

THE BATTLE OF LEPANTO.

In a former volume we published an account of the famous battle of Lepanto, the first naval fight of modern days, and the most decisive as respects the fortunes of the Turkish Empire. We now give to our readers a reprint of the first article on the same subject, published in the United States *Army and Navy Journal* of the 1st November, under the signature of the naval historian, Captain FOXHALL A. PARKER.

FIRST ARTICLE.

After a successful termination of the war of Chioggia, Venice increased rapidly in wealth and power, until at the close of the fifteenth century, she had acquired so great an extent of territory as to excite the envy and apprehension of all the other European powers, which, instigated by Pope Julius the Second, notwithstanding that His Holiness owed his elevation mainly to the Venetians, united in that formidable league to crush the great republic, which was signed at Cambray on the 10th day of December, 1508.

The civilized world now beheld with astonishment, not unmingled with awe, Venice contending, singlehanded, yet undismayed, against the combined forces of France, Germany, Spain and the petty Italian States, and, at the same time, replying with spirit and dignity to the bitter fulminations of the Vatican.

The Emperor Maximilian, at the head of a hundred thousand men, besieged Padua, the King of the French, with his army, descended, like a mountain torrent, upon Lombardy, and dispersed throughout the rest of her territory, at various strategical points, Venice had to confront the soldiers of Spain and of misguided Italy, which, hearkening to the voice of the tempter, had invited the representatives of tyranny to invade the soil that for so many centuries had been sacred to freedom.

The Venetian army, beaten on the Adia, yet still facing the enemy, like a lion at bay, retreated slowly and sullenly upon the capital.

The main land was lost, but not the love of its inhabitants for Venice; and so, little by little, after the first shock of war had passed, the republic recovered its former possessions, with the exception of Romagna, which upon the termination of hostilities, it was obliged to cede to the Pope forever, in order to obtain the revocation of his infamous sentence of excommunication against her citizens, which had produced so terrible an effect upon the minds of the vulgar in Venice as to cause the Signory to apprehend an outbreak, on their part, against the authorized government, in favour of the priesthood.

The republic now enjoyed some years of repose, which were devoted to the embellishment of the capital; and the magnificent private dwellings erected there about this period are looked upon with admiration by the traveller of the present day; rich as they are in marbles, paintings, and sculpture; in curiously-carved furniture, walls clothed with tapestry, and ceilings adorned with frescoes of priceless value.

But a more terrible enemy than any with which Venice had yet contended appeared on the political horizon in 1566, in the person of Selim II., the youthful emperor of the Turks—that barbarous nation which, in 1453, had taken Constantinople by storm,

and learning there the sad truth that “the rapine of an hour is more productive than the industry of years,” had assumed the aggressive ever since, wresting from the republic, by degrees, the whole of the Morea, and now demanding from her the cession of the island of Cyprus (which Selim greatly coveted) as the price of peace. The Signory, which had been for some time pursuing a temporizing policy toward the Turks, of which this demand was the legitimate fruit, now resolutely prepared for war, and dispatched embassies to all quarters in quest of aid. The Christian princes of Europe, however, for the most part lent a deaf ear to the story of a danger menacing them from the distant Bosphorus, and coldly turned their backs upon the ambassadors of a power which they had always hated and often feared. But, fortunately for Christianity, there was one great man among them who fully sympathized with the republic in this her hour of need, and comprehended clearly that, as Sicily, in ages gone by, had served as a breastwork for Italy against the advances of Carthage from the west, so Venice now rose from the sea as its bulwark against the barbarians approaching it from the east. This great man was Pius the Fifth, one of the best and ablest pontiffs that ever filled the apostle's seat. Gifted with eloquence and discernment, and possessed of an enthusiastic temperament, and a religious fervor which gave to all he uttered the force of inspiration, his opinion had great weight with Philip the Second of Spain, whom he now earnestly besought, in the name of the Holy Catholic Church, of which His Majesty was so distinguished and devout a member, not to be a passive spectator of a strife that, unless he took a part in it, must inevitably result to the shame of Christendom, in the triumph of the Moslem over a neighbouring Christian State. Thus urged, Philip, who it is probable, foresaw, on his part, that the establishment of the naval supremacy of the Turks on the Mediterranean would endanger the safety of every Spanish colony inside of the Pillars of Hercules, and even of the maritime district of Spain, filled as they then were with disaffected *Moriscoes*, readily consented to unite with Venice and His Holiness in an effort to check their further encroachments, provided the league was considered as binding against the Moors also, the inveterate enemies of Spain. This coalition was formally announced from the chair of St. Peter in 1570,* and resulted, during the following year, in the great battle of Lepanto, where the Christian called out to the Moslem, from the midst of the sea, as he had declared to him, eight centuries, earlier from the centre of France, *Hitherto shall thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud course be stayed!* But in order that the characters in this great naval drama may be properly brought upon the scene of action, it is necessary that a *resumé* of the events immediately preceding it should first be presented to the reader.

The conquest of Cyprus was resolved upon by Selim, according to La Fuente, from the moment he succeeded to the throne of his father, as an enterprise worthy of the son of the great Solymus; and this, no doubt, was the ground upon which this conquest was urged upon him by the commander in chief of his army, the infamous Mustafa, for it is the very language flattery

would use in addressing a youthful sovereign; but as Selim, brought up in the seraglio, although fully imbued with the thirst of conquest, was not possessed of the warlike spirit which had prompted his ancestors to lead their armies in battle, and was so addicted to the wine cup withal, notwithstanding its prohibition by the law of Mohammed, as to have been nick named, by his subjects, “the wine bibber,” and “the inebriate,” we cannot but think, with Hammer, that the wines of Cyprus acted as a powerful stimulant to the ambition of the young Sultan; and we are not, therefore, disposed to pass over in silence the remarkable tale told by him in his history of the Ottoman Empire, of the influence exercised by a certain Joseph Nassay in bringing about the war of Cyprus and the events consequent thereon, which is, in substance, as follows:

“During the lifetime of his father, Selim conceived a great friendship for a Jew named Joseph Nassay, a pretended convert to Mohammedanism, who was in the habit of making him rich presents of wine and money, thus giving the young prince a taste for the ducats of Venice and the wines of Cyprus; and one day, when the two boon companions had indulged for many hours in the pleasures of the table, Selim rose, staggering to his feet, and holding up his glass to the light exclaimed: ‘By the great Prophet, when I come to the kingdom, I will take possession of the island which produces this rare nectar; and you, Nassay, shall be the governor of the island and have charge of its vineyards.’”

The acquisition of Cyprus, then—from whatever cause—being now resolved upon, it was not difficult for a government which maintained that wherever a mosque had once been erected there the standard of Mohammed should fly forever, to trump up a claim to that island which had formerly been in the hands of the Sicilians. Besides, although the Ottoman Empire was at peace with the republic, it had long been held as a maximum with the former that no treaty of peace should be considered as binding upon its government whose rupture would enlarge the bounds of Islamism and redound to the glory of the Sultan. In honor of the prophet, too, a magnificent temple was in process of erection at Adrianopolis, to which the revenues of Cyprus were to be appropriated. So the demand for the cession of the island to Turkey was made, as we have seen, and great was the rejoicing in Constantinople at its indignant rejection by the Venetians; for the Turks of that period were a nation of military fanatics, delighting in nothing but war, and especially in a war with those, of whatever nation they might be, who inscribed on their banners the sacred emblem of the crucifixion.

A force of fifty thousand infantry and artillery, under the command of Mustafa, was soon landed in Cyprus and laid siege to Nicosia, its capital, striking terror within its walls; a squadron of Turkish infantry scouring the roads in all directions, spread havoc and desolation through the country, far and wide; while a fleet one hundred and eighty galleys, whose admiral was the Bashaw Piali, one of the instigators of this war, entirely encircled the island, cutting off all hope of succor from without. Nicosia fell, after an obstinate resistance, on the 13th of September, 1570, and in August of the following year Famagusta capitulated, after a protracted siege, during which the most heroic valor was displayed on both sides; for it had withstood six general assaults and buried fifty thousand Turks

* Prescott says: “Although a draft of the treaty had been prepared in the latter part of the preceding year it was not ratified till 1571 but La Fuente (vol. 7, p. 263) mentions two distinct treaties, one made in 1570, the other in 1571.”