

a breach is effected, but sooner or later the wall will surely be demolished." "i will go up and make my report to the grand master." "do so, gewaise, i almost wonder that he has not himself come down to see how the wall is resisting." gewaise, on reaching the palace, heard that d aubusson was at present engaged in examining no less a person than maitre georges, the right hand of paleologus, who had soon after daybreak presented himself before the wall on the other side of the town, declaring that he had left the turkish service and craving to be admitted. news had been sent at once to d aubusson, who despatched two of the senior knights with orders to admit him and receive him with all honour. this had been done and the grand master, with some of his council, were now closeted with the newcomer. several of the knights were gathered in the courtyard, discussing the event. there was no question that if the renegade came in good faith, his defection would be a serious blow to the assailants, and that his well known skill and experience would greatly benefit the defenders. "for my part," sir john boswell, who formed one of the detachment which the english langue, as well as all the others, contributed to form the garrison of the palace said, "i would have hung the fellow up by the neck over the gateway, and he should never have set foot within the walls. think you that a man who has denied his faith and taken service with his enemies is to be trusted, whatever oaths he may take?" "you must remember boswell," another said, "that hitherto georges has not fought against christians, but has served mahomet in his wars with other infidels. i am not saying a word in defence of his having become a renegade; yet even a renegade may have some sort of heart, and now that he has been called upon to fight against christians he may well have repented of his faults, and determined to sacrifice his position and prospects rather than aid in the attack on the city." "we shall see. as for me, i regard a renegade as the most contemptible of wretches, and have no belief that they have either a heart or conscience." when maitre georges came out from the palace, laughing and talking with the two knights who had entered with him, it was evident that he was well pleased with his reception by the grand master, who had assigned to him a suite of apartments in the guest house. in reality, however, d aubusson had no doubt that his object was a treacherous one, and that like demetrius, who had come under the pretence of bringing about a truce, his object was to find out the weak points and to supply the turks with information. georges had, in his conversation with him, laid great stress on the strength of the turkish army, the excellent quality of the troops, and the enormous battering train that had been prepared. but every word he spoke but added to the grand master's suspicions; for if the man considered that the capture of the city was morally certain, it would be simply throwing away his life to enter it as a deserter. the grand master was, however, too politic to betray any doubt of georges' sincerity. were he treated as a traitor, paleologus might find another agent to do the work. it was, therefore, better to feign a belief in his story, to obtain all the information possible from him, and at the same time to prevent his gaining any knowledge of affairs that would be of the slightest use to the turks. instructions were therefore given to the two knights that while georges was to be treated with all courtesy, he was to be strictly watched, though in such a manner that he should be in ignorance of it, and that whenever he turned his steps in the direction of those parts of the defences where fresh works had been recently added and preparations made of which it was desirable the turks should be kept in ignorance, he was to be met, as if by accident, by one of the knights told off for the purpose, and his steps diverted in another direction. georges soon made himself popular among many of the knights, who had no suspicions of his real character. he was a man of exceptional figure, tall, strong, splendidly proportioned, with a handsome face and gallant bearing. he was extremely well informed on all subjects, had travelled widely, had seen many adventures, was full of anecdote, and among the younger knights, therefore, he was soon regarded as a charming companion. his very popularity among them aided d aubusson's plans, as georges was generally the centre of a group of listeners, and so had but few opportunities of getting away quietly to obtain the information he sought. gewaise delivered his report to the grand master. "i am free now," d aubusson said, "and will accompany you to st. nicholas. i have been detained by the coming of this man georges. he is a clever knave, and, i doubt not, has come as a spy. however, i have taken measures that he shall learn nothing that can harm us. no lives have been lost at the tower, i hope?" "no, sir; caretto has forbidden any to show themselves on the walls." "he has done well. this is no time for rash exposure, and where there is naught to be gained, it is a grave fault to run risks." on arriving at the end of the mole, d aubusson, accompanied by caretto, made an investigation of the effect of the turks' fire. "tis worse than i expected," he said. "when we laid out our fortifications, the thought that such guns as these would be used against them never entered our minds. against ordinary artillery the walls would stand a long battering; but it is clear that we shall have to depend more upon our