

slain by the swarming hordes of the Moslems. But the castle of San Angelo still held out. Don Mendoza, one of Grand Master La Vallette's most trusted lieutenants, implored him on his knees to remember the preciousness of his life to the dearest interests of Christendom. But in vain. "Can I end my life more gloriously at the age of seventy-one," exclaimed the gallant old knight, "than in the company of my friends and brethren, in the service of God, and for the defence of our holy faith?"

The Turks continued to press the siege. Day by day the numbers of the Christian garrison diminished. At length the Turks carried all the outworks, and levelled them to the ground, and, flushed with victory, were preparing for the investment of San Angelo, the citadel, when the long-expected relief made its appearance.

A goodly column of great ships streamed into the Bay of Melleha on September 7. No time was lost in landing the troops, who leaped eagerly ashore. The commonest soldier was filled with as much enthusiasm as the noblest knight in a cause which he felt to be that of Christendom. But they were allowed no opportunity of meeting the Moslem in battle, for as soon as the Turkish commander learned of the arrival of reinforcements, he abandoned the siege, and embarked in such haste that he left all his heavy guns behind him.

"We leave the reader," says Mr. Adams, "to imagine the wonder and reverence with which those deliverers gathered among ruined walls and shattered ramparts, and looked upon the worn and haggard knights, and the Grand Master himself, with hair and beards neglected, and in foul and tattered apparel, like men who for four months had scarcely ever undressed, and many still wearing the

bandages that covered honourable wounds." Of the forty thousand Moslems who on the 18th of May sat down before the castle, not ten thousand re-embarked; whilst of the eight or nine thousand defenders, barely six hundred were able to join in the Te Deum of thanks for the successful termination of what was one of the greatest struggles in ancient or modern times.

The ancient infirmary of the Knights Hospitallers, as an old writer tells us, was in former days "the very glory of Malta." Every patient had two beds for change, and a closet with lock and key to himself. No more than two people were put in one ward, and these were waited upon by the "serving brothers," their food being brought to them on silver dishes, and everything else ordered with corresponding magnificence.

Nowadays, though scarcely so sumptuous, the hospital is still a noble institution, one of the rooms, four hundred and eighty feet in length, being accounted the longest in Europe. The rock-hewn dungeons in which the knights kept their two thousand galley-slaves, in most cases Turks and Moors who had fallen in the way of their warships, still exist in the rear of the dockyard terrace. Such reminders of a cruel age and a stern Order are depressing to the wanderer in search of the picturesque.

The island was still in the hands of the Knights Hospitallers when, in 1798, the fleet which conveyed Napoleon and his army to the conquest of Egypt, dropped anchor in the bay, and landed several regiments to take possession of it in the name of the French Republic. No resistance was offered, for the degenerate successors of La Vallette and his knights had secretly disposed of their rights for a heavy bribe.

But the Government of Great