

From: Kritovoulos, A History of Mehmed the Conqueror



Of the reasons for the composition

§ 1. Kritovoulos the Islander, originally of the inhabitants of Imbros, wrote this history in the belief that events so great and wonderful, occurring in our own times, should not remain unrecorded, but ought to be written up and handed down to subsequent generations so that brave deeds, well worth recording, certainly no less so than those of the old heroes, shall not disappear from the knowledge of men, being hidden by time. Thus those who live after us may not be greatly injured by being deprived of such a history and its lessons, and the authors of these deeds may have a fitting memorial for time to come of their heroism and valor, through this history and its portrait of these deeds.

§ 2. Hence it seemed to me, not the least for this reason, that this present history was needed. For ancient deeds, although very honored and very great, are somehow hard to accept as true, and it is with difficulty that they secure a hearing; as if, as time passes, they are credited or else despised in accordance with the general trend of memory. Everything redundant reaches the point of surfeit, and surfeit brings disgust. Whereas the modern, being new and near and well-known, is easily accepted and retained, and since it is nearby, it is the more admirable, still more so since it is more interesting and is credited because it is clear and well-known. Men for the most part prefer the more recent events and wish to study them rather than others.

§ 3. For these and similar reasons, the present history appears to me necessary. Great and remarkable deeds have been done here in our times, deeds such as were enacted in ancient times among both Greeks and barbarians, yea, deeds of valor like those of the most noteworthy men. A very great government, and the oldest we know, has been destroyed after a struggle of no long duration—that of the Romans [Byzantines]. And this has been the greatest event

of all, and is a change in affairs that is of no little importance.

§ 4. I shall write of these things one by one, exactly as they occurred, suiting the words to the deeds, and never separating the deeds from the times when they took place, but preserving carefully the order as between persons and as between dates. And in all this I shall use the utmost care to tell the truth.

§ 5. The events previous to our times, what happened to this people in earlier days, what their sultans who followed one another in succession from those days till the present accomplished in the way of brave and remarkable deeds, the wars they waged, the victories they won, victories by which they gradually humbled the great rule of the Romans of former times and brought it to the point where they completely subdued and utterly destroyed it—all this has been narrated by many before me, and it is not my purpose now to record these things, nor is this the material for my present composition.

§ 6. Instead I shall write this out, God willing, in other books later on, devoting to it a separate treatise, setting forth accurately the dates, the events, and the grand achievements of that period.

§ 7. Even though many have told of these events, they have not done so systematically, nor have they arranged their history as should have been done, but have followed a sort of chance arrangement, either according to their own judgment, or else as they happened to remember it. They either lacked experience in writing history or else paid little attention to accuracy. However, my present composition does not treat of these things.

§ 8. My object is rather to present the deeds of the now reigning great Sultan Mehmed, excellent as they are and in every respect surpassing those of his predecessors. I give them as a result of my own study and from the accounts of my contemporaries, as a model and an excellent example to be followed by all who love bravery and courage. For this man excelled not only his own predecessors, but also the kings who were of his generation, in valor and courage, generalship and good fortune, and in his experience in mili-

tary matters, as much as they excelled their predecessors and their contemporaries.

Apology

§ 9. So I beg of my compatriots, both those now living and those who in times to come may read this history, not to condemn me for either stupidity or perversity, if in place of grieving as others do over our misfortunes, or being burdened at the sufferings of our nation, I choose to record and to openly hold up to ridicule and disparagement our own internal evils, which—in others' views—ought rather to be covered up as far as possible and by no means brought to the notice of the public.

§ 10. First, then, let me say that I would not place any censure on my nation or proceed to slander or speak evil of my people. With a far different purpose have I embarked on the present effort. For I am not so past feeling or so bitter in my judgment as to wish to condemn the unfortunate rather than to share their pain. Nor would I criticize my race.

§ 11. Furthermore, I am not so stupid or so lacking in judgment, nor so altogether unacquainted with human affairs as not to recognize their fortunes and changes or the inconstancy, uncertainty, and irregularity of events, or to think that in such confusion and disorder of things, and in the diseases common to all mankind, I should seek in my own nation alone for healthy and stable and altogether immutable conditions, as though it were absolutely above all others and not under any circumstances to be compared or contrasted with any others.

§ 12. Who does not know that since men have existed the kingly or ruling power has not always remained in the same people, nor has it been limited to one race or nation? Like the planets, rule has gone from nation to nation and from place to place in succession, always changing and passing, now to the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, and then to the Greeks and Romans, according to the times and epochs establishing itself in a place and never returning to the same.

§ 13. There is therefore nothing astonishing if the same

things happen and are endured now also, and the Romans [Byzantines] lose their rule and prosperity, which pass on and are transferred to others, just as they came from others to them, so forever preserving the same nature and order of events. And since this is the case, how then can we possibly condemn our nation, with any justice, because it has not been able to preserve its happiness forever or to guard its supreme power and good fortune unshaken?

§ 14. And if certain individuals, who in their own times had the responsibility for affairs, have by the depravity of their character misdirected the affairs of empire and have not made proper use of circumstances, this is not a fault of the nation, but of those who have badly and wrongfully misused their opportunities. They alone should justly be held responsible, and the nation should not be condemned. In the same way the good should now be praised and their good deeds admired in every way and honored. We should not desire to deprive them of praise and of the rewards of virtue because of the indolence and wickedness of others, for this would not be just.

§ 15. This is what Josephus, the Hebrew, a truthful man well acquainted with the facts, recognizes in his book about the capture [of Jerusalem]. He praises the skill and valor of the Romans, and exalts them very truthfully in his discourse. He also reproaches the evils which appeared within his own nation, but he frees from blame those who had done no wrong. This is what I also shall try by all means to do, not shrinking in the least but preserving in every respect what is fitting and true. But enough of this; let us turn to our subject.

Beginning of the History

§ 16. It was the year 6959 from the beginning [A.D. 1451] when the Sultan Murad came to the end of his life, having lived a total of fifty-two years and having reigned thirty-one, a very good man in every way, high-minded, and also a very great general who had exhibited throughout his life many brave and wonderful deeds, as indeed these

exploits show. He was the sixth of the brilliant line of the Ottomans, a nobleman of noblemen.

§ 17. These men are of the very oldest people, that of Achæmenes and Perses, and springing from them, all the kings of the Persians are descended. There were indeed Persians of other lines, as Herodotus relates, but they were common and ordinary while these were alone the illustrious line of kings—those who had their primitive origin from Achæmenes and Perses.

§ 18. So too the Greeks are descended from Danaus and Linges, who were in origin Egyptians, from the town of Chemis, situated in the marsh land. They migrated into Greece. Ages afterwards, the descendants of these people, who were called Achæmenidae and Persidae, crossed over into Asia and settled at first in Persia. And when they died, they left their race and name to that place.

§ 19. So when this Murad, of whom I spoke, died, his son Mehmed succeeded to the sultanate, he being the seventh Sultan and now in the twentieth year of his life. He was sent for from Asia, for it was there that he had his province which had been assigned him by his father.

§ 20. Just at that period the Divine power sent many unusual, unexpected, and prodigious signs. These occurred both at the birth of this man and also at his entering on his rule as Sultan. For strange and exceptional earthquakes took place, and subterranean rumblings, also severe thunder and lightning from heaven, and whirlwinds and terrible storms, and an unusual light appeared in the sky, and many similar signs which the Divine power is accustomed to exhibit at the time of the greatest events and changes in the customary order.

§ 21. The soothsayers, sages and prophets and inspired persons foretold and foresaw many things that were to happen, and announced that the new Sultan would have every sort of good fortune and virtue, that his dominion would be very large in every way, and that he would surpass all the sultans before him in the very great abundance of his glory and wealth and power and accomplishments.

§ 22. When he became heir to a great realm and master

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of many soldiers and enlisted men, and had under his power already the largest and best parts of both Asia and Europe, he did not believe that these were enough for him nor was he content with what he had: instead he immediately overran the whole world in his calculations and resolved to rule it in emulation of the Alexanders and Pompeys and Caesars and kings and generals of their sort.

How the Sultan was also a Philosopher

§ 23. His physical powers helped him well. His energies were keen for everything, and the power of his spirit gave him ability to rule and to be kingly. To this end also his wisdom aided, as well as his fine knowledge of all the doings of the ancients. For he studied all the writings of the Arabs and Persians [Ottomans], and whatever works of the Greeks had been translated into the language of the Arabs and Persians—I refer particularly to the works of the Peripatetics and Stoics. So he used the most important philosophies of the teachers of the Arabs and Persians.

Treaties of the Sultan with Constantine,
King of the Romans [Byzantines], and Karaman

§ 24. He did not postpone anything or put off any action, but immediately carried everything through. First he made a treaty with the Romans and the Emperor Constantine [XIII];¹ and after that, with Karaman,² the ruler of Upper Phrygia and Cilicia, believing that for the present this move was beneficial to his affairs.

Scrutiny of the lists of the army, etc.

§ 25. Then he gave himself to an examination of his whole realm. Using his judgment about the governorships of the nations under him, he deposed some of the governors and substituted others who he deemed to be superior to the former in strategy and knowledge and justice. It was his aim,

¹ Constantine XIII Palaeologus, 1448-1453.

² The most important of the Anatolian Seljuks' successor-states, and the Ottomans' principal Anatolian Moslem rival.

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above all, to have every province under him ruled as well and as justly as possible.

§ 26. He also went over the registers and battle order of the troops, cavalry and infantry, which are paid from the royal treasuries. He especially made the royal palace subject of considerable thought and increased the pay of its troops. I refer to the "new recruits," his personal guard of foot-soldiers, customarily called in their own language Yenitsari [Janissaries], a term meaning "new levy." He realized how important these were for himself, for the protection of his person and of the whole realm.

§ 27. In addition to this, he collected a supply of arms and arrows and other things needful and useful in preparation for war. Then he examined his family treasury, looking especially closely into its overseers. He carefully questioned the officials in charge of the annual taxes and obliged them to render accounts.

Examination of the Public Funds,
and of their Treasurers

§ 28. And he discovered that much of the public and royal revenue was being badly spent and wasted to no good purpose, about one-third of the yearly revenues which were recovered for the royal treasury. So he set the keeping of this in good order. He greatly increased the annual revenue. He brought many of the tax officials to reason through fear, and for them substituted trustworthy and wise men to collect and safe-keep the funds. His father had dealt with such matters in a much more hit-or-miss manner, but he made short work of them.

§ 29. So, with the arrangement of these affairs in this fashion, the ordering of the reign in the best possible manner, there passed the year 6959 from the beginning [A.D. 1451], the first year of the reign of the Sultan. Thus he prepared for greater things; and so everything contributed to the plan he had before him.

§ 30. And this plan was: he meant to build a strong fortress on the Bosphorus on the European side, opposite to the

Asiatic fortress on the other side, at the point where it is narrowest and swiftest, and so to control the straits by uniting both continents, Asia and Europe; and to cross there whenever he should choose, quite independently of any other individuals and with no least question that it was the Sultan himself who controlled the passage.

§ 31. For he well knew how many and what varied difficulties this problem had presented to those of previous times, in the days of his forefathers, and especially of his father—what a hindrance this had offered to their operations, and how it had frequently almost made them abandon the other continent. Meanwhile the Emperor of the Romans [Byzantines] reigned securely in the City, always watching the times and the events, for the most part controlling the sea, making use of it sometimes to the advantage of his own nation, and injuring whom he pleased. In addition, the Italians, and especially the Venetians, in their quarrels with these others, often cruised in long triremes through the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, preventing the crossing of these straits.

§ 32. Not only did these facts influence him, but, in looking toward his set purpose, he also believed it would be wise to have a walled fortress. And in connection with the siege of the City, which he planned for the not distant future, he believed that a very strong fortification would shut off from the City not only the two continents of Asia and Europe, but also both seas, from above, the Euxine Sea through the Bosphorus, and from below, the Aegean and all the Grecian sea through the Hellespont.

§ 33. With this plan in mind, that winter he ordered all the materials to be prepared for building, namely, stone and timbers and iron and whatever else would be of use for this purpose. He set the best and most experienced officers over the work, instructing them to put everything speedily in the best order, so that when spring came he could undertake the task.

§ 34. The Emperor Constantine, on the other hand, and the men of the City, when they learned this, regarded it as terrible and as the beginning of great evils. Considering it a certain danger of enslavement—as indeed it was—they de-

cided to fortify their town and to prepare the whole City. They were sorely troubled.

§ 35. Hence he [Constantine] decided to send an embassy composed of his associates to try by any possible means to forestall this threat.

§ 36. And they, when they arrived, used all sorts of arguments, citing the treaties and agreements. They told how, in all the previous treaties which had been drawn up and ratified, both with his forefathers and with his father, and indeed with him also, it was in every case promised that no one should build a fortress or anything else in this place. Furthermore it was specified that, if any such undertaking was begun, both sides would oppose this by every possible means. So the country had been saved from danger of this until now and was free. They said they would agree simply to the passing across of the Sultan's armies and other equipment from continent to continent, but they demanded that he should not in any way break the treaties, concluded but yesterday and the day before, for any trivial reason. For surely he did not wish to commit any injustice, as they certainly were not doing any injustice on their part.

Reply of Sultan Mehmed to the Ambassadors

§ 37. The Sultan replied to them: "I have no intention to do you any injustice, O Romans, nor to do anything contrary to the agreements and treaties in this undertaking of mine, but only to protect my possessions while doing no injury to you. It is, however, just and right for each of us to guard and make sure of his own, not in the least injuring those with whom he has a treaty, and this is the desire of all. But, as you see, I rule over both Asia and Europe, continents separated from each other, and in each of these I have many opponents and enemies of my rule. I am obliged to be present everywhere and to be equal to the needs of both continents if I do not wish to be taken by surprise—which is what my enemies wish. And know this well, that the Italian triremes gave us many great difficulties in the days of my father when we wished to cross against the Paonians [Hun-

At last the Romans and Giustinianni prevailed and repulsed them, though not without difficulty, and drove them from the wall, wounding many of them and killing not a few.

§ 153. Other attacks were made daily, here and there, on the wall, especially where it had been demolished. During these attacks the defenders in the City were by no means worsted, but fought vigorously and resisted bravely.

§ 154. Baltaoglou, after capturing the fortress [of Prinkipo], immediately sailed to the harbor where the other triremes were drawn up. On the second or third day he received an order from the Sultan to make careful preparation and collect his ships and join battle with the galleons and triremes that were guarding the mouth of the harbor and the chain, so as to force an entrance if he could. The Sultan had determined by all means to get the harbor and the Horn under his control so that he might attack the City from all sides, by land and by sea, for he thought (as was true) that if he could make an opening in the sea-wall as well, the capture of the City would be easier for him, since the defenders were insufficient for the entire circuit, they being few and the circuit great.

Attack of Baltaoglou against the vessels at the entrance to the harbor, and at the chain; the great sea-battle

§ 155. Having put all the ships in good condition and fully armed them, and the fighting men with them, Baltaoglou attacked the galleons and the chain with great force, fury, and vigor, and with shouts and battle cries. And first, having slowed down the ships, when they were about a bowshot from the enemy, they attacked from afar, firing on them and being fired upon with arrows and with great stone balls from the guns. Then he furiously attacked the center of the fleet. Of the heavy infantry on the decks, some carried fire in their hands with the purpose of setting fire to the ships. Others hurled flaming arrows, while others tried to cut the ropes of the anchors, and still others attempted to board the ships, climbing up by grappling-hooks and ladders. Others with javelins

and pikes and long spears attacked the defenders. Their attack and their zeal for the task were very great.

§ 156. Now those on the large galleons had already been prepared for such attack by the Grand Duke, who had been placed in command over the ships as well as of the sea-walls of the City; so, fighting from a higher position, and hurling down on the attackers stones, javelins, spears and pikes, especially from the crowsnests at the top of the masts, they succeeded in wounding many, and killed not a few. Furthermore they brought great jars of water to put out the fires, and heavy stones which they let fall, tied by ropes, and thus did a great deal of damage.

§ 157. There was the greatest zeal on both sides, and energy too, the attackers determined to prevail and to force their way in while the defenders were bound to fight their best to guard the harbor and the ships and drive off the enemy. At last the crews of the galleons, fighting magnificently, turned the flank of the attackers and drove them off, having proved themselves valiant men to the very end.

The invention of another and newer sort of cannon

§ 158. Sultan Mehmed, seeing that he had been repulsed in this attack, set himself to discover another sort of machine. Hence, calling the makers of the cannon, he demanded of them whether it was not possible to fire cannon-balls at the galleons fighting at the entrance to the harbor, and sink them there. They replied that they were unable to do this, especially because the walls of Galata were in the way at every point. He then showed them another way to do this by a new form of cannon. For, he said, if they were willing, it was possible to construct a different sort of gun with a slightly changed design that could fire the stone to a great height, so that when it came down it would hit the ships amidships and sink them. He said that they must first aim it and level it, getting the measures by mathematical calculation, and then fire on the galleons. Thus he explained to them his plan.

§ 159 When they had reasoned out the scheme, they de-

cided it was possible. So they constructed a cannon of this type, as designed by the Sultan, and after a careful survey of the land, they placed it a little beyond the point of Galata on a slight elevation opposite the galleons. Then having aimed it with care, and after leveling it by a special design, they fired it by applying a live coal to it. It shot the stone up to a great height, but as this first stone descended, it missed the ships, falling into the sea quite near them. However, when they had immediately corrected the error by changing the aim a little, they fired again, and this stone went to an immense height and came down with tremendous crash and velocity, striking the galleon in the center. It immediately crushed it completely and sank it in the depths, killing some of those on board immediately and drowning others. The very few who were not killed swam with difficulty to the other galleons and triremes near by.

§ 160. This unexpected event frightened all those in the City, and threw them into the greatest terror and anguish. Nonetheless, since this was the only possible safe step, the rest of the galleons and triremes were retired a short distance to a safer place, and a guard was set. Thus they suffered no further injury from the cannon-balls, but strongly guarded the harbor and the Horn.

§ 161. While affairs were in this condition, not more than three or four days later, three large galleons appeared in the open sea sailing grandly along. The High Priest of Rome [the Pope] had sent these from Italy, bringing food and help to the City. He had already learned of the fighting and of the approaching siege of the City, so he had sent these ahead as help until he should fit out the rest of his fleet as well. He was preparing to send from Italy thirty triremes and galleons after these, as aid to the Romans and the Emperor Constantine, but these were delayed.

§ 162. When the enemy saw these galleons sailing out in the open sea, they gave word to the Sultan, who immediately sent for Baltaoglu, Commander of the fleet, and ordered him to put out with the entire fleet as quickly as possible, putting on a full complement of rowers and others on all the ships and fighters on the decks, and arming them with every sort

of weapon. He also put on board the ships many other weapons: shields, cutlasses, helmets, breastplates, also javelins, pikes, long spears, daggers, and whatever else was usable in this kind of fight. Furthermore he provided the ships with as many heavy infantry and bowmen as he could, and from his own bodyguard the best fighters, the bravest in battle, and those best armed. So, after equipping and preparing the fleet with plenty of men and all sorts of arms, he sent it out, ordering them either to capture the galleons and bring them to him or else never to come back safe themselves.

Attack by the Sultan's fleet on the ships that appeared in the open sea; severe naval battle and failure

§ 163. Baltaoglu took the entire fleet and started immediately against the transports in all haste and zealously, and also with ambition and hope of success. He almost imagined that they were already in his hands. When they came within range of his arrows, they first lay to for a little while, and then he had very lively skirmishes, with arrows and with stones hurled by his cannon and even with flaming arrows against the sails and the galleons, with the purpose of setting them on fire.

§ 164. The men on the galleons also fought bravely. They attacked from a height, and in fact from the yardarms and the wooden towers they fired down with arrows, javelins and stones, impetuously and indeed successfully. There was much shouting, and men were wounded and killed on both sides.

§ 165. When they had kept on in that way for a time, Baltaoglu set up a great shout and ordered the rest to do so too. Then with great speed and force he attacked the center of the galleons, and there followed a hand-to-hand fight as both sides attacked with small-arms. Altogether it was a terrible struggle. Some carried fire and tried to set the galleons ablaze from below. Others with axes and daggers tried to break through their sidewalls, while others with long lances and javelins shot at the warriors from below. Some hurled pikes and stones, and others climbed up, clinging to anchors and ropes, and tried to get aboard the ships. So in various

ways they fought, wounding and being wounded, in ferocity and anger.

§ 166. The men on board the galleons were fully armed and fought desperately against them from their higher position, defending themselves energetically against the attackers. First they emptied great vessels of water which they had hung over the sides, and dropped down from above heavy stones that they had tied with ropes. Thus they put out the fire and killed many. The stones, falling heavily and with great force on all who were attacking from below, sank some boats and injured others. After that, some of them hurled spears and javelins and pikes on the attackers, others threw stones from above, while others with their cutlasses cut off the hands of those who tried to board. Still others beat down with clubs and sticks and broke the heads of those men by their blows. There was great shouting and din on all sides as they encouraged each other, hitting and being hit, killing and being killed, pushing and being pushed, blaspheming, scolding, threatening, groaning—it was all a terrible noise.

§ 167. And yet, although the men in the galleons struggled bravely, those in the fleet were getting the better of them through sheer force of numbers, for they fought by turns, relieving one another, fresh ones taking the places and work of those who had been wounded or killed. And those on the galleons would have lost hope of fighting successfully, because the battle had gone on so long, had not a south wind, suddenly coming up strong, blown into the bellying sails and powerfully swelled them out and driven the galleons along with great force. In a brief time they left behind the triremes, which could not keep up with the galleons. Therefore the fight died down, and they got safely away to the other galleons at the entrance of the harbor, and thus, in spite of their fears, were saved. They escaped a very great danger.

§ 168. The Sultan, seated on his horse by the shore, watched these events and seemed to be encouraging his men as well as watching the outcome of the battle. For he felt absolutely sure his fleet would defeat the galleons and capture them and bring them as captives to him, and he was in great glee. But when he saw the wind freshening, and the galleons

drawing away, he was immediately greatly chagrined. Whipping up his horse, he went off in silence.

§ 169. Of the men in the galleons, universal testimony says twenty-two were killed, but more than half of the men in their complements were wounded.

§ 170. Of the men in the Sultan's fleet, a little more than a hundred were killed, and the wounded were more than three hundred. Baltaoglou, the admiral of the fleet, was hit in the eye with a stone. This contributed both to the safety of the galleons and to the saving of Baltaoglou himself from death by order of the Sultan, for the latter took very hard the escape of the galleons, and felt very badly at the affair, accusing Baltaoglou of cowardice and pusillanimity. Rather, he thought the outcome due to the admiral's carelessness and idleness, and that the admiral had betrayed his plans. For he did not consider the failure in the matter of the galleons was a good omen for the task he had before him. Hence he relieved the admiral of the command immediately and gave the fleet and the governorship of Gallipoli to Hamza, one of his companions whom he greatly trusted in such affairs.

§ 171. On the other hand, this unhopèd-for outcome brought to the Romans more than a little respite and encouragement and filled them with better hopes, not only at what had occurred but also in expectation of better things to come—until they had to suffer badly. The evils had not yet come upon them. They were not to be happy for any length of time; they were to be captured, and given over to all sorts of evil, to captivity and slavery, murder, plunder, and the abuse of women and children.

A Surprising Plan and Decision

§ 172. Sultan Mehmed considered it necessary in preparation for his next move to get possession of the harbor and open the Horn for his own ships to sail in. So, since every effort and device of his had failed to force the entrance, he made a wise decision, and one worthy of his intellect and power. It succeeded in accomplishing his purpose and in putting an end to all uncertainties.

§ 173. He ordered the commanders of the vessels to construct as quickly as possible glideways leading from the outer sea to the inner sea, that is, from the harbor to the Horn, near the place called Diplokion, and to cover them with beams. This road, measured from sea to sea, is just about eight stadia. It is very steep for more than half the way, until you reach the summit of the hill, and from there again it descends to the inner sea of the Horn. And as the glideways were completed sooner than expected, because of the large number of workers, he brought up the ships and placed large cradles under them, with stays against each of their sides to hold them up. And having under-girded them well with ropes, he fastened long cables to the corners and gave them to the soldiers to drag, some of them by hand, and others by certain machines and capstans.

§ 174. So the ships were dragged along very swiftly. And their crews, as they followed them, rejoiced at the event and boasted of it. Then they manned the ships on the land as if they were on the sea. Some of them hoisted the sails with a shout, as if they were setting sail, and the breeze caught the sails and bellied them out. Others seated themselves on the benches, holding the oars in their hands and moving them as if rowing. And the commanders, running along by the sockets of the masts with whistlings and shouting, and with their whips beating the oarsmen on the benches, ordered them to row. The ships, borne along over the land as if on the sea, were some of them being pulled up the ascent to the top of the hill while others were being hauled down the slope into the harbor, lowering the sails with shouting and great noise.

§ 175. It was a strange spectacle, and unbelievable in the telling except to those who actually did see it—the sight of ships borne along on the mainland as if sailing on the sea, with their crews and their sails and all their equipment. I believe this was a much greater feat than the cutting of a canal across at Athos by Xerxes, and much stranger to see and to hear about. Furthermore, this event of but yesterday, before our very eyes, makes it easier to believe that the other

also actually happened, for without this one, the other would have seemed a myth and sounded like idle talk.

§ 176. Thus, then, there was assembled in the bay called Cold Waters, a little beyond Galata, a respectable fleet of some sixty-seven vessels. They were moored there.

§ 177. The Romans, when they saw such an unheard-of thing actually happen, and warships lying at anchor in the Horn—which they never would have suspected—were astounded at the impossibility of the spectacle, and were overcome by the greatest consternation and perplexity. They did not know what to do now, but were in despair. In fact they had left unguarded the walls along the Horn for a distance of about thirty stadia, and even so they did not have enough men for the rest of the walls, either for defense or for attack, whether citizens or men from elsewhere. Instead, two or even three battlements had but a single defender.

§ 178. And now, when this sea-wall also became open to attack and had to be guarded, they were compelled to strip the other battlements and bring men there. This constituted a manifest danger, since the defenders were taken away from the rest of the wall while those remaining were not enough to guard it, being so few.

§ 179. Not only was there this difficulty, but, the bridge being completed, heavy infantry and bowmen could cross against the wall. Hence that part also had to be guarded. And the ships near the mouth of the harbor and at the chain, galleons and triremes alike, as well as the other ships in the harbor had the greater need to be on guard since now they were subject to attack from within as well as from outside. Therefore in many directions they appeared to have, and actually had, difficulties. Still, they did not neglect anything that could be done.

§ 180. Giustiniani removed one of his galleons from the mouth of the harbor plus three of the Italian triremes, and took them against the end of the gulf where the Sultan's ships were anchored. There he anchored so as to fight from them and prevent the [Ottoman] warships from going out anywhere in the gulf or being able to do any harm to the harbor or its shipping. This he thought was the best plan

cruelly murdered or made captive and ignominiously taken away.

§ 275. For when he saw the enemy pressing in on him and coming into the City through the broken wall, he is stated to have cried aloud this last word: "The city is taken and it is useless for me to live any longer." So saying he hurled himself into the midst of the enemy and was cut to pieces. He was a splendid man and the guardian of the common good, but unfortunate all through his life and doubly unfortunate at its close.

Epilogue

§ 276. As for the great City of Constantine, raised to a great height of glory and dominion and wealth in its own times, overshadowing to an infinite degree all the cities around it, renowned for its glory, wealth, authority, power, and greatness, and all its other qualities, it thus came to its end.

§ 277. The Sultan Mehmed, when he had carefully viewed the City and all its contents, went back to the camp and divided the spoils. First he took the customary toll of the spoils for himself. Then also, as prizes from all the rest, he chose out beautiful virgins and those of the best families, and the handsomest boys, some of whom he even bought from the soldiers. He also chose some of the distinguished men who, he was informed, were above the rest in family and intelligence and valor. Among these was Notaras himself, a man among the most able and notable in knowledge, wealth, virtue, and political power. The Sultan honored him with a personal interview, spoke soothing words to him, and filled him with hope, and not him only but the rest who were with him.

§ 278. For the Sultan was overcome with pity for the men and their misfortune, as he saw from what good circumstances they had fallen into such great predicaments. And he had good intentions towards them, even though his ill will soon overcame these plans.

§ 279. After arranging these affairs and all that con-

cerned with the soldiers, suitably in accordance with his intentions, he honored some of them with government positions and offices, and others with money, and still others with stipends and many other sorts of gifts. He also did kindnesses to and personally received those whom he knew to have fought well. And after making an address to them and telling them many things, praising and thanking them, he disbanded the army.

§ 280. Then, with the notable men, and his courtiers, he went through the City. First he planned how to repopulate it, not merely as it formerly was but more completely, if possible, so that it should be a worthy capital for him, situated, as it was, most favorably by land and by sea. Then he donated to all the grandes, and to those of his household, the magnificent homes of the rich, with gardens and fields and vineyards inside of the City. And to some of them he even gave beautiful churches as their private residences.

§ 281. For himself, he chose the most beautiful location in the center of the City for the erection of a royal palace. After this, he settled all the captives whom he had taken as his portion, together with their wives and children, along the shores of the city harbor, since they were sea-faring men whom they previously had called Stenites. He gave them houses and freed them from taxes for a specified time.

§ 282. He also made a proclamation to all those who had paid their own ransom, or who promised to pay it to their masters within a limited time, that they might live in the City, and he granted them, also, freedom from taxes, and gave them houses, either their own or those of others.

§ 283. He wanted those of the nobility whom he approved of to live there with their wives and children. Accordingly he gave them houses and lands and provisions for living, and tried in every way to help them. This was his intention and purpose, as has been stated.

§ 284. He contemplated making Notaras the commandant of the City, and putting him in charge of its repopulation, and he had advised with him previously regarding this. But the arrows of envy laid that man and his sons low with mortal wounds, and they were condemned to an unjust death.