

The reply is equally ambiguous, and significant of either peace or war, according as it might be interpreted.

From Philip Villiers De L'Isle Adam, Grand Master of Rhodes, to Solyman, Sultan of the Turks :

"I have thoroughly comprehended the sense of thy letter, which thy ambassador has delivered to me. Thy propositions of peace are as agreeable to us, as they will give little pleasure to Cartogli. This corsair on my passage from France, omitted nothing in order to surprise us ; but, not succeeding in his project, and not willing to leave these seas without doing us some injury, endeavored to carry off two merchant vessels sailing from our ports. He had even proceeded to seize a bark belonging to some Candiots, but the galleys of the Order, which I sent forth from Rhodes, forced him to loosen his hold, and, fearing to fall himself into our power, he has sought for safety in precipitate flight.—Adieu. From Rhodes, this"

Solyman, pretending not to have received this letter, shortly afterwards sent a second to the Grand Master.

"We have been assured," he writes, "that the letter which our Grandeur had written had been delivered to thee, and that it has occasioned thee more astonishment than pleasure. Be assured that we are not content with the conquest of Belgrade, but that we propose very shortly another still more important, of which thou shalt soon receive notice—thou and thy Knights being but rarely absent from our memory."

To this communication the Grand Master felt bound to reply with equal *hauteur*.

He wrote : "I am not sorry that thou rememberest thee of myself and of the Knights of our Order. Thou remindest me of thy conquest in Hungary, and of thy design to undertake another enterprise, from which thou hopest for a like success ; but bear in mind, that of all projects that men can form, none are more uncertain than those which depend on the fate of arms.—Adieu."

Expecting an immediate assault, De L'Isle Adam made all the preparations in his power. He erected several new forts, and laid in a large supply of provisions and munitions of war. A muster of forces showed only six hundred Knights, and four thousand five hundred soldiers, to resist the overwhelming hosts of the Saracens, which were estimated at two hundred thousand. Solyman thus demanded the surrender of the island : "The robberies that you are constantly perpetrating upon our faithful subjects, and the insults which you offer to our imperial Majesty, compel us to command you instantly to give up to us the island and fortress of Rhodes. If you do so with good grace, we swear by the God who made heaven and earth, by the twenty-six thousand prophets, and the four Musaphi that fell from heaven, and by our great prophet Mahomet, that you may go forth from the island, and that the inhabitants may there remain without injury from us. But if you yield not at once to our orders, you shall all be put to the edge of our redoubtable sword, and the towers, bastions, and walls of Rhodes, shall be levelled to the ground."

The details of this memorable siege show the noble defence made by the few valiant Knights, against the innumerable forces of Solyman, but space will not permit us to enlarge on them. The Turkish artillery made numerous and formidable breaches in the fortifications, but fresh entrenchments were erected in the rear, and host after host of the assail-