

FOURTH BOOK, OR MALTA.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER from Charles V. to his viceroy in Sicily,
1531 directs him to let provisions go to Malta as
usual.¹ The Turcopolier, Sir Clement West,
got into squabbles far too unimportant to be regis-
tered in history, were it not that the unquiet out-
rageous conduct of that man led to this of good,
an official sentence still existing declaratory that the
order from the most ancient times, above all other
Christian princes, has always had for its chief pro-
tector the most serene King of England, and that
it was for the improper words of West, as disgrace-
ful to himself as to the order, that the chapter
general sent him to prison, and deprived him of

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

the turcopoliership, and not at all for what he pretended.¹ With this despatch Sir William Sullan went back to England.² But though such matters were settled, yet remained what was every day getting worse at Rome, and by repercussion menaced Knights of Malta, the great religious question, which, however it went, could not but be calamitous for at least a time to Christendom, inasmuch as it promised to create divisions among Christians, all of whose aristocracies were represented in the order, which consequently might baffle their best efforts at neutrality, and trammel their wisest proceedings in a thousand ways. The good old grand master was never able to console himself, and foresaw that the Castillian rebellion, the loss of Rhodes, and the utter ruin of the English language, were to be contemporaries, and all take place in his time. West's barfaced calumnies, diabolical untruths, struck him with surprise and horror. Indeed, it ended as he apprehended.³ On the sack of Modon, the Pope had written, "Beware of the irritated Turk," as early as 1531,⁴ and L'Isle Adam to the same on the same misfor-

¹ Condemned by even his great protector the Duke of Norfolk. Appendix, cex.

² Bosio : par ii., lib. viii. 129.

³ Id. : id., id., 130.

⁴ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. clxxx.

tune,¹ avowed it in 1533. Thanks for the knights
 1533 succouring Coron, was only presage to its
 loss.² England had almost as much right
 in L'Isle Adam, as France, for if born when Nor-
 mandy was French, yet was he of the old Norman
 race, and nearly allied to the English sovereigns.³
 Few the months he lived after this disturbance.
 1534 The date on his tombstone is August 22nd,
 1534, being that of his solemn funeral, but
 his insides had been buried the day before by his
 faithful French auditor.⁴ L'Isle Adam on his
 death-bed had recommended his knights to elect
 Sir A. del Ponte for his successor; as in truth they
 did, and Sir Richard Brown was the English
 deputy at that election. Del Ponte was a literary
 man and eloquent. Celebrities of every descrip-
 tion were knights of Malta, as Bembo, the historian
 of Venice, and Ponce de Leon, the Spanish
 warrior;⁵ like the Florentine Strozzi and Dorias
 of Genoa. Instead of joy at his own election, Del
 Ponte wept at thinking how much the order had
 lost. Of an ancient family in Asti, Del Ponte was

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

² Id., ii., Id. clxxxiii.

³ Pantaleone, x.—MS.—Lodge: Ireland, iv. 77.

⁴ Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 473.

⁵ Bosio: par. ii. 135.—139.

in his bailiwick in Calabria, when knights came with news of his election. He, after a thoughtful and melancholy pause, protested he must in conscience abdicate as an honour totally superior to his abilities; but when some hours later Sir C. Gessalli brought doleful tidings from Africa, Del Ponte changed his mind, and in the disasters of his order, bent his head in resignation, accepted, and instantly set out for Malta, where he died, 1535 at seventy, in November of the next year, as his epitaph proves.¹

The knights near Tunis were forty, and when they presented themselves to Charles V., he said some words in praise of the order, and admiring their beautiful armour, and survests, and their soldierly appearance, and asking the name and nation of each, he stretched out his hand to his cousin, the Prince of Portugal, and shaking hands with him cordially, exclaimed in Spanish, "These gentlemen, Sir, are your brothers, of whom, if we had many, then indeed very sure would be our victory!" It cannot be denied that Charles V. showed himself a most valiant captain. Not that his valour, however great, merited much encomium of itself alone; but why not speak of *his*, if we speak of his rival's? Only if on a par in even that respect, then was

¹ Seb. Paoli : Serie, ii. 473.—Appendix, ccxii.

Francis the most unfortunate of human beings. The white cross in a scarlet field, was first in the assault, and in an instant dashing through the tremendous cloud of musquetry, cannon shots, arrows, stones, whirled from the capultas, broke the Turks, and planted St. John's banner on the highest point of the bastions, surrounded by white cross warriors.

The great karack of Rhodes having been burned down by accident, the new one built at Nice came off Barbary, and was examined with wonderful admiration, not only by the Moors, but by Charles V. himself; for it truly was a marvel, and would be even now for many things, its salubrity particularly, and that it rivalled with our life-boats in this, that however pierced with multitudinous holes, no water could sink it. When the plague was at Nice, and the mortality so frightfully huge that the stench of the corrupted air made the birds of the sky drop down dead, not a man was ever sick on board it, which is attributed to the great quantity of fires kept by the workmen—chiefly the quantity of smiths—to supply the requisite screws, nails, and other irons, while vessels full of earth had cypress, or orange and lemon trees, and flowers, like small, but delicious gardens, in that ship, which had eight decks or floors, and

such space for warehouse and stores, that it could keep at sea for six months without once having occasion to touch land for any sort of provision, not even water; for it had a monstrous supply for all that time of water, the freshest and most limpid; nor did the crew eat biscuit, but excellent white bread, baked every day, the corn being ground by a multitude of handmills, and an oven so capacious, that it baked two thousand large loaves at a time. That ship was sheathed with six several sheathings of metal, two of which under water, were lead with bronze screws (which do not consume the lead like iron screws), and with such consummate art was it built, that it never could sink, no human power could submerge it. Magnificent rooms, an armoury for five hundred men; but of the quantity of cannon of every kind, no need say anything, save that fifty of them were of extraordinary dimensions; but what crowned all is that the enormous vessel was of incomparable swiftness and agility, and that its sails were astonishingly manageable; that it required little toil to veer or reef, and perform all nautical evolutions, not to speak of fighting people, but the mere mariners amounted to three hundred; as likewise two galleys of fifteen benches each, one galley lying in tow off the stern, and the other galley drawn aboard; not

to mention various boats of divers sizes, also drawn aboard; and truly of such strength her sides, that though she had often been in action, and perforated by many cannon balls, not one of them ever went directly through her, or even passed her *deadworks*.

At the fall of the town a noble Moorish lady, Aysa, however lofty her birth, far loftier her mind, refused to be bought back from captivity, but spat at the King, Muly Hassan, who had capitulated, instead of resisting to the death, calling him "Wicked Hassan, who, to keep your kingdom, hast had the cruelty to betray your country, and give it in prey to the stranger, and send so many of its unhappy citizens to slaughter;" and when notwithstanding he wished to ransom her, it only kindled her ire: "Away with thee, tyrant! by Allah! I will not have thee, nor be liberated by thee; on the contrary, I will remain true to my poor native land, and prefer slavery and death!"—That excellent veteran Del Ponte, in his last moments recommended concord to his knights, for that discord produces ruin.¹

So disastrous were events in England, that scarce any property remained to the English Language, which therefore had to be supported at the ex-

¹ Bosio : par. ii. 146.—153.

pense of their companions. In vain the grand master gave back the Turcopoliership to West, against all right reason, and Ranson, like a good knight, contented himself with the Bailiwick of the Eagle instead, when vacant by the death of Sir John Babington.¹ Good old Del Ponte had only reigned fourteen months and two days. About three hundred knights of all nations were the electors, of whom the English named are, Sir Clement West, the Turcopolier, and Sir Beril Rose, Commander of Templebower, and Sir Richard Brown, Commander of Mount Sanjo. Sir Clement West was also made president of the election. The chaplain to represent the clergy, was French; the servant-at-arms to represent that class, Portuguese; the Prior of Thoulouse, where he then was, Sir Desiderio di S. Jalla, became elected grand master,² mere justice after the signal bravery and ability he had shown during the siege of Rhodes. Yet never did he reach Malta, but expired at Montpellier, on the 26th September, 1536. Nor is there any further memorial of his at Malta, than the coat-of-arms of his house, set up in the fortifications of Castel S. Angelo, by a locum-tenens

¹ A Sir John Babington, of Chillwill, in Derbyshire, died in 149.—MS.—Lodge: Ireland, iv. 104.

² Bosio: par. ii. 156.—Appendix, ccxiii.

during the few days preceding the next grand master,¹ who was a Spaniard, Bailly of Caspe, and Knight of Arragon, of the name of Homedez, who, though not in the island, had an active agent in a knight who wished to get his baillywick, by getting him lifted to that promotion, and gained his point against Homedez's two rivals, the Bailiff of Pisa and the Bailiff of Lango. But Homedez had likewise great real merits, though he turned out less vigorous than perhaps he should have been.²

Charles V. having driven Barbarossa from Barbary, the villain fled to Constantinople, to engage Solyman to come and attack the Christians. This was known at Malta, but not whether he would begin with Africa, or the stronghold of the Hospitallers. So it was uneasy living in that island. The more from the absence of both grand master and his locum-tenens at first. No government, and almost every night brawls, chiefly attributable to the unquiet spirit of West. And at last the grand master's death, and at a new election with about three hundred and sixty knights, of whom the English named were Sir Egidius Russell, Sir Richard Brown, Sir Beril Rose. The three distinctive merits given Omedez by his partisans, were—first, that he was a Spaniard, most fitting for the order at that time.

¹ Seb. Paoli : Serie, ii. 474.--Appendix, cexiv.

² Id. : Id., ii. 474.

Secondly, that he had been honourably known at the siege of Rhodes. Thirdly, that he had lost an eye there, and endured all the mishaps of the abeyance. Henry VIII.'s severe versatility made the order be deprived, perhaps for ever, of that rich, noble, most principal of its members (as always has been held), the venerable English language.¹ Religion ought to stand quite apart from politics. These are too human, that too celestial. Of all petty things, petty politics are the most odious. Such vile matters it is detestable to mix them up with what is far too sublimely fine for any such desecration. Something of the kind was creeping among the Christian heroes on the coast of Barbary. What the commissioners had foretold was too true. Tripoli was to be a butchery for the Order; yet many a valiant struggle did it maintain.

In 1539, a chapter general was holden at Malta, where the Lieutenant of the Turcopolier was Sir Egidius Russell, with several other English knights. Yet some complain that the Turcopolier, Sir Clement West, was ill-looked on by the grand master, through whose means the

¹ Bosio : par. ii., lib. viii., anno 1536.—“Cosi ricco, nobile, e principal membro come sempre era stata, la venerabile Lingua d'Inghilterra,” are his precise words.

council had condemned him to keep his room for three months, whereas, the truth was, it was for his having, with his usual indomitable fierce arrogance, spoken disrespectfully of the councillors themselves, in their official presence, and it was prison he richly merited; and he having been condemned from the first by a chapter general, could not be declared innocent by an inferior tribunal, the grand master in his privy council; so divers knights now petitioned the chapter general to declare null and void all the proceedings in West's favour, under the late grand master, and confirm the former sentence, depriving him of the turcopoliership, on which commissaries were named to instruct; and subsequently to their opinion a month later, the final confirmation of the sentence of privation was pronounced, with this adjunct, that the said West could not only never again wear the grand cross, but that for the future was to be denied admission into any of the order's assemblies. Example worth noting, and justly pregnant with severe mortification towards a disposition so irritable and scornful.¹

As L'Isle Adam, on the approach of the siege of Rhodes, was given dictatorial power by that chapter general, so this one towards Homedez, in considera-

¹ Appendix, ccxv.

tion of the approaching contest with Solyman, and as complete supremacy over the treasury, with the sole obligation, that of every sum he received, a note be taken in three several books, one kept by himself, the second in the box of three keys, and the third be used by the treasury's writer; powers to last, until the next chapter general, to be convened in 1540. Likewise the particular income of the grand master was fixed at twelve thousand crowns a-year, which he reduced immediately by two thousand, and that he would not accept more than his predecessors, ten thousand.¹ As long as Charles V. acted against the Mahometans only, in Germany, Hungary, Africa, everywhere the Knights of Malta aided him by land and sea most heroically. The famous seaman, Andrea Doria, on that most urgent of occasions considered the karack of itself a match for the whole Turkish fleet, knowing, as he knew well, that it would sail through the middle of them without much risk, for that one thousand cannon balls might pass through it without sinking it.² Again did the order apply to the emperor regarding Tripoli, and that it was best either to dismantle and abandon it, or to aid the knights to fortify it in a proper modern

¹ Bosio : par. ii. 185, anno 1539.

² Id. : id. 186, anno 1539.

manner; for they began fearing they should incur blame, through Christendom, if that fortress should be taken; few being aware it would argue no fault of theirs, but that it could not be defended in the present state of its fortifications, wholly antiquated and unsusceptible of defence. But Charles V. had too many expenses with such rebellions in Flanders, and elsewhere, to have money.¹

Sir William Weston, last Prior of England, whose consummate prudence contrived to save some small part of the order's property there, had died in 1539, deathblow to the English Language. In vain did the grand master send two knights, one a Portuguese, and the other a Frenchman; their irrefragable reasons were unattended to, avarice counted Christian sufferings at little. Violent was the blow that deprived the order of a Language which produced such an abundance of honoured and virtuous knights. The knights of England had always held the first place in universal esteem up to that hour, even at Malta! The order had been always so proud of them! The English knights then at Malta resolved to sell their plate and all the valuables they had there, and go home. But the grand master, accustomed to bear adversity with signal constancy, forbade the sale and their departure, con-

¹ Bosio : par. ii., lib. ix. 188

soling them with a father's loving charity, for that they should be assisted in every way by their common treasury; and he put his hope in the great God, and seeing the lessening of the order's revenue by the English confiscation, he sought to decrease its expenditure by disarming the karack, real and noble cause for what malignant tongues loved ascribing to other vulgar, shallow occurrences undeserving serious mention.¹

He seems to have erred in not attending to the remonstrances of the most famous engineers then in Europe, who frankly assured him, after a diligent inspection, that neither the Borgo nor St. Angelo in Malta were capable of fortification; the latter being too narrow, and the former commanded by the neighbouring hills. Useless expense in either case, particularly from the Turks being accustomed to erect most formidable batteries themselves, were not to be kept off, except by the strongest works; but that a capital fortress might be erected on St. Elmo, to defend the two harbours. However the grand master grudging the cost, in all likelihood from feebleness of mind, clothing it with a plea that there was not time, and the Turks so impending, that to oppose them was of urgency, besought the engineer to fortify them the best he could as a

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. ix. 199.

temporary expedient for immediate use.¹ How valiant Charles V. was! Something of Julius Cæsar in the admirable quiet of his reply to Doria just before embarking at Marseilles, on his last African expedition: "My son" (thus the silver-haired admiral, with his habitual phrase, by command of the emperor, who always called him father), "do not sail in this weather! By Heaven, we may all be drowned!" "Nevertheless let us sail." Charles had promised, and could not bear the thought of breaking his promise. So sail they did; but were obliged to run into La Spezia, just in time not to be wrecked. And looking from shore to where ships were navigating through the hurricane, and some people asking who those fearless creatures could be: "The Hospitallers certainly" (was the imperial reply in Spanish), "for no other galleys than theirs can brave such a tempest."²

Homedez's chief foible a little later, was that of age, which permitted the chapter of 1542 to be so often prolonged, that its sittings became nearly permanent during the rest of his life, reigning
1542 under who suffered them to reduce him to a mere cypher, and whose leaders are accused of taking to themselves and adherents all the high

¹ Bosio: par. ii. lib. ix., anno 1541.

² Id.: id. id. 204.

places of the order, and of enriching themselves at the expense of their brethren—though grand masters are meant to be active, as their frequently being entrusted with dictatorial authority proves. They could never be young, for great experience was an essential quality. Books are no excellent school, nor any second-hand experience, but only personal. No education, however good, can compensate for the unique, in their predicament. But love of care is nearly always the fault of age. No doubt there are some bright exceptions, like D'Aubusson and L'Isle Adam; but perhaps Homedez was not of these illustrious few. Yet had he still a little of the energy of his honoured manhood, an aftergrowth of what he had been at Rhodes, and during the hardships of wandering exile and poverty, exposure to multitudinous perils, storms, wars, plague. The English had only to praise him as long as master of himself in his rights intact.

A brief from Paul III., calling upon the grand master to assail the Turks, proffering also his own galleys, which probably the knights had no great reliance on,¹ is well answered by an 1543
expostulation that the Turkish and French fleets are so united, that there is no distinguishing between them; so that it would be a breach of the order's

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

sworn neutrality between Christians to go to war with France; and also several French knights are in the order's ships, and ought those gentlemen to be forced to fire on their own countrymen, and perhaps near relatives?¹

The Portuguese round the Cape of Good Hope, by depriving Egypt, Constantinople, all the Levant and Venice, of the Indian commerce, enraged Solyman so amazingly that he prepared a fleet to attack Lisbon. For the very same reason, to show in what estimation the Arabs then held the order of Malta, and more particularly the Commandant of Tripoli, who spoke and wrote Arabic well, I too mean to follow the Swiss physician Pantaleone, in giving in the Appendix a Latin translation of the original letter from the Moslem sovereign of those parts to that aged German Prior in 1546.² In 1543 Sir E. Russell, penultimate of the Turcopoliers, died, and Sir Oswald³ Massingbert made only Lieutenant of the Turcopoliership, to give him a seat of honour in the chapter, through consideration for that ancient dignity, which, after remaining some years unoccupied, was finally conferred on Sir Nicholas Upton. Some spark of existence was in the English

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

² *Johannitarum Historia*, 307.—Basilea, 1581.—Appendix, No. ccvii.

³ Bosio : par. ii., lib., ix. 206.

Language still; and on the death of Sir John Ranson, Prior of Ireland,¹ Sir Oswald Massingbert quitted the lieutenancy for the aforesaid priory, on the condition of never wearing the grand cross until put into possession.²

Also to Charles V. the Hospitallers were recommended by Paul III., with his usual vehemence, in a brief dated October 12th, 1548. But that Pontiff's successor, foreseeing the imminent fall of Tripoli, exhorted Homedez not to wait to be carried off by the ferocious Turks, but to depart instantly, with whatever knights he had about him, for Sicily, and to let the Turk do what he liked with Malta.³

This, on the 11th of September, 1551; but on the 15th it is followed by another condoling brief, for it appears that in the interval³ the grand master had transmitted to him an official relation of the loss of Tripoli; since too truly, after hard and most glorious struggles, and far more

¹ Yet it could be only honorary, or of recent creation; for when a great chapter met in England, it is distinctly stated that the English Language, which comprised Ireland and Scotland, had only three grand crosses, Prior of England, Bailiff of the Eagle, and Turcopolier.

² Bosio: par. ii. 250, anno 1547.

³ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. clxxxviii.

⁴ Id., ii., Id. clxxxix.

romantic feats than is here room for (so bright that
1551 all the northern coasts of Africa were in a
blaze), the beleaguered heroes to their eternal
honour, made a splendid defence during years, within
walls reputed indefensible, and which certainly were
rude and inefficient, and never made to resist cannons,
but built before the use of gunpowder, and now
tottering from age in many places, and very firm
nowhere. Finally Tripoli fell, with an infinite
fame and slaughter of our knights, early in August,
1551, and on the 18th of that month, towards
evening, the French ambassador arrived at Malta
with the distressing news, which not a knight re-
mained alive to carry; but the foreign diplomatist,
then off Barbary, on his way to Egypt, did not an
instant doubt but it would please his government
that he should unhesitatingly diverge from his
course, and, in spite of the war, seize that oppor-
tunity of serving the sanctuary of all the Christian
nations.¹

The Sicilian was then very wrong to recount as
truths, nasty calumnies, and the King of France
might have spared his letter; were it not that it
renders still more certain, upon authentic, judicial,
infallible authority, that fraud or misconduct were
utterly out of question, and that, at Tripoli, all

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xv. 314.

was done which human efforts and the rarest valour could do.

A few weeks later the wicked corsair, Dragut, with whom the Turk was not ashamed to be in league, attacking Malta, and reputed a van of the whole Paynim army, on which supposition all the fortifications of Borgo were partitioned out between the several Languages, with great care, Sir Nicholas Upton was elected Turcopolier, with the command of all the Christian cavalry, heavy as well as light; and the English property being all gone, it is clear it was only his character for signal ability and bravery that merited him that post. And so effectual was his energy, that with a very small force he won a complete victory over the somewhat numerous Mahometan horse; but Upton expired that very evening, of his fatigues, and he who had been Russell's, and afterwards his successor's lieutenant, now represented a vacancy. For Upton was last of the Turcopoliers, and died as became his illustrious rank, just after having gloriously and successfully done his duty; for intimidated by his loss, Dragut hastened to re-embark the remainder of his troops, and sailed off. Sir Oswald Massingbert soon left his insignificancy for what seemed higher rank, but was quite as nominal, and much

more distressing, by coupling his name with distress for ever.

Much that was matured under Homedez, did not befall until after his death, on the 6th of September, 1553, who was then near ninety, and so decrepit in mind, that he was unsusceptible of pleasure, when came the illusive momentary hope of re-establishing the English Language, and one Captain Ormond was sent to Malta, to inform the grand master and his council that the Priories of England and Ireland, the Turcopoliership, the Bailliwick of the Eagle, and all the commanderies of the kingdom, should be re-established in *statu quo*, as was indeed Queen Mary's futile dream; which, though it delighted her, could not him it would have delighted most, notwithstanding he shortly after had an ultimate flicker, on the third or fourth of September, 1553, when rallying his spirits and bodily strength, he got himself drest in his richest magisterial robes, and seated on his throne, in the state chamber, in presence not only of his council, but of all the knights that could then be found in Malta, addressed the assembly with the most perfect placidity, telling them he should expire in a day or two, and in pious prudent words, exhorted them affectionately and paternally to concord; and he forthwith made his will, nominated an extremely worthy person to

be his *locum-tenens* during the hours he might yet live, and at once betook himself wholly to his spiritual affairs, and expired on the 5th,¹ and for simplicity and purity of intention, walked in the way of God. The defects in his administration may fairly be imputed to the chapter general's encroachments, which that he allowed them, proceeded rather from physical weakness, consequent on longevity, than moral.² His love of chapters general was, at worst, a fault on the right side—that of liberty.

From their various heroic expeditions about this time, in Barbary—not from any vain wish to recover Tripoli, but to curb the pirates all along those shores of the Mediterranean (for though they could not extirpate yet they reduced them to a defence of their own lairs, which prevented their infamous invasions upon quiet maritime towns and Christian islands and inhuman work on all Christians at sea) only cull this, because it proves that the precise obligation of a knight was in no possible case to abandon the order's banner, but rather die honourably than live a degraded wretch, deprived of cross and uniform, and expelled from all knightly society; a prey to ignominy and remorse.

¹ Seb. Paoli: ii. 475.

² Bosio: par. ii. lib. xxii. 340.

So Cassiere, who bore it, not a mere youth though young man (nor could have been appointed to a post of such trust, as standard bearer, had he not acquired military experience already somewhere; but truly had become a celebrated warrior in the service of his native country, France, years before this Barbary exploit), he seeing the Christians in utter remediless rout resolved at first to fling himself into the sea with the banner, but on reflection that both it and his body would probably be soon thrown on the beach, determined to die where he was valiantly fighting to the last breath; but Verdale (another knight, also a Frenchman) stood by him, and with incredible prowess they sustained the Paynim fury, from arquebusses to pikes, from pikes to swords, from swords to daggers, and when all these failed that glorious couple, they had recourse to their fists and corporal strength. And strange to narrate that the deaths they dealt, not only proved their own incomparable intrepidity, but partly succeeded in holding back the savages for a moment; of which Verdale took advantage, and perceiving everything fallen into the very abyss of desperation, and promising Cassiere never to leave him but aid him to the utmost, made him change his determination of dying on shore, like so many of their companions (which would be leaving the banner to be

carried off in triumph from his corpse), but on the contrary try to carry it to the galley; whereupon the valiant Cassiere flung himself into the roaring waves, taking care to hold the banner upright, followed by Verdale and others of their knighthood, who rallied round to assist and with monstrous danger struggled through that deep and stormy tide for above one hundred yards, far out of their depth from the very first, none of them knowing how to swim; nor if they did, could they or any have swum with their weighty armour, which they had no time to unbuckle, and they would have been instantly slain in attempting it; while waves beat there darkly, fearfully profound on the rocks, although another ledge on the bar showed such boiling surf that day that no boat could possibly pass out or in; yet often dipping under water, but rising again, and never ceasing to keep the banner up in the air, until they at length reached the bar and got over it, where a boat laboured waiting them; when what immensity of satisfaction, of glory was theirs and eternity of honour, no need of saying. Generous young heroes, they never ceased through their no short after lives to be examples of every knightly virtue; and both in turns, arrived to the supreme height of their pro-

fession.¹ When Homedez lay on his bier, there were about four hundred knights at Malta, but those of England were circumscribed to one alone, Sir Oswald Massingbert, Lieutenant of the Turcopolier-ship; so to represent the English Language recourse was had to two foreign knights. While the various ceremonies went on, clearer and clearer it became that there would be no contest; but the recommended concord be strictly preserved. The election of Strozzi, Prior of Capua, was considered certain. And well both his antecedents and his late and present conduct justified the choice, quite unanimously. One of the most remarkable men of his age, and in the full bloom of manhood, admiral of France, where he had served with much distinction; and when he left it openly for the pure purpose of transferring the homage of his sword and the bright fame he had won to the corps to which he belonged, and whose rights over him he flew to acknowledge, he too being a knight of Malta, the whole world applauded his noble resolution; and to this worth and magnanimity corresponded his whole bearing ever since he had come to Malta. The cordial obedience he had always displayed to his superiors in the order and his liberal dashing popular manners that made him universally

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xvi. 330.

beloved, all things rendered his election secure; and so he thought himself no doubt. His presence fortified his cause, for without soliciting, the very brightness of his look testified he had no objection. Not a dissentient whisper. But just prior to the voting, up the grand conservator rose, and these his words:—"Illustrious gentlemen and brothers, to tell you what I think of this election, it appears to me that you have already come to your decision; but in my opinion wrongfully. You believe it for the public good, I the contrary. Therefore although without hopes of what I say producing any fruit (for are we not forbidden to change our opinion lightly?), and also well aware I risk raising against myself a potent mortal enmity, as the whole assembly cannot but perceive; nevertheless it will be of use to me in the Divine eyes to have spoken the truth and cleared my conscience; and the world too will honour me with the fair fame of being manifestly above corruption. Nor indeed will I deny the Prior of Capua is a virtuous and most valiant knight and worthy a diadem. Nay I own him a most able statesman and excellently qualified to sway the sceptre in any other realm, however mighty—far mightier than ours. Still not in ours. All the requisites I have enumerated are not enough for me, reflecting on the

tremendous oath we have just pronounced to satisfy the debt and obligation of incorruptible electors; chasing from us all love, all hate, prejudice, partiality, fear, hope, favour. Insufficient is it to have chosen the bravest, wisest, most virtuous; it is moreover to be maturely weighed before we place any personage on this magisterial throne, not only whether he be worthy of that dignity, and competent in himself, but likewise if our choice be consonant with the peace and general satisfaction of all the different Christian princes, who are all bound to the conservation, quiet, and progress of this our sacred republic. And if it be true, as it is most certainly, that it would be of little advantage to us to have a saint for a grand master, who knew nothing of the affairs of this world; and as it would on the contrary be highly dangerous to have the most superhuman of warriors for our chief, who might set us all furiously divided; in the same way blind and senseless should we be reputed, or infinitely worse, most ungrateful of children and arch-enemies of our own order, if we delivered it up into the hands of Prior Strozzi. For besides having for irreconcilable enemy the great prince Cosmo de Medici, Duke of Florence, as you all know; and the prior having always before his mind's eye that terrible verse left written

by his father Philip Strozzi in the prison where he committed suicide, '*Exortare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor,*' most certain thing it is that his aspirations of vengeance, along with those of his brother Peter Strozzi, who they say has already obtained from the King of France the title of *alter ego*, and captain general of his army in Italy, and Governor of Sienna, under pretext of restoring liberty to his country, he could not but plunge us into a war that would lead to our ruin. Very far from applying his fine intellect to calm us down, and govern mildly as a grand master should, with a matured, quiet, reposed, most religious rule, and above all a temper from which are rooted out every private feeling of partiality or prejudice, that he may wish to know how, and be able to preserve the friendship of all the different princes in Christendom, on whom our properties entirely depend—the Prior of Capua, on the contrary, would use all his power, and authority, and substance, and industry, to foment our passions, and direct them to his own private designs, whence would derive the utter overthrow of our order. Neutrality between Christians, in all their contentions, is, and always has been, the basis of our institution, as we all know, and that against the infidels alone we can draw our swords. With such a grand master,

most necessarily would it follow that he would incur the ill-will of the said duke and all his confederates, and what is most of all important, of the emperor himself, our benefactor and protector. And it would end, perhaps, that we should have to depose him with grievous scandal and danger, having universal disorder for sequence. For my part, if this your election be effectuated, I begin from the moment to mourn over the proximate downfall of our order, and protest I do not consent to it, and that such tumults and excesses are no fault of mine."¹ This sufficed to upset the tables, and on voting, the choice fell on a distant person, according to the usual practice, and who was nowise conscious of what was being done. Sir Claudius de la Sengle, a French gentleman, then at Rome, ambassador to the Pontificate, who, on his arrival at Malta, gave audience to the envoy of Charles V., offering the order Mehediah, which he
 1557 had just conquered in Africa, but which De la Sengle refused as too hard to keep, and expired unexpectedly about the middle of August, 1557, and was succeeded on the twenty-first of the same month by the Prior of St Gilles, called Parisot, from his father's fief, but better known by his family of Valette, Sir John de Valette, famous by the

¹ Bosio : par. ii., lib. xviii. 358.

siege he endured, and the city he founded.¹ At the election I find but one knight of the English Language, Sir James Sunderland.² Mary's protection was not sufficient. She recognised Massingbert as Prior of Ireland, and his lieutenancy passed to another, and for assisting her in this affair, she gave one Nuzza the Bailihood of the Eagle.

Valette's first act was to commence the foundations of the projected city, getting a wooden model of it previously from an excellent engineer.³ From his spies at Constantinople, convinced he would be attacked in the following spring, he sent circulars to summon his knights, and on the 1538 26th of February, 1538, descended from St. Angelo, and took up his residence at Borgo, to be as exposed as his people in case of a siege, and if not, near to superintend the works on S. Elmo. Nuzza, whose country may have been uncertain, though secretary to the Empire of Germany, when he landed at Malta, wearing the grand cross, the Arragon knights present were so enraged, that they scarce refrained from killing him; declaring he had no right to it whatever without a magisterial decree, which he had not. As to a Papal

¹ Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 475.

² Bosio: par. ii., lib. xix. 392.

³ Id.: id., id. 395.

sanction he had obtained in passing through Rome, it was valued by them as so much waste paper, or rather nothing. Queen Mary indeed had made him an English citizen. But what of that? Was he such? The magisterial sentence was, that he might wear it at the chapter general, but nowhere else; which merits a demur as uncandid and unsatisfactory, as such half measures usually are. If no bailiff, he had no right to wear it anywhere; if a bailiff, to wear it on all occasions. He brought with him three real English knights, Sir George Dudley, Sir Oliver Starkey, Sir James Shelley, brother to the Prior of England, Sir Richard Shelley.¹ And a few others being already at Malta, as Sir Henry Gerard, now Lieutenant of the Turcopoliership, and Sir Edward Burrough, Commander of Henly, they set up a regular English hostelrie, or Inn and Language, expecting more knights from England. But such dreams soon vanished, for in November of that year Mary died. Nevertheless, when Valette sat on his throne in the chapter general, with the

¹ This Prior is not however in the list before me, Appendix xxx., which in Queen Elizabeth's reign, declares the last Prior of England was Sir William Weston, perfectly agreeing with the Cod. Dipl. Geros., and Seb. Paoli's Observations.—Bosio: par. ii., lib. xix. 396.

grand crosses right and left, Nuzza appeared as Bailiff of the Eagle, and Sir Henry Gerard, as Lieutenant of the Turcopoliership. The knights of the English Language, thinking better not to be present, petitioned to be represented by proxies; but the chapter general objected to any innovation. Philip offered each of those exiled knights a small pension, which they almost all refused, and the order undertook to feed them gratis, under the hope that England one day or other would make amends for her injustice.¹ Then farewell to even this faint similitude of a body once so deservedly honoured above all their contemporaries, the renowned English Language, that at no time ought to be left to expire, and whose memory defies death. For the glorious past is the treasury of treasuries, and what is there laid up, is safe. Exult at man's menaces, despise his scorn and cruel jokes; your aspirations are in the angel's coffer, nor shall ever be displaced through all eternity.

Neither Henry VIII. nor Edward, however they had sequestered it, appear ever to have confiscated the order's property in their dominions; but Queen Elizabeth and her parliament perhaps did (for although no documents remain stating it exactly, yet from this in Ireland may be fairly concluded,

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xix. 398.

that she had done the same in England already), naming a commission to take possession of it from the Prior of the Hospitallers in Ireland, Massingbert¹ not without secret manœuvres, that caused murmuring. “Likewise let all their papers, parchments, documents, wherever situated, be noted in 1559 the Irish Rotulary, and then expedited to me here, Westminster, June 3rd, 1559.”²

Not but the same year afforded some consolation to Valette, by the Prior of Bohemia and his community applying by an embassy to reunite with the order; submitting to its rule as of old, by a voluntary subjection, presenting the grand master with a written declaration to that effect, signed by the aforesaid prince, and all his knights, and that they would willingly go in person, if it was possible; that the grand master might dispose of the priory and them, as any other priory of the order; that they aspired to no favour, but only to be treated like the order's other priories; expecting however to be allowed all the usual immunities and prerogatives—and that only it is to be considered that the distance is great, and that to go to Malta and stay there some time, and return, is a serious business.

¹ Bosio: par. ii., lib. xvi. 296 and 317.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. clxxxix.—Appendix, cexii.

So the grand master and council accepted the obedience of prior and commanders, and ordered that the paper signed by him and them should be registered, and placed in the archives. And the grand master signed an analogous deed, sealed with the leaden seal, on the 11th December, 1559.¹

A great authority to some people, and no small one to any in that age, proclaims that perhaps the Hospitallers form the only society of men that have never declined from the principle of their foundation, but continue spending their property and blood in defence of Christendom. Most beautiful then and pious, and as it were necessary above all other military orders, is that Christian bulwark, that hedge of hedges to the vineyard.²

Here are many documents to prove their right to the first place in danger, which only testifies how ardently they sought for that station of honour. No sign they had as yet fallen off much from their distinguished thirst of glory; that weakness (if a weakness), of the brave. Yet is there date of this and some succeeding years.³

Solyman, still irritated against his old friends of Rhodes for their recent enterprises in Africa, de-

¹ Bosio : par. ii., lib. xx.

² Id. : par. ii., lib. xxiii. 468.

³ Id. : par. ii., lib. xxiii. 477.

terminated on immediately effecting what he had been so long making preparations for, the invasion of Malta.¹ Nor was this resolve not invigorated by his eunuchs, and wives, and concubines, all more or less interested in the predatory galleon lately taken by the knights; besides these Giaours much injured the pilgrimage to Mecca, for which it was the duty of every true Mussulman who could to punish them. Vengeance shrieked the sultan. So night and day was he urged on towards his desire. To divide the emperor from the order, a wish for peace with him was feigned by the Grand Seignior, who sent diplomatists to treat in Hungary while he himself remained in Constantinople, visiting the arsenals every forenoon, and in fine, dedicating his person entirely to the preparations against Malta. Of all these transactions the grand master was informed, with the utmost exactness and fidelity, and diligence, by his secret emissaries in the Turkish capital; and instantly despatched a most trusty person to reveal the whole to his Imperial Majesty, who, as young and warlike (Maximilian) was extremely moved at such duplicity; and naturally benefiting of the warning, and rejecting the uncandid Ottoman overtures, a diet was

¹ Funditus delere, the knights of Malta, was his execrable intention, says Pantaleone, xi. 326.

held, and measures accordingly taken by those Christian powers.¹ Nor slack was Malta in getting ready for resistance. Every day some new weapon or contrivance was suggested that might be of use in the coming siege. Above three hundred idle mouths were sent out of the island. All the male population was divided into platoons; all the army taught their stations. Sir Oliver Starkey, the now Lieutenant of the Turcopolier, was one of the three named to places of great consequence.² A prudential spirit breathes in the observations with which the grand master meets all the Papal invitations to the noted council; that all his time and that of the order is occupied, day and night, on warlike expedients to resist the Turks,³ 1564 which entirely precludes the possibility of their attending at Trent.⁴

END OF VOL. III.

¹ Bosio : par. iii., lib. xxiii. 482. ² Id. : id., xxii. 460.

³ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. excii.—exciii.

⁴ Id., id., Id., exciv.

Inches 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Centimetres 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

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