so the Ottomans found themselves compelled to undertake the siege of this comparatively unimportant town. There on the night of 4th September the great sultan died, and a few hours later Count Zrinyi and his brave companions perished amid the smoking ruins of the fortress they had most nobly held. Under Suleymán I., whom European historians call the Magnificent, but whom his own people style Kánúní or the Lawgiver, the Turkish empire attained the summit of its power and glory. The two great dis­asters, at Vienna and Malta, were eclipsed by the number and brilliancy of the sultan’s victories, by which large and important additions were made to the empire in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Selim II., the unworthy son and successor of the Magni­ficent Suleyman, was the first Ottoman monarch who shrank from leading his army in person. He was a man of mean and ignoble character, whose sole pleasure seems to have consisted in the indulgence of his degraded tastes and vicious appetites. The first conflict between the Turks and the Russians occurred in his reign. In view of a threatened war with Persia, the grand vizier Sokolli con­ceived the idea of uniting the rivers Don and Volga by a canal, by means of which an Ottoman fleet could be sent into the Caspian. But in order to carry out this scheme it was necessary that the town of Astrakhan should be in the hands of the Turks. A considerable force was accord­ingly despatched from Constantinople to take possession of that city ; but the Russian army which Ivan the Terrible sent to its relief drove back the Turks and their Tatar allies from before the walls, 1569 (977). Cyprus was the next object of attack. This island, which belonged to Venice, was assailed and taken, though not without heavy loss, at a time of peace between the republic and the Porte, 1570-71 (978). The Christian powers of the Mediterranean were roused and alarmed by this act of treachery, and a maritime league was formed through the efforts of Pope Pius V., with Spain, Venice, and Malta for its most important members. On 7th October 1571 the Christian fleet, under the command of Don John of Austria, encountered the Ottoman ships, led by the galley of the kapudan pasha, Mu’ezzin-záda 'Alí, just outside the Gulf of Lepanto. A furious conflict ensued, which resulted in the utter defeat of the Turks, their admiral being killed and their fleet almost annihilated. This famous fight, although it brought little immediate material advantage to the victors, was of the highest moral value to them ; for it broke the spell of Barbarossa, and showed that the Ottoman was no longer invincible on the seas. The only other event of importance during this reign was the final conquest of Tunis for Turkey by Kilij 'Alí, who won it from the Spaniards in 1574 (982). Selim II. died miser­ably the same year.

Murád III., who now succeeded to the Ottoman throne, was no improvement upon his father ; he ruled in name only, all real power being in the hands of worthless favour­ites. As a natural consequence the empire began rapidly to decay ; corruption infected all ranks of official society, the sultan himself selling his favours for bribes ; while the other great curse of old Turkey, military insubordina­tion, showed itself in a more threatening aspect than ever. The janissaries mutinied on several occasions, and each time compelled the weak Murád to accede to their demand. Notwithstanding this wretched state of affairs, some exten­sive and important, though not permanent, additions were made to the empire. These, consisting of Azerbijan and Georgia—the latter had been in alliance with Persia—were the result of a campaign against the last-named country, the internal condition of which was then even worse than that of Turkey. Transylvania, Moldavia, and Walachia rose in revolt, encouraged by the war which broke out in 1593 between Turkey and Austria. In 1594 hostilities with Persia were resumed; and early in the following year Murád died, leaving the empire to his eldest son Muhammed III.

Things had been going very badly in the war with Austria, when in June 1596 the grand vizier and the mufti, joining their voices with that of Sa'd-ud-Dín the historian, prevailed upon the new sultan, whose character resembled only too closely that of his father, to place himself at the head of the Ottoman army which was about to march into Hungary. Four months later Muhammed met the imperi­alists under the archduke Maximilian, and the Transyl­vanians led by Prince Sigismund, on the marshy plain of Keresztes, where a battle lasting three days took place. Although at one time things looked so hopeless for the Turks that the sultan would have fled but for the entreaties and remonstrances of Sa'd-ud-Dín, the 'Osmánlis gained a complete and decisive victory. But nothing came of it; for Muhammed, instead of following up his success, hastened back to Constantinople to receive the congratu­lations of his courtiers and to resume his indolent and voluptuous life. Nothing else worthy of note occurred during his inglorious reign. He died in 1603 (1012).

Muhammed III. was the last heir to the Ottoman throne who was entrusted with the government of a pro­vince during his father’s lifetime ; henceforth all the sons of the sultan were kept secluded in a pavilion called the Kafes or cage in the seraglio gardens. This new system, which was necessarily very prejudicial to the character of the future rulers, had its origin in the same dread of rivals that caused a sultan in those times to put all his brothers to death immediately on his accession.

The reign of Ahmed I. is not marked by any event of importance. The peace of Sitavorok (Zsitvatorok) between Turkey and Austria, 1606 (1015), made no change of any moment in the territorial possessions of either power, but is interesting as being the first treaty in which an Ottoman sultan condescended to meet a Christian prince on a footing of equality. Hitherto the Turkish monarchs had affected to grant merely short truces to their European enemies. But this peace was to be permanent ; the annual payment or tribute of thirty thousand ducats by Austria was to be discontinued ; and the ambassadors sent from the Porte were now to be officials of rank, and not, as formerly, menials of the palace or camp.

Ahmed died in 1617 (1026) and was succeeded by his brother Mustafa I. Up till this time the succession had been regularly from father to son ; but, as Mustafa’s life had been spared by his brother on his accession, that prince now ascended the throne in preference to 'Osmán, the eldest son of Ahmed I. This arose from the peculiar nature of the Turkish law of succession, which gives the throne to the eldest male relative of the deceased sovereign. Mustafa was, however, imbecile ; so after a reign of three months he was deposed, and his nephew 'Osmán, though only fourteen years of age, seated on the throne in his stead.

An unsuccessful war with Persia, which had been going on for some time, was now brought to an end by a treaty which restored to the sháh all the territories conquered since the days of Selim II. In 1621 the sultan led his troops against Poland, partially with the view of weaken­ing the janissaries, whom he justly regarded as the most deadly enemies of his empire. This expedition was not attended by any important results, neither Turks nor Poles gaining a decisive advantage. On his return 'Osmán formed another plan for freeing himself from his tyranni­cal soldiery : he gave out that he was going to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, but his real intention was to proceed only as far as Damascus, there place himself at the head