

## THE BATTLE OF LEPANTO.

(From *The Knights of St. John*, by E.H.T.)

THE horror inspired by this catastrophe determined the Catholic League to prepare for more vigorous measures than had yet been attempted; and it is from this period that we shall endeavor to take up the narrative, and lay before our readers the details of a struggle whose result has been found worthy of commemoration not only in the pages of history, but in the office of the Church.

And first, let us see what was the relative strength of the parties about to enter into the combat. A fleet of about 160 vessels, thinly manned, was furnished by the Venetian states, under the command of Sebastian Veniero, who had as his lieutenant Agostino Barbarigo, a man of distinguished merit and courage. The Pope had no naval force at his disposal, but undertook to furnish and equip twelve of the Venetian galleys; Mark Anthony Colonna, Duke of Paliano, was appointed to the command; and, besides the regular forces in the papal service, a considerable number of the Roman nobility volunteered to join the enterprise. Every thing had been done to give a character of religious solemnity to the enrolment and departure of the troops. The venerable Basilica of the Apostles had witnessed a function of singular character and magnificence in the June of the previous year, when after High Mass, sung by the Cardinal Colonna, the Pope solemnly implored the Divine benediction on the Christian arms, and blessed the crimson standard emblazoned with the crucifix and with the figures of the two apostles of Rome, which was committed to the Duke of Paliano; whilst the words embroidered as a legend on the damask folds were given to him as his watchword and assurance of success,—“*In hoc signo vinces*.” Nor was another kind of assurance wanting to encourage him and his followers. When, attended by all his officers and by the crowd of noble volunteers who had joined his company, he presented himself to receive the parting benediction of his Holiness, it was given to them accompanied by words which from the mouth of such a speaker had something in them of a prophetic character: “Go, my children,” he said, “and fight in God’s name against the Turks; it is in His name and on His part that I promise you the victory.” Similar to this had been the message sent by him to the Spanish leaders by the hands of his nuncio Odescalchi, as well as to the other princes who had joined in the enterprise; and to the Count de Carillo, as he knelt at his feet, the holy Pontiff again repeated, “It is in the name of the Most High that I promise you a certain victory.”

Yet this assurance could scarcely be thought to arise from the extent of the martial preparations. So far as the co-operation of the European governments was concerned, the embassies and negotiations of his ambassadors had almost utterly failed. Nevertheless we must remember that the influence of the Roman Pontiff over the heart of Christendom rests on something deeper and more powerful than the success of a political negotiation. And so, notwithstanding the coldness and backwardness of the Christian princes, the appeal of the Pope had been loyally and warmly received by many in every nation whither his nuncios had been despatched. Besides the regular armaments of Spain and Venice, and the forces contributed by Genoa and the Duke of Savoy, by the Knights of Malta, and several of the lesser Italian states, the volunteers who joined the troops of the allies, to the number of more than two thousand, were of all nations, and included some of the most distinguished soldiers of the day. But, more than this, it cannot be doubted that the confidence which filled the heart of St. Pius had another and a surer foundation. He could not command the arms of Europe, but the prayers of Christendom at least were at his disposal. Up from every church in every country that owned his obedience there had been arising for months a swell of fervent and united supplication. The religious order to which he himself belonged had been foremost in the use of this great weapon of intercession; and every Confraternity of the Rosary throughout Europe attached to the Dominican body had been unwearied in their processions and devotions for the success of the Christian arms. How strong a feeling had been excited by the efforts of the Pope may be judged by one fact: it was the period of so-called reformation, when throughout a vast portion of Europe the devout practices of former ages were sinking into contempt; and yet we are told Loretto had never seen such a year of pilgrimage. Every road to the Holy House was crowded by devotees of all nations; and all crowded thither with but one object—to place the cause of the Christians under the patronage of Mary.

The Spanish fleet has been hitherto commanded by John Andrew Doria,\* and some symptoms of jealousy had arisen in the first movements of the allies between him and the Roman leader, Colonna. These were, however, happily placed at rest by the appointment to the chief command of one whose rank as well as his reputation raised him far above all the subordinate generals of the league. This was Don John of Austria, the natural son of the emperor Charles V., and the captain-general of the navy of Spain. Colonna was, with the consent of all parties, declared his lieutenant; and his arrival was anxiously expected at Messina, where the various squadrons of the allied powers had assembled towards the close of the month of August. It was the 25th of the same month when he arrived at the place of rendezvous; and his entrance into the city seemed rather the triumph given to a conqueror than the reception of one whose victory was yet to be hardly earned. All the showy magnificence of the times was displayed in the preparations made for welcoming him. The city was filled with arches and triumphal columns, and the shores covered with the gaily-emblazoned banners of the various chiefs, whose martial appearance recalled to the eye the costume at least, if it did not represent something also of that chivalrous spirit which was fast expiring before the progress of

modern civilisation and the eager pursuit of material interests. And indeed there was much in this, almost the last of the Christian leagues against the infidel, which was worthy of the best days of chivalry. A great principle, even when it has received its death-blow, is long in dying; and the embers of that generous fire blazed up in many a bright and flickering flame before they were wholly quenched in darkness. We can scarcely fail, for instance, to admire the generosity evinced by the Spanish government; for, apart from the religious considerations of the war, its main object was undoubtedly the relief and protection of the Venetian states,—those very states which but a short time previously had refused to assist the Spaniards against the Turks, and by their refusal had been in great part the cause of the fall of Rhodes. Yet Philip II.,—a monarch whose traditional unpopularity in England, as the husband of Mary the Catholic, has obscured the memory of his many great qualities,—never seems to have given a moment’s place to the petty yet not unnatural feeling of resentment which might have led him to seize so favorable an opportunity for retaliating on a humbled rival. No sooner did the appeal of the Pope reach him than he gave orders to Doria to render every assistance to the Venetian fleet, without the exaction of any condition, or a symptom of any sentiment but that of hearty and devoted adherence to what he deemed the cause of God. There was, moreover, a deeply religious feeling among those now gathered on the shores of Messina. Many of the most distinguished leaders of their ranks had earned their laurels in the defence of the Catholic faith; not a few of the most renowned of the French volunteers, such as the Count de Ligny, and others, like the two Sforzas, had gained their military reputation in the Huguenot wars; whilst that of Don John himself had been in great part acquired in long and successful struggles with the Moors of Africa. But above all, a distinct religious character was given to the enterprise by the presence of Odescalchi, the papal nuncio, whose mission in the Christian camp was not merely to bestow the apostolic benediction on the soldiers, and to animate them to the combat by the assurance of the favor of Heaven, but, as we are told, to drive away all bandits, assassins, thieves, and other public sinners, who might have enlisted from the hope of booty, and who, unworthy of fighting in a holy cause, might rather draw down the anger of God by new crimes.

The chief appointed to lead the Christian forces, whose arrival was being welcomed with such enthusiastic manifestations of joy, was one every way worthy of a great command. His German biographer thus describes him: “He was of sanguine temperament and lordly presence: in stature somewhat above the middle height; of a frank and generous nature, possessing a strong sense of justice, and gifted with a ready wit and a retentive memory. He was remarkably vigorous and strong; so much so, that he could swim in his armour as if he had nothing on him. He was agreeable and courteous in manner, a great respecter of letters and arms, and an excellent horseman. He had a noble, clear, and spacious forehead; his blue eyes were large and bright, with a grave and kindly expression; his countenance was handsome; he had little beard, and was of a light and graceful figure.” By the terms of the league the squadron was to consist of 300 vessels and galleys, and 50,000 men. The actual combatants, however, were not more than 29,000, although there were more than 80,000 altogether in the fleet that was now assembled under the eye of its commander. The council of war having determined on seeking battle with the Turks without loss of time, only a few days were given to the marshalling of the armament, which then sailed out of the port of Messina, presenting a spectacle of naval magnificence which in those days had rarely been equalled. One by one each vessel passed in its allotted order out of the harbor, and fell into its appointed place, whilst the nuncio Odescalchi stood on the pier-head, blessing each in turn. The vessel which bore the Spanish prince was conspicuous for its beauty and decorations; it was the royal galley of Spain, ornamented after the fanciful taste of the day with “delicate carving and ingenious allegories.” The order of battle, which was to be inviolably preserved during the whole time of the expedition, was as follows: Doria led the right wing, having fifty-four galleys under his command, with orders to keep about six miles in advance of the main body, so as to give the ships plenty of sea-room. The left wing was under Agostino Barbarigo, and consisted of an equal number of galleys. The main body of sixty vessels was under the personal command of Don John himself; whilst the reserve of thirty more was intrusted to Don Alvaro di Bazzano, Marquis of Santa Cruz. Don John of Cardona was despatched with some Sicilian galleys a few miles in advance, with orders to reconnoitre the enemy, and fall into his place at the extremity of Doria’s wing, so soon as he should have discovered him. The hoisting of the consecrated standard was to be the signal for the whole fleet falling into line and presenting a single front; whilst a number of galleys were selected to form a circle around the leading vessels of the three chief divisions of the armament to act as a support. Besides the advanced galleys of Cardona, Andrada, a Spanish knight, had previously been sent by Don John, in a light and swift vessel, to make secret observations on the position and preparations of the Turks; whilst the Christian squadrons meanwhile proceeded to the harbor of Gomenizza, where the whole fleet was reviewed by the commander in person, not without symptoms of jealousy and opposition on the part of the Venetians.

† In 1557, when the armada was in preparation, Queen Elizabeth tried to draw Sultan Amurath III. into an alliance with her against Philip and the Pope. Von Hammer gives the letters written on the occasion. With characteristic astuteness she appealed to the religious sympathies of the Turk, making common cause with him as the “destroyer of idolatry,” and declaring that together they could “strike down the proud Spaniard and the lying Pope with all their adherents.” Such were the representations made by the English envoy as to the religious belief of his queen and nation, that one of the Turkish ministers remarked to the Austrian ambassador, that “nothing more was wanted to turn the English into good Mussulmans than that they should lift a finger and recite the *Eshad*” (or creed of Mahomet).

\* Nephew of the great admiral of the emperor Charles V.

(To be continued.)