

CHAPTER IV.

As Innocent VIII. to D'Aubusson, so Pius IV. offered the cardinalship to Valetta, yet with more delicacy leaving him a choice, by consulting him beforehand, of which he availed himself and refused; extremely courteously of course, supplicating it should be rather given to his brother, a true ecclesiastic, then Bishop of Vabres; whereas he himself had grown old in the profession of arms. "Very different from the holy spotless life of my brother, who has all which qualifies for that sacerdotal elevation." But it was too late—Pius IV. 1566 could no longer confer anything in the world, for he died on the 9th of December, 1565;¹

¹ Bosio: par. iii., lib. xxxiii. 720.

and it was now in 1566, the 5th of January, as is the date of the instructions Valetta gave to his ambassador at the Court of Spain: "That he should ask his majesty for a garrison for Malta, that otherwise the order would be obliged to give it back to him; of which, if he approve, then to beg him to assign a spot to which we might remove. To fortify Malta would be absolutely necessary, in case we are to remain there. The knights are quite ready to spend their lives, and all their worldly means, but if the whole be not enough, what more can they do. Others must do the rest, if done it should be. And, in returning through France, repeat to its monarch all that you will have said to him of Spain; and, besides, that if his Catholic Majesty do not, then it will be for all the Christian princes in Europe to resolve. That, to keep Malta will require an established force of fifteen or twenty thousand men; which the order makes known in this perplexity and confusion, that if the Moslem fleets come back, it may not be imputed to us, if the island be lost. That, with three thousand of our most excellent hired troops, and our body of knights, we will undertake to keep and fortify St. Angelo, St. Elmo, and Citta Vecchia, which is more than can reasonably be expected from so small a commonwealth. That, much above its force, is

the being responsible for the entire island, which, however it will try to defend; but without the slightest hope of success, and we now protest as much, in anticipation, for the purpose of disculpating ourselves to the Almighty, in every event, and in the eyes of the world.¹ I and my companions, we shall have done our very utmost."

To repair St. Elmo, alone, the engineer declared the labour of four thousand workmen for four months would be requisite; and that even so, it would be always liable to being taken again, from its narrowness; a natural imperfection, not to be remedied, "and therefore it is my opinion, it is far better to fortify the whole mountain, on an angle of which St. Elmo stands; otherwise the present situation will require twelve thousand foot, and two hundred light cavalry." And more to urge the chill tardy conclusions of the Spanish council, a circular to all the order's priors, cited to Malta every knight, and commander and servant-at-arms, to present themselves armed, accoutred, and equipped, not later than the end of next April, under the same date of January 5th, 1566.

But, on the 10th of the following February, met the chapter wherein the English language, under Sir Oliver Starkey, as Lieutenant of the Turcopolier,

¹ Bosio : par. iii., lib. xxxiv. 725.

had to be represented by a French knight, in the absence of any English one.¹

A law, by this meeting, that every knight taken by the infidels, and enslaved, should preserve his station amongst the knights during his slavery, and this be as favourable to his promotion as if spent on actual service, at the order's head-quarters, was surely in clear contradiction to both the words and the spirit of the old rule; that a knight made prisoner, and a knight dead, were one and the same thing, of which are to be found various instances in their brightest period. Yet high minded and rare bravery were the Hospitallers still to show, nor did it not encounter this of opposition, that for the nine knights at St. Elmo, since all too severely suffering from their bad wounds, for their consent to be either asked or given, it would be only just to make an exceptionable clause; but that a universal law were no compliment to them, and to it may be demurred on the best grounds.²

Only some months, and the succeeding Pope, in the name of Christendom, sent to exhort Valetta to set about creating his new city; and it having been observed that many decrees of the Council of Trent

¹ Bosio: par. iii., lib. xxxiv. 728.

² Id.: id., id. xxxv. 730.

were irreconcilable with the order's privileges, his Holiness notwithstanding confirmed said privileges, only adding a clause to his confirmatory brief.¹

Then returned the grand master and ambassador from Madrid, with a letter bidding Toledo pay the order two thousand crowns' worth of provisions and ammunitions, and a thousand other crowns for a much larger debt due to it by Spain several years. Yet were such petty matters soon drowned by what went through all the Levant, that Constantinople was preparing a second invasion of Malta; which hostile rumour at length alarmed the better class of the Maltese to that degree, that they began selling their things to remove their wives and children to Sicily; preferring the most disastrous exile to the horrors of last year. And willingly the grand master gave them leave, to unload himself of so many mouths—of slender utility in war. Hence those Sicilian ports became colonies of Greeks, Rhodians, Maltese.²

On the 14th of March began the building of the new city of Valetta, by laying the foundations with many religious ceremonies. But there was, besides the map, a model of it in wax laid before several of

¹ Bosio : par. iii., lib. xxxv. 737.

² Id. : id., id. 738.

the most experienced engineers in Christendom.¹ And another very consolatory brief came from Rome, conjuring Valetta not to put into execution his threat of leaving Malta, and going to abide in Sicily; "But rather remain, dearest child, in the fortress where you have already won immortal praise and glory throughout every land. The succours of his Catholic Majesty cannot be wanting, for therein is interested not only his fame, but the very safety of his own dominions. Nor ours; for we would be ready to spill our blood for love of our Redeemer and the benefit of this Christian republic. Above all, the Eternal will succour you, even He who so evidently saved thee last year. Nor will be wanting His supernal aid to your knights and soldiers. . . . All religious and faithful Christians listening to our invitation, will invoke a blessing on you. We instantly will write to the King of Spain and Sicily," dated Rome, at St. Peter's, under the fisherman's ring, 22nd March, 1566. Nor is to be forgotten the present by the Spanish monarch immediately after the siege, in testimony of his extraordinary ability and valour—a sword and dagger, both of which had hilts of the purest massive gold, beautifully chiselled, and of immense value.²

¹ Bosio : par. iii., lib. xxxv. 741. ² Id. : id., id. 767.

It was at this time that among several French youths, volunteers for the Turkish war, came Vignacourt to Malta, and shortly afterwards entered the order; and in process of years was to become its chief. Nor was Toledo any longer tardy; but transmitted five thousand Spanish and three thousand German foot—to be commanded by Valetta, “with as full authority as if he were my own person,” were the words of the King of Spain; which forces added to the knights, and their hired troops and some corps of Maltese, made in all eighteen thousand infantry and three hundred cavalry—a body quite sufficient to face whatever Turkey could convey to Malta.¹

But the Moslem fleet, instead of attacking that island, sailed up the Adriatic, and entering the port of Venice in a friendly way to refresh, vomited its ill-humour in a hostile demonstration on poor little Ragusa, and in cannonading some of the imperial towns along the coast of Dalmatia.²

Meantime the grand master took delight in superintending the construction of his new city—for the working at which on all festivals (even Sundays included) there was a Papal dispensation, so urgent did it seem to all Christendom. The hod-bearers to assist the masons amounting to eight thousand; and

¹ Bosio: par. iii., lib. xxxvi. 770.

² Id.: id., id. xxxvii. 773.

inhabitants of other countries will certainly smile at the solemnity with which the historian Bosio speaks of the discovery of a little spring of fresh water in cutting the rock—spring of no greater dimensions than a man's thumb. But people who have ever been there, will be nowise surprised; considering its aridity even now.

On the 22nd September, 1566, Selim ascended the Ottoman throne, his father having died in Hungary, of which new sultan tidings reached Malta on October 2nd, and were forwarded to Rome and Vienna, who were ignorant of the fact (much more the other Christian capitals) except, what is worse, that the imperial ambassador at Venice had written to his master that there was a similar vague rumour—not to be traced to any good source. So Malta
1565
at that time was the direct road for Levant news to get to Europe; and it was Europe rather than any one else, that first named the nascent town Valetta. It was the interest and care of all nations. All nations laboured to build it. It was considered from the beginning as much theirs, as the islanders'—a cosmopolitan city—the only one of that kind that perhaps ever existed from the foundations. The property of all the civilized people in the world a thousand times more than of the, however faithful, natives.¹

¹ Bosio: par. iii., xxxlib. vii. 788.

Selim was then forty-three, and being addicted to wine, women, and all luxurious habits, was no valiant warrior like Solyman (the better for Christendom), nor an irreconcilable enemy of the sacred, most illustrious Hospitallers. But no event distracted the grand master from his usual most diligent assiduity respecting the growing city. Nevertheless, not unmentioned must be the assassination of his private secretary, a renowned knight, by a bullet, in the dark, within a few paces of the palace, as he was returning to his house, to the deep vexation and grief of Valetta; who made many unavailing attempts to discover the murderer, whose harquebuss indeed remained on the spot, but led to nothing, being filed over with such care that it could not possibly be identified. Not but Valetta had to attend to all the order's concerns, as well as to an agreement still extant, and then made with a corps of hired soldiers; where are observable :— 1st. That the order kept usually three thousand of such; 2nd. That they had what would be enormous pay at present—forty dollars a-month each—which included sub-officers to be sure, and perhaps some of the very lowest officers likewise; but the rest and all the superior officers being Hospitallers, cost nothing. Even the superior officers of whatever allies marched with him, were generally in the same category, and, as Hospitallers, cost nothing.

The very ground on which Valetta was built was bought from the Maltese, and paid to them by the knights; in which sense also it has a right to be called a cosmopolitan city, and belonged much more to all Christians than to a nation, who had scarcely ever a single member in the order. The first name given to it by the knights was *Humblest*. And to assimilate themselves in some degree, exteriorly at least, a bye-law condemned them for the future to wear plain black; except in uniform and during campaigns. And that chapter met certainly in the *humblest* of halls—two temporary wooden huts, which the grand master had erected to defend himself and chancery from sun and rain, that he might be near the buildings, few of them, as yet, covered in. However, it was there he received an ambassador, sent expressly by the French King to ask the grand cross for his brother, the Duke of Angouleme; who professed, with the hope of one day becoming Prior of the Language of France.¹

But Selim, however unwarlike himself, headed a nation that loved war with the Christian; so prepared an expedition against Malta. And it being now the winter of 1567, the grand master was persuaded the threatened siege would take place next spring; so sent a citation to every

¹ Bosio: par. iii., lib. xxxvii. 793.

knight and servant-at-arms, not generally to the priors, but also to each individual separately, to hasten to join his language at Malta. And a Neapolitan nobleman—Signor Carlo Spinelli, Prince of Cariati and Duke of Semmara—on learning the grand master's urgency, and that the order was using every exertion to be ready to face the Turkish invasion, to provide him with that nerve of war, money—heroic generosity—sent a gentleman to Malta most affectionately to beg Valetta's acceptance of one hundred thousand crowns; or rather a security on his whole estates for that sum, for the merchants to cash in any way the order wished; and the agent presented to him the appropriate deed legally, with all the due formalities, with the duke's seal and signature—piece which Bosio gives in full, dated 17th December, 1567. And as frankly as it was offered, was it accepted by the grand master and council; and they had the fact registered regularly on their books, without making use of it however. And hearing it was the Moslem's intention to stop first at Gozo, Valetta went thither on February 8th, 1568, and remained there six days.¹

Yet soon ceased every doubt respecting the Mahometan fleet, whose intention was not to make any

¹ Bosio: par. iii., lib. xxxviii. 808.

real attack either on Malta or any Christian state; but clearly only to disturb all Christendom.

To this period the interference belongs which renders the town of Valetta so unsightly, with stairs as necessary as numerous from its standing on such different levels; but the idea was to have the whole city on one level, and the rock was to be cut far more down in a platform large enough to contain all the streets and houses; but that menace of a Turkish invasion caused the work to be left half undone—content with having the grand master's palace, St. John's, and the Languages, and the chief commander's house on a level, and the other habitations were built as they could; which probably at first was intended for only a temporary expedient; but the building once broken off, was never taken up again. And indeed a radical change and return to the primitive design became very difficult, from the foundations; if not quite impossible, and every year got worse and worse. Had the original plan been adhered to, and the rock cut down as far as was intended, the town would have been much more commodious and beautiful, and the batteries much stronger—however strong they be at present. In July, 1568, Valetta, very jealous 1563 of his new city, had several precautions taken. Also he wrote the Pope a sharp remonstrance at so

many of the order's privileges being broken by the Papacy; particularly in giving away dignities that ought to go to the impoverished knights, who had faced death with such surpassing gallantry, and endured such fearful wounds, for the defence of Christendom—and this return ensued before the perspiration was well rubbed from their blood-stained fronts, or their wounds were entirely closed.¹

In some brief dream of hope, or momentary resurrection of the English Language—how, is not quite apparent—but a Sir Richard Shelley is somewhat suddenly mentioned by Bosio as Prior of England;² though it be decidedly affirmed, that Weston was the last of our priors up to the dissolution of the monasteries.

The English Language fell then of inanition; and though some melancholy bystanders, and even doctors, retouched its pulse, and considering life not wholly gone, may have essayed a palliative, yet has it ever really lifted up its head since? Parties notwithstanding, in this all Englishmen will perhaps agree that it was not quite generous to hurl destruction on a body that had for ages been a glory to their country, and to whom all Christendom owed so much. If all be innocent

¹ Bosio: par. iii., lib. xxxviii. 815.

² Id.: id., id. 817.

till proved guilty, these were not even accused; why then confiscate their property? But that was over long since. Regret is now as vain as defamation. Yet he, who does not take it upon him to blame those times may lament their severity—which, if not necessary, was extremely unjust. But quietly in his closet, he ought not to forget that the statesmen of that age were exposed to thousands of difficulties, and a thousand hostile passions.

But on the evening of the 21st of August, 1568, Valetta could no longer brook what passes away with time, yet survived a stroke of apoplexy for about an hour, and even uttered, "Oh, my God, send me one of thy blessed angels to assist me in this extremity!" And the pious prayer was indeed heard—but thus, that instantly he left the shadow of pain. In his attached household it had been considered ominous that, one by one in the three days preceding his death, his three favourite animals had died—a falcon, presented to him by the King of France in allusion to that bird's being the crest of the Valetta house; his pet ruby-coloured parrot, that at a distance might be mistaken for a miraculously large ruby; and his tame lioness, so tame (at least towards him) that she used to sleep in his bed-room at full liberty.

Neither at his funeral, nor his successor's elec-

tion, any other Englishman than Sir Oliver Starkey appearing, the English Language had to be represented by a foreign knight.

One or two days after, Sir Peter del Monte took the usual coronation oath:—I swear solemnly, in the Divine presence, to observe the established and good ancient usages of our order, and to act in all state affairs by the advice of the members of the council. So help me, God!¹

On the 25th of the same month he ordered the late grand master's corpse to be carried into the new city founded by him, and buried there as he had prescribed. To his epitaph were added, and cut on the tombstone, some Latin verses composed on the occasion by Sir Oliver Starkey, a good scholar, then Lieutenant to the Turcopolier, and afterwards Bailiff of the Eagle.²

Del Monte had distinguished himself as head of the Italian Language during the siege—then being seventy. The order's marshal having died in France, his place was given to the Commander John le Vesque de la Cassiere. Again was Sir Oliver's rather quaint Latinity put in requisition, and over one of the gates of the new city is still to be read.³

¹ Bosio: par. iii. 822.

² Id.: par. iii. 825.

³ Id.: id. 828.—Appendix, ccxx.

The celebrated *Sixiena* in Spain, which had left off its original dependence on the grand master since above a century, returned to it by an oath taken by its ambassador before the entire council of Malta on the 17th of May, 1569, in eight 1569 articles, which being approved by the order, those nuns obliged themselves to obedience and the annual payment of a silver vase as feudal recognition.

Long had that nunnery existed with royal splendour; and when Alphonso II., of Arragon, died, his widow and their daughter retired thither, and took the veil, as others of that sovereign line did afterwards; and those ladies used to wear the white cross on their left side, like the knights, and the prioress on her chest. Nor were they founded under the grand master Berengario, as said by many generally—and not even by any grand master at all—but one hundred and seventy years earlier, and by another Berengario the order's provisor among the Spaniards, as is completely proved by the document shown on that occasion. The nuns were of all the royal and most illustrious houses—not of Spain alone, but of all countries as well; nor paid entrance or income, but were maintained every one gratis. In choir they bore little silver sceptres in memory of their august foundress, and

had a particular prayer-book, which, when Bosio wrote, was four hundred years old, and more.¹

In 1569, Sir Oliver Starkey, promoted to the Eagle—vain title in a vainer expectancy of the English Language's restoration—had the same melancholy satisfaction of sitting as bailiff in the chapter general without seeing any of his countrymen.²

Some pretext never wanting, Selim claimed Cyprus, and declared war on Venice, whose doge wrote to the grand master; but Loredan dying suddenly, his successor, Moncenigo, sent it on the 11th of May, 1570, begging his assistance. But Del Monte, who had long wished to abdicate, yet put it off while the Turks threatened Malta, now that their vengeance turned towards the Queen of the Adriatic, thought he might indulge his desire. But the Pope wrote with his own hand to exhort him to refrain; that it would be to go against that Providence that assigned him that glorious load; that he ought not to allow himself to be intimidated either by age or weakness; "on the contrary, become more animated the shorter the road you have to travel; for He will not fail to give you strength for whatever He ordains you to perform.

¹ Bosio : par. iii. 837.

² Id. : id. lib. xxxix. 842.

Without Him not a leaf falls from the tree; so this be your prayer, not mine, but His will be done. Remember, in the tribulation of the world, you must not lose confidence, for He has said I have conquered the world. As to your death, it will happen at the time assigned by Him." Rome, 8th December, 1570.¹

So good, aged Del Monte was consoled, and followed the Papal advice, and remained and made the whole order remove into the new city—deeming it little less glory to give it a soul, by giving it inhabitants, than to have built it. On the early days of March, 1571, the general removal was decreed; and on Sunday, the 18th, it took place. Publicly did he declare that none should have his benevolence who did not do everything in their power to benefit Valetta—the name coming into use instead of *Humblest*. And he engaged his own nephew to build himself a fine palace there, which the order subsequently bought to be the magisterial residence. So where the English governor now resides was erected by a private knight for his own dwelling; which gives us an idea of what the knights then were, and that it was a vast advantage for a small spot to have them for sovereigns. So persuaded was the Pope of the

¹ Bosio: par. iii., lib. xl. 870.

superiority of the Hospitallers' galleys, that he writes to thank the grand master for his promptitude in sending them to join his own Papal squadron at Messina—assuring him that it would not be the least disagreeable to the King of Spain.¹

It was a preparation for the great sea-fight of the age—to take place a little better than four months later. Certainly Lepanto was a defensive battle, and gained all it aspired to—the saving of Christendom. That was far from nothing; it was everything. Fair are they who put the Christian victory on a line with the Grecian Salamis, only on a larger scale; for Lepanto saved not a single country, but all the countries in Europe. The description of the day is spirited in the Venetian sketch,² adding, that it ought not to have been nearly silent about the Hospitallers; since Don Juan of Austria, supreme leader there, was himself a knight of our order, which took a great part in that victory; indeed almost a greater than Venice herself, as Contarini confesses, and likewise the Venetian commander-in-chief, Morosini. Nor were their praises from partiality, but an almost forced echo of universal beholders. Don Juan, of Austria, may be called no competent evidence, because sup-

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

² Family Library, Num. xxiii.

posed over favourable to his own order. But in fact he only spoke like the others. He Knight of Malta; they were both reciprocally worthy of each other. No more, and the eulogium of both is perfect. It was on Sunday morning, the 7th of October, that the two fleets met in awful conflict two hours after daylight—not on the 1st, as related by some moderns. The original pieces still exist. You have only to read them. The *Capitana di Malta* was not in either wing, but No. 6 in the centre of the line of battle.¹ Why leave out Contarini's words? "The Prior of Messina, a Giustiniani, Admiral of the *Capitana di Malta*, was so badly wounded that he was all but killed!" Of known valour, he saved the lives of several.² But 1572 alas! the grand master, under whom so many fine things happened, died on the 20th of January in 1572, as his gravestone shows;³ and was succeeded by that Cassiere, whose heroic feats on the coast of Barbary have been noted. Leaving France in 1522 as a volunteer, on his way to the siege of Rhodes,

¹ Sansovino: Hist. dei Turchi, 480.—Impresa del Regno di Cipro di G. P. Contarini etc.

² Yet dreadful the carnage! Of the Christians were killed seven thousand six hundred and fifty; and thirty thousand of the Turks, writes Galucci, best authority on that subject. Tentori: ix. 286.

³ Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii.

he then met L'Isle Adam at Messina, and received the cross of profession at his hands; and he now had risen to be Marshal of Auvergne when elevated to the supreme dignity. About two years later is the leave from Grand Master Cassiere to a knight who had fought in the Turkish wars with distinction, to live at the order's expense even out of Malta, or wherever he pleased. He had been in the *Capitana di Malta* at Lepanto, and fought until he
1574 could no longer stand, and fell so desperately wounded that he passed for dead; yet so recovered that he lost but an arm, a leg, and an eye.¹ Alas! what a state! Is that recovery? Howbeit, he survived, and that there is slight mention of Lepanto in the Cod. Dipl. Geros. is a new proof of to what glorious feats they were accustomed. For them there had been many a Lepanto; and even that renowned action was nothing new, nor of surpassing consequence.

But to one of the Barbary pair succeeds that other—Verdale; and under this latter it was that Gregory XIII. writes that, lest the ancient title of Turcopolier, distinctive of the head of the English Language, from the very beginning, as a memorial of all days, after having been so long pre-eminent over

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. ccxx.—Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni. See Appendix ccxxvi.

every other conventual dignity of the order, should be at any time exposed to neglect or profanation, the grand master is requested to assume it to himself, and incorporate all its rights and privileges with the grand-mastery unlimitedly; until (if that desired epoch ever arise) this lamentable secession come to a close, the then grand master shall be quite able to return the turcopoliership, without a single loss or blemish; on the contrary with each iota de jure of its antique advantages in no way deteriorated, tarnished, clouded, but sedulously preserved like a most precious jewel, deposited by a tender father, in a secure treasury for his beloved child.¹ With whomsoever the idea originated, it was lofty, fine, piteous. A regular document of this nature will obtain the veneration, not only of the order, but probably of all mankind.

Yet neither Cassiere nor Verdale shone as grand masters; both were on unhappy terms with their knights. The former, after having been a prisoner in his own palace, was called to Rome; to which he went, and had an honourable acquittal, but it broke his heart and he died there; though his remains being afterwards brought to Malta, we find his tomb among those of the grand masters. Verdale appears

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. ccxxiv., dated the 9th of June, 1582.

also to have been a haughty, severe man, and had a not dissimilar end.¹

From a letter to the grand master in answer to a petition from the monastery in the island of Patmos is clear, 1st, that he exercised still a protecting power in the Levant; 2nd, that where St. John the Evangelist wrote the Apocalypse had belonged to the order during its stay at Rhodes.² Undoubtedly it must have contributed to nourish self-esteem highly, that the order obtained the highest praise from the most venerated sources; nor was *laudari a laudato viro* ever more exemplified than in their case; and whoever collects the encomiums of the Hospitallers, will form several huge volumes; and strenuously is it repeated that theirs was then the most useful of human institutions, and the small spot where they resided ark and bulwark of Italy, nay of the whole civilised world.³

Verdale, however, also ended his sojourning in 1595, and was succeeded by Garzes,⁴ who may not have been extremely prudent; for I find Clement VIII. complaining of discord at Malta, and attributing them not to the Languages, which he seems to

¹ Seb. Paoli : Serie ii. 477.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cccxxi.—Appendix, cccxi.

³ Id., Id. cccxxii. Id., cccxii.

⁴ Seb. Paoli : Serie, ii.

regard as having been always in the order (whereas they were an innovation that had caused discords before, and might again), but to the form of electing the grand master, which indeed remounts to Gerard himself; so the knights are desired to decide on a new form of election. Now this was most manifestly to deprive them of all independence, and extort openly what, if sought by other Popes, they at least sought it under a cloak.¹ But the reply was becoming, that in most humble accordance with the Pontiff's desire, the knights during eight months had kept trying and trying without success, but found every change for the worse; so that his Holiness is besought to let them adhere to their olden form, that had almost invariably worked excellently and been so often confirmed by his holy predecessors.² The advice is dated 17th Sep., 1599; and the answer signed by grand master and council, July the 14th, 1600.

But on Garzes' going to his mansion in Feb., 1601, the choice fell on Wignacourt, a Frenchman, who in his long reign of twenty-three years showed himself an able and worthy sovereign.³ A new proof how idly superfluous was the idea of condemning the ancient

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

² Id., Id., Id. ccxxxvi.—Appendix, ccxxiii.

³ Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 477.

form of electing the grand masters; since two years had scarce elapsed ere the same Pope had to write in high praise of Wignacourt, as most zealous for the usual discipline, and therefore animates him to continue what he had so well begun.

In 1609 in November, that grand master wrote a letter to the King of Persia offering him the order's alliance in a war against the Turk;¹ and the answer of his Persian Majesty, translated from the original, preserved in the archives of Malta, shall be given in the Appendix.² Which may have rendered it the more advisable to cite to Malta all the knights of his order in a circular of 15th of February, 1614.³

But, in 1622, a Papal letter, both lamenting Wignacourt's death, and congratulating his successor, Vasconcellos, a Portuguese⁴ who, however, reigned for only about six months; and was succeeded by De Paul of Gascony,⁵ and to sharpen his sense of responsibility, a generous descant is rung on the glories of the order, and its valour, which terrifies the barbarian, and is the shield of Europe.⁶

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. ccxlv.

² Id., id., Id., ccl.—Appendix, ccxxiv.

³ Seb. Paoli: Osservazioni, ii. 506.

⁴ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cclvi.

⁵ Seb. Paoli: Serie, ii. 479.

⁶ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cclxiii, 17th of June, 1623.

It seems Urban VIII. had recommended the Franciscans of Holy Land to the grand master, in general terms. But a letter from the Father Guardian at Nazareth, on the strength of that recommendation, asked him for *four slaves*—though the proper term, at present, would be prisoners of war—of whom the order must at all times have had many, for the greater part employed to row their galleys, and without similar unfortunates, there could be no navies then. Yet, as the Father mentions none in particular, they were probably for a present to Constantinople. In whatever case, it was a charitable deed.¹

A reply of this grand master to a despatch from the King of France, shows the meaning of the latter,² coinciding with a note of the council to the French Ambassador at Rome,³ and another of the same to the Prior of Thoulouse,⁴ which three documents shall, in substance, be given together in the Appendix. Other letters from the grand master and council, to the emperor,⁵ to the King of Spain,⁶ and to the King of France,⁷ supplicating

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cclxx.

² Id., Id., Id. cclxxvi.—Appendix cexxv.

³ Id., Id., Id. cclxxvii. Id.

⁴ Id., Id., Id. cclxxviii. Id.

⁵ Id., Id., Id. cclxxxv.

⁶ Id., Id., Id. cclxxxv.

⁷ Id., Id., Id. cclxxxvi.

them to request the Pope to cease interfering with the commanderies belonging to the Languages, but permit them to follow their forms and usages, and not dispense any favours regarding the same
1625 —this was in June, 1625. That they obtained what they wanted, and the expostulations of the order's ambassador, Imbroll, were at length attended to, and that Rome prohibited its court of cardinals and prelates to decide on matters appertaining to the grand master and his council, but simply allowed Papal ministers to take preliminary informations; which only tended to render the decisions of the order more respectable—we have a proof in another diplomatic document.¹

That the order lost two galleys, offers a fine opportunity to its own Prior of Aquitayne to make it a present of four thousand six hundred gold crowns;² a new instance of the benevolence of its members towards their common stock, very characteristic, and highly laudable trait, which an historian would be singularly inattentive to his duty not to notice.

Another attempt of his Holiness, in 1627—like that of Clement VIII., in 1599—to introduce again the new form of electing the grand master, was

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

² Id., Id., Id. cclxxxviii.

met by a similar negative from him and his council,¹
which bold refusal, who but will approve of?

The rather considering those difficult times.

1627

Nor less Urban VIII. persisted, and discharged the
thunderbolt of his spiritual authority,² and perhaps
they must have submitted, at least in appearance.

But they can bide their time, and war and circum-
stances allow them to retain much of the spirit of
their ancient liberties, and the substance of

1628

popular self-government, in spite of exterior
and transitory shackles; so they remain true to
themselves. That undying resolution, and the

tempest quickly subsides. What has braved six
centuries, will not expire now. True, peace and

luxury are secret worms that feed on our very
vitals, and are far worse than war with Turks or
Tartars, or any desolating troubles of murder and

famine. But, for a long time yet, the

1629

knights are to run no risk from too much

quiet—if ever. The grand master convened, on

the 18th of January, 1629, a chapter general; but

soon saw how it was, and that although they,

perhaps, might abstain from violence, they would

by no means assent, as desired; so, in his letter to

the Pope, on that subject, respectful as are his

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii, Num. cxcxi.

² Id., Id., Id. cxcxiii.

terms, and though he sent his own nephew with it, imply a fear that his Holiness wished for some other forms in their sittings, which his knights would not at all tolerate, nor subscribe to the smallest innovation.¹ Not that De Paul did not perceive it was the Pope's intention to strengthen the grand mastery, but he who held it now, preferred their ancient constitution, to any private interests of his own. It is but justice to him to say that he appears to have been wholly without any undue ambition. Much less did he wish for the hatred of his knights, and to leave the sad renown of having subverted the body who had elected him for other purposes. Yet, whatever De Paul thought, or however pure the Papal motives, the fact is the order was deprived of the mainspring of its liberties, the chapter general, during above a century; and though the heavy expenses it cost, was the specious
 1634 excuse, the real cause might be that it was easier to manage a restricted council, than a numerous, and, as it were, popular assembly. Nevertheless, Urban VIII. did not change his mind; but obstinately confirmed his bull, regarding the form of electing the grand master, in a document, from Gandolfo Castle, on the 21st of October, 1634.²

¹ Boisgelin : i. 265.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. ccii.

But a truce to all theological or civil squabbles! Here is what must eclipse them, and is more consonant with our order. The Turks are not slumbering. On the 27th of March, 1635, comes a despatch from one of the chief ministers of the King of Spain, El Conde de Monte Rey, with 1635 intelligence of a large armament preparing in Constantinople, against, it is said, Persia, but perhaps against Malta; and if this last case turned out, the grand master may be sure of succours being ready in Spain, and that they be sent instantly, and in sufficient number, and of artillery forthwith.¹ Which may have roused the grand master into a still greater conviction of the necessity of his labouring to remove every discontent from the minds of his people; so he wrote a letter to the emperor, supplicating his imperial majesty not to send an ambassador to beg the Pope to yield grand crosses of the order by dispense to some young Italians, who have not the merits requisite; as is the rumour amongst their language, to the grievous dissatisfaction of all that body of knights.² This, under date of the 15th of August, 1636. But on the 21st March of the next year, Cardinal Barberini, by the pontifical com-

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

² Id., Id., Id. ccciv.

mands, writes to the grand master, informing him that the Greeks, and their patriarch at Jerusalem, having, by means of the Turks, possessed themselves of the keys both of the *præsepio* at Bethlehem, and of the Holy Sepulchre taken violently from the Franciscans, though belonging of old to the Latin Church; and therefore he requests of him to indicate the surest expedient to get back the keys, and holy places, and advise with the other Christian princes, regarding the same.¹ To which the grand master, that this is his council's answer, in which he also joins; "a war of all Christendom would be perfectly just, but only available in a way that those at Rome do not perhaps mean; for a crusade as of yore would be too long, and hardly practicable at present; the great omnipotent God of armies being able of course if He pleased, but not man. But thus it would be easy, and of instant result. It is most allowable to wage war against the really culpable, Greeks and Turks. So the Christian potentates should send out a few ships, and give leave to all individuals to do the like, and seize on the person and property of those two people; the rather, that it is certain nearly all the merchandise sold as Greek, is in reality Turkish, but marked with a

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cccv.

cross, and Greek names on the bales. Almost instantaneous the effect would be; that on their knees the culprits would restore the keys and places. Such reprisals would be strikingly fair. True and only remedy after mature reflection, and consulting with those who know the Levant well. This evidently just way of impartial reprisals would at once bring the usurpers to be the first to conjure you to receive back everything, and cease further hostilities." And on the 8th of the next June, grand master and council again join in a letter imploring the King of Spain to ask the Pope to revoke his brief in favour of a French knight of the name of Saurè, on whom his Sanctity confers the grand cross with an active and passive voice in the council, grievous injury to his own, and likewise solemnly and unanimously protested against by all the Languages, Spanish, Italian, German, French. And this is probably the last letter written by the Grand Master, De Paul; for his tombstone says he died on the 7th of the Ides of June, 1636;¹ and he must have been succeeded nearly immediately by Lascaris, since here is a Papal brief, dated Rome, the 2nd of July, 1636, congratulating him as already grand master.²

¹ Seb. Paoli : Serie, ii. 479.

² Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. cccvi.

Sir Paul de Lascaris Castellar, Bailiff of Manosca, was born of the ancient Counts of Ventimiglia in Piedmont, originally of the imperial house of Constantinople. "In his election soon appeared the validity of the new reform" (which Urban had after all effectuated—notwithstanding the knightly oppositionists), "and deluded was the sagacity that dictated it;" are the words of an eminent commander of Malta, no vulgar historian.¹

In the chapter general a few years earlier, a number of mere boys had been admitted to the votes by a dispense from Rome, who might even then have sufficient to give the grand master a majority whenever he liked; and now this new grand master asked and obtained a similar dispense to raise them to the full complement of one hundred, which certainly deprived the order of its former freedom, that the grand master and Pope might at any time command the order's supreme tribunal, the chapter general.

The new reform was manifestly calculated to put the election of the grand master in the Pope's power, had not He whom all things obey, decided otherwise. Every human contrivance appeared to concur towards the destruction of our liberties; yet matters did not proceed as intended. How

¹ Pozzo : par. ii., lib. i. 2.—Verona in 4to.

weak and blind are mortals! Why should not that petty assembly have its troubles, as well as the illustrious British Parliament? Both have known how to overcome all the wit of man. It was far easier to manage the grand master than the rightful superior meeting.¹ On the 5th of February, 1638, is an extremely courteous letter to the grand master from the then Doge of Venice, 1638 Francisus Erizo;² as well as a somewhat similar to the whole order, from Louis XIII.;³ and another to the grand master, from the Queen of France 1639 signing herself his good cousin Anne, a St. Germain, ce 17 Avril, 1639.⁴

Most determinedly following his design of lifting the grand master into absoluteness, that same Pope, now in his sixteenth pontificate, restricted all diminution of the magisterial authority, during the vacancy between one grand master and another, when the knights indulged in comparative liberty, and whether willing or unwilling, the grand master's name was used as having applied for such a Papal rescript.⁵

On further rumour of an invasion of Malta by

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. ccex.

² Id., Id., Id. ccxiv.

³ Id., Id., Id. ccxvii.

⁴ Id., Id., Id. ccxviii.

⁵ Id., Id., Id. ccxxi.

the Turks, the same Pope concedes a dispensation for a hundred little boys, of six years old, to be made knights professed, on their paying so much a head, to be laid out in the defensive armament; a great lure to an avaricious grand master, and an easy way for the Papal quota—the Pope offers no other; yet money was the least evil, where a popular government was to be converted into despotic. Happily the temporal power of the Holy See changes, usually, with every Pontiff.¹

Three months later, the King of Spain sends to his viceroy, in Sicily, to aid Malta in the threatened Turkish invasion, his command being signed *Yo el*

*Rey. De Madrid, ade Hebraro, de 1640.*²

1640 In the following August, the French king alleviated the taxes, regarding those of the order in consideration of its services to Christendom, both by land and sea.³

A King of Poland, in 1642, to the grand master, announces a new priory for Poland alone, about to be founded in favour of the Radzivil family; since not only the Polish knights, but the entire nation of Poland, consider it an injury and insult to be

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

² Id., Id., Id. cccxxiv.

³ Id., Id., Id. cccxxvi.

any longer allowed to remain united with the Priory of Bohemia, Moravia, and Austria, as before. So the Poles had resolved to erect a priory for themselves, and humbly apply for the magisterial sanction, *Wladislaus Rex, Warsaw, 4th of April, 1642.*¹

And follows another of his Majesty to the council, on the same, and of the same date.²

To which we have two years later one of especial courtesy from Louis XIV.,³ and a similar from the queen mother,⁴ both to the Grand Master Lascaris.

Within some months Grand Master Lascaris directs a circular to the Prior of France, bidding him cite every dignitarian, knight, or servant-at-arms, as well as novices, and those youths who in their childhood had become professed by dispense, and were now eighteen—even such as may have entered into the French army, or any other military service—to set out instantly for Malta, without a single exception for those too decrepid to fight, but that they must appear and be judged on the spot, whether to be declared invalid or not—all with their

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

² Id., Id., Id. cccxxx.

³ Id., Id., Id. ccexl. Appendix, Num. cccxxiv.

⁴ Id., Id., Id. ccexli.

arms, and having servants twenty years of age at least; otherwise they should be deprived of the cross and insignia, besides other severities, and this to front the siege of Malta, which the Turk is said to be about undertaking, January 24th, 1645.¹

1645 To corroborate which the King of Spain wrote to the grand master, to promise prompt succour, in case the Turks invaded Malta.² The real cause of this warlike threat—no more than a threat respecting the island of Malta—for the storm burst on Candia—was according to Pozzo, the anger of the Grand Turk at the taking of his favourite sultana and child, by the Maltese ships, who were admitted into Candia, where the beautiful young mother expired, having been already poisoned by a rival in the Constantinopolitan seraglio; but her infant was given to the grand master, who had him bred up a Christian, with real care, and afterwards he travelled through Europe, and came back Prior of Porto Salvo, to Malta—his home until his death, in 1676. The story at large is very romantic, but probably true.³ The council's decree by which the volunteer, Viscomte d'Arpaion, is made captain

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

² Mi muy Amado Amigo. Yo el Rey. De Zaragoza a 9 de April de 1645.—Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. ccexliii.

³ Pozzo: Istoria, ii. 91.

general of the army and fortresses of Malta, during the siege, with the order's marshal second in command, but superior to all except the said viscount, is dated May 27th, 1645.¹ It certainly caused sorrow, quite the contrary of satisfaction, at Malta, when they heard the Turkish fleet had sailed against Candia instead; so prepared were the knights, and so confident of victory.² Truth is the Candian war is as much of Malta itself, as of Venice; and so the knights always considered it. Therefore if they were the primary cause of it, it is only fair. Nor does Venice disagree, however dear to her—and with good reason—be the glories she earned at Candia, as will be fully proved by the documents to be cited. Yet what seemed must have
1656
blown over, since no document of importance till ten years later. In 1656 is a letter from the Doge of Venice, Bertuccio Valerio, to the Grand Master Lascaris, imploring his *usual* aid to withstand the fiercer than ever Turkish attacks on Candia; knowing that in the worst of peril is when those much noble Knights of Malta will come with their troops, both by sea and land, to try to win back what we have lost; not only from their own

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

² Pozzo: Istoria, ii. 114.

thirst of glory, but for their compassion for universal Christendom, and its interests.¹

But the fifty-seventh Grand Master, Lascaris, died
1657 on the 14th of August, in the next year,
after reigning twenty-one years, and living
ninety-seven, as his tombstone shows.²

And next came Redin, Prior of Navarre, elected
fifty-eighth grand master, who had been Viceroy of
Sicily, and a great warrior, and even in his last
years had offered either to be the Godfrey de Bug-
lion of a new crusade, or take part in it as a private
gentleman.

There is a bull of Alexander VII. praising Redin
as he merited, and that he was right in standing by
the Venetians, who had the constancy and fortitude
of rejecting the peace offered by the Turks on such
conditions; an illustrious and generous refusal, which
deserves all commendation, and is, in truth, heroic
and worthy of the egregious and signal high-
mindedness of the true glorious hospital. "This
marvellous example calls forth even our energies,"
exclaimed the aged Pontiff, "so that we are pre-
paring eight or ten triremes, as strong and as
properly furnished with artillery as we possibly

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. lii. Giunt.—Dato in Nostro
Ducali Palatio, 9 Decbr., 1656.

Seb . Paoli: Serie, 2.

can." Rome, 26th January, 1658.¹ But that G. M. died on the 6th of February, 1660, in the seventieth year of his life. And Clermont 1660 de Chattes Gessan, who reigned next, had been Bailiff of Lyons, and was indeed of an ancient royal house, but in three fugitive months after his elevation (in consequence of the breaking out of an old wound received in his youth, in the African wars) he expired on the second of June, in the same 1660.

On which succeeded Sir Raphael Cotoner, Bailiff of Majorca, and as the Candian war may be as properly called Maltese, his first act as grand master was to send a party to aid the Venetians in the Levant.

So it was to R. Cotoner, to whom was directed the letter of the Doge of Venice, Domenico Contarini, that in the war of so many years, the sacred cross of Malta has ever been ready and true, in all circumstances, to the standard of St. Marc, nor will the Venetian republic be slow in due gratitude 1661 to the conspicuous and glorious deeds which have been worthy of the sincerest esteem and love; 17th of August, 1661.²

On the 1st of October of that same year another letter from Doge Contarini to the same grand

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

² Id. Id., Id. cccliii.

master, is concerning a naval victory gained over the

1663 Turks, off Khania.¹ But towards the close
of 1663, Raphael Cotoner died, and another
of that family name, Sir Nicholas Cotoner, Bailiff
of Negropont, succeeded.²

¹ Cod. Dipl. Geros., ii., Num. ccclv.

² On the 20th of October.—Seb. Paoli : Serie, ii.