

THE BATTLE OF LEPANTO.

FOURTH ARTICLE.

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The fight lasted many hours, and the sun was fast declining when the rival chieftains, the beaks of whose galleys had long been interlocked, like the antlers of two stags in mortal combat, mustered their forces on the upper deck, each with the intention of carrying the other's vessels by boarding. On the one side were the Janissaries—those renowned warriors whose proud boast it was that they had never turned their backs to the foe; on the other that invincible Spanish infantry, trained and disciplined by the great Duke of Alva. Many times did the intrepid Ali spring on board the *real* at the head of his men only to be driven back by the withering fire of the arquebusers; Don Juan as often gained and lost the deck of the Bashaw's galley foot to foot and hand to hand the bravest soldiers of the East and West contended for the mastery. The Spaniard fought for glory in this world and endless bliss in the world to come; while, beyond the serried ranks of the Christians, the Moslem beheld the dark-eyed hours of Paradise waiting to welcome the warrior who should lose his life in the service of Mohammed and the Sultan. At length Uluch Ali, regarding Doria as whipped and recognizing the fact that the final issue of the battle depended upon the struggle then so fiercely pending between Ali and Don Juan, steered for the Christian camp, followed by all his Algerines, and, although stoutly opposed by Don Juan's supporters, was fast nearing their admiral's galley. In spirit by the sight, Ali put himself once more at the head of his Janissaries, and, crying out, "O Yengi cheri, this day God has delivered the unbelievers into your hands!" he prepared to board the *real* at the moment when Uluch Ali's vessel should collide with her. Victory seemed within his grasp, and all was dark with the Christians: At this critical instant, so pregnant with the opposite emotions of fear and hope the smoke cleared away, as if by a miracle, and Don Alvarez de Bazan, with the reserve, was seen coming at full speed to the relief of his chief, while Doria, supported by a few of his best and fastest galleys, was making an effort to get in Uluch Ali's rear. Seeing this the wily Algerine gave up all for lost and, signalling to his squadron to withdraw from action, retired into the direction of Zante. "Curses on him for a coward!" cried the indignant Ali. "Soldiers, we must conquer without him!" As he ceased speaking a bullet, fired by an unknown hand, went crashing through his skull, and the gallant Turk, more fortunate than his comrades who survived this disastrous day fell back, senseless but with honor, in the arms of his nearest follower. Profiting by the confusion incident to his fall, Don Juan boarded his magnificent galley from the bow simultaneously with Veniero and Colonna, who threw their crews on board on either side. Thus overpowered, the Janissaries true to the principle which had been instilled into them from their earliest childhood resolved to die under their colours. Not one of them threw down his arms or asked for quarter; on the contrary, each man, fighting to the last, fell in the ranks, covering with his body when dead that portion of the deck which he had occupied while living. As the last man fell, a Spanish volunteer, cutting off Ali's head, carried it with him to the poop of the *real*, whither Don Juan had betaken himself, and, placing it on the

point of his lance, he held it far above his head that all the Turks might see it, and from the helmet with which it was covered, bearing the insignia of his rank, became cognizant of the fact that their grand admiral was slain. At this dismal sight, however, a cry of horror went up from the friend and foe alike, and Don Juan sternly rebuked the barbarian who had perpetrated the outrage; then, turning to Requiesens, who stood near him, the youthful victor directed him to have the colours of the Bashaw's galley, which were still flying, hauled down—an order that was joyfully complied with.

As the great standard of the Prophet was lowered to the deck, fear and dismay seized the whole Turkish host, God had given a great victory to the Christians.

One hundred and thirty of the enemy's vessels, with their crews, fell into the hands of the allies, and twelve thousand Christian captives were rescued from bondage. The rest of the vast Turkish armament, with its myriads of brave men, was consumed by fire or swallowed up by the waves.

The Christian loss was fifteen vessels sunk and eight officers, seamen, and soldiers killed, of whom the most noted were the *prove ditore*, Augustine Berberigo, who died ten days after the battle, universally regretted, and Don Juan Ponce de Leon, a scion of that illustrious race whose blood has ever been poured out like water in the service of Spain.

Among the Turks, who, next to the lamented Ali, most distinguished themselves in the action, the bashaw Pertor, who for three hours sustained, unaided, the attacks of four Christian galleys, stands pre-eminent. Finding himself at last without oars or rudder, this inimitable officer leaped overboard, and swam to a small fishing craft, where he was overtaken by the Venetians and barbarously murdered.

Of the Christians, three names come down to us invested with especial interest: those of Don Juan, of Austria, whose whole life was a feverish dream of ambition, to end in a melancholy death; of Alexander Farnese, prince of Parma, destined to be the first general of his age; and of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, then but a common soldier in the field of Mars,* but shortly to become a leader and a guiding star in that wider and nobler field where the sword yields precedence to the pen.

Such was the ever memorable battle of Lepanto, which gave the *coup de grace* to the naval supremacy of the Turks on the Mediterranean, and filled their capital with mourning. That the allies did not gain from it all the advantages they should have gained, history makes apparent. The fact is undeniable, and is to be attributed partly, to a want of harmony among the commanders of the allied fleets, and, in part to Phillip's jealousy of his half brother, which thenceforth began to manifest itself in all his conduct toward him, but the assertion of many chroniclers that Don Juan might have taken possession of the splendidly fortified and strongly garrisoned city of Constantinople, had he made sail for it immediately after the action, is best answered by the Turkish Vizer Soko li himself: "Your Excellency wishes to know," said he to the ambassador of Venice, what our temper is since our defeat. Let me tell you, then, that you, in losing Cyprus, have lost an arm, while the destruction of our fleet is to us as the cutting off of our

hand. A limb cannot be replaced, but the beard, you may assure the Signory, will grow thicker with each clipping." And this was not a vain boast; for early in the following summer more than two hundred admirably built and equipped vessels were put afloat by the Turkish government; and when Uluch Ali, who had been appointed to the command of the fleet, expressed his astonishment at its "marvellous fittings," Sokoll assured him that the resources of the Sublime Porte were such that they could have been furnished, if necessary, with silken cordage, velvet sails, and spars of silver.

The disaster, then, that befel the Turks at Lepanto consisted, not in the vast number of men and galleys lost, for these as we have seen, were easily replaced, but in the loss of prestige, that breath of life to a nation, without which it may be likened to an unburied corpse. From that moment the Mohammedans were placed on the defensive; and the historian of the Ottoman empire, in recognition of this fact, does well to head the chapter following that which gives an account of their defeat. *Epoch of the Decadence of the Turks.* Slowly but steadily has their light been declining ever since, and but a short time can now elapse ere it will be extinguished forever; for no nation whose religion is purely material may hope long to survive the enlightenment of the nineteenth century.

No wonder, therefore, that the Pope, shedding tears of joy when he heard of Don Juan's victory, should have exclaimed in the language of the gospel: *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John* (or that a statue should have been erected at Rome to Colonna. No wonder that the pencil of Tintoretto and the chisel of Vittoria were employed by the Venetians to illustrate that great action which seemed to revive the ancient glory of the republic. The victory at Lepanto was the final and permanent triumph of the cross over the crescent.

Phillip received the tidings on All Saints' Day, in the chapel of the Escorial, just as vespers were commencing, and, with his usual impassibility, remained on his knees during the whole service, engaged in prayer, without vouchsafing a word of reply to his chamberlain, Don Pedro Manuel, who was the bearer of them. At the conclusion of the service he ordered the officiating priest to have the *Te Deum* chanted—the first intimation received by his courtiers of the triumph of one whom they all loved, and whose chivalric deeds Spanish historians and poets have ever since vied with one another in celebrating.

The helmet of Ali and the armour of Don Juan were hung up, side by side, in the Royal Armory at Madrid, where they are still exhibited; and as the death of the former was lamented not only by the Turks but by the Christians, on account of the kindness he had shown to many of their faith while in captivity, so was that of the latter, which occurred but eight years afterward, greatly regretted, both by the Christians and the Turks, for the Mohammedans long remembered Don Juan's kindness to the son of Ali, and his generosity in restoring him without ransom to his sister Fatima.

The hero of Lepanto was in fact no ordinary mortal, and well deserved the affection and respect which were accorded to him by all classes while he lived, and the deep lamentation which accompanied his remains to the grave. "He conquered the Moors," says Bentivoglio, while but little

* The above is a mistake; Cervantes held the rank of Captain at Lepanto.—ED. VOL. REV.