

THE HISTORY
OF THE ORDER OF
ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM.

BOOK III.—RHODES.—(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER III.

THE next to fill the magisterial throne was Sir Anthony Fluvian, or De la Riviere, a Catalan;¹ and his first act in that capacity, was to favour one who must have been an Englishman, since he was Turcopolier, though his name has an odd sound, Sir Thomas Sequipunt; but I dare say there is an error from the translation.² And the times being comparatively peaceful, there might be a large allowance of law; on which we find a 1423 Papal bull, referring for legal decision to Rhodes between two knights of that order,³ which was, in truth, only to grant as a favour what had been ruled as obligatory as a right, by the late grand

¹ Seb. Paoli : ii. 406.—Bosio : par. ii., lib. v., anno 1421.

² Bosio : par. ii., lib. v., anno 1421.

³ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xev.

master's chapter-general; and another bull graciously permitting the knights to raise a loan on their own property, towards the expenses of a fleet to face the Cairo sultan, who was threatening them with an invasion.¹ In 1426 cannon must have become quite common, for they are counted among the necessaries of an armed ship.² But the principal event of the period as regarded the community, was a chapter general holden at Rhodes, in May, 1428; for in it many important statutes were enacted—among which one of the voters being the Turcopolier, Sir Thomas Lanceleves—curious English name! How not in disguise? Perhaps Launceleweck³—is that no member can exercise commerce. Something of the kind might always have been in practice, but this is the first time that I see it laid down as a law.⁴ Yet there were exceptions, as Venice, Genova, Florence. One statute renders all idle duels, and illegal homicides, as opprobrious as criminal. Another with proper severity represses corruption in officers and systematic debauchery. Others concern the treasury, the *Esgard*, the baillias,

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., xcvi.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. v., anno 1426.

³ Id.: id. id. 1428.—Appendix, cli.

⁴ Id.: id., vi., id. 1437.—*Che i cavalieri e fratelli diquest' ordine esercitar non possino mercantia.*

chiefly the grand Bailly of the German Language, inspector, until then, of St. Peter's Libertini, but which fortress, for the future, to be immediately under the grand masters. Esgard was a sort of court of arbitration, formed of the knights for themselves to prevent them, through respect—true signification of the word—from the noise, loss of time, and scandal of an open judicature. In the Esgard was neither lawyer allowed, nor writing, but only the parties to tell their own story; and this is the most ancient tribunal of the order, and not without something of the jury, in this that they are the *equals* of the accused. The baillias are a high and very ancient dignity, deriving from the French *bailliez*, which was the word in fashion with the Kings of France, when conferring any place.¹ If to each of the different Languages had been assigned from the beginning, by custom, a particular dignitarian to head it, as the turcopolier to the English, yet it was for the future to be considered not merely custom, but matter legalized.² Caravan in Arabia signifying a company, it is used in the order for the knights chosen for such a garrison, or such expedition, whether by sea or

¹ Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, i. 490, and ii. 533.—App. cxlix.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. ccxxiv.—Appendix, cl. The prior was head of the order in England. The turcopolier, head of the English language everywhere.

land.¹ Sir Anthony had been himself a grand cross, before chosen to be grand master; namely, that very ancient dignity, drapperius, in more modern times called grand conservator.²

Timour and Bajazet being dead — the latter's four sons might have divided his realm, or ascended the throne, legitimately, by turns; but that would have been to wait overlong for the youngest, so his fraternal hug relieved the three elders, and Mahomet I. reigned alone. After him his son, Amurath II., became sultan; who, but for Scanderbeg and Huniades, would have mastered all Greece and Hungary, of which the various sovereigns implored the protection of the grand master of

1434 Rhodes; who began to make what exertions he could, one of which was the calling of a new chapter general, that began at Rhodes, in 1433, and was continued at Bazil; in which the grand master, from his great age, did not appear in person but by a *locum-tenens*; and the property of the order stood for a large loan towards war with the infidel. To Rhodes the turcopolier hastened, with the king's permission to take gold and silver plate, to the value

¹ Statuti Tit. xix.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., i., Num. cviii. The drapperius in 1241 was a French knight, Chev. Poncius Boschant. The Templars had the same dignity, and in 1241, held by the Chev. Pierre d'Aramont.

of three hundred marks.¹ The Order also received embassies of sympathy, of which one was from the King of England, by the Lord Scroope, then of the lords of the council, as his ambassador,² when a far worse enemy than the Turks singly—the Turks leagued with the Saracens—were on the point of invading the island; which, from its position between them, had for policy, never to be at direct warfare with both at a time. Rarely did Turk and Saracens coalesce. And now, as at war with the Turks, it would willingly have been at peace with Egypt. And, indeed, the Saracen, at the same time that he ruined the baillyhood of the order, at Cyprus, seized its king and kept him in fetters, 1435 requiring so vast a ransom that, but for the Knights of Rhodes, who gave him money to pay it, the unfortunate Lusignan would have remained in slavery his entire life. Still, though he pretended to renew the late Grand Master Naillac's treaty,³ the not veracit Daher was determined to assail Rhodes, since taking it, Cyprus would fall of itself. This intelligence, which Sir Anthony had from his trusty spies at Cairo, made him write a circular, calling

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xcvi.—Bosio : par. ii., lib. v., anno 1433.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. xcix.—Appendix, clii.

³ Id., id., Id., lxxxvi.

on all his knights in Europe, who instantly replied by flying to Rhodes, in greater number far than was calculated on. In obedience to which the twenty-ninth Prior of England, Sir Robert Malorry, hurried off, with what stores he could collect, and we have the king's passport, allowing of his free embarkation, with his suite, and as far as a hundred marks sterling of gold and silver coin.¹ Daher, a Circassian by birth, had been brought to Cairo a child, and became Mameluke; as was usual with those soldiers carried off by barbarous robbers, or sold by their parents from their cradles in some Christian country, but chiefly Circassia or Georgia, and taken to Egypt to be circumcised. The constitution of which body was, that a father could, in no case, be succeeded by his son, and it may be said they never had legal wives. So this circumstance had for effect, that though many Mamelukes became sovereigns, there was never any royal family. Daher, at present, was king, and celebrated at his day. But with all his evil intentions, the enormous preparations of the knights, and their signal reputation for valour and military science, awed him and engaged him to abstain from his plan;² but there

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. c.—Appendix, cliii. and xxx.
—Or Malery. Bosio calls him Malorto.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. v., anno 1435.

remained such immense expense, that they were obliged to mortgage some of their property. And be it reflected, before we pronounce the Papal consent superfluous, that to have it suited all parties, mortgagees as well as lenders, the sellers as well as the buyers, who often even required it as one of title deeds; for the Pope having been original trustee to nearly every legacy or donation, the lands lost much of their value when sold without his assent and all due formalities; whence it was well for the order to have it, though they were only disposing of their own. We may smile at it, and are wrong; but Sir Anthony and Rhodes were grateful. At Basil everything tended to the reunion of all the various members and interests of the order, and to wiping out any little remains of the great schism; nor did this chapter general break up quickly, but to hear of its proceedings, contributed to the quiet of Fluvian's deathbed; for he ¹⁴³⁷ died at Rhodes, in 1437, on the twenty-sixth of October,¹ leaving to his order a legacy of two hundred thousand gold crowns, saved from his private fortune.² Mild and excellent prince, he was much regretted! At his own expense he

¹ Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 468.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1437.

erected and endowed a princely infirmary at Rhodes, on the foundations of the former one, in the true spirit of the order, as was practised formerly, and shall be in the far future; where the sick and wounded of the knights themselves might be treated as became noble gentlemen, worthy of every respect and attention, as representatives of the warriors who had won the island, and of those who were its sovereigns, and defended it daily at the price of their blood.

This was the precise climax of the period when the order is said to have been more flourishing and rich than it ever was; and the majority in one of those chapters general (after a circular which brought an unusual flow) amounted only to four hundred and fifty-five knights; to whom if you add (but it must be on supposition, for I find it nowhere on record) a strong minority and the servants-at-arms, you may perhaps come to Vertot's thousand, certainly not surpass. But they were the choice officers of all Christendom, and enough to lead their hired troops, which were likewise excellent, as picked out from every Christian nation. The grand master was then held to be the most powerful Christian sovereign in the Levant; and for above a century (why not repeat it?) no mendicant is said to have been in Rhodes or any one of its numerous islets.

The able-bodied had plenty of work; and for the sick and old, they were cared for by the state, as is just; and there was a splendid hospital and a house of fair honourable maintenance, with good clothing and all necessaries, and many of the luxuries of life,¹ all gratis. As for crimes, there seem not to have been any.

His successor was the Grand Prior of Auvergne, Sir John de Lastic,² who was at his priory when he heard of his election, and, unable to proceed to Rhodes immediately in person, he sent to the commander Sir John Claret, already *locum-tenens*, to continue so. Then was Sir William Tong, Commander of Wilton in the Priory of England, made one of the magisterial commission that consisted of only three. Sir John Castello was Commander of Lemoggia in England.³ Lastic's arrival in December, 1438, found secret communications already announcing a league between Saracens and Turks, and that the former were to invade Rhodes, which the latter were not to oppose. How matters really stood might be found out by an ambassador, whom Lastic despatched to Amurath II., under cloak of

¹ Vertot: v. 192; vi. 377.

² Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 468.

³ Bosio: par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1437.

informing him of his election. To which the infidel returned fine words; but (not unwilling that the Knights of Rhodes should be occupied with Egypt, while he himself had to face the whole Christian league, including Castriot and Humniades), declined renewing the truce made with the late grand master, under pretence of its being totally superfluous, seeing they were candid friends; and that it was therefore as well to let things stand as they were. But this veil did not conceal the truth. On the contrary, it engaged Lastic to lose no time in directing his nephew Sir William de Lastic to visit Egypt, who hurried back to bid him expect to have the whole Egyptian force on his shoulders within a few days.¹ And indeed he soon saw he had acted wisely in summoning all his knights to join him; for the Egyptian fleet putting out very strong with sixteen fire-ships, and a large body of transports containing heavy artillery, and horse, and foot, and land troops of every description, as well as all the necessaries for regular sieges, after taking a fortified castle in one of its dependencies to the eastward, 1440 arrived off the harbour of Rhodes in September of 1440, but were soon driven off by the order's galleys.² The same year the Pope sent

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1439.

² Id.: id., id. 1440.

a circular to all the kings of Christendom, informing them that the infamous Soldan of Egypt was preparing a large army in Asia to overwhelm the island of Rhodes, and eventually Europe itself.¹ But success did not prevent the wise grand master from writing to the Castellan d'Emposta and all the Spanish knights, in the most urgent terms, for either their persons or contributions, or both, since he foresaw this was the forerunner of a worse storm.² Yet grievous had been the Egyptian loss, and cannon and musketry were on both sides. Curious to see how general the use of gunpowder. They kept up a violent cannonade on each other, not only the Moslem, but likewise the Christian ships of war, being furnished with cannons and musketeers in efficient quantity. The guns of Lango, and other land batteries are spoken of as seemingly of long standing, and of the vessels taking shelter under their cannon. The same may be said of nearly every country in the civilised parts of Asia, and all Europe. We read of thirty-four pieces of cannon in the Milan army in 1397, and of twenty thousand muskets with the same in 1449.³ It is impossible to indicate the exact

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. ci.

² Id.: id., Id. cii.

³ Hallam: Middle Ages, i. 254.

time when the old system ended and the new began, between the Greek fire and the sulphury cloud. The grand master's words relative to the Turkish bombs and artificial lights, make us think of our own bombardments, and congreve rockets, and Bengal illuminations; "bombardis et igne quo mirabiliartificio utuntur."¹ Again Eugenius

1441 directs himself to all the Christian potentes, beseeching of them to assist the Knights of Rhodes.² Nor did his Holiness not continue his benevolent exertions, but wrote to France, Germany, Spain, England, in the same tenor he uses in his brief to the priors, bailliffs, and Knights of Rhodes itself, to encourage their efforts.³

1444 The defeat of the Saracen invasion was so complete, that it is to these times some writers refer the Piedmontese, F. E. R. T. (though improperly), and even the pigmy sovereign Prester John, King of Abyssinia, threatened Daher with giving another direction to the Nile, and so destroying all Egypt, if he did not give over his hostilities against Christians, which, though perhaps no better than a rumour, is however repeated by

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cii.

² Id. : id. Id. ciii.

³ Id. : id. Id. cv.—Appendix, clv.

others,¹ and shows what was the sentiment of the time, and the story is here given on the official authority of an Indian ambassador by the grand master, in a letter to the King of England.² The name Prester John was long an enigma. But our ancestors did no more than follow the practice of the time. *Æthiopiæ Reges omnes sunt Sacerdotes, Liturgiam super altarem celebrantes.* One of them in the eighth century was called Rex Ynnani, that is of Nubia, whose descendants, possessing also Æthiopia, went by the title of Pretiyunani, which though ill written by people who did not know the language, means simply, and word for word, *Kings of Nubia*; and as to emperor, it is pretended they reigned all over India.³

In 1445 a chapter general was holden at Rhodes, under what seems superfluous, but 1445 denotes the Pope's anxious partiality, perhaps a special Papal exhortation; and that same Pontiff in that same year engaged the grand master to hold by *locum-tenens*, a second chapter general in Sienna, removed afterwards to Rome.⁴ All this

¹ Ebendorfer Chron.—Bib. Crois., iii. 202.—Makrisi: Arab.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cviii.—Appendix, clvi.

³ Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 548.

⁴ Cod. Dipl. Geros., Giunt. Vatic., ii., Num. xvii.—Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 468.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1445. The *locum-tenens* was not one, but three; the Priors of France and England, and the Castellan d'Emposta of Spain, Sir Robert Boutil, thirtieth English Prior.—Appendix, clviii., xxx.

had the effect of changing Amurath's politics, and, not to have the Knights of Rhodes also against him —when Scanderbeg turned out a still more dangerous foe than his father, truce between the Turks and Rhodes was gladly renewed. So the Order had breathing. Yet not of duration. But neither quite lost, for many excellent laws were framed by the chapter general from Sienna, transferred to Rome in 1446; where besides these three representatives of the grand master, are named of the English knights Sir Hugh Middleton, Turcopolier, Sir William Langstrother, Bailly of the Eagle, and Sir William Tong, Commander of Wilton. Where these two last were chosen by the entire Language of England to represent them.¹

Grand Master Lastic confers his coat-of-arms on a Florentine gentleman, who had nobly come to Rhodes to volunteer his services during the late war, and afterwards been extremely useful
1448 in the treaty of peace with Egypt.²

A third chapter general at Rhodes in 1449.³

It cannot be denied that the Popes exerted themselves much concerning Christendom. So in 1450

¹ Bosio : par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1446.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cix.—Bosio : par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1448.—Appendix, clvii.

³ Bosio : par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1449.

Spain is exhorted with proof evident of the dreadful situation of the Knights of Rhodes, 1450 exposed to the infidels of both north and south.¹

Amurath II. sickened, and after some ill health dying of fatigues, and vexation of a defeat from Scanderbeg, was succeeded by his son Mahomet II.—every way fearful. The succession calling a cloud of ambassadors to speculate on a new reign, Lastic also sent his, and the juvenile sultan received them all courteously, and swore solemnly to renew the numerous alliances—even that with Constantinople; but took it by storm the very next year. The alarm rang all through Europe, even before he had seized on the Grecian capital. His own horrid outbreak previous to marching was, “Constantinople first, and Rhodes next!” Religious fanaticism might enter for a trifle, but was it his principal scope? Certainly not. How could it? He was an atheist—as much as not thinking of the matter, creates that rare bird. Ferocity and ambition can drown thought.²

Lastic had to write his circular, summoning the

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cx.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1452, 1453. Certainly it was a very notable thing, as the venerable historian remarks, that the first Constantinopolitan Emperor was a Constantine, son of Helen, and the last a Constantine, son of a Helen.

knights to leave Europe, and hasten to defend Rhodes. If Daher and his Saracens were worse than Amurath's Turks, yet these led by 1453 Mahomet II., fresh from the success of Constantinople, would be undoubtedly far more tremendous. "After weeping over the miserable downfall of illustrious Constantinople, as we wrote to you in other letters, this is to command you instantly to come hither, where most urgent is the want of your assistance. For not a day or night elapses, without hearing of some new slaughter of Christians by the Grand Turk and his inhuman cruelties; not from vain rumour, but from our own confidential ambassadors, who relate what they saw with their own eyes. So it is a certain fact that horrors inexpiable have been already perpetrated. Expect no further letters from us, or exhortations, or commands; but the moment you receive these lines, set out at once on your journey towards Rhodes by the quickest conveyance love or money can procure." Such is Lastic's circular, dated 20th January, 1453.¹ January must have been at the end, not beginning of the year, since Constantinople had been taken in the preceding months.²

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxi.—Appendix, elix.

² On the 29th of May of 1453, says Bssio: par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1453.

At that time, the year began in March, that is with some, (as Seb. Paoli observes) who just then began to count the year from the 25th of March, *ab incarnatione*.¹

In 1454, a letter from the King of England to the Venetians, implores them to be juster and kinder to the Hospitallers, who were defending the universal cause of Christendom; and that, but for the Hospitallers, the whole of Europe would be ruined.² Certainly Harry VI. was not cold on the matter; for within the same twelvemonth here are four other of his letters on the same subject. One to the emperor,³ one to the Pope,⁴ one to the College of Cardinals,⁵ and one to the Grand Master himself, to encourage him;⁶ the three last on the same day. The Langstrother, of whom King Henry speaks as the Hospital's ambassador in England, and an Englishman, was Sir John Langstrother, Commander of Basal and Graston in England,⁷ and later 1454 Bailiff of the Eagle, but eventually raised to several of the foreign dignities in the order, and died

¹ Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 548.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxii.

³ Id., id., Id. cxiii.

⁴ Id., id., Id. cxiv. Appendix, clx.

⁵ Id., id., Id. cxv.

⁶ Id., id., Id. cxvi.—Appendix, clxi.

⁷ Bosio: par. ii., lib. vi., anno 1449.

Grand Commander of Cyprus in 1471.¹ So there were two Langstrothers—William and John, contemporary Knights of Rhodes. After the murder of Irene, began Mahomet's movements towards Rhodes. His way of declaring war was curious. A herald landed at Rhodes, and proclaimed the sultan's demand of two thousand ducats of annual tribute from the knights, which Lastic as solemnly in the quietest terms refused, he being an independent sovereign, and the knights from all the chief European families; so that they could do nothing without consulting the various sovereigns, and above all, the head of their common religion at Rome.² On this the Turkish herald announced war, and that his master would come, conquer, and destroy the island and the islets immediately, and again sailed. Instantly was sent off the Commander D'Aubusson on an embassy to Charles VII., King of France, to tell him all that, less from any hope that his succours could arrive in time, than to leave no means untried, or duty undone, when—to a dead man had even our Henry VI. been writing; for his letter is dated 24th of July, 1454, and Lastic (who was aged) had expired on the 19th May of that year.³ Though

¹ Seb. Paoli : Osservazioni, ii. 550.

² Id.: Id., ii. 551.

³ Id.: Serie, ii. 469.

it has been said that Fulk de Villaret was called Grand Master, it appears, from what is in the order's chancery, that Lastic was the first to whom that title was officially and generally given.¹ On the 1st of June, 1454,² was chosen for thirty-seventh Grand Master Sir James de Milly, Grand Commander of Cyprus, Captain-General of the Fleet, and lastly Grand Prior of Auvergne, which may imply his birth, but no proof. Wondering that at a time when there yet were numbers of English in the order, we find no grand masters of our nation since ever it came to Rhodes, although full surely there were, only their names are too concealed in the translations, I blame myself severely for my want of perspicacity to discern them. Mere sound, to be sure, is insufficient evidence, or rather none at all. Montalt, Montegon, Montherme, Morevic, Moreville, Montfort, Munchensi, Montfichet, Molines, Meschimes, Mussard, and several others, without going out of the M, are good old English names,³ though they have little the appearance of it to the ear. Who would know them if translated? Even without that operation, they are not very cognizable at present.

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. vii., anno 1454.

² Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 469.

³ Any book of heraldry. What lies on every table will do. Sir Harris Nicolas: Synopsis of the Peerage, ii.

Sir William d'Aunay the Turcopolier, and Sir John Lambton, are selected as of the most renowned knights of the English language in 1454.¹ Is he of the family of Dawney in Lodge?² A fleet sent by Mahomet II., in 1457, sacked a village on the coast of Rhodes, and returned with their booty to Constantinople, which was a more grievous loss to the island than such a small matter seemed to merit; 1459 for it rendered the Rhodian peasantry timorous, and little propense to tillage ever after. And to escape death, many of them became renegades and spies on their own countrymen.³

Assuredly the good Bosio was engaged (perhaps cajoled) into inserting in his history some documents a little whimsical, which have no existence in the Cod. Dipl. Geros.; as that imputed to Caoursinus, the Vice-chancellor of the Order in 1457, though scarcely his. Of Milly's short reign little is recounted, except that he held two chapters general; one on the 10th of November, in the same year as his election, and the other on the 10th of October in 1459, wherein Sir Thomas Dampont appeared to represent the turcopolier, as also Sir William Frestan and Sir John Langstrother for the English

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. vii., anno 1454.

² Lodge: Peerage of Ireland, v. 72.

³ Bosio: par. ii., lib. vii., anno 1457.

language.¹ When it was regularly enacted that the statutes regarding hospitality should be written out on parchment, and hung up where the knights could not avoid seeing it every day, to have that fundamental duty well impressed on their minds; likewise, that two officers of the infirmary shall have the same authority as notaries public, regarding the wills of persons who die in it; that what the dying has told them shall be inscribed before witnesses in a book kept on purpose, and its contents be law, to which the heirs may refer as to a legal depository.² If in births death lurks, like poison, so do Languages in the order; yet no blame to Gerard or his next, for he died two centuries before Languages began! Nor was this meeting without the usual disputes; yet near is what unites every one.³ And a commander said: "Not without deep sorrow and apprehension, do I see dissensions, attributable chiefly to the division of the order into Languages, *flagitiosa dissidentia!* It will be our destruction; mind what I tell you. Would I were a false prophet! But it bodes nothing save evil!" Yet were his exhortations in vain. The four Languages, Italian,

¹ Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii., 469.

² Statut: De Hospitalitate, Tit. iv. 7, 8, 18.

³ Bosio: par ii., lib. vii., anno 1459.

English, Spanish, German, seemed a majority, yet were not. The three French, Auvergne, Provence, France, with the grand master, who had two votes, constituted five. He ought to have been impartial, but was he? An Auvergnian, he sided with Auvergne; at least it was suspected so. For this time, however, the sedition blew over by Milly's falling sick.¹ On his recovering a little, he might attend to the inextricable turmoils of Cyprus—cause or pretext. Its intricate affairs at all events furnished a pretext for the Venetians taking part with the Saracens and Turks; and Lusignan sold himself to the soldan. Was there anything of the prerogative of a free mind in all that? And with great pomp and barbarous solemnities, he was crowned King of Cyprus, after doing homage to the infidel, and obliging himself to dependence superlatively rigorous and fealty, and under dictation pronounced this most humiliating, impious, abominable oath: "By the great God, high, merciful, benign Creator of heaven and earth, and all the things which are in them; by these holy gospels, by the holy baptism, by St. John the Baptist, and by all the saints, and by the faith of the Christians, I promise and swear that whatever I come to learn, I will make it known and discover it, and reveal all such projects to my

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. vii., anno 1459.

most high lord and master the soldan, whose kingdom may God strengthen it. I will be a friend of the soldan's friends, and enemy of his enemies. I will not tolerate pirates in my dominions, nor will aid them in any way, or give them victuals. The Mahometans who are slaves in Cyprus, I will buy them, and give them their liberty. I will offer up as tribute on the first of September or October, every year in the most mighty temples of Jerusalem or Lamech. I will prevent the Knights of Rhodes from aiding the European pirates . . . and if I do not perform all I promise, I will own myself a renegade and apostate from God's commandments and the Christian faith. I will say that the Gospel is false; I will deny that Christ lives, and that Mary his mother was a virgin; I will immolate a camel on the baptismal fount; I will curse the priests from the altar, and—" but who not blush, and his pen blister his fingers, if he transcribed the rest?"¹

Yet the wise Milly preferred to yield some of his rights, rather than expose his unfortunate subjects. "With your valour," said he to his knights, "I know extremely well I can resist the republic of Venice; but can I prevent their galleys from surprising some point of the island, and carrying off

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. vii., anno 1459.

some of our peasantry into captivity? I believe it is better to liberate a few Saracens, however criminal, than that any of our own poor subjects and their families should risk chains and torments." Nor did the order's council not applaud their generous old chief's sentiments.¹ But though the grand master pardoned the four Languages, who had returned to their duty in the chapter general, where Sir Thomas Dampont now appeared in somewhat another quality, as deputed with Sir John Langstrother, Commander of Basal and Graston, to represent the English, yet soon did worse than external enemies break out anew; the divisions among the knights themselves, with more bitter words than ever—the four Languages complaining against those of France, which were three, and that of Provence at the head; whereas in a commonwealth like theirs, all nations should be equal. Provence declared that the first place belonged to France, both from birthright and merit; since it was from the French the institution sprang, and their ancestors exclusively founded it, and by degrees admitted all the other nations.—That Normandy was theirs, and had always been theirs — and they, the Normans — so that, as successors of their common forefathers, they claimed the marks of honour won by their blood;

¹ Bosio : par. ii., lib. vii., anno 1460.—Vertot : vii. 23.

and of which it was unjust to deprive them.¹ Partly assuaged or not, it was during such state of things that Milly died on the 17th of August, 1461.²

Sir Richard Leufort and Sir Myles Scaffo were the English knights at the ensuing election on the last Monday of August, 1461.³ By a most regular plurality of suffrages (whatever said) was then chosen Sir Peter Raymond Zacosta, a Castilian and at that time in Spain Castellan d'Emposta.

If after so many grand masters had been French, this one of a Spaniard argues, what undue influence over the election? This single fact may put down a wagon load of speeches. He reigned little longer than his predecessor, each about six years. From Spain round by Rome, Zacosta reached Rhodes in June of 1462. In the chapter general in October, 1462 (present Sir John Weston, Commander of the magisterial chamber in England, and the turcopolier's lieutenant⁴) holden by the scarcely arrived Zacosta, issued was the decree by which the *quæstio vexata* was settled with the triumph of Spain, by giving it another language—that is, by splitting it

¹ Vertot : vii. 24.

² Seb. Paoli : Serie, ii. 469.

³ Bosio : par. ii., lib. vii., anno 1461.—Seb. Paoli : ii. 469,

⁴ Id. : viii. anno 1463.

into two. 1. Arragon including as before Catalogne and Navarre, retaining that old dignity Draperius for their head, one of the pillars of the order. 2. Castile, including Leon and the other Spanish provinces, with also the kingdom of Portugal. "Yet with whatever ruin we be threatened," said one of the number, "I should much prefer seeing the Languages blotted from our laws; and doubt extremely if dividing us into eight, instead of seven, will result in good, but rather increase the evil. The one inn at present (which tends to speaking one tongue and peace) may be altered some years hence. Who knows? Let us hope every change is not to be in the sense of subdividing us more and more. That the chief of the new Language should keep the iron seal, is just and proper, since to him is to be transferred the ancient
1462 title of Chancellor, who seals whatever is admitted to a place in the archives, and on whom the privilege of us all has always depended."¹

On the 23rd of March, 1463, he sent a circular for all belonging to the order to hasten to Rhodes,² and this was corroborated by a Papal bull in February of the very next year, supplicating and

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxix.—Appendix, clxii.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. viii., anno 1463.

commanding—stretching the Pontifical authority to its very utmost—under pain of *ipso facto* excommunication, in the highest and worst degree of it, which no power on earth, but the Pontiff alone, can absolve from, except at the hour of death, without distinction even of those dignified with the cardinalship itself, still less others said to be protected by kings at foreign courts, to set out immediately for Rhodes, according to the command already issued by their grand master, with the full consent of the whole body of their 1464 brothers assembled in that island in chapt. gen.; whose ordinances whoever neglects them, let him know the curse of the Omnipotent God will fall upon him.¹ And dated on this very same day, is a circular to all the princes in Europe, in which how dangerous the situation of Rhodes, with menaces of incursions from both Saracens and Turks, and ravages of the plague, which had broken out there with dreadful violence, as ambassadors from the grand master have too truly brought us word, and which produces its miserable sequel, famine; all these horrific details are given by the Pope with fervid and deep eloquence.²

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxviii.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 551.—Appendix, clxiii.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. viii., anno 1464.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxvii.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 551.

Zacosta rendered his memory lasting by several splendid acts; particularly building the gate and fort of St. Nicholas at his own expense, with some slight pecuniary aid from the Duke of Burgundy.¹ Zacosta's defending of Lesbos personally against the Turks, was remarkably gallant. Zacosta also enacted that the whole line of defences all round the city should be apportioned out to the different Languages, each Language to have its portion for ever, and be named by its name; and none were stronger, or more aptly embellished than the English bastion, to judge even by the remains of it at this day.²

In his time at least, at chapter generals, each member was seated, and spoke from his place. One such meeting convened at Rhodes, but by Roman interference altered to Rome, thither where a calumny had been cast on him, he hastened to put it down; on which occasion, among others of his retinue, were the Prior of Ireland, Sir James Chetin, Sir John Langstrother, now Bailly of the Eagle, Sir John Turner, Lieutenant of the Turcopolier, Sir John Kendal. In that public consistory when the Pontiff questioned him in a long astute Latin oration, the grand master replied in his maternal tongue,

¹ Seb. Paol : Notizie, ii. 494.

² Bosio : par. ii., lib. viii., anno 1465.

with a soldier's frankness, notwithstanding his heavy load of years: "I neither know nor see, in truth, of what we can be called culpable. If we have done wrong, we will endeavour to do what is better, and crave pardon. This only I well know and freely avow, that in consequence of the wars, quarrels, discords, fomented not by any fault of ours, but of the malignity of envious, malevolent men, our order has suffered great and ruinous damage; which it has not been in our power to remedy." Justice was finally accorded to the excellent, though rather punctilious old gentleman; but the great exertion bore him down, and he caught a fever at Rome—perhaps by coming thither at all (since some said the voyage and such frequent change of air, sufficed alone to hasten his end), and expired there in February of 1467; and was by Pontifical command buried in St. Peter's, where his 1467 recumbent statue in basso-relievo on his grave, represents a long beard that reaches his girdle.¹ At the re-edification of the church, his gravestone changed place a little, but is still to be seen.² Knights, and others of the order at that time in Rome, being in one of the Papal ante-chambers,

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. viii., anno 1467.—Bouhours: Vie D'Aubusson, i. 44.

² Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 469. Note H.—Appendix, clxiv.

and allowing themselves to be influenced into electing there the grand master (although they protested he ought to be so at Rhodes) elected the Prior of Rome, Sir John Orsini, who voted for the Prior of England; and as return, the English eagle voted for the Prior of Rome. But one Englishman at least, Sir John Weston, then only a simple Knight of Rhodes, gave his vote boldly in contradiction to the Papacy, whose choice, however, was of one not unworthy. Nor did Weston's example go for nothing; since St. Gilles was within a single vote, he having eight and Orsini nine; which votes were collected and written down in a list by the Pontiff's own hands, and moreover he read them aloud; and in the next consistory of cardinals proclaimed the result from his Vatican throne.¹

The new grand master instantly set out for Rhodes, and despatched a circular calling on all the knights and servants-at-arms to join him in that island, in order to present a sufficient front to the menaces of Mahomet II., whose inextinguishable ambition never left them a moment's ease. Responded to it with the happiest diligence an influx of signal persons,² among whom is named a Sir . . . Scaf, a Bourbon, divers Englishmen, and

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. viii., anno 1467.

² Id.: id., ix., anno 1471.

D'Aubusson, remarkable for his military acquirements—particularly in the branch of it then most requisite at Rhodes, fortification—and he was named captain-general and inspector of the whole island; and he widened the ditches of the city, and at the grand master's private expense, raised a wall on the sea-side of above a hundred perches long and six yards high, and prodigious thickness.¹ So that worse than Nero, Mahomet II. (whose mother had been a Christian, and himself bred up as such, and instructed by the good and learned Greek Patriarch) professed Mahometanism, and hated the Christians, being truly of no religion, but utterly ungodly, and full of vices the most cruel,² considering the magnitude of an attack on Rhodes, he prepared for it by that of Negropont, in which the Venetian Erizzo distinguished himself by his gallant defence and honourable death; and his beautiful daughter died a blessed martyr, after barbarians had murdered her father. Mahomet, who had promised to spare his head by a sworn capitulation, kept it by having the unfortunate Provveditore sawed in two, leaving his head intact. Nor is it surprising the Turk conquered, with an army of two hundred thousand, and a powerful fleet off the

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. ix., anno 1472.

² Bouhours: Vie D'Aubusson, i. 26.

coast, against a handful of Christians.¹ With wise and most laudable policy, Orsini was part in procuring a diversion of the invaders, by receiving with conciliating courtesy a Persian ambassador; and did not scruple to enter into an alliance with Mussulman Persia against the Turks and Saracens, and sent a hundred of his expertest knights, with good founders and gunners, to discipline the Persian army, and introduce the European founderies and artillery, and harquebusiers, in which the Persians were deficient; though their cavalry was then the best and finest in the world.²

Deeply persuaded of the use of chapters general, Orsini convened one in November, 1471, after having already been put off four times;³ of which not many vestiges remain. Yet some do, as that against debts; that no dignity can be conferred on him who has not first paid his debts to the last farthing; and that prescribing the length of sittings of chapters general, that they must sit at least fifteen days (holidays not included), and even a little longer, if the grand master and his council choose.⁴

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. ix., anno 1470.

² Vertot: vii. 54.

³ Bosio: par. ii., lib. ix., anno 1471.

⁴ Statuti: Tit. v., Num. 24., vi. 14.

D'Aubusson, who continued inspector of the fortifications of Rhodes and captain general, even after becoming Grand Prior of Auvergne, never relaxed from his zeal and vigilance. Nothing escaped his observation, and under him the Rhodian defences became every day stronger; and rightly, for excessive danger menaced continually. To knights and grand master, D'Aubusson's advice was law. He was the soul and main-spring of every resolution of the council, whether regarding war, finance, or fortifications. He himself executed what he had himself proposed. Always surrounded by officers, artisans, workmen, the difference of affairs never perplexed him. He passed from one to the other with signal readiness. The extent and facility of his mind sufficed for everything. The grand master, aged and infirm, wanted such a prop.¹

Of which chapter general formed part Sir John Weston, Turcopolier; Sir Robert Tong, Bailiff of the Eagle; Sir John Bosnel, deputy for England; and the grand master was given his standard and the purses, according to the usual ceremony, denoting expropriation in the knights, and obedience and individual poverty. And the favourite

¹ Bosio—Vertot: vii. 61.—Vie D'Aubusson, lib. i.

of a King of England, Sir John Langstrother, having died Grand Commander of Cyprus, the dignity was conferred on another. Of that same year are the letters patent of the King of France, to permit every one of the order to traverse his kingdom freely, with their horses, and whatever they have, without stoppage or disturbance of any kind, or examination, hurrying as they are to Rhodes and the battles in that quarter.¹ The union of the Greek and Latin Churches, as established by the Council of Florence, was always inviolably kept to by the Rhodians, and therefore it more easily came to pass that the people of Rhodes got much attached to the order. Many of the principal, noblest, and richest families then followed the Roman ritual, and the others who did not, yet had to deviate in nothing from their own. So they sturdily asserted they were all of one religion.²

The Turcopolier Sir John Weston was named commander of the galleys that were sent to join the Venetian fleet under Moncenigo, in 1473.³

On the 1st September, 1475, another general

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxx.—Appendix, clxv.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. ix., anno 1471.—Appendix, clxvi.

³ Id.: id., anno 1473.

chapter met, of which we have a regular record.¹ And in this was a law about horses for the defence of the island; and that the 1475 marshal and his staff shall be furnished with horses, clearly showing that cavalry was no longer the principal arm with the knights, but that, though they still somewhat used the land service, it was rather by way of exception, and that they had almost entirely taken the naval bent, ships and artillery occupying their chief thoughts.

And in it Sir John Bosnel appeared as representative of the turcopolier (absent with the fleet, as we have seen), and he and Sir John Vaquelin were for the English language. About which time the King of Naples sent an ambassador to beg for some of the falcons for which Rhodes was then so famous; and the grand master hurried off his falconers into that part of the island where the most sacred, gentle, and best-blooded falcons are found, and expedited several of them to his majesty; and gave strict orders, under a heavy fine and severe comminatory, that no one should presume to catch such birds.²

And a prorogation made this chapter last till the 6th of the next following December.³ But on the

¹ Statuti: Tit., v., Num. 71.—Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cxxi.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. x., anno 1475.

³ Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 551.

8th of June, in 1476, he died of a severe malady,
1476 as his monument testifies still in St. John's
Church at Rhodes; which the barbarians
spared, and its inscription was legible to travellers
a few years ago, as a lamentable but not singular
proof of the wretched taste of the times.¹

¹ Seb. Paoli : Serie, ii. 470.