

VENICE

ADRIATIC SEA

FLORENCE

ITALY

ROME

TYRRHENIAN SEA

MESSINA

SICILY

CORFU

LEPANTO

IONIAN SEA

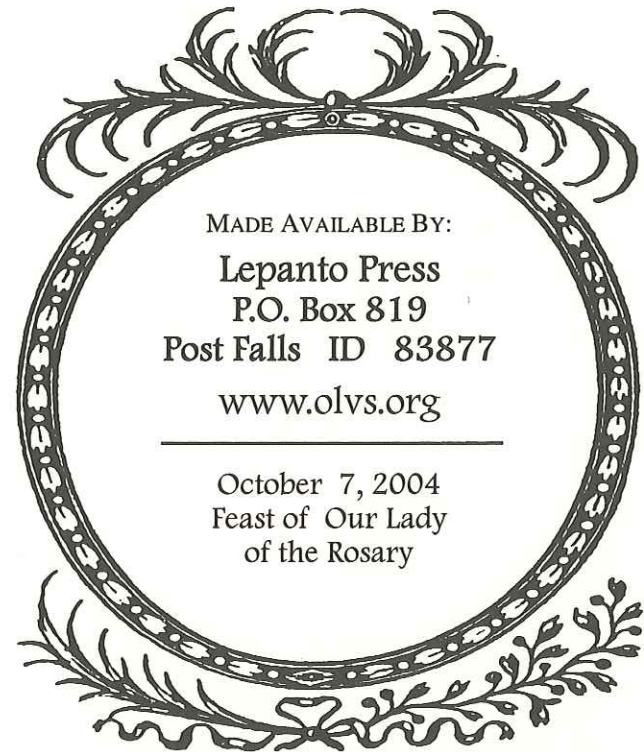
Route
of the 'Julia' to the
Battle of Lepanto
— 1571 —



THE BLOOD RED CRESCENT

HENRY GARNETT

Illustrated by Ciriello



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Feast of Our Lady
of the Rosary



Our Lady of Victories,
Pray for us!

This book is for
Frances
Dominic
Mary Clare
and last but not least, except in years,
Mark Aelred
in the hope that they may sometimes think of
"OY"



CONTENTS

I. A NEW CRUSADE	15
II. CARDINAL TO THE RESCUE	33
III. THE ARROWS FLEW STRAIGHT	43
IV. SKIRMISH ON THE BEACH	57
V. IN A MONASTERY GARDEN	67
VI. A WARNING FROM OUR LADY	75
VII. THE TURK CAME FIRST	81
VIII. VILLAGE OF DESOLATION	95
IX. THE SPOILS OF WAR	107
X. PLAN FOR BATTLE	115
XI. THE FLEET ASSEMBLES	127
XII. CONFERENCE IN CORFU	137
XIII. ORDER OF BATTLE	147
XIV. GREEN BANNER AND BLUE	159
XV. BATTLE BY THE SHOALS	167
XVI. AID TO GREEN PENNANTS	175
XVII. QUEST FOR COUNSEL	183

TO SET THE SCENE

A note from the author

This is a historical novel, and if you, my readers, are at all like your author, you will want to know which parts of the book are true, which people in its pages really existed, and which events and which characters were born in the writer's imagination. Here, then, is a short description of the work that will satisfy your curiosity.

The action in the book takes place during the years 1570 and 1571, and England then, as now, had a Queen Elizabeth on the throne. The first Queen Elizabeth was a convinced Protestant. You may remember that it was her father—King Henry VIII—who had closed the English monasteries and made himself, and his descendants, head of the Church as well as head of the state. Of course, there were many Catholics left in England, and their lives were very difficult. Perhaps because they really thought it the best for England, Elizabeth and her Ministers made the laws against Catholics more and more severe. It was in 1570, in fact, that the Pope excommunicated Queen Elizabeth. Many English Catholics went to live in sympathetic countries on the continent of Europe. Others, like Michael Selwyn in this book, traveled away from their country whenever it was possible and gave what help they could to Catholic causes.

At this time in history, Spain was the richest and most powerful country in Europe, and her king, His Most Catholic Majesty Philip II as he was called, also ruled in the Netherlands.

Italy was quite different from what it is now. It was not a united country, but was made up of papal states, principalities, dukedoms, and republics. Of these last Venice was the richest and most independent and was known as the Serene Republic.

Now for a word about the Turks. For years Turkish armies had been invading Europe. You will today find many of the words they used surviving in Central European languages. Moors had conquered and lived in parts of Spain for a long time until their last revolt against King Philip was crushed in 1568. It is quite true, as you will read in this story, that Moors, corsair pirates, and Turks—for the purpose of the tale they may be regarded as one and the same since they were all Moslems and united against Christendom—continually raided European coasts.

Now you may see why Pope Pius V—now St. Pius V—became alarmed at the spread of Islam in Europe. He knew, too, that the Turkish Sultan Selim, who was a drunken tyrant, was building a great fleet of galleys in Constantinople, or Istanbul as we now call it, and that he intended to use this fleet to extend his empire in Europe. That is why the Pope conceived the idea of a confederation of Catholics to fight against the Turk, and he called it the Holy League. Of course the Pope as the originator of the idea was obliged to provide some galleys and men, so he made the fair division of one quarter to be found by himself, one quarter by Venice, whose trade in the eastern Mediterranean was most affected by the Turkish pirates, and a half by the richest member of the League, Spain. The Pope asked Spain to provide the supreme commander of the fleet and forces, and King Philip chose his half brother, a handsome gallant young man, Don John of Austria. If ever you go to Messina in Sicily, where the fleet assembled as is told in the story, you may see his statue. It shows him wearing the Order of

the Golden Fleece about which you will hear more shortly.

And so we come to the people. The Callatta family of Venice is fictitious, but it is quite sure there were similar families living in the Venetian Republic at the time. Luigi is a Venetian sailor and, of course, there were many. Although Guido is imagined, the Cardinal Acquaviva, whom he meets in the Tuscan hills, is not. He really was a sick young man and he had been sent by the Pope to explain about the plans for the Holy League to King Philip of Spain. This young Cardinal did, in fact, bring Miguel de Cervantes, now known all over the world as the creator of *Don Quixote*, back into Italy as his teacher of Spanish.

The monastery at Genazzano and its inhabitants are largely imagined. The picture, or icon, of Our Lady of Good Counsel is not. The story is that sometime in the thirteenth century this picture was in a Balkan church. When this church was threatened with destruction by the Turks, the picture miraculously flew through the air to Italy and came to rest in the church at Genazzano. Throughout the centuries Our Lady of Genazzano has acquired the reputation of giving good counsel. Modern pilgrims make their way to Genazzano to pray to her for advice.

Michael Selwyn and his travels have already been mentioned. He and Barnabas Butter, the master gunner, are the English dream children of the author. They are typical of English Catholics of the period, who traveled abroad for adventure, to make their fortunes, for devotion to Mother Church, or just to sell their swords to Catholic Kings and Princes. May you become as friendly with the brave and gentle Barnabas as your author was!

You will not, in the course of the story, get to know the commanders of the Christian and Turkish fleets and squadrons very well. It may interest you to learn, however, that they are correctly named and that they really lived. The

movements of the two fleets during the battle are as near to the truth as it is possible to get when four hundred years have passed since the great fight was fought.

You will note in the story that Don John, the Supreme Christian Commander, is described as wearing the Order of the Golden Fleece. You should try to imagine the scene as he stood with the Pope's Ambassador on the quay at Messina. He was tall and slender, and he stood bareheaded, with his soft brown hair lifting in the breeze. He wore a polished steel cuirass decorated with silver, and round his neck over this armor hung the insignia of the Order of the Golden Fleece. This was a richly jeweled chain that winked in the sunshine. It hung down over his chest and from it depended a small golden sheep. It denoted that King Philip of Spain had made him a member of the second oldest order of knighthood in the world—the oldest is the Order of the Garter in Britain—for the Order of the Golden Fleece was founded by Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy in 1429. At the time of this story King Philip was the Grand Master of the Order.

The agony of body and the heartbreak that wars bring in their train are unchanged from the sixteenth century to now, so you will find the fighting men in this story very like the soldiers of today. Your author believes they were.

HENRY GARNETT.
London, 1959

I. A NEW CRUSADE



The great cathedral church of St. Mark in Venice was crowded with a gaily dressed throng on a bright, sunny morning in October of the year 1570. The priest turned from the high altar and began to bless the congregation. His words were barely audible above the chatter of the excited gathering. It seemed to Guido Callatta, kneeling silently by the side of his father, and looking at the backs of his mother, his

sister Julia, and the serving woman Magdalena, that the family formed the only listening group in the whole cathedral. He peered sideways from the corners of his eyes into the dimness. He was wrong, he saw. By the base of one of the pillars, were a half dozen proud, silent Spaniards. Their ruffs were starkly white above the sober black of their doublets and they appeared to stand aloof from the colorful Venetians and the even more gaily appareled Genoese.

"May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son"—Guido heard the priest's words faintly and crossed himself—"and the Holy Ghost."

Others must have been listening too, for the excited chatter was stilled for a moment and a deep "amen" echoed from the high roof. Immediately, talk broke out again.

Guido rose to his feet, dusted the dirt of the flagged floor from his knees, and offered an arm to help his mother to rise.

At the age of fourteen Guido was almost fully grown. The years to come would stiffen his supple body and destroy his youthful slenderness, but now, to the ten-year old Julia, he seemed to smile down from a great height when she slipped her hot and sticky hand in his.

The Callatta family threaded their way between groups of gesticulating gallants and their ladies and emerged from the gloom into the shock of the autumn sunshine. Guido glanced up, as he always did, to above the pillared doorway where the carved horses prance eternally beneath the winged lion of St. Mark, and his heart was filled with pride—pride in the Republic of Venice and her achievements—pride in his own family. The little company of Spaniards passed, their gait and manner showing contempt of all that was not under the dominion of their master, His Most Catholic Majesty, King Philip II. Guido returned their casual glances scornfully. Julia pulled at his sleeve.

"Guido," she whispered. "What did the priest mean when he talked to us? It wasn't an ordinary sermon, was it? Are the Turks going to fight us?"

"Sh!" Guido replied quietly. "You know Father doesn't allow us to talk after Mass. Not till we get home."

Julia tilted her head back and poked out the tip of a very pink tongue at him.

"Pig!" she whispered. "You're like the English."

Guido shook his head at her without speaking. Julia's teasing abuse drove from his mind the message from His Holiness Pope Pius V that had come to them through the mouth of the cathedral priest. He remembered the English letter that crackled faintly beneath his doublet as he put his hand to his breast—the letter that he must show to his father very soon.

Magdalena carried the last empty dish away from the table and set the flask of wine and a tall, intricately decorated glass before her master. Signor Callatta carefully wiped his knife on a table napkin and thrust it back into the sheath dangling from his belt.

"You all heard what the priest had to tell us this morning," he said.

"Julia did not understand what it was all about, sir," Guido put in.

Signor Callatta looked down the table to where his small daughter was perched on her thickly cushioned stool, and his face grew tender.

"She is too young for these things," he said. "But perhaps I can put it simply. During the past few years the Turk has been getting stronger and stronger. The new Sultan in Constantinople has been building more and more galleys. We hear that shipyards work every daylight hour and that new galleys are clustered in his ports more thickly than the flies

in the Turkish markets. Why does he want so many galleys?" Signor Callatta paused and glanced at Guido.

"What do you think, Guido, my son? I hear that you spend much time in ships and talking to sailors. Time, doubtless, that should be spent with your books or in my factory learning the craft and mystery of glassmaking."

Guido flushed beneath his tan.

"The sailors say that he intends to conquer Cyprus and then move west. They say that even Venice will not be safe from him, and that the Sultan Selim has boasted that he will set the Turkish crescent above the dome of St. Peter's in Rome," Guido answered.

"If he does, it will be a blood-red crescent. Red with the blood of Christendom," Guido's father replied. "And who knows? Already the Turkish armies are halfway across Europe."

"But, sir!" Guido looked up sharply at his father. "Where can the Sultan find the rowers for so many ships? I keep asking the sailors this, and they only laugh and say that they grow in the fields ready for the taking."

"And the sailors are right," Signor Callatta said. "The Barbary corsairs—the infidel pirates from North Africa—gather them every day. There is not a village on the coasts of Italy, France, or Spain that is safe from their raids. There is not a family in these villages that hasn't a father or a son whose body is being broken in the chains of Turkish rowing benches. Not a family that hasn't a daughter breaking her heart in an infidel seraglio."

He paused for a moment, his face grim, and then sighed deeply. He charged his wineglass.

"Then, of course, there are the galleys that are captured. In the last few months two galleys, carrying the finest decorated glass that my men have ever made, have been lost to pirates. Glass designed for the courts of England and France

is now defiled by the Mohammedan's sherbet. The galleys are gone. Such rowers as lived now serve under the banner of Islam—by force!"

"But, Father," Guido put in, forgetting in his eagerness the formal address due to him. "Why must we always lose our galleys to the Turk? Do we never beat him in battle? Our men are as brave as his, aren't they?"

"We lose frequently, because Christendom is divided," Signor Callatta said. "The galleys of Genoa sometimes sail with those of Venice, but in battle who knows whether they will obey the orders of a Venetian commander? Spaniards trust neither Venetian nor Genoese. Then the Barbary pirates attack in force, and their leader, Uluch Ali, Lord of Algiers, is a very fine seaman."

"I see," Guido said thoughtfully. "Then that is what the priest meant when he talked to us this morning. The Holy Father wants us to combine to beat the Turk."

"Yes. He wants a fleet to be formed. Of all the Catholic countries and republics in Europe, Spain is the richest. Think, Guido, my son, of the American gold that pours every day into King Philip's coffers. Then there is our own Serene Republic of Venice, with a bigger trade in the Mediterranean than any other. So His Holiness suggests that Spain should find half the fleet and Venice a quarter. The remaining quarter the Holy Father will provide himself. Of course, there will be other vessels—from Genoa, for example, and doubtless the Princes of Italy will find some. You will see, I think, that fighting men will volunteer from all over the Christian civilized world. The combined forces of Spain, Venice, and the Pope will be called the Holy League. It is a new crusade the Pope is preaching."

Signora Callatta stirred uneasily in her chair. The hour of the siesta had come, and Julia's eyelids were heavy with sleep. Her husband gestured with his hand in dismissal. He

himself sat on, fingering the stem of his wineglass, and Guido waited.

"Yes," Signor Callatta said at last. "I suppose it could be done—with the right leader."

"Is there no one else to help the Holy Father except Spaniards and Venetians?" Guido asked.

"Who?" his father demanded in return.

"France, perhaps."

"France is too torn with her own troubles. Catholics and heretics are at one another's throats. No, there's no help to be had from there."

"What about England. . . ?" Guido began.

Signor Callatta laughed a quick, short bark of scornful amusement. "England?" he said. "That country of heretics? With their cold queen, Elizabeth, just excommunicated by the Holy Father, and all faith in the Catholic Church forgotten in that fogbound land? What Englishman would join this Holy League? For that matter, what Englishman cares what happens to Venice or the Vatican? Why, if the crescent were being flaunted from the dome of St. Peter's, Englishmen would be there selling their wool to protect the infidel from the rigors of the Roman winter. No, my son, no!"

"I should have thought English Catholics might have helped," Guido said.

"How?" Signor Callatta asked. "Such Catholics as are left in England are persecuted by their queen, Elizabeth, who calls herself head of the church, and their government. They're harassed and fined until they have no substance left. How could they do anything for the Holy League?"

"I know of one Englishman who's going to help," Guido said, and drew from his doublet a letter that crackled in his fingers.

"What's that?" Signor Callatta asked sharply, and held out his hand for the paper. "Pah! It's written in English. You'll

have to translate it for me. Now I understand why you insisted on learning that barbarous tongue."

"It's from Michael Selwyn. . . ." Guido began.

"That taciturn young Englishman you made friends with, when he was visiting his cousin, who is a priest in Rome, last year? It was last year you met him, wasn't it?" Signor Callatta interrupted. "H'm, at least he's a Catholic, and has suffered for it, doubtless, since England broke away from Mother Church. He's a lot older than you, isn't he?"

"He's twenty-four, sir. He's written to say that he's bringing his sword to give what aid he can to the Holy Father's cause. They've heard about it in England. He says, as well, that his father's so poor now he must do something to help him. He's bringing the master gunner from one of his father's ships—that he used to have, I mean—and he begs me to ask if you can help to find him, and his man—Barnabas Butter's his name—a place in a Venetian galley."

"Is he coming here, to Venice?" Signor Callatta asked.

"No, sir. He's going to Genazzano. He used to go before, when he was in Rome, to ask for help from Our Lady of Good Counsel in the monastery there. He says I can write to him at Genazzano."

"H'm. I must think about it. Now, Guido, off to your room. I'll think about it. . . ."

Guido rose and bowed to his father. As he walked quietly from the room he heard his father mutter, "Genazzano! Yes. . . that might be the place. Thirty miles behind Rome. . . And the help of Our Lady of Good Counsel. . . Heaven knows we need it—all of us. . . Yes!"

Guido stood silently in the shadowed coolness of his room until he heard his father's heavy steps on the marble treads of the staircase. He waited until the latch of his father's door clicked home and then, slowly, he began to count. "One. Two. Three. . . One hundred." For a second more he lis-