat; although the

<sup>1</sup> As in Mr. Murray's recent Map to his "Handbook in the East."

<sup>2</sup> Seb. Paoli: Notiz. Geogr., ii. 502.

Cod. Dipl. Geros, ii., Num. xviii.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 527.



knights were not given time to erect walls. New proof that valiant hearts and hands are the best of fortifications, and need none. But though Ottoman was driven from Rhodes, he attacked the other adjoining islets and ravaged them; and an obstinate and fierce war ensued, during which the knights are said to have received much assistance from Amadeo V. of Savoy, and that, to perpetuate the memory, his descendants have ever since worn the white cross; and, as device, the word *Fert* meaning *Fortitudo ejus Rhodum tenuit*. And why may it not be quite true?<sup>1</sup> To write devices by initials, was the custom then. As to the cross, indeed they bore it long before; probably from the first crusade; but they may have continued to bear it more exclusively, not using much any other, whether eagle or lion—the rather that they had become sovereign and independent princes, and wished to show it; and, as Menestrier observes truly, at that time amongst the Italians the cross in an escutcheon was a sign of freedom and independence, and hoisted by any municipality as a proclamation of liberty. It was the cap of liberty of the period.<sup>2</sup> Thus Florence had a cross half

<sup>1</sup> With some difference of date; but in the main Bosio agrees with the usual opinion about F. E. R. T.; par. ii., lib. vi. anno 1444.

<sup>2</sup> Art. de Blason, cap. vi.



white and half red, with the word *libertas*.<sup>1</sup> And the small town of Macerata having declared itself independent, displayed a cross and rebelled against its former government.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly since Amedeo was in England in 1309, and at Rome in 1310, he could not be at Rhodes in 1310; but he could very well be there in 1315, true date of his succour, in question.<sup>3</sup> It is surely strange to find a vacancy in 1315. But so it is. In 1306 he is in Dauphiny, in 1307 at the royal marriage in London, in 1308 at Montmellan with his son and Beatrice of Savoy; in 1309, at the coronation of the King of England; in 1310 at Chambery, and with the emperor on his passage into Italy; in 1311 he is to be traced at Vercelli, Milan, Rome, until his return to Piedmont in 1313; in 1314 in Dauphiny; but there we would have a stop, if it were not that he was at Rhodes in 1315. These particulars, because other historians have decided that Amadeo's visits to London and Rome precluded the possibility of his Rhodian feats. But on the contrary, it is very near proof certain that this chronology is correct, since it coincides with the year he could be at

<sup>1</sup> Borghini : Dis., ii. 143.—Appendix, cxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix, cxv.

<sup>3</sup> Buffier : Hist.—Nice foro Gregorio, vii.—Laonico Calcondela, 1.—Villani.—Appendix, cxv.



Rhodes; whereas, if it followed the vulgar error of placing the attack on the islets in 1310 (as for many other reasons no extremely attentive reader can), then indeed the whole ancient Piedmontese tradition were indubitably a fable. As to Amadeo's ancestors having worn the cross before him, that is no impediment to his having gone to Rhodes. Even the coin alleged may have been by the Louis, Baron of Vaud, who died in 1350; just as well as by his uncle of the same name, who died in 1301. And the *Fert* and the dog's collar on the tomb of the father of Amadeo V. prove nothing; for though very ancient, who knows when it was erected? If in the latter years of Amadeo V. himself, it would be a flattery to assign his device to his father. Such things are not uncommon in the fine arts. Virgil has several anachronisms. And in Raphael's great painting, the School of Athens, are there not cardinals and friars as auditors of Socrates, and companions of Plato? Therefore, registered as historic be what the learned diplomatist has high Piedmontese authority for, if his own were not more than sufficient. The knights  
1315  
were enabled by Amadeo V. in 1315, to expel  
the Ottoman invaders from the islets, so that Rhodes might leisurely rebuild itself and fortify. But a few months were enough for quiet and luxury to



breed indiscipline. Villaret, blinded by his glory, was unable to withstand the temptation of success. Instead of giving good example to his young knights, quite the contrary. They had in him an excuse for every excess. And it appeared that valour and luck legitimated vice.

*Langue* was a word of division regarding the order, but of union between conspirators. If that was too harsh a term to be applied to those young knights then, it was quickly to suit their mutinous conduct. Nor were the riches, supposed flowing into the treasury from the downfall of their former companions-in-arms without offering a veil of sanction to every wild and ruinous expense. In vain one of the elder knights exhorted them to beware, that it was the very same turbulence and vanity that led the Templars to destruction; that their enemies desired nothing more than to be furnished with an excuse to ruin them; that it was not from love of Hospitallers that Philip le Bel burned the Templars; that if the Parliament of Paris<sup>1</sup>, and even Rome herself, declared the Hospitallers were to possess all the property, yet that was only in show, to fling the odium on them, and the King of France in fact seized every stiver of it in his dominions for himself; and that the Pope

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xxviii.—Appendix, cxvi.



well knew how, in despite of all his fine words, the different sovereigns and their greedy nobles would in some way or other contrive to get most of the rest of it; that no reason whatsoever to expect that the cardinals and Papal prelates would not do, as with their oily discourse they had always been in the habit of doing—namely, under various pretexts, wriggle themselves, they or their relatives, into the richest commanderies and other benefices of the order, and dispense graces to favourites at no allowance, and in substance pursue with ungrateful pertinacity their own best defenders; and even the worse ill-treat them, the more they are sure of their devotedness, and that they would submit to any injustice, rather than rise against their spiritual chief; that they ought not to close their eyes against what he had just received, this copy of the French king's letter to the Pope, by which it is evident he desired to extinguish the Hospital as well as the Temple, and he read to them his true expressions.<sup>1</sup>

“ Now if by reform that same was purely meant, you know I should not object; but it is that I know he means reform such as he used with the Templars. Clement praised those unfortunate gentlemen to the last, until they were entrapped into destruction.

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xxvii.—Appendix, cxvii.



Under pretence of reforming us, or uniting us to a new military order, the intention is to destroy us, and deprive us of all we have, and merge our name even (which has become too glorious for safety) in another from some unknown vocabulary, to serve its turn, and shortly be abolished. Yes, had our ancestors and we all acted less nobly well, we should not now be in so dangerous a predicament. Yet, at the very moment when prudence the most consummate is so requisite, you draw down the reproaches of censorial hypocrites. It is to ruin you and us all."

Yet what could be done, when Villaret, with his own debauchery, publicly warranted that of his subjects? This, and his monstrous favouritism, and occasional haughtiness and undue severity, and still more undue indulgence, caused tumults, which ripened into revolts, and even attacks upon his life. So that he had to throw himself  
1317 on the Pope's protection; and we have Papal documents to this day of those disgraceful scenes. First, comes a letter of recommendation brought by a person who may have been a spy, *to console and advise*,<sup>1</sup> and next the brief. "We are sorry to know you have been assaulted, and obliged to fly from Rhodes by your own knights into a

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xlii.



fortress in another part of that island; and although their demeanour appears to have been most improper, yet you are accused of having partly occasioned it; so that we cite both them and you into our presence, to investigate the affair, and decide on due information." This parchment, like so many others, has just escaped out of its hiding-place, and appears in history for the first time.<sup>1</sup> Rumours went of one of Villaret's confidential menials having been bribed to poison, or otherwise murder his master, upon whose flight the rioters elected as *locum-tenens* the old knight Sir Maurice de Pagnac, who hardened them in their resistance to despotism; and that, little by little, such as Villaret would end by erecting an absolute tyranny instead of the order's primitive free institutions. To answer which, the Pontiff at the same time wrote a brief to Pagnac, calling him likewise to Avignon,<sup>2</sup> and another, naming a vicar of the order.<sup>3</sup> Assuredly a new Pope, whatever internal dissent he may have felt from his predecessor's policy, followed it in the main, not sorry at this opportunity for a reasonable intervention, under cover of which he could deprive the knights and their grand master

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xliii.—Appendix, cxviii.

<sup>2</sup> Id., Id., Id. xliii.—Appendix, cxix.

<sup>3</sup> Id., Id., Id. xlv. and xlvi.—Appendix, cxx.



of all independence, and dispose of his dignity himself, which eminently agrees with the mysterious terms wherein he writes to the King of France,<sup>1</sup> as well as that appearance of pleading the Hospitallers' right to the property of the Templars in the bull to the King of Sicily; but finishes by approving of his Majesty's determination, though he could not but have known full well it was to confiscate the  
1318 chief part of it to the Sicilian crown, as indeed he did.<sup>2</sup> Nor is not the same evil intention observable in the bull to the King of Spain, in which he assents to the formation of the Montese Concordat consigning the Moorish war to another to be chosen, and the Valencian property of the Templars to maintain that new knighthood, and the Arragonese property given to the Hospitallers, with the accompaniment of what was sure to eat it up, the united expenses of that entire operation.<sup>3</sup> Up to this date, it is clear that the commanders were mere administrators, removable at will upon the smallest sign, who retaining the value of their own dress and food, paid all the rest into the common treasure; and likewise it is laid down formally

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., and Num. xli.

<sup>2</sup> Id., Id. Num. xl., xlvii.—Appendix, cxxi.

<sup>3</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii. Num. xxxvii. and Num. xxxviii.



by Bosio, that the *supreme* tribunal of the order is the chapter-general, to which the grand master and his knights and clergy alike submit.<sup>1</sup>

So Villaret, and Pagnac, and some knights, went to Avignon, and Villaret was sentenced to accept a priory, but totally independent of any future grand master, and only responsible to the Holy See, which, to the guiltless order, was a double sacrifice, losing the rent of a priory, and paying a prior in no way obedient to it, and having a grand master either directly named by the Pope, or indirectly chosen under his influence. Nor did his Holiness deny himself the satisfaction of hurrying to direct a brief to the fallen grand master, wounding him more severely from the novelty, and showing him that he was no longer an independent sovereign, but miserably dependent, both in temporals and spirituals; for, after writing to Villaret as a king, and companion of kings, even so far on his journey as Naples,<sup>2</sup> he, within a few weeks, changes tone altogether, and does not give the fallen even the title of knight, as if he were not such any longer, but quite a private person, to whom he doles out a

<sup>1</sup> Bosio : par. ii., lib. i, anno 1321.

<sup>2</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. l. and li.—Arch. Vatic. Secr.—Appendix, cxxii.



priory, in charity, at another's expense.<sup>1</sup> How long Sir Fulk continued to vegetate, is scarce worth notice; yet he remained in that forgotten state for years, never stirring from a castle of his sister's, to which he had retired, near Montpellier, where he was buried.<sup>2</sup> But his station was instantly conferred on Sir Helion de Villanova,<sup>3</sup> by a  
1319 few knights summoned to elect him in the Papal palace itself; which, if an honour, was such a one as induced the belief in many people, that he was not merely favoured by the Pontiff, as he was publicly, but that he altogether received the dignity from him, and not from the order. If so, he testified his gratitude in kind, by selling one of the order's estates to his Holiness, near his native Cahors, where, being sprung from a low family, he was proud to enrich it.<sup>4</sup> The pecuniary embarrassments of the order were real in proportion to its flushed expectations, when promised the exaggerated property of the Templars; but, in point of fact, only just so great as a usurer might wish, or perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. liv. and lv.—Arch. Vatic. Secr. Appendix, cxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix, cxxiv.

<sup>3</sup> Bosio: par. ii., lib. ii., anno 1322.—Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii., 463.

<sup>4</sup> Bosio: par. ii., lib. ii., anno 1325.—Vertot: v. 185, affirms the said Pope was son of a cobbler.—Grandson of a private soldier, according to an annotator on Platina, iii. 196, Note A.



cause, in order to lend it ready money at an enormous interest, or purchase its lands cheap. The date having been objected to, Seb. Paoli thought it necessary to corroborate it by an unanswerable document—the letter of John XXII. himself, which the perspicacious Bosio had never seen (since coming from the Vatican), but had formed his opinion without it—letter in which Villanova is advised not to abdicate, but accept the place of grand master to which he had been called—letter containing the names of the knights at the election, and dated Avignon, 14th of the Calends of July, 1319.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps in Bosio's time, things were too fresh; but now what harm that we know the secrets of the drama at Avignon, and the name of all the actors, by a document detected in the most secret corner of the archives of the Vatican and labelled secret? Villanova's election was irregular, what of that? It serves only to steady an historian in his path to truth, and enables him to find his way through those remote labyrinthine antiquities. Earlier it might have served malignity, but at present only aids laborious and innocent investigation. What quantity of good or harm the French revolution did, may be matter of opinion,

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. vi.—Gi. Vatic.—Appendix, cxxx.



but that it opened the archives of the world cannot be doubted.

Nor did the vicar cease command at Rhodes; but continued there as the *locum-tenens* of Villanova, who delayed a long time in Europe, impeded by a severe malady, and visiting the establishments in France, where (at Montpellier) he held a general chapter.<sup>1</sup> There Sir John Builbrulx was turcopolier. Does Builbrulx sound like an English name? Yet English he certainly was, and could not but be, since turcopolier. If ever was an exception, it was not at such a period; for then, for the first time, the order was formally divided into languages. The three grand crosses which hitherto had by custom never failed to be conferred on Englishmen alone, Grand Prior of England, Bailly of the Eagle, Turcopolier, were in that chapter-general made the property of the English language. That Builbrulx was at the same time made one of the conventual baillies, is a proof he was esteemed singularly sagacious and upright; for such baillies were chiefs of their different languages, or nations, and obliged always to reside with the grand master.<sup>2</sup> The use had crept on by degrees, and been found convenient; yet did not become legal with unanimity. For

<sup>1</sup> Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 464.

<sup>2</sup> Bosio: par. ii., lib. ii., anno 1330.



though it was in a distant country, respecting Rhodes, and on treacherous ground, where it was requisite to weigh well every word; with the recent example of the Templars before their eyes *in terrorem*, and supported by high authority on the reasonable plea of equalising the commanderies; still there was no small minority against it, but nevertheless the majority made it a standing law. We for the future shall have to speak of Languages, for the present only seven,<sup>1</sup> exact conformity with Hallam, but soon eight, and of Inns belonging each to a Language. Consider them like what our own Inns of Court once were, European, not Eastern invention. No peculiarity of the order, which in that respect only kept clearly in the wake of custom; not merely for meals, but also for debating, each exclusively in its own language. That at the grand master's and in the chapters being Latin, French, or Italian, or a mixture of all three—a sort of *Lingua Franca*, varying according to time and place. “Unwilling am I,” said a knight, “to find fault in this chapter general, with whatever is the practice. Yet are there many who like me prefer staying here at home in Europe, where there are many occasions of usefully exerting bravery and military skill—where our religious rites can be more

<sup>1</sup> Hallam : *Lit of Europe*, i.



solemnly performed, and whence there may chance to be a crusade—rather than drag a tepid existence in a small island so distant from Palestine, that it appears to several against both the letter and spirit of our profession—as it did to our choicest members at Cyprus—persisting to squander our time, wealth, and force in hostilities against pirates, on that unfaithful element to which we were unused (and worse if we become used to it), instead of backing our own good steeds on a wide continent, not shut up in a paltry ship, but established in some illustrious metropolis, where we can apply to our duty of exercising magnificent hospitality on an extended scale, and curing the infirm of every Christian nation, or advance to battle at the head of the armies of all Christendom. It is this vile Rhodian war that has reduced us to these present embarrassments of finance,<sup>1</sup> and the monstrous interest we have to pay to the Florentines. Thence a division in our order, as is proved by our holding this debate in land not our own, and our order shall dwindle away perhaps, until its very existence shall soon cease. A few may grumble; but here we have our grand master with us, and here let us remain.”

And when riches were spoken of, and the great

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros, ii., Num. liv., lvi. Vatic.—Consideratis oneribus dicti Hospitalis; magnum ejusdem prejudicium.



expenses to which Villaret had put the order by the conquest of Rhodes, it called up a rather aged knight: "Yet we should be rich (though probably for only moments) if the property of the Templars had been given us, as promised. It is not the Rhodian war (nobly employed money), nor was Villaret then other than a deserving hero, and as such his name will go down to posterity; but it was crafty politics that broke down his fine mind, and drove him on dissipation, which was artfully increased by the promises held out to him. I know I am trenching on perilous matters, but nevertheless I had rather say the truth, and be also burned alive, than remain silent before this august meeting of our own brethren, and seem by my silence to consent to throw a blot, through our late grand master, on our whole brave body and their exertions on so many days of glory, at the expense of so much blood, and the lives of so many of our renowned companions. Are not the papers in two mountains before us? And besides what we see, how much is unseen? It is easy to trick warriors. A million times rather tricked than trick. From this basest of wickedness, O Lord, deliver us! I despise their tricks far too deeply to envy them. Much better would it have been for us—a thousand times better—never to have been insulted with



offer of any of the Templars' spoils. A base offer! but worse, a plot to ruin us.<sup>1</sup> Bulls misled us into expenses that indeed are ruinous; effeminate vices (not the Rhodian war) generated the consequent destructive and shameful debts, and were beneficial to none but villanous usurers. Behold the rolls of those royal and imperial folk<sup>2</sup>—whom I cannot much blame, since they possibly act in favour of their own dominions. Rely on those despots, who will! Few of them but take the Templars' property to themselves, under a thousand excuses. So we incur all the odium, and they have all the profit; even so, it is better for us not to have ill-gotten goods. It were a profanation, a desecration, an infamy never to be washed out. Besides I tell you what has been often told you by revered lips, that it is the work of infernal conspirators. Instead of vainly descanting on that, let us bend to necessity, and allow that there is a relaxation of discipline which ought to be amended by obliging all the commanders to leave off loitering in Europe, and remove to head quarters, wherever it be, for at least some years, under pain of losing their com-

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii. Num. xxii., xxiii., xxiv., xxxviii., xxxix., xl., xli., liv., lviii.—Giunt. Vatic., iii., iv., v.—Appendix, cxxvi., cxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii. Num. xxvii, xxx., xxxi., xxxii., xxxiii., xxxiv., xxxv., lvi.



manderies; and let such residence be a necessary qualification for any of the high employments. Rhodes will thus cease to be looked on as a place of exile; and idlers, by this removal from infection, may learn some probity and honour. Therefore, most venerated vicar, I beseech you not to think of me—though one of your most dutiful servants—but of what I have said; and allow me to propose a law of that nature to this assembly.”

And so it was proposed and passed, and stands on the statute-books still. But was it executed? It is to be hoped it was, sometimes at least—however feebly.<sup>1</sup> That vicar, or *locum-tenens*, was the De Pins who had been made such in 1317, and still retained the situation, the grand master being absent. Never had the vicar the least pretension to be more, nor is he ever named anything else, in the documents.<sup>2</sup> Vertot has no excuse!<sup>3</sup> Vertot is full of errors. Thus he talks of a bull of 1325 1323, and upon no such thing being found, he is supposed to have meant that of 1322. Which is however to the King of England, and not to the

<sup>1</sup> Bosio: par. ii., lib. ii., anno 1331.

<sup>2</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lix.—Appendix, cxxvi.

<sup>3</sup> Seb. Paoli: Serie Chron., ii., 463.—Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xlv.—Appendix, cxxv.



Hospitallers.<sup>1</sup> Or who is willing to believe what he tells us of De Pins (who had been vicar now above twelve years, during which the order went on acquiring naval customs and that vicar himself an able seaman) having put, under whatever plea of expediency, all the able-bodied but unarmed men of a colony to the sword, and permitted the rest and the women and children, to be carried into slavery?<sup>2</sup> Vertot cites no authority for the enormity he relates, and proud am I of my inability to discover any. That John XXII. kept a sharp look out, on at least his noblest spies, is evident from his secret letter to the order's prior at Pisa.<sup>3</sup> Sir Thomas Larchier, who was Prior of England in 1329 and had been for several years before, abdicated; and Sir Leonardus de Tybertis took his place. Why? Was it a single exception at the king's desire? But he might have been an Englishman, though then the order's ambassador at Venice.<sup>4</sup> At all events, Tybertis lived little.<sup>5</sup>

Nor even when Villanova embarked at last in

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lviii.

<sup>2</sup> Vertot: v. 184.

<sup>3</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lx.—Giunt. Vatic. Secret.—Appendix, cxxxi.

<sup>4</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lxi.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 537.

<sup>5</sup> He was the twenty-second Prior of England. Appendix, xxx.



1332, was it without some difficulty on the score of his health, which was not yet strong enough to support so long a voyage, in the Pontifical opinion.<sup>1</sup> Nor did he find any difficulty to engage the vicar to deliver up the supreme power, nor had there not been transactions during that length of period, chiefly as to adding to the fortifications of the city of Rhodes itself, and the other chief towns of the island, as well as various strong towers and castles round all its coasts, not omitting several fortresses in the environing islets. The shipping too had considerably increased, and now merited the name of a fleet. Just previous to the arrival of Villanova, the King of Castile had attempted to create a new order, and endow it with the spoils of the Templars, but the Pope refused his consent; which did not make any essential change, since they went to Calatrava just the same, which could not but occasion discontent in the Spanish language at Rhodes.<sup>2</sup>

One of the first things which Villanova and his senate had to decide, was whether to enter into a league with France and Venice against the Turk, which that the order assented to

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lxxiii.—Vatic. Secret.

<sup>2</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lxxii.—Vatic. Secret.—Appendix, cxxxii.



is not curious; nor that Venetians soon left them in the lurch.<sup>1</sup> But what of Sir Deodate and the dragon? St. George and the dragon for a wager! It is about this time! What of that?—What? That it is a fable to be sure. Yet its being totally a fable (as following good authorities, I am prepared to affirm) were no sufficient reason for not relating it. Beyond doubt Livy knew, just as thoroughly as his modern readers, that many of the things he tells could not possibly be true. Yet he tells them nevertheless! For they showed what those times believed. When savages bored a traveller with some wonder of their idol, that he recounts it is no proof in the least that he believes it. No truth surely, in itself; but it is true in this, and thus far, that it demonstrates how over easy they are in credence. Why should the historian be taxed with the fictions he quotes? His business is to inform us how such a nation thought, not how he thinks. Describing a crime, is he for that criminal? But the story I refer to would give a false opinion of those times; as if it could have been entertained then, and I am quite persuaded it could not; but that it was the invention of posterity, when become too prone to accuse their ancestors. Superhuman, perhaps! But this was nothing superhuman, nor even pretended to be.

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lxx.—Vatic. Secret.



People had the contrary before their eyes, and it accorded with their every-day experience to resort to facile means of instantly annihilating a hideous wild beast, without any personal exposure of coming to close quarters with it, which would have only been ridiculous in those distant days, as well as in our own. Regulus and his army in Africa, do not apply here. The Romans having but swords, lances, and arrows, how could they manage with a boa whose dried skin measured one hundred feet and more? But not only gunpowder was used a little by the Turks, in 1330; but was so ordinary at that time, that they made use of it invariably and profusely, at every little battle or siege, showed every person what sufficed, at once, to consume any scales, however thick. And, although the generous spirit of the knights might reject it against fellow-creatures; yet naturally they could not be scrupulous concerning a noxious serpent, which had already been fatal to some of their own companions. The Greek fire could be thrown either from the hand in the shape of a grenade, or from tubes, like a rocket, at any mark a considerable distance off; and what could melt and consume iron and brass, could the toughest hide. Or a ball or steel point, if shot from the zembourek, could pass through a stout cuirass of the best steel; and



what greater resistance from a skin, however hard? So there would have been no necessity for a personal combat, on horseback—too pickering round and round as at a regular tourney. The warrior may have had his couple of bulldogs trained in Europe, to attack the belly, which is the weak point in most animals; and on that the whole story seems to have been raised, not by contemporaries, but in posterior ages. So it were doubly erroneous in me to enter into a prolix account of what is probably not only false, but tends to give a false opinion of the times in question.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps I have said too much about it as it is; but I thought it necessary to give substantial reasons for rejecting what cuts such a figure in Vertot, and is, indeed, in great part, an idle tale magnified into undue importance by himself.<sup>2</sup> As to the inscription on the tomb, “cy gist le vainqueur du dragon”—a more than dubious fact—that epitaph avails little, except

<sup>1</sup> Seb. Paoli: Serie Chron., ii. 464.

<sup>2</sup> Vertot: v. 194. Yet as I may have tickled curiosity, which was not my intention, here is the whole substance of the story, warning it dull enough. A dragon in the island of Rhodes, killed several people, and as many knights as went to attack him; so the grand master forbade any more. But Sir Deodate went to France, and returning with his dogs, slew the monster. Instead of praise, he was punished for disobedience; yet acquired the name of Champion, and it is said to have been written on his tomb.



you can tell who was the dragon. What is sure is, that the warrior was noted for his independent boldness of spirit, and that his order had much to exasperate their minds at that period; and even while a mere knight, he was looked upon by his brethren as their champion. They were too much occupied with a human dragon, to have leisure for an inferior class; threatened as the order were with that prodigious expense, the maintenance of the entire Christian fleet,<sup>1</sup> not voluntarily, but against their will, and clearly beyond their ability, in spite of their most oppressive self-taxation; *mortorio* and *vacante* being then first levied, as well as the plate and jewels of the dead, with whatever could be saved by a rigid limiting of the knights' table to one substantial dish, flesh or fish, and pursued by homilies severer than to the Templars, at the very moment those luckless gentlemen had been under sentence of dissolution and martyrdom, it might be expected a like destiny awaited themselves. While they were in a permanent state of war with the Turk, who never left them a moment's quiet—all their heroic efforts did not prevent European slanderers from converting the brightest trophy of their domestic politics, that not a poor man was in their dominions, into a cause of grave reproof; for

<sup>1</sup> Bosio: par. ii., lib. ii., anno 1344.



at this very date is it recorded, how under their wise government mendicancy had entirely disappeared, there being plenty of labour for every individual in health, and for the sick and invalid a magnificent hospital to retire to, where they found abundant comforts of all kinds spiritual and temporal;<sup>1</sup> confronting which, and the contented mediocrity of commerce and of social luxuries at that time in Rhodes, with the exuberance of wealth, mendicity, discontent and worse, and of colonies and manufactures at present in the most advanced nation in Europe, suggest an intricate question for wiser heads than mine. Yet was this their excellent example of real charity and true statesmanship, turned into an accusation of not giving alms, or rarely and but little. No wonder then, if their most inoffensive recreations were made sins of the blackest hue. Exiles, ascetics, cut off from the enjoyment of society, a sluggard called it criminal in them to have fine dogs and horses—as if it were a holier thing to indulge in curs and bone-setters, forgetting they were not mendicant friars, but soldiers of the noblest houses of Christendom, young barons and heirs to large fortunes, if they pleased.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vertot: v. 192.

<sup>2</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., Num. lxix.—Appendix, cxxxiii.



Sir Philip de Thame was twenty-third Prior of England in 1342, and long before—and a great favourite of the then King (Edward III.), who with difficulty allows of his going to Rhodes, and requires his return quickly, for that his government cannot well go on without him; and that he was an Englishman, so not to quit the kingdom without leave, under a great fine.<sup>1</sup> A violent Turkish campaign rendered the year 1346 more full of fierce conflicts and dissensions than usual,<sup>2</sup> in which the Hospitallers of course took a prominent part; when, in the midst of such scenes, poor Villanova died, to the great grief of the Pope, as was to be expected.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lxxviii.—Seb. Paoli writes Thames; others, Thane.—Appendix, xxx.

<sup>2</sup> Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lxxi.

<sup>3</sup> Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 464.