

SCANDERBEG



SCANDERBEG





GEORGE CASTRIOT, otherwise called Scanderbeg Prince of Epirus, Scourge of the Turkey. He slew Fero Baïa with his owne hand, Chiefe Commander of Amuraths army, Overran the countrey of Macedonia, Overthrew Turke army consisting of 40000. full renayning victor in many battells by his valour and pollicie

SCANDERBEG

His Life

Correspondence

Orations

Victories

and

Philosophy

By

NELO DRIZARI
U

In this sketch from *The Famous Acts of George Castrioti, Sumamed Scanderbeg, King of the Epirots*, on his triumphant return to Albania at thirty-eight years of age in 1443, Scanderbeg stands ready to liberate his native country.

COPYRIGHT 1968

By

NELO DRIZARI

All rights reserved, including
the right to translate or reproduce
any part of this book as edited thereof.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 67-31453

Printed in the United States of America

BY

The National Press

Palo Alto, California

CONTENTS

Author's Reflective Note	v-xxxiv
I. Scanderbeg's Triumphant Return	1
II. Holiday Recess	6
III. National Unity	9
IV. Victory or Death	14
V. Victory over Ali Pasha	18
VI. Europe Applauds Him	20
VII. Scanderbeg's Answer	23
VIII. Angry Letters Between Sultan Murad and Scanderbeg	25
IX. Answer: "Victory by the Help of God!"	28
X. Swiftly Improvised Strategy	30
XI. Before War with Venice	33
XII. At Conclusion of Peace	37
XIII. At Siege of Sfetigrad	39
XIV. Steps Against Complacency	43
XV. Letter to King Alphonse	46
XVI. At Siege of Berat	48
XVII. Philosophical Reflections	51
XVIII. Scanderbeg's Appeal for Papal Aid	55
XIX. Defender of Italian Freedom	59
XX. Sultan Mehmed Offers Peace	68
XXI. A Short-Lived Peace	73
XXII. Death of a Crusader	75
XXIII. A Flaming Sword Against Another	77
XXIV. "Do or Die"	79
XXV. Battles of Kashar and Valcalia	81
XXVI. The Siege of Croya and the Vatican	83
XXVII. Valedictory	86
Postscript	91
Index	99

AUTHOR'S REFLECTIVE NOTE

Before getting to know and understand him well, Scanderbeg may easily appear as a storybook hero, fictionally created and magnified for most exciting plausibility. In the realm of fiction, that kind of portrayal is designed to excite the reader's deeper interest in the hero. And he would certainly find him most absorbing. Of course, there's nothing wrong with that. The world's masterpieces, the very life and soul of great literature, have had their deepest roots in artful creation.

But Scanderbeg, for one, transcends such fictional characterization. His fantastic deeds, his philosophy of life, his unshakable faith in Divine Providence, as well as his fullest dedication to the freedom and independence of his people, lift him above any artfully created hero. In hard reality, as you get to know him more intimately, he emerges as an incredibly living, pulsating, blood-stirring knight of the highest order.

In that distinctive perspective, the true story of his life and deeds gives a deathless meaning to the popular saying: 'Fact is stranger than fiction.'

At seventeen, for example, when his Christian name was George Castrioti, the boy became a rebellious hostage. That's when his father, Prince John Castrioti, ruler of Albania, handed him over as hostage to Sultan Murad II, ruler of the mighty Ottoman Empire. And it wasn't for any greedy bargain, either. No loving father—such as John Castrioti was—would commit such an inhuman act. Rather it was to purchase a precarious peace at a terribly heart-breaking price. For more than two decades, his people had been at war with the Ottoman Empire, which had become mightier than the Roman Empire of the latter Caesars.

In 1422, when he took Prince John's youngest son as hostage, Sultan Murad was preparing to execute his grandest plan: He was feverishly getting ready to capture Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire and the pulsating heart of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Jerusalem, the spiritual heart of Christian Europe, was already under his dominion. So was Mecca, the spiritual core of Islam. And he certainly had his eye on the Vatican as well, although that was a fancy dream.

The Ottoman ruler had already subdued Greece, Bulgaria and Romania. Serbia, precariously ruled by Despot George, had bowed to him under certain prearranged marital terms: Princess Mara, daughter of Despot George, had become the bride of Sultan Murad. But Roman Catholic Albania stood its ground in freedom against the mighty sword of the Ottoman Empire.

That year, to secure the rear of the Turkish army in Southeastern Europe, Sultan Murad made a deceptive agreement with John Castrioti: With George, the youngest of his four sons, as hostage, Albania was presumably to mind its own military manners while Murad attempted the conquest of Constantinople. Of course, Murad failed then to conquer the strongly fortified bastion. It remained for Sultan Mehmed II, his renowned son, to achieve that spectacular objective thirty-one years later, in 1453.

Meanwhile, young George Castrioti was brought to Edirne (Adrianople), the European capital of the Ottoman Empire. He soon entered Enderun, the Ottoman Military Academy of Princes. But, before becoming a bona fide cadet there, the boy was mandatorily required to be circumcized. And, after the honored ritual of circumcision, he became nominally a Moslem. That's when he adopted the alias of Scanderbeg. It stood for Iskander Bey. And it meant Alexander, in honor of Alexander the Great, his ancestral hero.

At Enderun, which had produced great Turkish generals, cadet Scanderbeg took his academic task very seriously. All-around perfection was his chief goal. He was most determined to surpass any hitherto unsurpassable record established there by the Ottoman Empire's chosen cadet princes. His subjects included history, military strategy and tactics, philosophy, Turkish, Arabic, and classical languages. He had already learned Italian and Latin at the White Castle in Croya. And he also knew Albanian, his native tongue. Moreover, he had learned the art of guerrilla warfare at the feet of his father.

Very soon, cadet Scanderbeg's unusual academic record at Enderun attracted the full attention of faculty members and the body of student princes. Even Sultan Murad himself, keenly interested in any potentially most promising military leader, began taking a personal interest in him. From

that hour on, Scanderbeg began riding on the crest of his own genius.

As a cadet, he had achieved a long string of firsts. For one thing, he had excelled as a swordsman and lancer. And his fame while at Enderun had spread fast even among the higher echelons of the Ottoman Empire's armed forces. While still a cadet, Scanderbeg's performances as a cavalry officer, as a brilliant strategist and tactician in war games, as well as a victorious performer in individual combat, had won for him a flock of admirers among the most influential pashas and beys who were closest to the Seraglio.

Well impressed with Scanderbeg's unusually distinctive record, Sultan Murad soon promoted him to the rank of brigadier general. He hadn't yet then reached his majority. And, as it seems, he hadn't as yet received his final graduation papers. Even then, he was put in command of a cavalry of 5,000 fighting men. His first command took him to Anatolia, where he clearly distinguished himself in bloody battles against the enemies of the Ottoman Empire.

On his first triumphant return to Edirne, Sultan Murad decorated him at a lavish ceremony. And he even rewarded him with precious gifts. Eventually, such ceremonies in his honor became almost commonplace. He was soon afterward given the command of an army of Janissaries, the toughest body of fighters in the whole Ottoman Empire.

Under his command, the Janissaries began winning battle after battle in the Near and Middle East. They eventually gained greater military prestige both for him as well as for the Janissaries Brotherhood. And it didn't take him very long to become most popular among them. In battle, he would be the first in the forefront and the last to leave the battlefield. They had never seen any brigadier general risking his own life like a common soldier. They liked his spirit. More than that: He treated them as human beings. And he camped and ate and lived with them.

Meanwhile, shortly after he had reached his majority, Sultan Murad promoted him to the enviable rank of full general. In that capacity, he soon again gave a great account of his genius as a military leader. As a very young cavalry general, his fame eventually spread far and wide. It cut clear across the boundaries of the widely spread Ottoman

Empire, which included a score of conquered kingdoms and principalities and ancient over lordships. The Seraglio itself fondly folded him to its capacious as well as capricious bosom.

But such an enviable fame had crossed as well into still unconquered enemy realms. Enemy knights, hoping to gain immortal glory by slaying Scanderbeg in individual combat, seemed to have sprung up almost overnight. One day, a Scythian knight suddenly appeared in Adrianople. He at once challenged Scanderbeg to a hand-to-hand combat. And that speedily was his undoing: In the briefest time possible, in a knightly duel before a great gathering in front of the Imperial Palace, Murad's young general slew the seemingly invincible challenger.

And there were still other such troublesome challengers, all afflicted with similarly burning ambitions. Two of them hailed from the heart of Persia, Sultan Murad's deadly enemy. Iaia and Hamza, two brothers in the service of the Shah, felt just as cocksure of their invincibility. Both were most confident of swiftly taking Scanderbeg's measure. Still, despite their apparent prowess and their cunning trickery in knightly combat, Murad's favorite knight artfully put them one by one to the sword before a loudly cheering audience.

As a superb swordsman and lancer, Scanderbeg's renown was already achieved in the battlefield. He had never lost a battle. In victory after victory 'for the glory of the Ottoman Empire,' he kept on rapidly rising to greater heights. Each time, on his triumphant return to the Seraglio, Sultan Murad would as usual reward him with high decorations and very precious gifts. The young and handsome cavalry general, meanwhile, was highly praised each time in Palace firmans. Soon enough, under this limelight, he won the heart of the people, the love of the Janissaries, as well as the accolades of the mighty lords in power.

Before long, however, these in themselves were enough to cause disturbing jealousy in Murad's Court. Great Turkish • generals and pashas and beys—not to mention viziers—were afflicted with it. It seemed to have become contagious. Even Sultan Murad himself had eventually succumbed to the consuming affliction.

And there were other smouldering undercurrents as well. Scanderbeg, after all, was an Albanian prince. His father, Prince John Castrioti, who by now for nearly five decades had defied the whole Ottoman Empire, was getting on in years. In the event of his death, his youngest and most renowned son would eminently qualify as his successor.

While thus riding high on the crest of his renown, Scanderbeg one day, early in 1443, suddenly received the sad news from the White Castle in Croya: His father had died of natural causes. Meanwhile, a special Albanian delegation had secretly arrived in Adrianople. He was urgently asked to return to his native country in order to succeed his father as ruler. But he promptly dismissed them—without revealing his innermost intentions—and sent them away 'empty handed.'

From his numerous friends and informants in the Seraglio, meanwhile, he reliably learned that Sultan Murad was preparing other plans: He wanted to make Albania an obedient vassalage of the Ottoman Empire. And he had become both jealous and deeply suspicious of Scanderbeg. His great general possessed both ability and princely qualifications to become king of Albania, he had whispered around in confidence. And he certainly would never allow him to rule Albania as a free and independent nation. Both men now almost openly mistrusted each other.

In strict secrecy and without giving any hint of his innermost thoughts even to his most trustworthy chief of staff, Scanderbeg feverishly formulated his plans: To outwit Sultan Murad, he resorted to a 'cat and mouse' game. At first, it was a psychological ruse de guerre. And it was brilliantly designed to gain all the precious time possible for his eventual escape into Albania. He knew only too well his life now was in imminent danger. Murad would stop at nothing short of assassination to gain his most ambitious objective.

One day, early in November, 1443, destiny seemed to have suddenly put the sword of freedom in his hand. That's when Sultan Murad put him and Kharambeg in joint command of a Turkish army of 20,000 men. The two generals were mandatorily ordered to attack and defeat the Hungarian army under the command of Janko Huniades and King Ladislaus. The battle took place along the banks of the Morava River, near Nish.

On November 10, Scanderbeg's hour of hours, for which he had devoutly prayed, miraculously arrived: When the battle was joined, instead of unleashing his customary thunderbolts, he ordered his army to put up a very feeble resistance against the Hungarian army. Then, to the amazement of his own commanders, he suddenly ordered a general retreat. This at once precipitated fear and panic among the Turkish ranks. Scanderbeg had never turned his back on any enemy in battle.

Even his own special force of three hundred loyal Albanian cavalymen was shocked. That was too much. And when he ordered them to detach themselves and follow him out of the battlefield, they thought he had suddenly gone out of his mind. But when he soon gathered them together and told them of his secret plan to escape into Albania in order to free their country from Ottoman oppression, they lustily hailed him as a great knight and liberator.

Then, as the Hungarian army walked away with both the victory and the spoils of war, Scanderbeg swiftly turned his whole attention to a vitally important document: At sword's point, he forced Sultan Murad's battlefield secretary to affix his official seal to an imperial firman. It authorized Scanderbeg to replace the Turkish governor of Oroya and to take full command of the fortified White Castle (Ak-Hissar), his native home.

This battlefield event has been glorified in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's lengthy epic poem, Scanderbeg, which follows:

In the middle of the night,
In a halt of the hurrying flight,
There came a Scribe of the King
Wearing his signet ring,
And said in a voice severe:
"This is the first dark blot
On thy name, George Castriot!
Alas I Why art thou here,
And the army of Amurath slain,
And left on the battle plain?"

And Iskander answered and said:
"They lie on the bloody sod
By the hoofs of horses trod:

But this was the decree
Of the watchers overhead;
For the war belonged to God,
And in the battle who are we,
Who are we, that shall withstand
The wind of His lifted hand?"
Then he bade them bind in chains
This man of books and brains;
And the Scribe said: "What misdeed
Have I done that, without need.
Thou doest to me this thing?"
And Iskander answering
Said unto him: "Not one
Misdeed to me hast thou done;
But for fear that thou shouldest run
And hide thyself from me,
Have I done this unto thee.

"Now write me a writing, o Scribe,
And blessing be on thy tribe!
A writing sealed with thy ring,
To King Amurath's Pasha
In the city of Croya,
The city moated and walled,
That he surrender the same
In the name of my master, the King,
For what is writ in his name
Can never be recalled."

And the Scribe bowed low in dread,
And unto Iskander said:
"Allah is great and just,
But we are as ashes and dust;
How shall I do this thing.
When I know that my guilty head
Will be forfeit to the King?"

Then swift as a shooting star
The curved and shining blade
Of Iskander's scimitar
From its sheath, with jewels bright,
Shot, as he thundered: "Write!"
And the trembling Scribe obeyed
And wrote in the fitful glare

Of the bivouac fire apart,
 With the chill of the midnight air
 On his forehead white and bare,
 And the chill of death in his heart.

Two weeks later, after triumphantly entering Albania at Dibra, Scanderbeg-reached Oroya at the head of his security guard. In a brilliantly executed stroke, he stormed into his native White Castle. The date: November 28, 1443. Here again Longfellow continued his poetic exultation in describing the next event:

Then to the Castle White
 He rode in regal state.
 And entered at the gate
 In all his arms bedight,
 And gave to the Pasha
 Who ruled in Oroya
 The writing of the King,
 Sealed with his signet ring.
 And the Pasha bowed his head,
 And after a silence said:
 "Allah is just and great!
 I yield to the will divine;
 Who shall contend with fate?"
 Anon from the castle walls
 The crescent banner falls,
 And the crowd beholds instead,
 Like a portent in the sky,
 Iskander's banner fly,
 The Black Eagle with double head;
 And shouts ascend on high,
 For men's souls are tired of the Turks,
 And their wicked ways and works,
 That have made of Ak-Hissar
 A city of the plague;
 And the loud exultant cry
 That echoes wide and far
 Is: "Long live Scanderbeg!"

Longfellow had been thrilled reading of the incredible life and deeds of Scanderbeg. At the Wayside Inn, on the old Boston Post Road, he had been awed by the fantastic stories certain Spanish minstrels had told him about the

valiant knight. And at the Boston Public Library, on Copley Square, he had most avidly thumbed through reference books for every bit of available information he could possibly glean.'

And such informative books have a blessed way of crossing great oceans and reaching faraway continents. Quite a few of them have dealt at length with the life of Scanderbeg. The most famous has been the Latin biography by Marin Barletius, a Roman Catholic priest of Scutari, Albania. Its title: De Vita et Moribus Georgii Castrioti. It was published in Venice, 1504. An authoritative and exhaustive work in twelve books, it contains a vivid account of Scanderbeg's life and deeds, as well as his correspondence, orations, and philosophy.

Barletius, as a contemporary of Scanderbeg, had access to firsthand information. From records of the Roman Catholic Church itself, from chaplains with Scanderbeg's forces in the battlefields, from his own notes as a searching reporter, as well as from cavalry and guerrilla commanders and soldiers, he was able to compile his precious biography. Also as a trained scholar, he had access to other reliable sources—such as were found in the libraries and archives of Rome, Venice, Naples, Ragusa, and Croya.

Among the very first to translate Vita into French was Jacques de Lavardin, a French writer and nobleman of Plessis and Bovrot. His title: Histoire de George Castrioti, surnomme Scanderbeg, Roi d'Albanie. It was published in Paris, 1597. In his note of dedication to the nobility of France, in which he has reminded them as well of the glorious history of their own country, Lavardin wrote:

"George Castrioti, Scanderbeg ... King of Albania, whose immortal name is worthy ... to be consecrated to the Temple of Memories, stands far above the other knights and champions of the Levant..." Then he has added: "This description ... I have drawn out of the writings of those who have dealt with him: and especially out of the Latin biography of Marin Barletius. ..."

Almost concurrent with the French edition, an English version of Vita was issued in London by publisher William Ponsonby under the lengthy title: The Famous Acts of George Castrioti, Surnamed Scanderbeg, King of the Epirots

Now Named Albanois. Its author was Z. I. Gentleman. He has based it chiefly on Lavardin's manuscript. And he has cited as well quite a number of other authoritative sources to uphold Vita's scholarly worth.

In his dedication to "Sir George Carey, Knight Marshall of Her Majesty's House and Governor of the Isle of Wight," Z. I. Gentleman has added this reminder about Scanderbeg: "I doubt not but you will grace the desert of his virtue ... to the intent that so admirable an example of military perfections, and the singular precepts which may be derived out of this history of his life and deeds, may have that due applause and commendation of the world which the greatness of his exploits and the worthiness of the work do justly deserve in the eyes of wise men."

Of Scanderbeg's 'military perfection,' which has been compared by other military experts to that of Alexander the Great, Major-General James Wolfe, commander of the English army at the siege of Quebec, has expressed his earnest view. In a letter to Lord Sydney, he wrote in part: "Scanderbeg ... excels all the officers, ancient and modern, in the conduct of a small defensive army. I met him in the Turkish History but nowhere else."

General Wolfe must have come across the life of Scanderbeg in Richard Knolles' book, The General Historie of the Turkes. It was first published in London in 1603, the year Queen Elizabeth I died. Knolles, a brilliant Fellow of Oxford, has drawn a good deal from the Vita of Marin Barletius.

Three hundred years later, historian Edward Gibbon, another compatriot of Richard Knolles, had something good to say about Scanderbeg—although he has leaned rather heavily on prejudiced data by Georges Phranzes, ambassador of the Byzantine Empire to the Court of Sultan Murad II. In his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Gibbon wrote:

"In the list of heroes, John Huniades and Scanderbeg are commonly associated; and they are both entitled to our notice, since their occupation of arms delayed the ruin of the Greek (Byzantine) Empire. . . .

"The Albanian prince may justly be praised as a firm and able champion of his national independence. The enthusiasm of chivalry and religion has ranked him with

the names of Alexander the Great and Pyrrhus; nor would they blush to acknowledge their intrepid countryman: But his narrow dominion and slender powers must leave him at a humble distance below the heroes of antiquity, who triumphed over the East and the Roman legions."

And Edmund Spenser, the Elizabethan poet who has graced the English language with many literary gems, including his famous Spenserian stanza in poetry in his Faerie Queene, might well have agreed with Gibbon. In his preface to Z. I. Gentleman's Vita by Marin Barletius, he has held that Scanderbeg was "matchable to the greatest of the great." Here follows his sonnet:

Wherefore doth vain antiquity so vaunt,
Her ancient monuments of mighty peers,
And old heroes, which their world did daunt
With their great deeds, and filled their children's ears.
Who rapt with wonder of their famous praise,
Admire their statues, their Colossus great,
Their rich triumphal arks which they did raise,
Their huge pyramids, which do heaven threat.

Lo one, whom later age has brought to light,
Matchable to the greatest of the great:
Great both in name, and great in power and might,
And meriting a mere triumphant feat.

The scourge of Turks, and plague of Infidels,
Thy acts, o Scanderbeg, this volume tells.

In all this, and much more, Barletius and Lavardin as well as Knolles and Clement Clarke Moore, another brilliant author and Oxford scholar, would heartily concur. But there is another authentic book, which still sheds more light on the life and deeds of Scanderbeg. Its title in Latin: Historia Scanderbegi, by Antivarino. It was published in Venice in 1480.

Antivarino, presumably, is the pen name of Paul Angella, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Durazzo. He was a close friend and supporter of Scanderbeg. And he was almost daily at his heels. Also' his brother, Andreu Angella, was one of Scanderbeg's staff officers and a first-line commander in guerrilla warfare. Antivarino's book, however, was lost in the dust of time.

In 1742, it was uncovered by Giammaria Biemmi, a great Italian research scholar. That year, his Istoria di Giorgio Castrioto Scander-Begh was published in Brescia, Italy. Antivarino's book confirms Scanderbeg's heroic struggle in keeping Albania free and in preventing the Ottoman Empire from overrunning the rest of Europe during his lifetime. It also, indirectly, lends greater credence to Marin Barletius' Vita.

But Scanderbeg, like Samuel Johnson, had still another more intimately dedicated James Boswell: Dimitri Frangu (Demeter Franco), an Albanian priest, was his most loyal secretary-treasurer. He followed his king and guerrilla general everywhere—including bloody battlefields as well as the soulful serenity of the Vatican. Frangu must surely have kept, copious notes on Scanderbeg's military and diplomatic activities. His book in Italian translation from Latin, Georgio Castrioti, detto Scanderbeg, Principe d'Epyro, contains eyewitness accounts of the incredible knight. It was first published in Venice in 1539.

Frangu's book might never have reached us had it not been for Francesco Sansovino, a keenly dedicated Italian scholar. Sansovino has given a comprehensive version of it in his Historia Universale, which was published in Venice in 1568. Frangu's Scanderbeg further indirectly upholds the authenticity of Vita. It also almost duplicates its biographical contents. Two other research scholars, Carl Hopf and Johann Fallmerayer, have attached unquestionable credence to his book.

Another early eyewitness, writing independently of both Barletius and Frangu, was Gjin Musachia. A knightly commander who fought side-by-side with Scanderbeg, he was one of the charter members of the Albanian League which was secretly organized in Alessio in 1444. The Musachia family has had its roots deeper in Albanian history. Even until this day, a vast and fertile area in lower Malakstra serves as a reminder: It is still called Myzeqeia. It stretches from the great valley of upper or highland Malakstra, where my own family has had its remote beginning, to Kavaja on the shores of the Adriatic Sea.

In 1510, in Italy, Gjin Musachia wrote a book as a legacy to his sons. Its title: History and Genealogy of the House of Musachia. In it, he tells them of the family's fabulous

background. And he describes in detail his own role—with Scanderbeg—in the Albanian struggle against the Ottoman Empire of Sultan Murad and Sultan-Mehmed. His book begins with the year 1443, when Scanderbeg returned to Albania. It ends with the eleven-month-long siege of Croya in 1466-1467, when Scanderbeg finally defeated the mighty armies of Sultan Mehmed and Ballaban Pasha. After the death of Scanderbeg, two years later, Gjin Musachia with his family took refuge in Italy.

His Genealogy, which understandably deals more in praise of the Musachia family rather than the Castrioti clan, was brought to light by Carl Hopf, a distinguished research scholar, in his Chroniques Greco-Romanes. And it gives greater authenticity not only to the Vita of Marin Barletius, but, indirectly, upholds as well the substance of the other two authors—Antivarino and Frangu.

Presently the combined works of these four authors — Barletius, Antivarino, Frangu, and Musachia—clearly constitute the original source on which later books have been based. Without them, especially without Vita, the life and deeds of Scanderbeg might never have reached us in full perspective. And, over the centuries, there have been some 150 authoritative references dealing with the Albanian knight. For example, both Lavardin and Z. I. Gentleman have cited the following works, which have dealt with Scanderbeg's period especially:

Volaterrano, Commentary
 Bonfinius, History of Hungary
 Callimachus, Battle of Varna
 Pope Pius II, Description of Europe, Commentaries
 Paulus Jovius, Bishop of Nocera
 Bartholomeus Facius, Neapolitan Commentary
 Leonardus Chiensis, Siege and Fall of Constantinople
 Francesco Sansovino, Historia Universale
 Theodore Spandugino, Fall of Constantinople
 Callenucius of Pesaro, Neapolitan History
 Wolfgangus, Chronicle
 Melancthon, Chronicle
 Andrew Thevet, Cosmography

Not included in the preceding list is the Chronicon of Georges Phranzes, who had only contempt for Scanderbeg

and his Roman Catholic Albania. As a member of the Eastern Orthodox Church, he could hardly contain his venom against both. For a long time, Phranzes had served as the Byzantine Empire's ambassador to the Ottoman Court of Sultan Murad, whom he admired greatly. He was still alive when Murad's son, Mehmed II, conquered the Byzantine Empire's Constantinople in 1453. Eleven years later, at his deathbed, Phranzes must belatedly have had kindly thoughts about Scanderbeg. Had he been alive in 1466 and 1467, when Scanderbeg soundly defeated Mehmed's mightiest armies in Albania, he might even have become a greater admirer of the Albanian knight.

But, despite these and other such poisoned shafts discharged against him, Scanderbeg has stood the test of five centuries in the clearly discernible limelight of his valiant deeds. From 1443, when he returned triumphantly to the White Castle, to his deathbed in 1468 at Alessio, he left an indelible record of unsurpassable heroism in defense of freedom. Longfellow has again so poetically expressed it:

It was thus Iskander came
Once more unto his own;
And the tidings, like the flame
Of a conflagration blown
By the winds of summer, ran,
Till the land was in blaze.
And the cities far and near ...
'Were taken as a man
Would take the tip of his ear.'

Of course, his struggle in defense of freedom wasn't as easy 'as a man would take the tip of his ear.' To be sure, it was spectacular. But it also was bloody, agonizingly uphill, and most heartbreaking. True, he established a secure bridgehead in thirty days after returning to Croya on November 28, 1443. Five impregnable fortresses, fiercely defended by Sultan Murad's Turkish garrisons, were swiftly seized by his fiery guerrillas and cavalry stradiots.

Then, in less than six months, he feverishly applied his military genius. From Christmas Eve, 1443, to June, 1444, when he defeated the suddenly invading army of Ali Pasha at the bloody battle of lower Dibra, Scanderbeg built

a fighting force which not too long afterward was closely emulated in Europe. It was a three-sworded army, swiftly recruited and carefully trained for lightning assaults in defensive warfare. Its steely backbone was composed of peasants, farmers, highlanders, shepherds, cowpokes. And it was new and distinctively of his own creation.

In an emergency mobilization, as young recruits secretly kept on pouring into Croya from unliberated provinces, he had each one selected for one branch of his three-sworded army—guerrilla, cavalry, infantry. And each recruit was selected on the basis of his physical stamina, mental alertness, family background, deep religious belief, and love of freedom.

Scanderbeg's guerrilla battalions were carefully trained how to attack, confuse, ambush, encircle, terrify, and annihilate a numerically superior army of the enemy. And his cavalry, soon known throughout Europe as stradiots, was especially trained for frontal assaults when clashing with massively arrayed enemy cavalries and infantries.

The cavalry was prepared for swift and deceptive onslaughts, as well. On every onset, they would attack with lightning speed, feign retreat, suddenly wheel around, and slash away. His cavalymen were lightly armed and armored. And his horses were lightly barded and light-footed. Both were designed for most effective maneuverability, streamlined to run circles around the heavy-footed and heavily barded enemy horses as well as over their riders who wore cumbersome armor.

Meanwhile, the 'land was in a blaze.' His countrymen had already been seized by a flaming enthusiasm. With heart and soul they embraced the most exciting adventure of national liberation. And they labored day and night to fashion arms and armors for Scanderbeg's green recruits.

Blacksmiths and craftsmen, like their predecessors of Biblical times, literally began beating plowshares into swords. Almost overnight, they most excitedly produced bows, steelnosed arrows, lances, halberds, harquebuses, pikes, and axes. The very sharp swords and daggers, which they created with loving care, would still be hot when thrust into the eagerly awaiting hands of Scanderbeg's puny army.

By June, 1444, when he faced the overwhelming army of Ali Pasha at lower Dibra, Scanderbeg had built his three-sworded army. But it was very puny. Yet, like Fabius Maximus, he firmly believed that a general who could not beat a numerically superior army with ten or twelve thousand men could never, do it with a far greater force.

And he had very good reasons. For one thing, he had carefully trained and whipped his raw and untried army until he was well satisfied that it could do just exactly that. And he was never disappointed. Both his stradiots and his guerrillas lived up to his fondest expectations. Both were eventually copied in Europe. Scanderbeg's light cavalry, for example, soon became very famous. Gibbon, among the first historians to reveal it to the world, wrote in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire:

"The Albanian cavalry, under the name of stradiots, became famous in the wars of Italy." Of course, he refers to the Italian wars of 1460 and 1461. That's when Scanderbeg rushed over with an expeditionary cavalry of two thousand men to aid Aragon's King Ferdinand (Ferrando) against the French Anjous in Italy.

While his stradiots were making history in defense of Italian freedom, Scanderbeg's getas—guerrillas—were fiercely defending Liberty in Albania. Together, ever since their baptism of fire in 1444, they had left behind an amazing record of heroism and bloodshed.

His untried and puny army first covered itself with glory on June 29, 1444. That's when it decisively defeated the numerically superior cavalry—forty thousand—of Ali Pasha at the historic battle of Torviolli in lower Dibra. Although small and green and almost wholly untried, as it was, it achieved an unforgettably remarkable victory. And, for the first time, it gave greater proof of Scanderbeg's military genius.

By 1449 he had built a defensively unconquerable little army. That year, at the four-month-long siege of Sfetigrad, he defeated an equally overwhelming enemy force under the overall command of Sultan Murad himself. And, in a knightly combat in the battlefield, he even slew Ali Feriz Pasha, commander-in-chief of the Turkish army in Europe.

Again the following year, Scanderbeg won a spectacular victory against the Ottoman ruler. With a Turkish cavalry of 160,000 men, Murad again invaded Albania and besieged Croya. And it turned out to be a bloodier Homeric struggle. The siege lasted for eight months. Still, Scanderbeg's puny army of cavalry and guerrillas finally defeated an enemy force of more than ten times its own size.

And by 1466 and 1467, when he smashed the mightiest legions—some chroniclers say 300,000—of Sultan Mehmed and Ballaban Pasha, Scanderbeg's most efficient military handiwork had won some two score victories against numerically superior armies. By that time, as General James Wolfe has said, he had excelled "all officers, ancient and modern, in the conduct of a small defensive army." In other words, he had become an unsurpassable master of guerrilla warfare—perhaps for all ages.

During those two years, he won three defensive battles of the greatest importance—two at Croya and one in Durazzo. In Croya, he defeated the overwhelming armies of Sultan Mehmed as well as Ballaban Pasha's—

At Durazzo, where he executed his most carefully planned strategy and ruse de guerre, Scanderbeg both baffled and hotly frustrated Sultan Mehmed. That year, before besieging Croya for his decisive showdown with Scanderbeg, the Ottoman emperor decided to conquer Durazzo first.

But he soon suddenly faced a greater challenge there than he had faced against the almost impregnable walls of Constantinople fourteen years earlier. His biggest and most devastating artillery was ruthlessly turned against the ancient city. The incessant battering, however, proved utterly ineffective against Durazzo's massive walls. And the defenders, who were expected to capitulate within a few hours, stood their ground most heroically. Scanderbeg had inspired his hand-picked commanders and fighting men never to give up alive.

Sultan Mehmed had badly miscalculated his own strategy and military power in besieging Durazzo. In addition to what the Albanian knight had lately fused into its defensive complex, the fortress stood strongly impregnable by virtue also of its natural location. Fourteen centuries earlier, the Roman poet, Marcus Annaeus Lucan, had been deeply awed

by its natural strength. On a visit to Albania during the 1st Century A.D., Lucan wrote the following poem about Durazzo:

This town is not a work as others are
Of ancient structure built of lime and stone.
No work of men, nor-such as time or war,
Can easily bring to alteration.
Great is their power and they can do much
Yet greater is the strength of Duraz' town,
Her fortress is so strong, her seat is such,
That mines nor engines cannot tear her down.

Nature itself has fortified her seat,
Having enclosed it on every side,
With cliffs that break the billows as they beat
And with a gulf that is both deep and wide:
Nought but one mountain from an isle her saves,
Rocks are her rampiers threatening ships to dash,
And cliffs her walls on which the foaming waves
Do beat and her strong buildings wash.

But there was more than its proud name and natural strength to Durazzo's background. There was a precious heritage as well. And nobody knew this better than Scanderbeg, who was a keen student of history.

"Within its walls goodly temples and sumptuous churches make the city much more stately and venerable," wrote Marin Barletius.

It was already an ancient city when Illyria was at its greatest height—long before Rome and Athens had gained worldwide prominence. Via Egnatia, the Roman road to Constantinople and beyond, had its European base and origin there. At one time in ancient history, Durazzo was known as Epidamnus. At another, as Dyrrhachium. The latter name in the Albanian language suggests perhaps this significant meaning:

Der' Haku ... God's Door.

At any rate, Sultan Mehmed failed to capture it. Painfully convinced that Scanderbeg himself was directing the devastatingly defensive operations from inside the walled city, he soon lifted the siege. His fullest attention immediately was directed toward Croya, certain now that

Scanderbeg could not possibly be in both places at the same time. Accordingly, he ordered his Turkish army to rush forthwith toward the Albanian capital.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman ruler diverted certain invasion forces toward the newly built city of Churrill. They were ordered to destroy it by fire and other demolition means. Intended by Scanderbeg as a gift to his people, Churrill was located at Cape Rodoni, on the eastern shores of the Adriatic, just a stone's throw from Durazzo. It was still uninhabited when razed to the ground. It never arose again.

Before assaulting Durazzo, Sultan Mehmed had bivouacked his vast army along the Shkumbini River, near modern Elbasan. While there, he ordered his field engineers to rebuild and fortify the ruined city of Vallmes, which the Gauls and other alien invaders of ancient Illyria had destroyed. He at once strongly garrisoned its fortress in order to secure the rear of his legions heading for Croya.

But even while the main Turkish army was marching toward Croya, Scanderbeg's strategically placed guerrillas continued taking their heavy toll with their accustomed skirmishes and forays. By sheer force of power and numbers, however, the Turkish army managed to forge ahead. Finally it pitched camp before Croya.

Immediately upon arrival there, Sultan Mehmed committed another grave error. He seemed to have forgotten what happened when Sultan Murad and Ballaban Pasha futilely threatened the garrison and the townspeople with ultimatums. Like them, he forcefully shouted his ultimatum for conditional surrender. They could reap more richly rewarding benefits under him rather than under Scanderbeg, he blandly told them.

But he had no better answer than Sultan Murad and Ballaban Pasha. The garrison greeted him with a good store of cannon balls and musket shots. And more than that: They emerged from Fortress Croya and, with a furious and brave leap, assaulted his legions.

Meanwhile, Scanderbeg's main troops were poised and tensely waiting at strategic points. He had placed his most powerful and lightfooted cavalry and sharpshooting guerrillas on the closest possible fringes of the assaulting enemy forces.

While his lesser squadrons were already violently engaged against the invaders, Scanderbeg kept on counting the fast ticking moments for a sudden and tightly coordinated attack on all sides. When the instant came, he ordered them in his booming voice:

Mbë 'ta—"Overrun them!"

Echoed Lek Dukagjini, his great general: "E mbë 'ta!"

As the Croya garrison attacked from inside the fortress and the special squadrons of guerrillas continued chewing up the enemy flanks, Scanderbeg himself suddenly charged furiously with his swift cavalry.

During that day and night, his fiercely executed counter-offensive before Croya soon had its most telling effect. He continued relentlessly his closely coordinated assaults both against Sultan Mehmed's storming troops as well as against the camps from which fresh enemy troops were being steadily pressed into battle.

When he finally realized that the crushing operations against his army were being directed by Scanderbeg himself, Sultan Mehmed was forced to halt the attacks. Consequently his second bloody attempt to conquer Albania soon failed miserably. Agonizingly frustrated once more, Sultan Mehmed was forced to abandon the siege of Croya.

His badly disorganized and chewed-up troops were soon ordered to retrace their footsteps back to their permanent base at Adrianople. And the army of Scanderbeg followed him close at the heels until he was driven clear out of Albania and Macedonia.

His failure to capture Croya and Durazzo and thereby conquer the rest of Albania had shattered as well Sultan Mehmed's most cherished dream of ever being able in his lifetime to conquer Rome and the whole of Christian Europe.

Albania had become a rockbound dead-end with a forbiddingly formidable wall. For twenty-four years, Albania under Scanderbeg had stood as the Rock of Gibraltar against the Ottoman legions. The invasion of continental Europe was thereby unmistakably prevented. Another attempt, while Scanderbeg was alive, might surely have been suicidal for the proud conqueror of Constantinople.

He never did—not while Scanderbeg's sword was still flaming in defense of freedom.

Scanderbeg's heritage of freedom has long lived on in a continuous blaze of glory. Especially from the time of his death in 1468, that tradition began taking deeper meaning among the highland clans, north and south. After the Ottoman legions subdued the fiercely resisting Albanian lowlands in the 16th Century, even the ceta—pronounced tsheta—heritage was kept actively alive among Albania's unconquerable clans.

Early in the 19th Century, when the Greek people finally won their independence, Lord Byron keenly experienced that deeply rooted tradition in action. He himself saw the Albanian clans of Suli, Himara, and Laëria fiercely aiding their Greek neighbors to the south to free themselves from the crushing heel of the Ottoman Empire. While in Albania, he heard stirring songs sung in praise of Scanderbeg's living heritage. In Janina, capital of free Albania under Ali Pasha the Albanian, Byron planned the liberation of Greece.

Kilted himself in the Albanian fustanella, Byron even fell in love with virtually everything he saw in Albania. Here's part of what he wrote in his Childe Harold's Pilgrimage:

Land of Albania, where Iskander rose,
Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise.
And he, his namesake, whose oft-baffled foes
Shrunk from his deeds of chivalrous emprise:
Land of Albania, let me bend my eyes
On thee, though rugged nurse of savage men!...

Fierce are Albania's children yet they lack
Not virtues, were those virtues more mature.
Where is the foe that ever saw their back?
Who can so well the toil of war endure?
Their native fastness not more secure
Than they in doubtful time of troublous need;
Their wrath how deadly! but their friendship sure,
When gratitude or valour bids them to bleed,
Unshaken rushing where'er their chief may lead ...

The wild Albanian kilted to his knee,
With shawl-girt head and ornamented gun,
And gold-embroidered garments fair to see; ...

Childe Harold saw them in their chieftain's tower,
Thronging to war in splendour and success ...

Like Scanderbeg, Byron had a deep love for freedom and independence. But what he saw delivering Greece from tyranny was only a handful of clans in southern Albania. Less than a century later, England's romantic poet would have seen all of Albania in a blaze of glory. That's when all her great highland clans, north and south, arose as one and again "thronged to war in splendour and success." They completely drove the last remnants of the Ottoman legions clear out of Albania.

And they gloried in their inspired achievement: On November 28, 1912, Scanderbeg's old flag was again raised over the red-roofed, stucco houses of Valona. And it was exactly like the flag he himself had hoisted above Croya's White Castle on November 28, 1443. At the outset of World War II, they once more arose and struggled heroically to keep the torch of Liberty aloft and flaming.

Even in death, over the long centuries, Scanderbeg has never ceased casting his powerful shadow over the highlands and valleys as well as over the people he so dearly loved. And the people have forever gratefully remembered him. They just could never forget, because they have ceaselessly kept on wearing a black patch—a sacred memorial of mourning—over their "gold embroidered garments fair to see."

And his philosophy of life is still deeply rooted among them. It is indelibly recorded in his fantastic deeds in their behalf. It lives on as well in song and legend. And it is clearly reflected in his philosophy and correspondence and orations, as well as in battlefield victories.

Scanderbeg lived and died for what he firmly believed as being wholly sacred: Faith and virtue, honor and freedom, valor and love of country. He was a chivalrous knight and liberator to remember—and possibly even emulate—whenever Liberty is in danger.

ALBANIAN BACKGROUND: Scanderbeg's Albania has a long historical background. Its family and linguistic roots reach far back into remote antiquity, when ancient history was perhaps still unrecorded. Recognized research scholars tell us that the Albanians are descendants of the Illyrians, whose already enlightened capital in the 13th Century B.C. was Scutari (Shkodra).

Illyria's first historically recorded ruler was Hyllus. His name in Albanian means star. Illyria itself signifies Realm of the Stars. It also denotes liri—freedom.

The Kingdom of Illyria—particularly from the 13th to the 2nd Centuries B.C.—occupied the vastly spread eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea. In the north, its inland domain included Dalmatia, Montenegro and northwestern Serbia. And it extended southward to take in southern Albania, which in ancient times was known as 'Mollosia.' It then extended over the Gulf of Arta, with the Suli highlands forming its southern boundary with Greece. Even the Island of Corfu was then a part of Illyria.

The 'Mollosians' and Illyrians shared in common racial, linguistic as well as family roots. Greek historians called the 'Mollosians' barbarians. At the time, this Greek word meant: stranger, foreigner, or alien. In other words, they did not speak the Greek language. Wittingly or unwittingly, by that designation, they accorded these foreigners the undeniable distinction of being non-Hellenic.

The same Greek historians, however, obviously not knowing the Albanian language, have confused succeeding centuries as to the real meaning of 'Mollosia.' As written in classical Greek, 'Mollosia' has for some thirty centuries defied meaningful decipherment.

Of course, since Albanian was alien to Greek ears, we can well assume that it may have sounded that way to them. At that remote age, possibly Albanian was roughly spoken. Its intonation might very well have been more throaty or guttural in its progressively normal development. And it is hardly conceivable that celebrated Greek historians and geographers were guilty of deliberately distorting its phonological meaning.

But the sad fact is this: There is quite a confusedly wide discrepancy between the Greek phonological version of Mollosia and its actual meaning—the very meaning the native people themselves attached to it. In the light of the Albanian language, we now need to clarify this unfortunate discrepancy. As we see it, here is the true meaning of 'Mollosia':

'Mollosia' is but Malasia. And Malasia in Albanian means Mountainland or Highland. Mai in Albanian is mountain.

And mala is its old, definite form meaning both the mountain and the mountains. In its ancient form, malasias is mountaineer, highlander, clansman. Only as Malasia does that part of ancient Albania which then covered Epirus assume its rightful meaning for all ages.

Examined more closely, it is entirely possible that the softer sound of the liquid l, as pronounced by the Malasians, was not easily discernible to Greek ears. Perhaps it wasn't refined acoustically enough beyond its thicker cousin, the double ll. But why didn't they spell it with two a's to give it a closer meaning in Albanian? How is it possible phonologically to write Mollosia with two o's instead of, let us say, Mallasia? That is the incredible mystery.

As either Mallasia or Malasia—not as 'Mollosia'—it would have fallen into its proper phonological groove and taken its rightful meaning. Today, we have living proofs in Albania—north and south—which support either intonation and meaning. There are three great remnants which clearly uphold this fact.

Take, for example, today's Mallakastra whose history stretches at least as far back as that of 'Mollosia.' Mallakastra, as spelled and pronounced in modern Albanian, has two a's and two ll's. Certain recognized German scholars, however, have spelled it with only one L. We prefer the latter. Both forms, however, are acceptably firm. With two ll's, Mallakastra has retained its old intonation and corresponds to Mallasia. With one l, it corresponds to Malasia or the great Mountainland of Southern Albania. The highland of Malakastra is located between Mount Kulthi and sacred Mount Tomori, over the Viosa River Valley.

In Northern Albania, we have two more living examples which, in their meaning and phonology, correspond to Malakastra and Malasia. They are Malsia e Madhe in Mirdita and Malsia e Vogel. The first means great highland or mountainland. And the second means little highland. Both of these ancient clans are at least as old as Illyria itself.

However, we discern a minor difference here: Both northern clans have dropped the second a, possibly because over the long centuries it was much easier to pronounce. In modern Albanian, it could be written as Mal'sia. But Malakastra has long retained its second a in mala.

Like ancient Malakastra, Malasia (Mollosia) was perched over a long stretch of southern highlands, valleys and rivers. Ancient Greek writers have left no doubt about that. For example, the high Acroceraunian Mountains, which rise majestically above the shores of the Ionian Sea and Labëria (Alberia, Arberia), were a fixed part of 'Mollosia.' So were Mount Kulthi, Plotcha and other great mountains under the Malasian domain.

Malasia made its first known appearance in recorded history as far back as the 13th Century B.C. And it enjoyed a fairly free rule for more than a thousand years. Its long life in freedom was interrupted in the 2nd Century B.C., when it was overrun by Roman legions. From that period, Malasia fell under the protective shield of the Roman Empire.

During its millennium in freedom, the Kingdom of Malasia produced certain great historical figures. One of them was Malasius or, as certain writers have called him, 'Mollosus,' presumably one of the greatest ruling highlanders. Then we come across Alexander I, King of Malasia. His sister, Olympia, was the mother of Alexander the Great. The other most famous ruler was Pyrrhus, who conquered the hitherto unconquerable Roman legions. Like Scanderbeg, they were Epirots.

That distinguished array of Malasian rulers was matched by the Illyrian side almost man for man and woman for woman. Besides Hyllus, who was the reigning monarch during the middle years of the 13th Century B.C., the following three monarchs were among the greatest: Bardhyllus, Queen Teuta and Gentius. They reigned during the 4th, 3rd and 2nd Centuries B.C.

In the 4th Century, Bardhyllus succeeded admirably in more strongly solidifying the unity between Illyria and Malasia. Meanwhile, his armed forces openly defied the stronger Roman Empire. Bardhyllus, whose name in Albanian means white star (yll i bardh'), succeeded also in building a strong fleet to secure especially the coastal waters of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. It was strong enough to hold Roman sea power at a good distance.

Until the reign of Queen Teuta in the 3rd Century B.C., united Illyria and Malasia held their own in South-eastern Europe. Teuta, possibly the first historically known

reigning queen there, covered herself with glory. Her Illyrian fleet eventually clashed with Roman sea power. The bloody conflict lasted for nearly three years.

These wars were caused by a series of deep-rooted national differences. For one thing, Illyria's commercial and shipping rights had been violated by Rome. But maritime piracy, aggressively practiced by both sides of the Adriatic, finally brought the conflict to a bloody head. Piracy was a permissible way of life and a lucrative sport at the time. And Queen Teuta's cocky sailors would hardly yield the profitably exciting sport to their deadly rivals from across the seas. Roman galleys were temptingly loaded with rich cargoes from faraway lands. And, so, her Illyrian fleet continued being victorious year after year.

But during the reign of King Gentius in the 2nd Century B.C., fickle fortune dealt a terrible blow to Illyrian domination in Southeastern Europe. Gentius was the last Illyrian ruler enjoying that distinction. Roman sea and land power soundly defeated his armed forces. Rome's military power soon forcibly reduced his realm to a Roman province.

During that period, strangely enough, a curiously botched term came into prominence. It was 'Epirus,' which has enjoyed quite a deceptive importance as a geographical place-name. This highly exaggerated importance of 'Epirus' as an enigmatic geographical area has long misled the world. And it now is badly in need of clarification.

In the light of what we now know, the term 'Epirus' is not as difficult to decipher as the world may long have supposed. Of course, it has its own significance. Such geographical place-names in ancient times usually meant something in Greek. But they also meant something more specific in Albanian.

In classical Greek, it meant just this: Mainland. When coastal or lowland or island Greeks turned their eyes upward toward Illyria's awesome mountains, they must have seen along the UPPERmost distance the Mountainland which the native Inhabitants called Malasia and which today are the highlands of southern Albania. This was the vast region which Greek writers made quite clear that it was inhabited by certain people who were non-Hellenic and spoke no Greek.

This is clear enough to confirm the fact that 'Epirus' is—and always has been—a deceptively vague Greek term. And it also clearly confirms the meaning Malasia ('Mollosia') takes on in Albanian. It has always meant Mountainland, Highland. Nowhere do we find that 'Epirus' means Greekland.

If 'Epirus' could thus most conveniently be stretched to mean Greekland, then the world would forever be faced with a chaotic situation. For example, the United Kingdom might be perfectly justified in claiming Europe as being Englishland. Why not? The English often refer to Europe as The Continent. As such, it is clearly a geographical place-name. And it is in perfect English.

Pursued in that curiously deceptive context, we might even have such a case quite closer to home in the U.S.A.: Perhaps a century or two from now, somebody could very well claim California as being Greekland. It is a choice Greek word. It means good climate. And, as we know, California has it and good weather, too.

Even Albania, the rightful heir to Illyria and Malasia, would fall in that cosy pigeonhole. It could be called either Italianland or Irishland. Albania is derived from alpnia. In Latin and Celtic alpnia means mountainland, highland—the same meaning as Malasia. The Latin and Celtic root-word is alp or alpes, meaning mountain.

But fortunately for her Italian and Irish friends, Albania means also whiteland, from alb or even albus. Albania's perpetually snow-capped mountains, when seen under sunny skies, usually reflect a dazzlingly white aura. Newcomers to Albania, when seeing the awesome mountains for the first time in their majestic beauty and whiteness, have been quite impressed. Even ancient Greek geographers seem to have experienced such a personal elation when they first saw the Albani mountains.

When the Normans invaded Albania in 1081, they were just as keenly impressed by her skyward panorama. And they were among the first to make that name better known throughout Europe. Long before that, however, the Vatican called the country Albania, Illyricum, or Illyricum Sacrum. Of course, under either name, it meant the same people who spoke the same language and enjoyed the same customs and traditions. At the time, as a Roman Catholic country,

the Vatican could hardly call Albania by any meaningless name.

During the 15th Century, when Scanderbeg ruled Albania, Popes Eugenius IV, Calixtus III, Pius II and Paul II addressed him as Lord of Albania. But Sultan Mehmed II, in his letters to Scanderbeg, addressed him either as Prince of Albania or as Prince of Epirus. Mehmed and his father knew better. Both never accepted Epirus as being Greek-land.

Scanderbeg himself would sometimes use either title in his correspondence. For example, in a letter to Giovanni Antonio Orsini, Prince of Taranto, he proudly wrote: "We are called Epirots." To Scanderbeg, Albania and Epirus were one and the same. In 1635, Franciscus Blancus called his published glossary in Latin-Albanian: Dictionarium Latino-Epiroticum.

But whether it was in the name of Illyria, Albania, Malasia or Epirus, the people themselves over the countless centuries never ceased fiercely defending the precious freedom of their Mountainland. For far more than three thousand years, their greatest protective shield against all invaders was always provided by those same sacred mountains.

Regarding Mountainland's fiercely defended freedom, there is a living legend in Upper Malakstra: Early one sunny morning, as Father and I were riding on horseback from the ancient and walled City of Berat, I suddenly spotted a mule's hoofprint deeply imbedded on the face of a jutting rock along the caravan road near Mount Signa.

"Why?" I asked curiously, as growing children often do.

"Once, when our fighting men were almost defeated by the enemy in battle," he began relating, "Mount Kulthi flashed a thunderbolt messenger on muleback to sacred Mount Tomori for swift assistance. And Tomori thundered back: 'Shpejt—swiftly!'"

As you may already have guessed the moral of the legend, even the mountains and the rivers and the valleys could never tolerate alien domination. Alien legions were either completely defeated in bloody battles or captured and eventually wholly assimilated. They could not possibly

stay on safely long enough to snuff out the native people's freedom or to change their accustomed way of living.

But when the Ottoman Empire first set foot in South-eastern Europe, small nations like Albania began having national nightmares. Ottoman military might was much too overwhelming. The little countries were the very first to feel the swift sword of the newest and most aggressive empire of the century.

Already flushed with major conquests in the Middle and Near East especially, no single power on earth could now stay the hand of any Ottoman ruler. Three most ambitiously determined Turkish sultans had set a common goal: Sultan Murad I, Bayazid and Murad II each had come to South-eastern Europe not only to establish a permanent foothold there but to seize continental Europe as well. Rome, the pulsating heart of Christianity, was their eventual goal.

Ever since Edirne (Adrianople) became the Ottoman Empire's European capital in 1362, each sultan was well prepared to crush any hostile armed force standing in the way of his cherished objective. And by 1421, when Sultan Murad II succeeded to the Turkish throne, the Ottoman Empire had reached the enviable zenith of its military, economic and political power in the world.

By then, the little Balkan countries had one by one succumbed to its aggressive designs. Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Serbia had already felt the mighty sword of the latest and most overpowering invaders.

Even the Byzantine Empire, badly torn by internal dissension, had by now retreated behind its massive walls in Constantinople. Balkan princes, forever jealously quarreling among themselves, and much too weak singly to make any effective stand against the Turkish juggernauts, had soon fallen by the wayside.

But Albania and Hungary, most determined to give up the ghost fighting rather than submit to humiliating terms of peace, kept on struggling along as effectively as they knew how. Albania, brilliantly led by John Castrioti, Scanderbeg's father, kept on hurling back the Turkish invaders.

In 1422, however, John Castrioti had to make an agonizing decision: Either continue fighting or accept certain harsh but honorable terms of peace. First, he was asked to hand over his youngest son, George Castrioti, as

hostage. And, second, allow Turkish garrisons to man certain strategic fortresses. If he refused, he would have had to face more ruthlessly applied military assaults. With a cautiously ready hand on the trigger, so to speak, Scanderbeg's father painfully accepted both terms. Even then, it was a most precariously insecure peace.

Until his death in 1443, John Castrioti managed quite well to preserve his people's freedom and national integrity. By then, even his other three sons had become 'lost.' But after his death that year, Albania was wholly overrun by Sultan Murad's overpowering armies.

Meanwhile, shortly after learning of his father's death, Scanderbeg returned triumphantly to Albania. His return at once brought new hope in the Mountainland. Until he passed on in 1468, he wrote an unforgettably brilliant chapter in defense of Liberty.

Scanderbeg's incredible life and deeds, as well as his deep philosophy of life and freedom, are more clearly reflected in his correspondence and orations. They follow in historical sequence.

NELO DRIZARI

SCANDERBEG'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN

On his return triumphantly to the White Castle, in Croya, Scanderbeg delivered his first historic oration before his fighting men and the people of Croya. It was designed to convince them of his faith, his love for his country, and his determination to free the rest of Albania from the tyranny of the Ottoman Empire. The date: November 28, 1443:

I see here what I have hoped, as often as I have recalled to mind the ancient worthiness of this Nation and your exceptional devotion to my deceased father.

As for myself, I never doubted but that I should always retain the same mind and the same love for my country: and that I should always have the same courage for the recovery of our people's liberty.

Likewise your desires, your vows and your wishes were in effect one and the same with mine. As I willingly and freely take delight in often repeating, you did by all manner and means of affection and duty lead me to this charge even while I was yet abiding time under Murad.

Perhaps in your opinion I might seem to have been forgetful of my country, to have forgotten my own honor. And it may be that you have thought me careless of our deliverance and freedom, whenever you returned to your homes charged with sorrow, without any certain hope, without any appearance or likelihood of any honorable thought in me.

Certainly, my dear countrymen, by that dissembled remiss and default of mine, I provided both for your surety and for my own security: The state of our affairs were then of such quality and disposition that they required execution rather than consultation. Besides, it was necessary to restrain you rather than to spur you on to the recovery of your liberty.

True it is that I concealed from you my deliberations. But the reason of my long delay to make known my ready will and affection for you was not because I suspected your loyalty or that I had not sufficient knowledge of your stout hearts. You yourselves were the first to enter into this dangerous course and you made known to me the secrets of your thoughts. That which turned and withdrew me from

it was the frailty of mortal men and the inconstancy of man's mind which, as in all other actions, is brittle, variable, and inconsiderate.

So it must be drawn with force and violence, and not guided by any gentle entreaties and usage to seek and win freedom. For it is in nothing stable and constant. Neither does it observe any good order or direction. And if the least occasion and opportunity had appeared which might have given any hope or plausibility for winning liberty or for the attempting of it, not a thousand swords, not a million perils, not manifest death itself and apparent hazard to loss of both life and property would have diverted and turned us from our goal.

But after the matter is once in vain attempted or your endeavors made prematurely known, either must you endure most cruel punishment or bondage far more intolerable, all hope taken from you in time to come and the opportunity once let slip had been lost forever after. So that this fact must have been enterprised once for all and, if it had not succeeded at first, all future means to accomplish it would have been utterly lost, without any hope of ever returning again.

For this reason, I will speak freely, I hardly dared to trust myself with my own conception of my plans. Neither could I think myself assured that I had communicated it to my own thoughts. I mistrusted even my tongue, impatient as it were of a matter so important, lest it should impart it to the very walls of my private chamber.

Witness to this is Hamza, my nephew and my chiefest friend and counsellor and the faithful companion of my travels. And there are a few others besides him whose loyal assistance and diligence rendered us good service in the execution of this action.

Although we lived together as a family, as it were, in one and the same course of life, although we ate at one and the same table and though we did in a manner breathe jointly with one and the same soul, nevertheless, neither they nor any man alive ever heard me mention my country—except during the war with Hungary. Neither was there any man that heard me use any speech, or utter any word at any time, which might reveal me to be a Christian or a free man, until such time as I saw and perceived that I might freely do so and without fear of danger.

Well therefore, O my Albanians, you might have fought and found some other person, for God was never destitute of most excellent spirits, whom you might have made the author of your liberty and who might thereby have more advanced your cause and courage. But it pleased you, and it may be God would have it so, that you should attend to your deliverance rather with me than to seek out others or by your own virtue alone to gain it.

It was not any grief to me in the depth of my mind, though attuned to freedom, to be held in so long a subjection by the barbarians: because I still lived in the hope that you should one day see me as I am now.

But why do I under your patience usurp unto myself the name of liberator?

It is not that I have brought liberty to you, but here I have found liberty. Scarcely had I set foot within our country, scarcely had your ears heard the sound of my name, but that all of you made haste to meet me. And you did it in a manner as if competing to see who should be the foremost to come unto me, as if otherwise you had heard that your parents, your brothers, or your children had been revived from death to life:

It was as if one had told you that all the gods had arrived among you. You overwhelmed me with so many demonstrations and proof of your exceeding joy and gladness, that, in my opinion, the humbleness and duty wherein I stand bound me unto you. It is no less the liberty which I have gotten and gained with you.

It is not I who has given you this Nation and superiority. It is not I who has given you this city. It is you who have given them unto me. It was not I who put arms into your hands. I found you ready in arms. I found you everywhere bearing the signs of liberty in your hearts, in your faces, in your swords, and in your lances. And, as most loyal teachers and guardians ordained by my father, you have put the scepter in my hands with no less faith and diligence than as if you had kept and preserved it especially for me even until this day. And you have brought me by your effort and careful care into my ancestral possession without shedding any blood.

Now, therefore, in the name of God, lead on and conduct me into the recovery of the rest of our country, which

yet remains in the hands and possession of the enemy. The greatest part and, in a manner, the whole task you have accomplished: Croya is recovered. And this territory thereon is wholly under our care. The Dibrans and all the people are now united with us. The name of the enemy banished from this part of our country. Only the towns and strongholds are still in enemy hands.

If I consider their disadvantages, how all places are either to be taken by us or besieged, and how nothing is left to them but the enclosures of their walls, then I have hope of good success. But if I contemplate the difficulty and the strength of the fortresses and the strength of the garrisons placed there by the Tyrant, it behooves us either to use some notable strategy of surprise or singular resolution and obstinacy in smashing them.

But about this we shall better and more conveniently both consult and determine when we come upon each place, face to face with the enemy and with our arms in hands, than to decide now when we are away and our minds altogether uncertain and unresolved.

Let us then march on and advance our standards speedily. Let us take unto us the courage of victors. Fortune shall favor our endeavors. In all our actions and in all places it has singularly both accompanied and followed us.

Petrella is the place we must first set upon, not that it is inferior than others in strength and natural location but it is near to this city. I have good hope that it will be the more terrified by that fact and by the report of our good fortune which we have had at Croya. Many are the spectacles which shall come before their eyes both of your valor and of their own calamity. Maybe these things will somewhat move and appall them. But if the conception of these things will not make them tremble, then that which shall be wanting, our own resolution and obstinacy must assuredly supply.

This is one thing we must hold resolutely and build upon: If this place is not taken and if we do not reach our desired goal, we must never think of ever returning to our homes.

Let us try, therefore, by all means: by art, cunning and strategy, by pains and toil, by patience and the sword

achieve our first victory: so that by our success in this we shall find the beginning of our good fortune. And we may make it the first good sign and augury of our victory.

If it please God that we enter by force, we must remove all pity and compassion toward these obstinate miscreants. And we ought to effect our victory with all obstinacy and severity, for the greater discouragement of those who shall yet rest unsubdued.

If by composition and without bloodshed we can gain it, then it is mandatory that we conduct ourselves toward them with all courtesy and treat them in a friendly and favorable manner both in general and in particular: to the intent that we may make others the more tractable, and keep them from being obstinate and desperate.

Despite the severe winter which had already set in, with roads leading to Petrella and Stellusa and Petralba already frozen and slippery, Scanderbeg assaulted the three strong bastions and overwhelmed the Turkish garrisons. It took his cavalry and guerrilla battalions less than a month in liberating the highly strategic area.

After securing his bridgehead, with the liberation of Petrella and Stellusa as well as Petralba, Scanderbeg again returned triumphantly to Croya. It was Christmas Eve, 1443. Before dismissing his fighting forces for the holiday season, he delivered his second most significant oration:

I am at a loss, my comrades, whether I should first or last praise and commend you for your virtues or for your good fortune. The latter has been stirred up by the former, and the former has been nurtured and enhanced by the latter. And by her industry and celerity, which in warfare are very necessary, fortune has made your good counsels and efforts all one and equal.

For this reason, I have conceived a most assured hope and prophesy for the future renown and glorious name of our country as well as your honor and reputation.

What is there wherein fortune can hereafter deny us? What is there that your patience will not surmount and achieve?

It is yet scarcely the thirtieth day since I, with full doubt and uncertainty and as one almost forgotten and unknown by reason of my long absence, did happily arrive and set foot in my native country occupied by the Infidels and miscreants: of whom, except in Sfetigrad, there remains in this province neither their name nor, if you'll pardon the expression, their odor.

We must thank God for causing our enemies to deliver into our hands and possession of so goodly and strong fortresses without any slaughter or bloodshed.

Then, above all, we owe so much to your patience and endurance, which have merited great praise and commendation for your overcoming hardships and dangers during a severe winter. And yet, without turning your faces one way or the other, you never flinched until your noble thoughts and desires long since conceived in your hearts were fully satisfied.

I do well like and approve the willingness of those of you who want to pursue our victory as well as the others who think it good to defer for a longer while our campaign.

Although there should be nothing to hold back magnanimous and valiant men, as virtue is accustomed to finding ways for herself through fire and water, as well as through places howsoever inaccessible they be, you may well, without doing wrong to yourselves, take care of your physical bodies which are made of no other than human ingredients.

Retire, therefore, victorious at a good and happy hour to refresh yourselves. Then shall you return more gallant, strong and lusty, in a season more temperate, to new services and expeditions. Then shall all of you have the free use and your fill of all wars, of labors and travels. Then shall you find continued employment in arms. And then you shall receive your pay which you have now so well deserved.

For if the Ottoman sits still and does suffer us to wage war without disturbances as we have done already, then will we overrun, sack, burn the tyrant's country, and assay upon some of the neighboring garrisons.

But if the Sultan does proclaim war upon us, as I think most likely he will, we will then decide in the field of battle against the enemy as to how and in what manner we are to proceed and to conduct ourselves against him.

Nevertheless, we have occasion of service elsewhere. It will behoove us to make the first attempt against Sfetigrad and there to employ and bend our first forces: For I behold it no less ignominious than unbearable that the Infidels should continue there settled and untouched to the great reproach and dishonor of us Epirots.

But it is necessary at this time that we temporize for a season for fear lest we attempt with too great obstinacy the destruction and ruin of Sfetigrad. If the action should turn out to be vain and our attempt frustrated, we should retire with shame as overcome and vanquished and the enemy, growing insolent, would learn in a short time to condemn our forces.

And so we should have to contend not only against men but even against the heavens. I have heard some ancient generals highly blamed, who by imprudence and want of experience in military art have lost goodly armies more by discommodities of things than by the sword and force of the enemy.

Besides all this, we have at hand the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, our Savior. I do not think that anything should be undertaken during these festival days. Neither should we deprive anybody of his life at a time wherein we ourselves have received life and were brought into the light.

Rather by our vows' and daily prayers, I may often repeat, let us give thanks unto God in all respects for our liberty, for our estate and Nation, for our wives, for our children, for ourselves, who have been recovered and freed from the bondage of our enemies.

For my part, my good friends, if there is anything wherein I am not able to be thankful: I protest unto you, it is principally in that you have brought me these excellent pledges of gallant youths. You have honored me with so many valiant and gallant commanders, whose company is very agreeable and acceptable to me. My mind does promise great matters ahead, and all great and good events by the aid and assistance of such leaders.

It is they who will give me the means, they themselves will give me the matter and occasion for which one day I shall be able to be thankful unto you according to the worthiness of your merits.

At this time, if there is anything which may bring you more honor and reputation: speak it freely, utter your thoughts and open your minds unto me. For, I assure you, the acknowledgement of the greatness of your services, whereby I am bound unto you, shall never fail or be wanting in me.

NATIONAL UNITY

At the secret conclave of Lesh (Alessio), where 'fathers and princes most debonair and religious' had gathered in answer to his urgent call to organize the Albanian League, Scanderbeg delivered this impassioned and historic oration, March First, 1444:

I would to God, fathers and princes most debonair and religious, that the credulity and light beliefsofus Christians would at once come to an end and that we would at once wax weary of the treachery of the Ottomans. Or, to speak more plainly, I would that their infidelity more than barbarous may from this instant be made more open and manifest unto us.

As concerning myself, being now peradventure ill thought of as the motive and occasion of these new troubles, I would not have disturbed the tranquility of this Nation nor would I have asked you to expose your lives to the inconvenience of arms, nor to the last and utmost extremity of all things: were it not that John, my father, whom may God forgive, a prince in other things well versed, had not given too much credit to the fair words and speeches of this disloyal Murad at that time, when under the pretense of a deadly peace he obtained from him by pledging his own proper children in bondage.

But why do I complain of my father? This error and this destiny is common unto all Christian princes. What shall I say of the Greeks, the Serbians, and others of our faith and profession?

This kind of overeasiness believing has without doubt ruined and destroyed all of them. It has been done in such a way on the part of the tyrant that they have nothing at all left except the repentance of their simple ways and oversight.

Nevertheless, while I pour out my complaints and do in my mind carefully repeat these treasons of the Ottomans: yet, as I contemplate and cast my eyes upon you, I do consider your prudence as well as the unity of your minds and affections.

All this gives me strength and bids me to have good hope, seeing that our enemy has hardly subdued or destroyed any people or nation except by deceit and fraud only,

or by their overeasiness of belief and credence in him, or by civil dissensions or domestic hatreds.

Now let any man here tell me whether the Ottoman has ever by his power achieved any great conquests, and whether the countless provinces and endless realms, which in our time have been gotten and gained, have been annexed unto his crown by force of his arms or power.

Let them account and reckon up the number of his triumphs and victories.

Shall Epirus then, being so invincible, so flourishing in arms, so replenished with princes and valiant men, with so many warlike and brave people, so united and agreeing within themselves: shall Epirus, I say, only through our credulity here be made the subject of his courage?

How greatly the Barbarian does estimate and redoubt your virtue, I myself can give you most certain and assured testimony: even I, who have lived with him for many years both in war and in peace. Even now they would not undertake a war against you, but that very necessity does constrain them to it.

Now what good or great matter can be effected or executed by a courage that is forced and violently drawn unto it, any brave and resolute soldier will soon tell us.

But howsoever this affection and matter of so great a grief do carry me away in speaking to you, yet I am not ignorant but that there must be here among you many of those who, having been until now long accustomed to a peace, though little honorable, will be highly aggrieved and dissatisfied when they shall see themselves invited by me to participate in the miseries and mischiefs of war.

Whatsoever be the fortune and success of our arms, yet nothing can be done about the expense and loss of blood. Likewise I think I see how mothers will be discomfited when they shall see their children sent to the dangers and hazards of the wars. Wives will be heard to lament with grief and sorrow because they care for their husbands' safety. And the very infants left at home will seem to cry for fear they should be made orphans.

All men generally will call me cruel and will detest me, and I cannot think without horror, as a new author of wars and of perils and of bloodshed and murder. Whereas they ought rather, be it said without boasting, to call me the preserver of their liberty.

But I am not so careless of the public and common good, nor so careful of my own interest, that I cannot endure to hear so many complaints amongst you, neither to see so many mischiefs' light upon you all in common.

If my counsel, worthy princes and lords, seems not good and not to your liking: or if this occasion of taking up arms is not found for the welfare of the people, or is not deemed honorable by all of you, I will be ready and willing to yield to Murad both Croya and all relics of this unfortunate Kingdom.

I desire much rather to put my own life in danger, in order to provide for your safety, than to reign at the public detriment and damage to all of you.

There is one thing only which greatly depresses me: and that is the miserable condition of my people and the innocent blood my countrymen have shed as a sacrifice to the enemy. This they have done without a leader, without a governor: I remember their faith and loyalty, of which even at the time of my return to this Kingdom as well as of late, they have left sufficient and good proof for all ages to come.

But what, O Immortal God, if you will permit me my lords to speak freely unto you, what reason is there that your fellow citizen and countryman should still abide with the tyrant in the midst of so many dangers and ever embrace his religion, as a continual fugitive from his native country rather than to spend the rest of his life in Epirus, in the place of his birth and in the society of Christians as well as in the midst of you his own countrymen?

Or is it possible that I should be in Epirus, and here to see and endure hereafter that the seat of my ancestors, the scepter of my father, our sepulchers, our temples and especially our Gods should longer remain under the tyranny of the miscreants?

Alas! Does it seem a small thing to you that I have until this day seen their hands filled with the blood of my people? Why have I dwelt so long with a wicked and unmerciful bloodsucker, and have spent nearly all the rest of my best and most pleasant season of my age in manifest and certain danger of my life?

From now on, seeing that God has so permitted it, let us be ashamed of our condition. It is a great shame and

infamous for us any longer to endure our masters, as mis-haps constrain me to call them, whom in the time of our fathers, one base and ignoble town of Scythia could scarcely suffer for slaves and villains, so contemptible were they at that time: And being accustomed only to rape, theft and robbery, they have increased even until this day, when they have grown so strong as to threaten and menace Christendom, that they will make haste furiously to suck and swallow up your blood.

Let me entreat you not to stay and await these extremities. Do not delay and tarry so long, till you see some aid coming. Then it will be too late to implore your supporters. But even now rather, and presently joining your forces with our forces and your arms with our arms, let us drive and compel the enemy speedily to take the field, or let us be the first upon him and invade his territories.

Then, if he shall once see us united, sure and certain it is that either he will change his mind: or, if he does venture to march forward, he may well lose and come short of his wretched and greedy desire for victory and conquest.

Do you think that I, in the meantime with the troops which you shall commit unto me, will remain shut up and restrained within the confines of any walls and, as one of faint courage and degrading my ancestors, will hide myself in some safe corner?

Or do you think that, from some high tower among children, I will take up my stand and behold the enemy spoiling your fields and causing the destruction of your lands and possessions and such like calamities?

No. Be assured. Such cowardice shall never enter my heart. The enemy shall see me daily and continually with my banners, and with my soldiers to test the fortune of his affairs and endeavors: not in plain battle and open fight but, with the help of God, also by some other better kind of policy. And it may be, with very little loss of my men, I shall make the design and audacity of Sultan Murad turn to smoke and vanish away to nothing.

From this moment on, he shall have enough to do and shall be forced to give up his quarrel and to leave behind his bag and baggage as prey and booty for you.

At least he does not like to see his camp brought to that end, as it would be in the case of a forced and besieged army rather than a besieger.

Up then, noble and most Catholic Princes, let us not delay even for a moment. Let us summon the Nation. Let us set up good laws and orders of discipline. Let us levy and muster our soldiers. And let us make known unto all ages to come that we are men worthy of a Christian Nation.

Visibly stirred, the distinguished members suddenly sprang to their feet, followed by a deafening ovation. They at once formed the Albanian League and unanimously elected Scanderbeg Prince of the Albanians and commander-in-chief of the army.

With an untried but carefully trained army, spearheaded by his potentially unconquerable cavalry and guerrilla battalions, Scanderbeg faced Sultan Murad's cavalry of 40,000 men under the supreme command of Ali Pasha. His own strength was almost-one-third the enemy's. Before the battle of Torviolli, in lower Dibra, on June 29, 1444, Scanderbeg stirred his fighting men in this fiery oration:

I would, my comrades, that you had come to me as your commander and that I might have enjoyed your notable and faithful service when my affairs had been better and at a time when my reign had been happier and more fortunate.

For now, being deeply aware of many bonds and obligations whereby I see myself bound unto you, I would not have asked you to bear the new hardships of war. But, having been so well received by my countrymen, I would have given them those due thanks and recompense which long before this time I had prepared to give them.

As a general who sees his soldiers covered with blood, I would not spare myself in compensating you for your toils, hardships and dangers and for the blood of the enemy which until now you have so valiantly shed.

But since destiny has so ordained, as it pleases fortune that I must disclose to you my own affairs, I must be the cause of your pains rather than of your tranquility and rest.

Bear in mind, I pray you, that it behooves us to endure it valiantly and patiently, and to submit ourselves to whatever difficulties this war shall bring us: so that one day we may live in peace.

It behooves us willingly and with frank and ready minds, to take up arms, to break the chains of so long a servitude and bondage, and to drive the enemy from our soil, so that afterwards we may rejoice in a more happy kind of life and in a durable and lasting liberty, for which it is not necessary for me to incense you.

Now, as all of you show your affection unto me, it is most certain, as the saying goes, that words do not increase the strength of men who are courageous. I cannot say any more to you with my weapons in my hand than you, bearing arms, ought to know of yourselves.

The enemy, whom you have now near you, will pit himself against you sufficiently: The indignity of so many injuries, the wrath and hatred which they have conceived, do warn you of it and do arm you against them.

The yoke of our bondage shaken off and broken: the liberty both of our bodies and souls: the mortal hatred of Murad: the horrible executions with which he does advance himself to suck up our blood: and, last of all, the process of the final ruin and destruction of us all.

All of these do call on you to take up arms against him.

If then the love of country, which contains all love, if the honor and nobility of our kinsfolk do strengthen the courage of each one of us: let them move you to action, to take up arms and to sharpen your swords.

You have with me, so speedily and without the loss of one drop of blood, recovered Croya, the seat of your forefathers. Spare not now, in defense thereof, to shed your blood if need be.

This is the day when both hope and opportunity do present themselves to you for the recovery of your country, so lost for such a long time, and for the elevation of yourselves to great and high fortune. You have chosen me above any other either as your comrade or your general. And I will not be the last in any undertaking, in any danger whatsoever.

And, if peradventure in other things I shall not have as good a fortune, I will nevertheless make known to you the conditions, the vanities and policies of the enemy, with whom (maybe by Divine Providence) I have spent most of my years to my own hindrance and have been instructed in them to the end that they might serve in aiding you at this time.

It would be unpleasant for me to report to you their base and vile condition. But hope, which makes promises of a victory less painful, does render the soldier more resolute.

What other things are they but the dregs and scums of slaves and rascals gathered together, more accustomed to thefts and robberies than to a true war and a just kind of combat? Is it certain that this sort of men whose name is so famous among persons fearful and timorous, should be those Ottomans who were the slaves and fugitives of the Scythians?

It may be that they have usurped by fraud and deceit great and ample dominions. And they will from time to time daily take both better and fairer lands as long as such shall be given to them wherein to exercise their treason and infidelity.

Here now, I believe { see how Murad will resort to his wiles, tricks and subtleties whenever his ways will not prevail against you-

Behold and mark well this subtle Ottoman, who will offer you fair and goodly promises upon the hope of repeating the misfortunes of others.

It seems to him that there isn't anywhere any kind of people but like the Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbians. All of them were inveigled and blinded in their own misfortune after they had simply and in good faith yielded themselves unto him:

The Ottoman Prince did either drive them all into exile and banishment, or did deprive them of their fight, or did deform and mangle their members, or wholly disfigure them.

This which I tell you now, my friends, is to admonish you: you whom I esteem and vow by, as men to whom I have consecrated my life and blood, to the intent that you may give me ample occasion either to commend you or to accuse you: For at this time, I don't think it necessary either to praise or berate any man.

For what judgment can be made of a soldier who is only showing bravery within his own camp?

I will judge your merits when I see your swords smoking with the blood of the Turks: when I myself both as an observer and encourager will imitate your prowess, being prodigal both of life and safety. At that time I will heap upon you all sorts of commendations and rewards.

But if any one of you does feel his courage waxing cold through cowardice, measuring our forces by those of the enemy: if any soldier thinks that those who surmount in number will surmount also in virtue, let him leave at once for his home.

Or if all of you are of that opinion, and that this fear is common among you: if neither God nor man can make you feel ashamed, let us then reenforce and strengthen our army with new recruits, or else let us turn and flee speedily.

But he who should stand in fear of the lieutenants of Murad, especially within Macedonia (a place most safe and secure by nature), certainly in my opinion would be unworthy both of the name and the sword he bears, and unworthy of the air which makes him breathe and live.

I may seem tiresome to you even against my will, most valiant men, and not only valiant but princes of the valiant.

Go to, then, awaken your ancient courage. Take unto you your generous and heroic spirits, setting nothing before your eyes but victory: And resolve yourselves not to be vanquished but by death only.

If we overcome our enemy and be victorious, have no doubt but all things hereafter will be in your favor.

Likewise, being vanquished, while fighting well and valiantly, one and the same end will determine both our miseries and our misfortunes.

VICTORY OVER ALI PASHA

After Ali Pasha's army was completely broken and defeated, Scanderbeg—two days later, when his battle-weary men had had sufficient rest—gathered his victorious army at the edge of the battlefield and delivered this oration:

Until now, my soldiers, you have fought for me, your king. And now you have exemplified and done your duty for your country. From now onward your own profession does invite you, and your own good fortune does summon you, to continue as you have begun.

Behold how everywhere the legions of the enemy are overthrown and demoralized. And now you may proudly count your own prowess and valiant deeds.

It may be that secretly, in your own thoughts, you promise to yourselves some great reward from me, and some special recompense which should be prepared and provided for you: for so many toils, for so much blood, for so many hardships suffered in this battle.

And I protest unto you, on my faith, your expectation shall not be frustrated, so far as I shall find the means and possibility.

I do very well conceive in my mind the commendations and praises due to you all both in general and individually. This is the only reward that you shall expect of me, if so be the courage of brave soldiers who can satisfy themselves with praise only.

Other goods, with which to reward your honor and valor, I do not have at this time. But hereafter, when I shall have things in abundance to dispose of, assure yourselves that I will give them to you bountifully.

What is there that you can receive more pleasantly and with better courage than this honor and glory, which each of you shall carry home in triumph as a victory achieved by your own arms and proper virtue?

Behold here near at hand the territory of the enemy, rich and plentiful in wealth of all sorts. Your gallantry and prowess have made it naked and bare of all defense:

Now, therefore, with good leisure and ease, charge and load yourselves with the prey and spoils, which are left and abandoned to your pleasure and discretion.

Let the fear of the enemy, far and wide, know you to be the conquerors: even you, I say, whom your native country shall presently see you returning home joyous and triumphant.

This will be no small benefit to you, coming from a bit of service so excellent.

Nevertheless, it may be said that I also in some sort have rewarded you for this day's victory. And so that none of you will have occasion to envy each other, since the virtue of you all in the fight was alike and equal, I do hereby order and appoint that the infantry shall take the horses of the slain enemies and that all of you from now on shall serve on horseback as Men at Arms.

Now, therefore, by the grace of God, let every man follow me cheerfully so that we may go on and reap the most acceptable and gladsome fruits of your perfect and full merit.

The spoils of war rated an honorably acceptable means in warfare at the time: To the victors belonged the rich supplies of the defeated enemy. As yet, Scanderbeg had very little money in the treasury to pay his army.

EUROPE APPLAUDS HIM

The following letter reveals how Europe was suddenly stirred alive by Scanderbeg's triumphant return to his country and his victory over Ali Pasha. It also reflects the almost hopeless disunity of Christian rulers against the overwhelming might of Sultan Murad's Ottoman Empire:

Ladislaus, King of Hungary and Poland,
Unto Scanderbeg, Prince of Epirus, greetings:

It may be that some good hap has deferred our congratulations until this present, to the intent that we might at this time, together with you, rejoice in the double success of your prosperity: first, for the happy recovery of your realm, and then for the same which, by your wisdom and valor, has of late been so notably defended.

Wherefore in this we greatly rejoice, not only in your behalf but in the behalf of all good Christians, that it has pleased God, by your valor, to have given so great an increase and comfort unto the Christian commonweal: for amongst our great evils, the loss of the Albanian people has not been accounted the least, at such time as John Castrioti, a worthy prince, your father, who, oppressed by Murad and by the ungrateful destinies taken out of this world, had neither the means to leave unto you his kingdom and sceptre nor was he able yet otherwise to provide for his affairs.

And would to God that your father, most happy in such a son, might have until now lived so that he might have seen you before his death. For as you seem unto me above all other princes in the world, without offence be it said, most accomplished with all the good graces and perfections both of body and mind, so are you endowed also with a certain divine and wonderful fortune: under good conduct whereof, not only the whole kingdom of Epirus may think itself in security, but all the rest of the nations also, lately by detestable fraud and violence of the Ottoman kings dismembered from the realm of Macedon, may also recover the former beauty of their ancient laws and liberties.

For to say nothing of those things which, even from your childhood having continually made you envied, have heretofore gained you an immortal fame and glory even amongst

the barbarians themselves. What can be more glorious than this victory, which you, to your singular admiration, have obtained by the overthrow and utter discomfiture of Ali Pasha with his so great and mighty a power?

But now, O Scanderbeg (God so appointing it, who, in His deep and secret wisdom, has reserved you in these so dangerous times, for the public good and comfort of the Christian commonweal), there now offers itself unto you an object of far greater glory: with a fair and fit occasion for you to avenge yourself of all the wrongs and injuries, both new and old, by Amurath, the Turkish sultan, done not only in private to the person of yourself but also unto the whole state and kingdom of Epirus—, and not only the domestic and civil miseries of your own country but also the public calamities and those approbrious disgraces done against the Christian faith in general, now oppressed and that is, if you, with your victorious forces, will aid us in this extremity of your affairs, not yet altogether desperate.

Hereunto do all the princes of Hungary and Poland, and all other men of courage, invite you (Julian, the cardinal of St. Angel, entreats you) with all those devout and courageous Christians, who long since here with us and ready in arms, wish for nothing more than the presence of your victorious standards: which so fair an occasion if you do not refuse, will, in all men's judgment, be a sure means to vanquish and overthrow our common enemy and drive him entirely out of Europe.

I need not therefore use any kind of persuasion unto you in this cause and quarrel, the defense whereof does bring to us health, light, and liberty: but if it be neglected, I fear and abhor to think what may follow.

We Christians have been too slack and backward in helping one another. The flame has now nearly consumed us all while no man thought it would have come near himself.

What do we see of the Greek empire? What of the Bulgarians and Serbians? Yea, my own losses and many calamities already and yet also to be endured, who is able to recount? The brave and most valiant princes, the surest bulwarks and defenses of the kingdom of Hungary, from time to time lost, and the powerful armies, with one and the same fatal chance of war, consumed and brought to nothing. Who is able to reckon up?

There is no house, wife or matron in all Hungary who is not in some measure bearer of this burden. All this do the Christian princes hear of. And yet the miserable condition of their allies can not move any one of them, but suffer us thus as a sacrifice for the rest to be on all parts exposed to the rage and fury of our common and merciless enemy.

Only Eugenius, the most holy Bishop of Rome, and Philip, Duke of Burgundy, have not refused to bear a part of the burden in our afflicted fortune. The Pope has sent there his legate, Cardinal Julian, with notable and powerful aid and the other, with his fleet at sea and come as far as the Hellespont, so much as in him depends, does notably hinder the Turkish passage into Europe.

And one other hope there is, not now far from us, and that is your help for which we are so desirous (which we require of you), moved thereunto partly by your valor so well known and partly because of the imminent peril and danger to us all. And we are not ignorant how ill at ease you may be to undertake such an expedition at hand, while the troubled state of your affairs and your newly recovered Kingdom is as yet scarcely established.

Nevertheless, let it not withhold you or keep you back, assuring you that as this expedition to you cannot be but most honorable, so your present desert as well shall not be bestowed upon ungrateful and thankless men. But that which you shall now first begin and undertake for our preservation and dignity, we will from henceforth and forever continue for your glory and for the increase of your greatness.

Farewell, from our City of Buda, July 4, 1444.

SCANDERBEG'S ANSWER

Scanderbeg, Prince of the Epirots,
To Ladislaus, King of Hungary and Poland, greetings:

Your letter, invincible King, I have with like joy and contentment received. This in the National Assembly of my people I have caused to be read. Without a dissenting vote, everybody present was of the opinion that so just a cause of war as you have offered was forthwith to be joyfully embraced.

And so every man does privately and publicly affirm that nothing could have happened to each of them more acceptable from God than that they together might by some notable service testify their grateful minds. In this foresight of my people I myself took great pleasure, both in regard to yourself and in behalf of the public and common cause, seeing that my men of war and all others of my citizens, of whatever state or degree (without using any persuasion on my part), to be so cheerfully and courageously minded in defense of the Christian religion and so well disposed towards your most Royal Majesty.

To tell the truth, even if there were no question of religion or of the common danger, who would refuse so just and lawful a war for such a King? We Christians do not only reign but even live, breathe, and enjoy the liberty of our speech. Who would not willingly take up arms and venture into most manifest and certain danger for the people of Hungary, by whom in all ages the Christian commonweal has with their so many toils and so much of their blood been so mightily supported and defended? They even from the very cradle have been continuous enemies of our enemies.

Would God that it had been in my power to bring unto you such forces for this honorable war as were answerable to my courage and desire. Then perhaps Europe should not longer lie in this ignominious state, oppressed by Murad. Neither should the fields of Varna so often smoke with the blood of Hungarians. Nor every corner of Macedonia be covered with the blood of Albanians. Both Nations, as it were, have become the expiatory sacrifices of the sins and offenses of others. We all now by turns perish, while every man thinks himself born but for himself alone.

But why do I unto myself pour out these vain complaints ? Truly, it neither repents me of my forces nor, if it shall please God that our forces may once meet and join together in so happy a war, shall the Christian commonweal have any cause to be grieved by the issue and event of our fortune. For to my army which lately defeated Ali Pasha on the borders of Macedonia, my purpose is to add as many more. With all of this strength, as soon as they conveniently may, I will begin to set forward—ready to follow your standards to all events whatsoever.

Fare you well. From Croya, the Third of August, 1444.

Scanderbeg's army was blocked. It did not reach Varna. Prince George, Despot of Serbia, refused him permission to pass through his territory. George was the father-in-law of Sultan Murad.

ANGRY LETTERS BETWEEN SULTAN MURAD AND SCANDERBEG

After defeating the Hungarian army at Varna, Sultan Murad was now sitting on top of the world. Only Scanderbeg stood between his Ottoman legions and a sadly disunited Europe. Here follows his threatening letter:

Murad Ottoman, King of the Turks and Emperor of the East,

To Scanderbeg wishes neither health nor welfare:

You have so highly offended my mind and touched my honor that I know not in discretion what words to address you. For neither hard speech mollify the natural fierceness of your proud disposition, nor are you worthy of any better, which has far exceeded all hostility.

And because you would omit no occasion to provoke me, you have of late proceeded to that point of folly that you have had your own affairs and welfare of your subjects in small regard by confederating yourself in arms with the Hungarians against me.

It grieves me to mention your other unkindness and as it were to touch those other sores, if my mind would ever suffer me to forget them: Or your so manifold and horrible treasons and strange examples of a most ungrateful mind were ever to be covered with silence.

Yet I thought good to let you know, although perhaps too late, lest your unstaid heat does untimely overthrow you with your unlucky Kingdom. And then you would make humble confession of your long transgressions, when you have lost yourself and left no hope of refuge in your desperate Estate.

We have until now sufficiently suffered your manifold injuries. You have sufficiently provoked the majesty of the Ottoman Empire with wrong and haughtily insulting spite. And I with patience have borne all your contempts. Do you think that my Army, which you betrayed to the Hungarians, shall be unavenged? Do you think that so many cities and towns in Epirus, which you have wrested from the body of my Empire, with my garrisons there slain, shall be forgotten? Or do you think with your lately committed outrages to escape my avenging hand?



Remember your destruction of my Army under Ali Pasha; the wasting and burning of my dominions; and, lately, the Hungarian wars by you countenanced; with the territories of George, the Despot of Serbia, my Father-in-law, by you spoiled.

At length, mend your ways, you graceless man, and expect not further whether my indignation will break out. Let not these trifling allurements of your good fortune so puff up your foolish desires and sharpen your conceits that your miserable fortunes afterwards may move even your greatest enemies, or myself, to compassion. I would you at least remember my courtesies, if any spark of humanity remains in your savage nature, and no longer make me sorry that I have so ill bestowed the same upon you.

And although it is not the part of an honorable mind to repeat those things which we have bountifully bestowed upon any man, yet it is the token of a most ungrateful nature, so easily to forget all past kindness, as to need reminding. Wherefore, Scanderbeg, I cannot bewail your hap and lament your estate: For to let pass the health of your soul, which you esteem as nothing, not to speak of the laws of Mohammed which you despise, and the holy Prophet you condemn, for the zeal you have for the Christian Superstition.

What have you, who now hold your poor Kingdom in such price, ever wanted from my hands of all those things which most delight the desires of men? Did you ever want armor, horses, a great train of followers and servants, money or other superfluities, the allurements of all Ages? Or did you want matter to exercise your valor for the increase of your honor? Were you ever denied preferments, dignities, and honors of all sorts fit for your age, both at home and abroad? Was any man in my Court dearer to me than yourself? What growing wit, not of strangers only, but of those who were nearest unto myself, was better welcome than yours? With what careful instruction did I cause you to be brought up?

When you were delivered to me almost a child, I daily cherished and increased your hoped-for future with learning and nurture. I have at all times honored you with rich rewards, magnified praises, and honors of the Field (which of all worthy things is most glorious), so that in all feats of arms no soldier was to me better known, or captain by me better honored.

For all these great benefits, Scanderbeg, I may be thought not to have brought up such a man as I had hoped for but a very serpent in my own bosom. But the love of your Country did move you. Which if you had asked me, would I have denied the same to you? If you well remember, I so oftentimes proffered it unto you? But you had rather gain the same by treachery than to receive it at my hands of courtesy.

So yours be it, therefore, in God's name and that with my very good will. And verily, according to my accustomed clemency towards all of those whom I have once known well and been familiarly acquainted with, I now pardon you for all that you have offended me.

This is not for any of your present merits, which are none, but because in this public enmity it pleases me to remember my former kindness in private towards you in your faithfulness sometimes in my affairs, especially for that much-longer time during which you served me than for the time you have offended me.

Croya and your Father's Kingdom, although you have gained them by foul treachery, I give unto you, upon condition that you willingly restore unto me the other towns of Albania, which by no right belong to you but are mine by the Law of Arms, by myself honorably won.

Whatever you have taken from my Father-in-law, the Prince of Serbia, you shall restore and make him an honorable recompense for the other harms you have done unto him. And forever hereafter you shall as well refrain from doing violence to our friends or aid our enemies. So shall you avoid the displeasure of the Turks, but stand in my good grace and favor as you have done before. Otherwise you had rather cry in vain for mercy, when your furious outrage will have me in person be an implacable avenger.

You know your own Forces. You know the strength of my Arms. You have before your eyes the fresh example of the Hungarian fortune, so that you need no further admonitions.

Yet I wish you would write at length what you intend doing. You may also confer with Hayredin, our servant and trusty and faithful messenger, from whom you will understand more than is contained in this letter.

Farewell if you be wise. From Adrianople, 15 June 1445.

ANSWER: "VICTORY BY THE HELP OF GODI"

George Castrioti, alias Scanderbeg, Prince of Epirus,
To Murad Ottoman, King of the Turks, greetings:

You have in times past, as you write, exceeded me in many kinds of courtesies. At this present I will exceed you in modest and temperate speech: For I think there is no greater token of a base mind than to be able to forebear giving railing and opprobrious words even unto our most mortal enemy.

I have with patience received and seen both your letter and your messenger. And they have caused me greater occasion for smile than anger. While at first you do not feel shame to accuse me of much ingratitude and treason, and presently following a milder passion, seem concerned with my soul's health, being ignorant of your own estate as a studious defender of a most damnable error. And at last, keeping neither Law of Arms nor orderly course of answering to our affairs, you do most insolently, as a valiant conqueror to his vanquished enemy, propound many conditions of peace of such quality and condition that my ears scorn to hear the same.

Truly, Murad, although your immoderate railing might move a man of greatest patience to intemperate speech, yet I impute the same to your advanced age and partly to the waywardness of your nature, and the rest of your conceived grief, which I know you can hardly moderate. And rather for that reason I have not set down myself to contend with you in foul and unbecoming language, but with Arms and the just fury of War.

Yet, I pray you, why do you complain against me before God and Man, as though you had first suffered wrong and injury from me and that you had not in truth first done the same. Do you call my necessary departing a perfidious treachery? My native Country by my policy and valor recovered, do you object to me as a villain?

Object the same still, and spare me not. Charge me with such crimes forever, I care not. The long catalogue of your kindnesses toward me, which you rehearse, I could willingly remember, if it did not draw with it the woeful remembrance of my greater miseries which, if they were

to be compared together, the greatness of your good deeds would be overwhelmed by the multitude of your greater tyrannies. These I would rather you should count by yourself, then blush while I repeat them:

Every man who knows them may marvel how I had the power to endure them, or how you were not weary at last of your cruelty and secret hatred.

You took away my Father's Kingdom by force. You did murder my Brothers, and myself you did most wickedly vow to death when I little feared any such cruelty. And does it now seem strange to you, O Murad, that an invincible mind desirous of Liberty, should seek to break out of the bonds of so great and insolent a slavery? How long at length did you think I would endure your proud bondage? Which, for many years, I endured and did not refuse your command.

I exposed myself to public and private dangers, both voluntarily and by your design. Speeches were given out daily by you, and the admonition of my friends concerning your deep treachery was rife in my ears. Yet, for a long time, I simply believed both your words and deeds to have been devoid of all fraud, until your cankered malice began too apparently to show itself. Then began I also to gloss with you, wholly metamorphosed into your own conceits, until I found occasion to recover my Liberty.

Why then should you have cause now to be grieved, if you be well beaten with your own rod? But these are but trifles, Murad, in comparison with those things which I have laid in hope and resolution of mind.

Therefore, hereafter, cease your angry threats, and tell not us of the Hungarian fortune. Every man has his own resolution, and every man a particular Providence of his own actions. And so will we with patience endure such fortune as it shall please God to appoint us. Meanwhile, for direction of our affairs, we will not request counsel of our enemies, nor peace from you, but Victory by the help of God!

Farewell. From our Camp, 12 July 1445.

Having already vowed to crush Scanderbeg, Sultan Murad rushed over two armies under two great generals. A crack cavalry of 10,000 men was put under Ali Feriz Pasha, commander-in-chief of the Turkish Army in Europe. The second, made up of 15,000 cavalry and infantry, was commanded by Mustapha Pasha.

Feriz Pasha was the first to make his way secretly through Macedonia, heading straight for Dibra and Croya. The date: Late May, 1447. Reliably informed by his agents of Feriz Pasha's step-by-step itinerary and strength, Scanderbeg began preparing a gigantic trap for him at the narrow bottleneck of the Mocra Mountains.

Under his personal command, the Albanian Knight had an elite cavalry of 5,000 men. Three of his greatest commanders were: Moisi Golemi, Musachi Thopia, and Hamza Castrioti. To each one he assigned about 1,500 highly experienced cavalry and guerrilla fighters.

As Feriz Pasha's vaunted cavalry began pouring through the 'nutcracker vise,' Scanderbeg suddenly sprung the trap. At the very first onset, the Turkish forces were crushed. About 1,000 were captured. Feriz Pasha himself barely escaped.

Meanwhile, Mustapha Pasha had soon slipped his army onto the Mocra Valley, in a deceptive deployment and encampment. Scanderbeg, not satisfied with first intelligence reports that the 'Turks were acting like free-booters,' quickly revised his own strategy. Then he briefed his army in this oration:

I was reluctant, my colleagues and comrades-in-arms, to give counsel and to set down the course and order of our affairs: But now it behooves both you and me to take counsel together regarding the state of our affairs and the manner of our proceeding against our enemy.

And this every one of you will readily acknowledge, if you do but look closely into the core of the matter:

We were given to understand by our scout that the Turks, acting as free-booters, without any orderly conduct, without any regard, were wandering up and down the fields, flying here and there as men who feared anything else more than our coming.

For this cause, by my persuasion and order and under my direction, you have come here with this honorable intent and purpose: to invade and set upon them with your forces.

It is not necessary for me to tell you what new counsels and directions the happy coming of this scout has brought us: You have heard him recount what the enemy does and how they belittle themselves.

There is one thing which no man can deny: If you consider the purpose and drift of Mustapha, both in the fashion of his encampment and in the fortification and defense of it with well armed and selected men, you shall soon understand that he does not present toward you either the face or the mind of a robber, as you may have supposed, but that of a most experienced and cautious enemy.

For this reason, in my opinion, it is necessary that you conduct yourselves with more caution and with a better deliberation against our enemies than you were determined to do.

Let us leave alone those who are bent on foraging lest, by giving occasion to their captains to emerge from their trenches, we give them a better advantage and opportunity for an easy victory over us.

For while we stray out of order, dispersed and in disarray, thinking to pursue them while they seem scattered and in disorder, it is to be feared that we would be overthrown by them and be cut into pieces.

It is better that we issue forth all at once, with our whole might, and break upon the ramparts of their fortress: which, if our accustomed valor and resolution shall take, or if we put their General to flight or slay him and display his head to the rest of the Barbarians in order to terrify them, which God for His mercy may grant us, there is no doubt but that without any danger you shall, to your everlasting honor, attain your desire in each respect.

For the rest of these free-booters, some of whom are separated from the support of their comrades, as well as from the others being besieged by your forces, they will be at your mercy, either alive or dead, as you shall please to dispose of them.

But in any case, my good soldiers, be careful that the avarice and desire of pillage do not carry you away in the sacking and spoiling of the enemy camp:

For many are the examples which show how this great shame and dishonor of greediness has oftentimes taken away victory out of the hands of the victors and has given it to the enemy after the enemy has been quite overthrown and disrupted.

In a tightly coordinated and sudden assault, spearheaded by his elite cavalry, Scanderbeg overwhelmed Mustapha Pasha's forces within their trenches and camps. About 5,000 Turks were slain, and 300 were made prisoners.

BEFORE WAR WITH VENICE

An unwanted war with the Republic of Venice over the village of Dayna, which the Venetians had seized, grieved Scanderbeg. But, as he reveals in this significant oration to his commanders and armed forces, he had no other choice. The battle of Dayna, near Scutari, where he defeated a greater Venetian army, took place on July 23, 1448. Before battle was joined, he delivered this oration:

Whether the cause of this war is just or not, my good friends, it is not time to question it or debate over it now that we have come to the battlefield and are in plain view of the enemy:

Considering especially that I myself caused you to take up arms, you have never yet had just cause for grievance with me either for refusing any war that was lawful or for seeking any quarrels which were unlawful and unjust.

But it is true that, in all human affairs, nothing does more to torment the conscience of good men, nor is it more curiously respected by men of war before they come to fight with their enemy, to inquire into the justice of the quarrel, and to be resolved whether they shall not also contend with God as well as with men.

For my part, I would be content if any one of you thinks that my decision in undertaking this war is to be condemned of rashness, or if you think me too greedy and desirous of new wars and troubles, I shall be well pleased and I shall not stop you, if you presently pack up bag and baggage and that we return every man to his home.

I am not the one who would train you by force to endanger yourselves. Neither do I desire, in this troubled state of our affairs and the chiefest troubles of Albania, to seek new quarrels with the authority of Venice.

If, therefore, my attempt and purpose are exempted and free from blame and the causes of this war do seem to you just and necessary: then it is up to you also, and none but you have reason to be interested in the cause, to effect by your virtue and courageous perseverance and to show and prove your arms to be right and just.

Nothing can be more reproachful to a noble mind, neither can anything be more repugnant to the dignity of a King,

than to suffer by timidity and cowardice his right to be usurped by another, when he knows his right is not to be attained but by the force of arms.

There is none of you who doesn't know the hearty friendship which existed between me and the elder Lech Zacharia, whose death has stirred everywhere so many troubles. He and I had made with each other so inviolable an agreement that whosoever of us two should die first without issue, the survivor would inherit all his dominions.

Now the Venetians have gotten his lands, and I am left heir only to his tears to lament the iniquity of his fortune.

Did I not by this agreement hazard the renouncing of my own patrimony, if an accident, as the danger of death is common to all men, had first taken me out of this life?

I have no reason, therefore, to give up this war, except I be put to the sword or that I be allowed to take quiet possession of Dayna: For none but fools can blame me for this war, for which so good and honest a cause does justify me.

Let no man marvel at seeing me in arms against Christians, against the Venetians, since they themselves have given me such a just occasion and have put the sword into my hands.

It is true that we do with straight siege press the town and country of our own kinsmen, of our own blood and alliance. But we do it not with such an ill intention as they imagine. Neither are we led into it either by a greedy desire for power or aggrandizement. Nor do we delight in murder and bloodshed:

We do it only to wrest that city out of the hands of our adversary, and to bring the ungrateful inhabitants to at least a confession and acknowledgement of their error and obstinacy.

We have come to fight with the enemy, who has first provoked us by various acts of hostility.

Resolve you, therefore, in your courage with an assured and honest determination to maintain your honor and reputation.

It may seem that the sovereignty of Dayna, being considered for the reward of the conqueror, should give sufficient and ample occasion to take up arms: But let not such a concept enter into your thoughts, for these are

commonly baits to allure ambitious minds and the enticements of a base and vulgar sort.

After the enemy is beaten and the besieged find themselves frustrated in their hopes and disappointed in their colleagues, and pressed as well by extreme famine, they will soon open their gates to receive you as conquerors.

As for our victory, I need not say anything to you who are accustomed to being victors: The new enemy will now test your valor, and it will be a new kind of glory awaiting you.

Do the Venetians surpass you in numbers? So they do.

The honor which you have gained in so many battles, where you have always been fewer in number, has until now made you famous: The free and gentle heart does disdain to overcome it when every man's duty cannot be seen and where he cannot gain particular praise and commendation.

Again, what advantage have they over us in being numerically greater than we are?

There is among them a diversity of languages, a variety of habits, and a different use of arms. So is there a great diversity and disagreement in their minds and courage. Their army is composed of many and sundry nationalities: as Slavonians, Italians and Albanians. So are they diverse in customs, and with a confused kind of ignorance under one and the same colors.

Their cry and noise in battle will be of diverse and sundry sounds, and much less available will be the encouragement of their leaders.

March on, therefore, my good soldiers, and from the very beginning of the battle, valiantly beat back, repulse and disperse these enemies who are better disposed to flight than to fight.

And see that you do now renew by the honor of this day's task the glorious renown of so many trophies and victories which you have won over the Turks.

Nevertheless, I would rather that you did not conduct yourselves toward these as against other enemies: But I would rather that you use better moderation and less fury and, being inclined to mercy and clemency, try to have them as prisoners than to have them slaughtered in the field of battle.

In any case, do not, either through the intemperate fury of war or the heat of your anger, defile your victorious hands with the blood of those who shall surrender and place themselves at your mercy.

For it is not with barbarous, fierce and savage nations that we have now to deal-but with Christians, against whom we are to contend according to the rights and laws of arms, with equity and justice, and only to repulse injustice as well as to live in peace and freedom.

AT CONCLUSION OF PEACE

Before the Venetian delegation signing the peace treaty at the White Castle in Croya, Scanderbeg expressed deep sorrow for having been at war with an ally:

My hearty wish and desire is that Prince Lech Zacharia were still living among us, since his death was the beginning and first occasion of my just grief and this wearisome war I have had with you.

For while I fought to recover Dayna from you, stained with the blood of our citizens by the misfortune of an unjust war, I wish that I had not seen this province of Christians and of all our friends and allies overwhelmed with so many injuries.

But I would have gloried in the observation of inviolable peace and friendship with that most honorable and worthy Senate. For the interruption of which my heart will long and greatly grieve.

This breach and controversy grew upon another occasion: For your taking up arms is to be excused, in that the disloyalty of others by their sinister and perverse counsels did easily estrange and alienate our good affection and did conceal that which was agreed between Lech Zacharia and myself. They were the authors of Dayna's yielding unto your protection.

It was not you, therefore, with whom I found myself so much aggrieved. Neither did I take up arms to convince you of injustice. Nor did I impute any ambition or greedy desire for empire unto the Venetians, who as yet have not enterprised or authorized any war which was unjust and against equity.

Still, there was one thing which displeased me no less: You had little trust and confidence in me than was necessary. And while you lent ear and built upon their tales and reports, you thought me as being ambitious and led by a desire for trouble.

Therefore, seeing that right was not to be had in any other way than by the force of arms, I took occasion to resort to a war which, in a manner, was thrust upon me and even put into my hands.

But I now do gladly lay aside my weapons, as God is willing to have it so. And, more than that, if you yourselves had not required to give me this territory for the recompense of Dayna and for the confirmation of our league and amity, I hold myself well satisfied only in the good will and frank offer of your Senate and do willingly embrace the good will and friendship of those liberal and magnificent princes.

And for any other thing, I neither desire nor accept: But, if need be, all this territory which I have, my whole estate and my goods and substance, yea my very life, will I vow and pledge to you, to your children, and to the majesty of your Nation.

On May 14, 1449, Scanderbeg faced Sultan Murad and Ali Feriz Pasha, commander-in-chief, before the fortress of Sfetigrad in upper Dibra. They had a formidable army of 45,000 men. His numbered close to 12,000. Before the beginning of the siege, which lasted four months, he inspired his men, including the Sfetigrad garrison, with this brief oration:

If you men and citizens of Sfetigrad had wished for a more fit occasion to immortalize your faith and loyalty, and forever to preserve its memory, God in His infinite wisdom so be willing, you could not have at this time a better or fitter subject and opportunity than this which has caused you to take up arms.

In former wars we fought for victory, for glory, for the reputation of our country. But now we are to fight for the safety of our people, for our liberty, for the walls and preservation of this your city and province.

For their defense, it behooves you to strive with your utmost strength and endeavors. Otherwise, the infinite praises and commendations and the excellent honor and glory, which you have happily deserved under my direction, will be stained and blemished with great shame.

The greater and better part of our fortune consists in your virtue, because the first attempt of Murad presently upon his entering Epirus and the first fury of the barbarians will be directed against you and your city.

His objective, after the surest fence and bulwark of the province is beaten down and razed, would be to lead more freely his forces into the heart of our country, which by this means will be the more exposed to the violence of his fury.

The first fruits of this war, therefore, do await you. If any valor remains in your hearts and if the minds of men so brave and valiant are careful or mindful of liberty, you may easily tame and stem the proud attempts of the enemy and you may soon ruin and vanquish those arrogant and haughty stomachs.

In accordance with your stand and behavior, the Ottoman will begin to conceive of fear and uneasiness or hope and good heart.

If he finds you stouthearted and full of courage, as I do now see you to be furious and resolute, he will be fearful lest he face in all other areas greater violence and much more formidable and dangerous.

So shall you teach him to refrain from attacking other cities of Epirus, and to reserve himself for more easy exploits: Render him unwilling to press you with any long siege: Else, if his age makes Murad so willful and so obstinate as to seek to force you, his troops shall undoubtedly wax grayheaded before they depart.

For such is the natural situation of this place that it need not fear any enemy regardless of how fierce and furious he be.

Resolve yourselves, therefore, my good citizens, and by the firmness of your determination and the constancy of your faith, win for yourselves and for your country this immortal victory.

Upon the success of your virtue and prowess, I repeat willingly, do depend the faith and constancy of the rest of the people of Albania.

All men have fixed their eyes upon you, either to commend or to condemn you or else to follow and imitate your virtue.

A KNIGHTLY COMBAT: Sultan Murad's Ottoman army besieged Sfetigrad. The siege lasted sixteen weeks. During the first six weeks, neither side was certain of victory or defeat. On the seventh, Scanderbeg finally seized the upper hand against the two divisions directly under the command of Sultan Murad.

Seeing that the ruler of the mighty Ottoman Empire was in imminent danger of being defeated, Ali Feriz Pasha challenged Scanderbeg to a knightly combat between the two generals. It was a daring step to gain precious time and thereby relieve the devastating pressure Scanderbeg had unleashed against Sultan Murad.

Despite the fervent pleas of his staff officers and commanders not to endanger his life, Scanderbeg promptly accepted the challenge. Then, to allay their fears, he reassured them in this speech:

God forbid, my good soldiers, that as long as this hand of mine can handle the sword and as long as this body of

mine retains its accustomed strength and vigor, any one of you should carry away from me the success of this adventure which, come what may, I shall refer to Him who is the giver of all victory.

Reserve, therefore, your good reasons for some other season when you shall see me aged and stricken in years, when my limbs begin to fail, and when I shall assure myself that my strength does fade away. But you ought to have a care lest, while you show yourselves too careful of my life, you do envy my honor and reputation.

And what will the enemy say if, according to your request, I should yield you the hazard of this combat? He will say that my holding back and refusing to fight were but a mere reflection of my cowardice, and a true confession of a fearful and faint heart.

For, to answer your objections', it is not amiss sometimes for a general of an army to undertake a combat as well as a private soldier. That glorious combat between Alexander the Great and Porus, King of the Indians, did it diminish his honor and reputation? Did our ancestors ever fail to commend the fight that took place between Pyrrhus and Pantachus? I will not speak here of the Marcelli and Toquati, and Corvini, who to the singular glory of both themselves and their citizens, overcame their enemies who challenged them to combat.

These are the hands that must undertake this hazard: For me it is that the enemy calls with so many menaces and bravadoes. To me it is that this cruel beast speaks. I could do little if I should refuse him such a matter. And he might think me very unkind if I should not satisfy his desire in so honest and reasonable a request.

He is a man of sufficient worth to feel the weight of my sword. He is a man whom Murad thought so worthy to be in charge and command of so great an army.

The combat took place with lances rather than swords. At the very first encounter on horseback, Scanderbeg slew Ali Feriz Pasha. But, despite the heroic defense Scanderbeg's puny forces had managed to put up, Sfetigrad fell—as a result of superstition and treachery. And Sultan Murad finally fell back toward Adrianople, his massive army decimated.

SIEGE OF CROYA: The following year, Sultan Murad again committed aggression. At the end of April, 1450, after regrouping his shattered forces of Sfetigrad, he reached Croya as supreme commander of a greater army. It numbered 160,000 fighting men. Under his command were three of his hand-picked generals. One was Prince Mehmed, his young son who, three years later, became the proud conqueror of Constantinople. The other two were Sermet Pasha and Evrenoz Pasha Sebalia, whom Scanderbeg had deposed on his return to Croya in 1443.

The siege of Croya was bloody and prolonged. It lasted for eight months. By the middle of December that year, Scanderbeg finally defeated Sultan Murad's Turkish army before the massive walls of Fortress Croya. His heroic generals were Moisi Golemi, Tanush Thopia, Count Urani, Hamza Castrioti, Gjiu Musachia, and Musachi Thopia.

Heartsick by his failure to defeat Scanderbeg and capture Croya, Murad suddenly fell ill at his camp. Historians are divided as to his death. Barletius, who was usually reliable in his accounts, wrote that Sultan Murad died in Albania—before the siege of Croya was lifted. In his Vita, the author has challenged all other chroniclers to uphold any contrary view.

Fearing a coup_d'etat in Edirne, Mehmed apparently had kept the news of Murad's death from reaching the Seraglio and the Turkish people. Only after he was crowned Fatih Mehmed II, at the end of January, 1451, was he in a position to reveal it. Murad was buried with great honors at the Ottoman family's burial ground in Brusa, early in February.

Scanderbeg's victory over the mighty Turkish army caused great jubilation in Albania. That Christmas was the happiest the people had enjoyed since his return to Croya seven years earlier.

STEPS AGAINST COMPLACENCY

After his wedding to Princess Donica Comneni-Araniti on April 26, 1451, Scanderbeg felt his countrymen were becoming complacent. His victory over Sultan Murad the year before had given his people a taste of the more pleasant comforts of peace. Even his army, he feared, was getting "soft and slothful." To correct all that, later that year, he gave a modest banquet at the White Castle. His invited guests were the most influential princes, lords, and military commanders. On this occasion, he delivered the following oration:

Worthy Peers and brave Epirots: Now that we have enjoyed our feast and banquet, with all kinds of orderly ease and liberty, we no longer have any reason to abandon our arms and let our wonted virtue, as it were, lay asleep and forgotten.

We have kept our holiday long enough. We have feasted and celebrated sufficiently our victory over Murad. We have spent a whole year partly in recreation and partly in rehabilitating our war-ravaged towns or in building new fortresses. And we have not so much as once visited the enemy.

It is now high time to awaken and to give some new proof of our accustomed valor. Even now, when Sultan Mehmed has his hands full with the Persians and while God has given you the means and opportunity, without shedding any blood, to reestablish the ancient honor and reputation of Albania and to revive those ancient times so greatly desired.

While the enemy's power is somewhat weakened and repressed and while he is otherwise occupied and entangled in wearisome and tedious troubles, not knowing what to do nor what course to take, we have two principal reasons for the happy undertaking of our great exploits.

This, therefore, is the time. This is the hour, which invites you to seek out the enemy and not always to lie still and idle and to expect the time when the enemy comes to assail you.

Behold how Sfetigrad looks to you and calls for your aid. Does the ill success of last year's siege terrify you? I

assure you I would be loath to lead you where the danger would be great or the peril so evident.

But now when we have the great number of your victories, the death of Murad, the present occupation of our enemy: all of these have greatly reduced our difficulties.

The opportunity of the time and the countenance of the enemy shall inform us what is further to be done.

For my part, I can promise you nothing without expense and loss of blood or without vehement and earnest toil: of which the valiant man, the courageous soldier, has hardly any awareness or perseverance. Even then, when he is most painfully occupied and when in action, much less will he be afraid or in doubt of it, before he comes to prove its difficulty.

Yet if Sfetigrad is so odious and unpleasant to you, there are other places and fortresses of the enemy, not far off, which may repay your losses sustained at Sfetigrad and which may satisfy your desires.

There is Berat, as near or nearer than Sfetigrad and not unworthy either of our efforts or of our blood, if we have any desire either of honor or of recompense.

I have reason, my good companions, to be ashamed more than ever that I should have spent one year during my reign amongst you idly and doing nothing while the homes of our ancestors, the towns of our countrymen, the noble marks of the Nation of Albania, were so shamefully being subjected under the Infidels.

Lest this leisure and opportunity which is still left us slip from our hands, let us follow the example of the Persians. Let us embrace the good fortune which God seems to offer us.

In so doing, we shall enlarge our dominions. We shall augment our franchises and freedom. We shall avenge our losses, our griefs and injuries, and we shall as well keep the youth of our country from falling into sloth and idleness.

Neither has the Bishop of Rome nor our good friend, King Alphonse, nor so many devout and Catholic Princes, aided and supplied us with their treasures with the intention that we should stay indoors and that we should dwell in pleasures and grow corrupt and effeminate.

They all have done it rather so that we may take up arms and prove our valor in the midst of all perils and dangers and that, in the face of death itself, we should perform the duty of men valiant and courageous and of most fearless and resolute soldiers.

LETTER TO KING ALPHONSE

The following year, after defeating the Turkish forces in 1452 at Pologue, where he also slew Debreas Pasha, their chief commander, Scanderbeg wrote the following letter to King Alphonse of Italy, asking him for arms and certain specialists in assaulting walled fortresses such as that at Berat:

To Prince Alphonse, King of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, Scanderbeg, King of the Epirots, sends greetings:

Our soldiers, most Catholic King, know well how to fight with men in the field. But for assaulting of walls and holds, they are utterly unskilled. You Italians, as I hear, are very skillful in that service, and you love it well: This is the cause for which we at this time have need of your good aid, which we desire you to give us.

The Infidels are in possession of some of our towns in Epirus. And I have for a long time had a singular desire to pluck this thorn, if God be so willing, out of my foot. But the continual impediments and hindrances of the wars have ever withheld me. I have not been able to this day to bring it to any good pass. In order to accomplish my desire, I have chosen this opportunity which is most fit both as to the season now present as also the leisure and rest permitted us by Mehmed, whose fury we have repressed in two recent battles.

You may guess, by few words, what it is we have need of: All other things are in readiness, only we wait for succors and aid from you, which, if it shall please Your Majesty, you may send unto us: namely, harquebussiers and crossbows, such as are skillful to fight aloof, and to trouble the enemy from afar off—for of other soldiers our dominions are sufficiently well furnished.

How happy may I account Naples and Sicily, which are governed by such a King as my Alphonsus, from whence, as out of a treasury, a man may have choice of all precedents and examples of virtue!

For my part, I do so highly esteem your love and goodwill. And the memory of your exceedingly great benefits does remain so sacred and inviolable in my mind that, many

a time I wish—though perhaps therein I overshoot myself—that your fortune and estate were such as you might have occasion to try and prove rather than to purchase and bind your friends unto you.

For so should I be able, by some certain and evident proof, to testify my devotion and ready service and the entire affection of my unfeigned love toward you.

AT SIEGE OF BERAT

Before assaulting the great fortress of the walled City of Berat, the first of July, 1455, Scanderbeg gathered his army under the shadow of sacred Mount Tomori and delivered this oration:

My good soldiers: This is our eleventh year of our continuous efforts which we have sustained for the recovery and possession of our country of Epirus and for the seat and dwellings of our ancestors which were lost to the barbarians rather by a kind of fatal necessity than by any default or want of courage in them or in us.

The time has now come when we must employ our whole power and endeavors to dislodge the Infidels and to expel them altogether from our country: and with no less glory, to impose the yoke upon the necks of our enemies and to shake it off from our own shoulders.

If the life and death of Murad have up to now given you a large and ample subject for glory, you now have a fitter occasion and a more noble matter with which to gain greater honor. And it may be that his son is reserved for your greater glory.

You have even of late some pledge and experience of your good fortune. And the tyrant gave you some proof and trial: While with one hand, as it were, holding the funeral of his father, with the other he demanded peace of you under a certain color and honest show of tribute.

But the valleys of Mocra and the fields of Pologue can testify that they had bad luck in collecting payment and they had made a bad calculation.

This consideration here ought to spur us on to follow and pursue what still remains unfinished. Among the rest, the town of Berat does seem to promise us good success: In its siege, thereon, we will continue as long as you yourselves shall think convenient.

In the event that either the fortune of war or the obstinacy of the defenders does protract or draw it out longer than expected, we must not determine to continue beyond the end of Autumn.

However, I am hopeful that we shall not be forced to stay there until the end of that season, considering both your

accustomed valor, the flower of so many good troops, as well as such great store of engines and pieces of battery which the King of Sicily has most bountifully given us.

Besides, you know that Berat is a city of Christians, peopled with our own kinsmen and friends. Murad, after the recent death of Theodore Corona, the last Lord of that city, treacherously seized it and took possession of it.

This place is full of her ancient citizens, who only wait to be freed and delivered from the bondage of the Infidels.

I would be much deceived if they do not greatly further and favor our attempts to assail the enemy both from inside and outside the walls.

Go to, therefore, my good friends and comrades-in-arms. In God's name, march on resolutely and courageously. And aid those who wait in expectation of your virtue.

After two days of relentless assaults, the enemy garrison raised the white flag. Then both the Turkish governor of Berat and certain Albanian leaders pleaded with Scanderbeg to grant the truce. Sensing trickery, he gave this severe dressing down to his countrymen especially:

I see that the Albanians are glutted with so many victories, so much so that they have become delicate and effeminate: And, as the frost of the last winter was unpleasant for them, so the heat of summer does now annoy them.

God grant that it does not happen, but they are in need of some misfortune to chastise them for their slothfulness and negligence.

Besides, who will not condemn us for being overly gullible?

If we remember, the same kind of fraud was practiced against us at Sfetigrad. And they deluded us in the same manner.

What do you think should be done when the time-limit of the truce expires? You shall discover then either their hidden deception or their change of mind.

We shall abide hard penance for our light credulity, we shall in vain repent for the loss of time. We shall then be constrained in the meantime to depend wholly upon the pleasure and faith of our enemies.

And whatever are the allegations touching upon the difficulty of the siege, as well as upon the occupation of the Sultan, we ought not to defer that which the urgency of our own affairs demands to be done.

It so happens that while we are engaged in forcing the town, it appears in all likelihood that something is stirring from Adrianople. To meet it, we have forces both to defend ourselves and to secure us from their attempts.

In addition to that, Dibra also is sufficiently assured with the garrison which Moisi has in readiness along those frontiers.

As he had suspected, however, the two-week truce was violated. An army of 40,000 men, under Evrenoz Pasha, suddenly came to the aid of the garrison at night. It almost shattered Scanderbeg's forces. And it frustrated his plan to liberate Berat.

PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

In 1456, Scanderbeg was saddened by the defection to Sultan Mehmed of Moisi Golemi, his greatest general and personal friend. But, after defeating Moisi and his strong Turkish army that year, he finally pardoned him and restored him to his former military rank and social status. But, in 1457, Hamza Castrioti's betrayal deeply grieved the Albanian ruler.

Before confronting his nephew, who had reached lower Dibra with a Turkish army of 50,000 men under the supreme command of Isaak Pasha, Scanderbeg prepared his own 11,000 hardy warriors in this philosophical oration:

Among all other things which the Divine Wisdom has left to mortal men in the strange variety and diversity of worldly actions to afflict and torment their minds are, my most worthy Albanians, these two: Hope and fear.

The first is more plausible, and it commonly touches minds that are haughty and, I might say, vainly addicted. The other is more prudent and less given to blood and cruelty.

For although fear does in some sort prolong and protract the desires of men, yet does she nevertheless season them and, as it were, does serve as an excellent medicine to cure many infirmities within them-

Hence it is that among ancient generals usually accustomed to being more victorious were those who feared and mistrusted all things than those who never doubted nor feared anything.

Hence it also follows that Hannibal, the great Carthaginian, called Quintus Fabius his most grievous and dangerous enemy, who to his own citizens seemed slothful and timorous: He said that Terentius Varro was more dangerous to his own country and the people of Rome than he was to his enemies.

But why do I attribute that strange and dishonest surname of fear to what more properly merits the name of caution and sage advice.

For my part, I care not what you call it: This is certain, and cannot be contradicted: From it is derived all the ancient discipline and the severity of martial government, invented and practiced by our forefathers.

She it is who does nourish and entertain hope. And she never does anything but comes to a good and happy end. She carries her eyes before her, behind her, and on all sides, and with equal balance does not pause and measure present things with future things.

You may now guess the meaning of my speech, which is very fit and proper for this time, intended to correct and chastise your complacency.

I thought it good, my fellow countrymen and comrades-in-arms, first to discuss with you and to sound your affections before I innovate anything in regard to this war.

You have heard of late, and your ears are full of the daily rumors and reports, about the stirs and tumults of war which are daily prepared and directed against us.

Behold the Pasha of Rumelia who, with the flower of all Europe and with the strength and power of the Ottoman Empire, does now knock at our gates.

And yet my courage would serve our cause as it has ever done, and I dare venture and hazard the battle against him. And I do not doubt but you have the advantage.

But against so mighty an enemy, whose forces are so huge and immoderate, it behooves us to use prudence and good counsel rather than the accustomed fury and fierceness of your courage.

The notable and famous defeat of Ali Pasha, so many famous and memorable triumphs and victories you have obtained even until the present, your resolution gotten and testified by so many exploits which have succeeded so happily, all these do persuade and assure us that we have both the courage and the power to meet and confront the Turkish forces in the open field.

But the unstable and inconstant changes and alterations of the wars, and the natural disposition of fortune so unknown and so uncertain, often make men who are wise to forget and mistrust all these matters.

To always overcome these was never reserved to any man, nor was it ever hereditary to any person.

New actions and attempts do daily demand new counsels and new measures. Although yesterday you did overcome the enemy as conquerors, yet today you cannot assure yourselves that you shall have the spoils of your enemies or the ransom money of their prisoners.

Victory is like a traveler along the way. She turns and widens here and there, not having a certain dwelling or abiding place.

Although virtue and prudent counsel be the principal means both to win and retain victory, yet oftentimes it happens that, when you have wisely guided and conducted all matters, fortune and the chance of war and certain casual accidents challenge a great part of victory.

At the battle of Albula, under the overpowering shadow of Mount Tumenishta, on September 2, 1457, Scanderbeg's light cavalry and swift guerrilla regiments almost wholly annihilated Isaak Pasha's army. He captured Hamza Castrioti alive. A few days later, Sultan Mehmed sent Meseit Beg at the head of a large Turkish delegation to Croya to ransom Hamza and 5,000 prisoners. He had brought as well Mehmed's offer of "peace and perpetual friendship."

Promptly refusing ransom for Hamza, whom he later banished to a military prison in Naples, Scanderbeg then severely reprimanded Meseit Beg and his delegation in this fiery outburst:

I have not so often—even in the worst times of my adversity—refused conditions of peace.

Nor do I assure myself that I will always so insolently disdain your friendship. It may well be that fortune may put on her false mask and visage and may make us in the future petitioners unto you for a peace perhaps far more ignominious.

Nevertheless, whatever be the occasion of the matter and whatever the order of destiny may bring upon us, we are not determined at this time to alter our mind on any point or to detract anything from our resolution:

We deem any kind of amity with you most infamous, as long as we see so many outrages and injuries everywhere to the Christians: as long as we see so many wounds and so much bloodshed in the past and in the present both in Greece and in the fields of Hungary.

Shall we recompense the loss of Morea with such a peace? Shall we, with such a base and cowardly peace, shame and disgrace the notable victory and glory of the Hungarians?

Let Mehmed, as long as he will, seek peace. As for us, we will purchase our peace with the sword. And, having once gotten and attained it, we will likewise by the sword seek to maintain it.

SCANDERBEG'S APPEAL FOR PAPAL AID

Three years of unprecedented events had increased Scanderbeg's anxiety about the freedom and safety of his people. In 1455, he had been frustrated at Berat. His greatest general, Moisi Golemi, had taken up arms against him in 1456. And, in 1457, Hamza Castrioti, his nephew and chief-of-staff, had defected to Sultan Mehmed. The Ottoman ruler had vowed to defeat his greatest European enemy by any possible subterfuge, bribery and corruption.

Scanderbeg had anxiously appealed to Pope Calixtus III, as well as to King Alphonse, ruler of the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. The following letter from the Roman Catholic Pontiff reveals how deeply concerned the Vatican was at the time about the plight of Roman Catholic Albania, which had served as a bulwark against Ottoman armed might:

Pope Calixtus III
To Scanderbeg, Lord of Albania:

We felt a deep and great grief when our dear son, the Abbot George Pellini, whom Your Lordship sent to us, related to us how the Turks invaded your country, caused destruction in the land, and how the barbarian troops besieged and surrounded you.

For us it is indeed a very sad thing to hear. We have always felt that because of your outstanding efforts and memorable victories you have, above all other Catholic rulers, served the Christian Faith and the Church. We could not help feeling the greatest sorrow when we heard that Your Lordship had experienced this terrible situation.

We wish we could help you quickly with our subsidy. We could do so not so much out of being compelled by necessity but out of our generosity. Still we want to help you beyond our strength, in order to provide for your safety and defense. So that you might more strongly resist and repel the tempest, we have ordered that out of several Holy Crusade funds raised in Ragusa and Dalmatia, a certain part should be paid to you, although our dear sons in Christ, the illustrious kings of Hungary and Bosnia, also need this money and have urged us that we should grant them this kind of financial help since they have to fight

the Turks ceaselessly and a weakened resistance would let the Turks remain in Christian countries, unless they are pushed back and kept away from the Christian kingdoms.

Be of strong and constant mind, considering your glorious actions and your own glory. They are eminently proclaimed everywhere -among the Catholic people. Your fame will reach the climax when the Christians will see that in the midst of the greatest furor and onslaught of the most powerful enemy, Your Lordship did not waver but with presence of mind you kept your fortitude and manly strength. All know what you performed and with the greatest praise extol you to heaven and speak of you as the true knight and defender of Christianity. We don't want to dwell at length how we appreciate you, rather we want to show it with deeds and with our affection.

We wrote to the legate of our fleet, which is in the East, that with the ships or part of them, if it is necessary, he should give you suitable help. If you resist for a while the tempest of this storm and you don't soon yield to it, the calm which will follow will lessen all your troubles. This winter so many projects are being prepared by the Christian nations, which all over the world have asked for our help, prayers, and tears- There will be such a great unity of the Christian powers in order to destroy the terrible Turks, this serpent which now hides and now emerges to do damage to the Christian people and breaks forth and tortures them. This Turk will be defeated and broken. And after having left behind what he had so cruelly conquered, will be driven in perdition and ruin.

In the early spring you will see miracles. With joy and happiness you will see the Turk flee after being pushed back. In the most vicious way they now menace you and your people. Do not be disheartened by the losses and destruction suffered by your people. Greater blessings will come which will give double rewards for them and will bring eternal calm and happiness to you and your people. We do not deal in empty words; the events will witness our speech, as it has been seen in other cases. Last year, when the perfidious Turks threatened Hungary, who was not in fear when he saw the most powerful enemy menacing Christianity with such fury? But God the immortal, moved by our prayers and those of other Christians,

came to the help of his people; the countless hordes disappeared and vanished like the fog before the sun.

These were great events but there are even greater ones which God has in store for your people. The Christian powers are eager to come by land and sea to annihilate this menace. One thing is needed: And that is, with your usual fortitude, as an undefeated knight and soldier of Christ, you should bravely repel the present attack which God's power will soon reduce to nothing.

In order to collect and hand you the money of which we have spoken, we need our dear son, John Navarra, our emissary to Dalmatia. He will come to you and stay there as long as you want him.

Dated in Rome, at St. Peter's with the Fisherman's ring, September 11, 1457.

The following year, Pope Calixtus wrote again to Scanderbeg. His letter follows:

Beloved son: Your spokesmen, whom you had sent to us, were here. They told us explicitly and wisely everything Your Lordship had entrusted to them. We heard of the strong attacks the Turks have made against your country. We admire the greatness of your courage with which you have, checked their fury. You have acted as a worthy Catholic Prince. We learned of your relentless effort to drive out the Turkish hordes.

We thank God that, had the perfidious enemy managed to overrun your country, had you not withstood as a strong bulwark against him, he would have found his way into the Christian world. You have often been forced to fight against him. Your customary resistance against the Turk has made your glory greater and greater.

If the other Christian princes had your courage, we would not be worried and tormented over the safety of our faith. Continue always courageously, our beloved son, in your dedication to the sacred cause. Since you are fighting in defense of the Christian faith, you must have good hope that He to whom nothing is impossible, and who causes the little people to put the mighty to shame, will not forsake you but will give you a glorious victory over His enemies.

Although our means are hardly enough to continue our aid, to strengthen and increase our fleet in the East, while already burdened with other large expenses, nevertheless we want to do the best we can by sending you a subsidy of five thousand florins from our privy purse. We hope to send you more in the future so that you may have enough funds with which to face the dangers menacing you and your people. Your trustworthy spokesmen mentioned above will explain these things to you in more detail.

We have already informed Your Lordship about the meeting of the envoys of the Realm and other Christian kings and princes summoned by us to a meeting at which to discuss an invasion of the territories now held by the Turks. Some of these envoys have already arrived. We hope that with God's help our plan will be carried out successfully and that all help possible will come from every country in order to achieve this promising objective.

Be therefore as you are: a man of great and strong mind. Let no fear hold you back- God will aid you and give you strength so that you may achieve victory over your enemies and win for yourself the greatest praise and glory.

Rome, the 6th of February, 1458.

Two days later, Pope Calixtus wrote this letter to King Alphonse V:

We well understood with what great regard you recommended to us our beloved son, the noble Scanderbeg, Lord of Albania. We were truly delighted. We would embrace him with greater affection than we can possibly express. By his high qualities and great achievements he merits not only our commendation but that of all Christendom as well.

As we view it, he is the only great bulwark withstanding the fury of the savage Turk and blocking his way to the rest of the Christian countries. We well know how many disasters he and his people have suffered.

We exhort Your Serene Highness to help Scanderbeg by sending him all appropriate means, as you used to do, for he faces many difficulties.

Rome, the 5th of February, 1458.

Calixtus III

DEFENDER OF ITALIAN FREEDOM

The war of Italy—during 1460 and 1461—gave Scanderbeg a golden opportunity to repay a debt of gratitude to the House of Aragon, Naples and Sicily. King Alphonse, father of King Ferdinand, had been his great friend and supporter in time of dire need against the ravages of the Ottoman Empire.

After Alphonse died, Italy was plunged into bloodshed and rebellion. Ferdinand I, his son and successor to the throne, was attacked by the armies of the French House of Anjou, aided by the Prince of Taranto. At the head of this rebellious army was General-Count Jacopo Piccinino, a renowned Italian commander. They wanted Prince Rene of Anjou to grab the throne "by right of succession."

But Ferdinand had the full support of Pope Pius II, the Duke of Milan, and, later, Scanderbeg. The Anjou-Italian forces soon routed King Ferdinand's army in Apulia. And they finally trapped and besieged him at Barletta. In 1460, Scanderbeg first sent a very small force of Albanian footmen and cavalry to aid Ferdinand. In command he had placed George Stresa, son of Iella, his nephew. But in the summer of 1461, after learning of Ferdinand's plight, Scanderbeg himself rushed over at the head of an elite cavalry of two thousand men. He soon turned the tide in favor of Ferdinand at the bloody battle of Apulia.

The following correspondence clearly reflects the very serious situation prevailing in Italy then and the great importance of Scanderbeg's military aid:

Pope Pius II,

To George Castrioti Scanderbeg, Lord of Albania:

Our dear son Martin Missiachus, your spokesman and soldier, came to us and told us of how you have faithfully discharged your duty toward Ferdinand, the Noble King of Sicily, our beloved son in Christ, when he was in difficulties with his enemies, and how you offered to aid the Kingdom of Naples to the best of your ability.

He also said that since you cannot leave your country without endangering your position in Albania, we should grant you permission to conclude a treaty with the Turks.

He also added that, if we don't approve, we send there our legate to protect and defend your territories.

To these propositions, my dear son, we answer that the Roman Catholic Pontiff does not give permission to anyone to make a treaty with the Infidels. There can be no agreement with them without offending God. We informed your spokesman that to send a legate to take your place and to defend your territories would not be of any help for the purpose requested because it is not an easy matter for us on account of our lack of power.

But since the Venetians already have a ready fleet and are very powerful, be assured that we shall ask them to protect your country. That is what we say in writing to you, Noble Lord, and we very much regret that among other Christian rulers we have not found the spirit we had hoped to find for the sake of our faith. Neither is our strength and that of the Church such that we might now give aid to Your Lordship, a help which we owe to your constant toils in defense of the faith.

We very much approve of your intention to go to the aid of the King, whom you praise for his generosity toward you. We are sure that your going there yourself will be of great help to him, and you will earn great glory and praise for doing so. We also trust that His Majesty, in appreciation of your loyal service, will duly reward you in such a great necessity.

We have sent him an energetic letter in which we strongly urged him to gratefully accept your proposal to aid him and to worthily reward such a constant loyalty he has found in your people. We are sure that His Majesty will hark to your exhortations and will show his appreciation and gratitude.

Dated in Rome, 29th of June, 1460.

The Prince of Taranto,
To Scanderbeg, Lord of Albania.

Our Honored and Magnificent Friend:

Not long ago, we were informed that you had sent word to Don Ferdinand asking him to send you galleys to transport your troops to Brindisi. It seems you have promised him to come to our country in person or to send others to help him in time of need.

We believe you to be a wise and prudent man and that you will not carry out your promise. At present, we are told also that you have already sent to Apulia your footmen and cavalry who are plundering and ruining the lands of His Majesty King Rene and ours. This comes as a surprise to us because we have done nothing to offend you.

Not only that but you may even receive more favors and rewards from him than you have received from the King of Aragon, in whose behalf you are doing what you now are. You should have no doubt that the kings of France are better Catholics than most other princes in the world.

You should now think it over, for almost all the princes and people of the Realm are on the side of our monarch. You and your Albanians cannot help Don Ferdinand. Much less, you cannot hurt his powerful enemies. We beg and urge you to desist from your plans and to recall your men in a graceful manner.

Let us know if you wish peace and good friendship with honor and good terms with the most illustrious Duke of Calabria, the son and lieutenant of His Majesty King Rene. We offer our good services as an intermediary so that you may obtain better conditions, in case you do not have the temerity to ask for them yourself.

If in the future you would still wish to wage war, you have a venture much closer at home against the Turks, a war which can bring you more glory and honor than if you support a lost cause, which is none of your concern and in which you would suffer great losses at the expense of those men you have already sent or about to send.

We don't have any more to say in this letter, but wish to wait in expectation of your answer, placing our services at your pleasure.

From our victorious camp at Agrolam, October 10, 1460.
Giovanni Antonio d'Orsini

Two weeks later, on October 31, 1460, Scanderbeg wrote two letters. One was addressed to King Ferdinand. The other, to the Prince of Taranto, follows:

Your Serene Highness:

I have received your letter which has given me more cause for surprise than displeasure, noting the tone in which

it is written. First you say that you couldn't believe what you had heard about my having asked His Majesty King Ferdinand for certain galleys in order to send my men to his aid. Then you say that my troops would set fire to Brindisi on disembarking there and then, after which, they would proceed to ruin the rest of the country of Apulia. To all this, here is my answer:

It is true that, when we heard you had taken up arms against His Majesty, we asked him for the galleys in order to transport our footmen and cavalry who would rally to his aid.

I should think you would have great difficulty taking any territory under the rule of His Majesty, who is still your sovereign and to whom you owe your allegiance. And I wonder why you express surprise at our being grateful to our benefactors, especially to that immortal King (Alphonse V, father of Ferrando) of Aragon, whom I and my people recall with tears in our eyes.

Then, as you say, if you consider me faithful and prudent and wise, you should not be surprised at our going to his son's aid. Remember, it was that angelic King who aided and defended me and my people from the cruel madness of the Turks. If we had been defeated then, Italy would certainly have felt the wrath of the Turks and that territory which you now claim as yours would certainly have fallen into their hands.

And so, having been aided by His Majesty, we could not let his son down without debasing ourselves to the degree of infamy and shame. Up to this moment, we have met our obligations and voluntarily discharged our duty to the extent of endangering our own life.

As for your suggestion that we would reap greater rewards from the Anjou King because he is a better Christian than most all other princes, my answer is this: I don't know him. And I don't like to know him. And I'd rather have him for an enemy. But now I must remind you of one more thing: All of us are equally alike as Christians because of our baptism. And the Turks fear no other power more than the glorious House of Aragon. Then you say that I would not be able to help Ferdinand because almost all the leading barons and the people of the south are in arms against him.

If up to this moment King Ferdinand is in worse danger, then you are guilty of this misfortune because you are the most powerful rebel. I liken you to those women with easy virtue who become mistresses in their old age and who use fancy words to lure other women to do likewise. You are cunningly leading the barons and people who follow you to be slaughtered like sheep.

Still, despite this unfortunate situation, we do not think King Ferdinand's cause is lost because God is on his side and his friends and loyal followers will not forsake him. Be reminded, therefore, that the power of the Turks is far greater than yours together with that of the French Anjou Lords you are supporting. Yet, when they besieged Croya with such an overwhelming army, we with only a small force defended it and caused our enemy to flee with great losses and in shame.

I must remind you once more that we are called Epirots and, if historians do not err, our ancestors at different times in history crossed over to the land you hold today and there we defeated the Romans in bloody battles. And now we will do our best to support and defend King Ferdinand. In the event he does not emerge victorious, we will exceed our obligations and help him to the utmost of our ability and power until he is victorious.

As to your exhortations that I should withdraw my men and return them home in order to fight against the Turks for greater honor and glory, here is my answer: We do not need any exhortations or counsel from you. We have not sent our troops to be recalled but to aid King Ferdinand until he fully regains his realm. Besides, my men are soldiers who, if need be, prefer death in support of His Majesty's cause. But those troops we have already sent are small compared to what may be sent later, if he so requests of us. If necessary, I will go over myself and lead them in battle not only to regain Apulia but, with God's help, also to fully restore that unfortunate region to its former self.

As for our struggle against the Turks, since you mention it, we have long proudly fought against them. But, during the next three years, we may continue our truce with them in order to satisfy our objective by aiding King Ferdinand. In your case, it would be good for your soul if you should instead wage war against the Turks. As an old

man, and much closer to the Turks than other princes, you could hardly spend your years and your money more gloriously than to fight against them.

I assure you that, if you do that instead of what you are doing now against your own, you will have my full support. I urge you to desist from warring against the King to whom both you and I are obligated.

Dated in Croya on the 31st day of October, 1460.

George Castrioti, alias Scanderbeg.

Meanwhile, Scanderbeg wrote the following letter to King Ferdinand and sent him a copy of what he had written to the Prince of Taranto:

To His Majesty Ferdinand, King of Sicily and Aragon,
From Scanderbeg, Prince of Albania.

Your Majesty:

It would be in unnatural bad taste for men who wait to be called upon whenever their master or friend or relative is in dire need of help. I am sure that Your Majesty remembers when I pledged my personal services and all my worldly possessions to repay my obligation to you. I did so immediately after I heard of the revolt in your realm.

Of course, Your Majesty has not asked me for any aid perhaps because you believed there was no need for it or perhaps you felt I might not be able to keep my promise. But now, according to the news reaching my ears, I gather that your situation has grown worse. For that reason, I took hold of certain galleys which transported some of my footmen and cavalry to Apulia.

Until today, we have had no report whether these troops have been of any help to you. But now that I have received a letter from the Prince of Taranto, a copy of which together with my answer are herewith enclosed, I am well aware of it. He has used some unkind words in his letter and urges me to desist from helping Your Majesty. May God protect you from any harm. Be assured that, regardless of what others say, I will be on the side of right and virtue, not on the side of fortune.

Meanwhile, if Your Majesty will see whether or not my men have been of any help. Let me know if I should send more troops and just how many. As I informed you a while

ago, I am holding in readiness two thousand fully equipped and battle-ready horsemen and awaiting your request to send them over. And should you have any doubt about the outcome of the struggle, I will come myself to lead them and even to give my life aiding Your Majesty to victory.

Dated in Croya, the 31st of October, 1460.

George Castrioti, alias Scanderbeg.

Scanderbeg rushed over with an expeditionary force of 2,000 cavalry. It was August, 1461. After leaving Durazzo, on their way to Italy, his galleys stopped over at Ragusa for more military supplies. Scanderbeg was on intimately friendly terms with the Republic of Ragusa.

On landing at Barletta, in Italy, after crossing the Adriatic Sea during a violent storm, he gathered his elite troops and delivered this significant oration:

I recall, my fellow soldiers, what has been said of Belissarius, that famous warrior, about his powerful expeditionary forces by sea against the Englishmen. This may also just as well apply to us here.

His first act was to have his men set fire to all his ships for fear lest his soldiers, being carried away with the hope of safe passage back again, should be always desirous of returning home to their country. And, instead of doing their best and staking their lives to gain victory, they might by their default and negligence be overcome and vanquished.

This now is our case, my good soldiers. And our situation is not much unlike that: We are now across the sea, far from our own homes and from our own country. We are on the territory and dominions occupied by our enemies. We are amongst strangers, altogether without hope of ever returning again to our own.

Indeed, our affairs have reached such an impasse that it is impossible for us to resolve as to whether it is better for us to stand still or to go forward. Except for our arms and our horses and our courage (which is dedicated to deeds of arms), we have nothing else left to us on which to rely and build.

For there is now no hope of life or safety, if we do not win a notable victory over our enemies.

But have courage, my men. Let us consider that this is God's will and pleasure: that we should maintain the

patrimony of Jesus Christ, the house of God, and the seat of the Church.

And never doubt that He will send us even from heaven an easy and speedy victory.

Soon we shall confound this enemy of ours. And then shall we return to our own country victors, joyous, and triumphant.

Here I cast no doubt, nor question your usual and accustomed valor, when I set before my eyes so many victories which you have won over your enemies.

And then, being thus reassured through the confidence of your virtue and prowess, I have cheerfully undertaken this expedition after having learned by your arms to break and shatter greater armies, far better than this which is now confronting us.

Much more reason have you, my comrades, not to overrate these small troops. At the hearing of our names and before they ever had any contact with us, they did take to flight and did not delay for our landing but lifted their siege and are now retired from us.

It remains for us, therefore, to pursue them while they are seized by this fear and astonishment.

And yet, in this respect, I would warn you, my good friends, that if our enemy should dare to abide us and to come and fight with us, my counsel is that at first we shall hold loose by light skirmishes: And we shall endeavor to weary and overcome and trouble them with relentless assaults.

In so doing, we shall either put them to the sword or take them alive as prisoners.

For the burdensome weight and heaviness of their own arms do sufficiently plague and afflict them in the fight.

But we, being lightly armed and mounted, have a great advantage against them: We would be able to course up and down both to harass and to cause disorder with ease.

Go to then, my brave and courageous soldiers. Let every man see that his horse and armor is in good readiness. For, with the help of God, tomorrow we shall face our enemy.

Scanderbeg's fabulous cavalry—in full coordination with King Ferdinand's Italian forces—triumphed easily over the combined armies of the French Anjous and the Prince of

Taranto at the battle of Apulia. King Ferdinand, after triumphantly returning to Naples, rewarded him handsomely. Trana and two other vast lands were given to him in perpetuity. King Ferdinand had already named him 'Captain General' in the Balkans.

On his return to Albania, Scanderbeg immediately turned his full attention to domestic affairs. One of them had to do with Prince Stephen, Despot of Serbia, whom Ottoman legions had driven out of his country. In this connection, the following letter speaks for itself:

To Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan.
Your Serene Highness:

I come before Your Highness with a recommendation, and am ready to act in accordance with your wishes. Please bear in mind how Stephen, the illustrious Despot of Serbia and son of the late Despot George of Serbia, was driven out of his country by the Turk simply because of his love for the Christian faith.

He is now living among us. And, according to the best of our ability, we have given him sufficient aid from our wealth and possession. Whatever message Despot Stephen has sent to Your Highness by his personal emissary, please give it your gracious attention and keep him in your good will.

Dated in Lesh, 10 September 1461.

George Castrioti, alias Scanderbeg, Lord of Albania and Captain General of His Majesty in his Greek territories.

SULTAN MEHMED OFFERS PEACE

Shocked by so many defeats in Albania, Sultan Mehmed soon decided on a subtle approach to attain peace. In the following letter, which Mustapha Pasha had brought to Croya, he has made it quite clear:

To Scanderbeg, Prince of Albania,
Mehmed, King of the Turks and Emperor of the East,
greetings.

I think, Friend Scanderbeg, that no acquaintance can be greater or friendship more firm than that which has grown of long living together. And especially since the same has taken place beginning from childhood and tender years, as you know it has been between us two who have lived together in great love and friendship, when you stayed as hostage in my Father's Court.

Wherefore, beloved Scanderbeg, when I call to remembrance how all our youthful years were delighted, and being mindful of all those things which you have oftentimes done for the advancement of our Empire and Kingdom, and for the glory of the Ottoman Family, I cannot choose but embrace you with singular zeal and affection.

For I take God to witness, that nothing could be more welcome or pleasing unto me in my life than to have you with me, and for a while to enjoy your company.

Neither need you fear anything by coming unto me, just because my soldiers without my knowledge or commandment have of late broken in and spoiled your Kingdom; which thing, as reason required, was to me exceedingly displeasing. Nor did any whit offend me that they were by your forces vanquished and overcome, and so received the just reward of their evil deserts, and that all things fell out with you according to the equity of your cause.

But to let these things pass, the old love and friendship persuaded me to come to agreement and to join together with you in a Perpetual League of Amity, to the intent that our ancient acquaintance and familiarity, which by reason of long absence is almost worn out, may again take life, increase, and be confirmed. Of which Peace, let these be the Capitulations, if they shall seem to you reasonable:

First, we require of you freely and peaceably to let our Armies to pass through your Kingdom, for the besieging of the cities and invading of the countries subject to the Venetians, our enemies:

Then to deliver unto us your Son John in Hostage, whom we will always treat as one of our own natural children:

And afterwards, that our Merchants and Men of Trade may peaceably come and travel into all parts of your Kingdom with their Merchandise, and there freely and safely use their negotiation:

And, lastly, you yourself in person may at your pleasure safely and without fear at all come to us, and in like manner return again.

In which things if you will yield unto us, I promise by the Faith of a King to grant unto you and your Kingdom sincere Peace with perpetual tranquility. And that there shall not be any more dearer unto me than yourself, and will never to the utmost of our power permit your Kingdom to be infested or molested by any of our subjects, or others.

Whatever you shall further receive from our Ambassador Mustapha, you may give full credence.

Fare you well. From our Imperial Palace at Constantinople, the 10th of May, 1461.

Before Mustapha Pasha left Croya, Scanderbeg handed him the following letter:

To Mehmed Ottoman, King of the Turks,
Scanderbeg, Prince of Epirus, sends greetings:

Most noble and renowned Prince, we have received your letter in which you write of your deep love and singular affection which you have for us, confirmed as you say by our old upbringing and education, and is so bound and deeply rooted by long use that, being in a manner grown into a second nature, shall flourish and endure between us forever.

You say also that, since our friendship has lain dormant for a long time, we should reawaken it. And you move that we should enter into a certain new League and Confederation in which, among other conditions of the League, you propound this one, namely, that your Armies should pass through my Kingdom in order to invade the Venetians.

This request, worthy Mehmed, I do not find compatible either with Justice or with my Honor to consent, especially since the Venetians are my good friends and allies.

As for your desire to have my son John with you as hostage for the better assurance of the peace between us, I should peradventure do it, most noble Mehmed, if fatherly love would permit it. But since I have but him, and he is yet a tender child, it is neither for his good nor for ours to have him now taken from us, now that he ought to be most tenderly cherished and carefully educated.

Regarding your request for your merchants, that they may freely and safely travel in my Kingdom at their pleasure, I can be content and wish heartily that there might be a free intercourse of our respective merchants within both our Kingdoms.

Furthermore, regarding your earnest persuasion urging me boldly and without fear to come to you, that by such a personal interview and personal presence, our great desire might be better satisfied. In this respect, most noble Prince, I cannot but praise your most honorable disposition and commend your good nature. And I would therefore boldly follow your persuasion, if my other urgent affairs, with the Government of my Kingdom, would so permit.

But what shall I do? My son, John, as I said before, being but little and as yet unfit to govern; and my people, as you know, love always to have something to do, being by nature a fierce and restless Nation, whom I myself have much ado to rule and govern.

For all that I will come to you according to your desire, excepting only at a more commodious time.

And so fare you well. From our Camp, the 30th day of May, 1461.

Upon receipt of this letter, Mehmed sent him the following reply:

Your letter we have received by our Ambassador Mustapha. You give us to understand that of all the conditions of peace we have made, you accept only that which concerns our Merchants and Men of Trade that they might lawfully and at their pleasure transport and sell their goods there.

Upon this condition only you make an offer of peace to me, alleging that such is the will and mind of your Captains.

This offer of yours we accept, and all the rest of your excuses we willingly concede. And therefore, Scanderbeg, I promise you faithfully that with all you demand of me I will comply, and upon that resolution rest assured. And I will as long as I live—God be my witness—observe and keep a sincere and inviolable Peace with you forever, except in the event that you first give me just cause for violating it.

For that purpose we have with our Imperial Seal signed this letter, which we have sent to you by our Ambassador Mustapha, thereby confirming to you this agreement of permanent Peace.

Therefore, you, if you please, may also signify and with your Seal confirm Ours, so that we likewise may also have your consent and agreement. And, further, you may order an open proclamation for public knowledge throughout all your Kingdom, as I will in like manner order to be done through mine.

And in manifestation of my love toward you, as well as my willingness and bounty, I do freely give unto you all those things which you by force of Arms have taken from my late Father in Albania, so that you may possess and enjoy them as if they had always been yours by inheritance from your ancient Ancestors.

And we do absolutely renounce and release unto you all rights, prerogatives, and authority which we have at any time heretofore had over them. And we do give, grant, and confirm the same unto you and unto your Heirs all the right, title, or interest, which we heretofore have had therein, and from henceforth we will always approve and allow you to rule as the true and lawful King of Albania, and will call you so.

As I have promised you by the Faith of a King, we will never hereafter with wars molest you or yours except in the event that you give us just cause to violate our promise.

Wherefore we do expect that you send unto us a copy of these presents, entrusting them to our Ambassador Mustapha unto whom you may give credence touching upon anything in which he shall declare to you in our behalf.

Given in our Imperial City of Constantinople, the 20th of June, 1461.

* * *

Accordingly, peace soon prevailed between Albania and the Ottoman Empire. It lasted for a comparatively short spell—until it was violated under a deceptive pretext.

A SHORT-LIVED PEACE

Only a few months afterward, peace was violated. Sultan Mehmed's legions had attacked the Balkan forces of the Republic of Venice, an ally and friend of Scanderbeg. Mehmed's letter, brought to Croya by Mustapha Pasha, reflects the very serious consequences:

Mehmed, Emperor of the East and West,
To Scanderbeg, Prince of the Albanians, greetings:

I have always admired your great fidelity and upright dealing, most noble Scanderbeg. I found it incredible, therefore, that you, a Prince of such heroic and princely perfection, should so inconsiderately and without any occasion break the Faith and League which you not so long since contracted with me. For, as I am informed, you have entered into the confines of our dominions with a great army and, with fire and sword destroying all that you could, have carried away with you a great booty.

For which thing—I know quite well—the Venetians are the only cause, by whose counsel and persuasion you have been induced to do this deed. And, seduced by their allurements and subtle persuasions, you have made war on me and have become the faithless breaker of your own League and of the sacred Law of Nations.

Yet I blame you little or not at all therefore, regarding more the cause of the ignominy than the spite itself, but lay the blame upon them who have always been my foes and chief enemies rather than lay it on you.

But, alas, what is this to me, Scanderbeg, that you have done—to me who possess so many and so large Dominions? Do you think you do great harm to our Empire by spoiling a little piece of a country and by stealing our cattle, more like a thief and robber than an open enemy? Which thing I do not consider worth the name of an injury.

But if you think it so good, proceed doing so. But I value more your friendship and affection than whatever else is dearest to me. As you know, I have always borne special favor for you, and loved you most dearly. And, therefore, as often as I recall to mind our tender years while we lived together in my Father's Court at Adrianople, I cannot but feel myself bound to you in every courtesy.

And, therefore, my good Scanderbeg, I most heartily request and entreat you that we renew our former conclusions of peace and confirm anew the same by solemn oath. If the former peace had been established, you would not have suffered yourself to be so circumvented or seduced by the Venetians.

It is necessary, therefore, that we now again forever confirm a League and Peace between us by solemn and sacred oath on both sides. Which if you will do, as I hope you will and in this be advised by me, you with your Posterity will undoubtedly always reign in peace and possess in safety whatever is yours.

Whereas if you should do otherwise, believe me, you will regret it, and that right quickly. You know already my Forces, which whether or not you will be able to withstand, you had best be well advised.

The poor Princes, your neighbors, and the Venetians, your deceivers, cannot deliver you from my Forces and Power.

Do you not see the Greeks almost all rooted out before your eyes? Do you not see the Emperors of Constantinople and Trebizond deprived by us of their Empires? Cannot you see the Princes of Serbia and Romania, the King of Bosnia put to death, and all the Kingdoms of Asia, with many other Kings and Princes, vanquished and overthrown and made to bow unto me as subjects?

Wherefore, Scanderbeg, I advise you in this respect to follow my counsel, and so believe me you will not be deceived.

Concerning these matters, we have given further orders to our Ambassador and Servant Mustapha, who comes to you. To him you may without any doubt give credence in any matter.

Farewell. From our Imperial City of Constantinople, the 7th of May, 1463.

Scanderbeg promptly rejected Sultan Mehmed's second offer of peace, having already rushed to the aid of the Venetian forces in the Balkans. In retaliation, the Ottoman ruler ordered Sermet Pasha and a sizable Turkish army to invade Albania- But Scanderbeg, fully anticipating such dire measures, was well prepared for any eventuality.

DEATH OF A CRUSADER

August, 1464, brought Scanderbeg a resounding victory and news of a heartrending death. He had hardly defeated Sermet Pasha and his 15,000 Turkish cavalry at Ochrida when he heard of the death of Pope Pius II, his great supporter and benefactor. The Pontiff, while heading a force of European volunteers, was on his way to meet Scanderbeg across the Adriatic presumably to crown him "King of the Albanians." But he suddenly died at Ancona on August 14. Stunned and grieved, Scanderbeg at once issued this philosophical message in order to console his own bereaved people:

God, the ruler of our days and all eternity, does sometimes frustrate the wishes and desires of mortal men and does not suffer them always to enjoy these according to their own will and contentment.

For though in the eyes of man they may seem good and profitable, yet in the sight and secret knowledge of His divine majesty He knows them to be otherwise. And while there may be many things which unto us appear beneficial, His wisdom foresees that they will greatly prejudice us.

For example: There is no city so big, there is no nation so powerful but that, if they had no enemies abroad, they might find some even at home among themselves. If there is no external cause to molest or grieve them, they might at one time or another be oppressed by their own proper forces, by reason of some internal disagreement.

If it had pleased God that the Romans had not ruined Carthage, which was envious of their greatness, and if they had not rooted out this foreign enemy but had kept him in fear and awe, had they not then been consumed by civil wars within themselves, had they not turned their swords against their own throats, the great Roman Empire would peradventure be standing even until this day.

The fear of a foreign foe had preserved and still maintained them in safety.

The same may be said of the Christians, of the nations professing the faith of Christ: For if we were exempted from external enemies and if we had not an adversary elsewhere to keep us in awe, considering our impiety and

ambition, our rancors and divisions beyond all hope of reconciliation as well as the bloody streams of troubles and tumults nourished within the body of the commonweal of Christendom, do you think that we would not find a hundred times more disadvantages and mischiefs by our own enmities and dissensions than by the violence of our enemies?

Be assured that, long before this time, we would have been consumed and worn out by the fury and outrage of our own proper arms.

I conclude, therefore, that it has not happened altogether for the worst that this voyage is broken off: For it was greatly to be feared that when we had once chased away this grievous and bloody enemy far from us, we would have kindled some fire within our own homes which would have proved more bloody and fatal unto us.

However, it is not to be doubted, and we may hold it as certain and an infallible truth, that the Ottoman Empire cannot continue too long but it must decay and perish, if it is to be called an Empire: which is but a waste and lone desert of barbarism deprived of all light of true doctrine, being without laws, without judgments, without any good order and policy. And even in those parts where as once the arts and sciences, the true and perfect discipline, the most famous Churches with many other precious ornaments were most glorious and flourishing: They have all come to an end in Asia. A great part of Europe is subdued by the arms and violence of the Turks.

For it will not be long before the same will come to nothing because, as wise men have written, things ill-gotten are soon wasted and would speedily perish: No man can long possess or retain dominion over anything purchased by injurious force and violence.

On the contrary, the Christian Empire and the Church of God, founded and erected by the divine oracle, shall endure forever and shall never end.

Pope Pius had recently organized a crusade of European volunteers to drive the Turkish armies out of Europe. He had named Scanderbeg to lead the crusade.

A FLAMING SWORD AGAINST ANOTHER

Having vowed by the head of Allah to defeat Scanderbeg, Mehmed soon called on Ballaban Pasha Badera, his greatest general, to achieve his cherished goal. Like Scanderbeg, his man-of-the-hour was a great master of guerrilla warfare. With him as a master strategist, Mehmed had conquered Constantinople in 1453. And now, eleven years later, Ballaban Pasha, himself an Albanian renegade, was to cross swords with Scanderbeg at the first battle of Valcalia.

Keenly aware of his new enemy's military genius but most confident of taking his measure, Scanderbeg calmly briefed his army in this speech:

My good soldiers and comrades: I see very well that it behooves us today, as much as ever, to make our enemy see and feel our sword.

Ballaban has come to seek us and to prove whether fortune will be more friendly to him than she has been to his predecessors. But before he begins to march against us, I deem it best that we remove our camp to this mountain which is at our backs.

Nevertheless, this you must mark well: As soon as he sees us departing hence, he will imagine (because we are so few) that we mean to fly away: And, therefore, it must be presumed, he will immediately charge us with all possible violence at our backs.

If he does, then you will receive him valiantly. And, after you have shifted your place a little and feigned retreat, suddenly you turn and, with around and brave charge, you bear in upon them with all your strength and, as is your custom, break and disorder them. In so doing, I have no doubt but you will have them at your discretion.

But take heed, my good soldiers, I pray you. And be you well advised when you have put them to flight and you have them in pursuit and you follow in execution upon them:

Take heed, I say, that you do not enter within the mouth of the strait of Valcalia. But stop your course and do not pass farther forward.

For within that narrow passage, I know, there will be certain enemy squadrons poised to entrap us.

I know it well. I am well acquainted both with the place as well as with the policies of the Barbarians: If you once enter, you will never get out again.

Let it suffice you, my friends, to pursue your victory only to the entrance of that place and not farther.

Scanderbeg had directed part of his cautious warning to cavalry General Moisi Golemi, who was second in command to himself. In the fierce heat of every battle, Moisi had always fought with great abandon and without the least regard for his own safety. This time was no exception. As briefed, Scanderbeg's cavalry resorted to its usually swift and deceptive tactics to crush the enemy at the very first onset.

Accordingly, Moisi cut loose against Ballaban Pasha's forces. Seven other cavalry commanders, two of them Scanderbeg's young nephews, followed his leadership. In tightly coordinated assaults under Scanderbeg's overall command, in onset after onset until nightfall that day, Ballaban Pasha's main army was broken and routed. Those who escaped the swords of Scanderbeg's battalions retreated toward the narrow gorges of Valcalia.

In a brilliantly executed tactical maneuver, however, Ballaban Pasha had done exactly what Scanderbeg had all along foreseen—and feared: He had seized the narrow end of the valley, with both the distant passages as well as the rocky and forested heights securely guarded. He had laid there a huge ambushade to trap Scanderbeg and his commanders.

By nightfall, Ballaban Pasha's vaunted army was soundly defeated. And Ballaban himself barely escaped Scanderbeg's flaming sword. But it was a Pyrrhic victory. The flower of Scanderbeg's cavalry command had pursued the defeated Turkish forces much too far into the trap—for themselves.

At the first battle of Valcalia, Scanderbeg won a costly victory. Although he defeated Ballaban Pasha's stronger army, eight of his greatest commanders were captured. They were: Moisi Golemi, Musachi Angelina, Gjino Musachi, Gjon Perlati, Nicholas Berisha, Gjergj Chuku, Gjin Maneshi, and Gurizi de V্লাidane. Later, contrary to the laws of warfare, Mehmed ordered them publicly executed in Constantinople. Scanderbeg was deeply grieved.

But in two bloody battles later, both at Oronica and Sfetigrad, Scanderbeg soundly defeated Ballaban Pasha's Turkish armies. Each time, he captured almost the whole enemy command. At the second battle of Valcalia, however, Ballaban Pasha nearly trapped him between himself and lagup Arnaut's strong army, which had secretly slipped into Albania by way of coastal Greece.

Like Ballaban Badera, lagup Arnaut was an Albanian renegade. Both were reared and educated in Turkey at the Devrisheme Military School for foreign hostages. And both of them knew Scanderbeg and his military genius. Here is Scanderbeg's oration to his troops, before the second battle of Valcalia:

The necessity of the time, my good soldiers, and your tested valor will not suffer me to speak at length. You are sufficiently well acquainted with this hostile army which is but the scum and accumulation of those troops which your swords have left alive. And they are but the remnants of those battles which you have lately won.

These are not the martial and generous Frenchmen nor the warlike and brave Italians whom you, nevertheless, have beaten and defeated. But they are your slaves. Their lives are at your mercy. And they are the ordinary subjects of your glory.

See to it, therefore, that you bestir yourselves valiantly, so that this encounter may end and determine the course of twenty years of triumphs and victories which you have most gloriously gained over them.

They have come here by force and constraint. They are drawn to this place by the blinded ambition of that infamous Ballaban who, being in disgrace both before God and man,

does seek desperately by some exploit against us to recover his reputation and to recapture the favor of Sultan Mehmed.

Now is the time, my friends, when you are to hope for an honorable end to your wearisome toils and to the shedding of your blood.

Behold why this is the last attempt of your enemy: Being deprived of Turkish commanders, he is now forced to seek the aid of those who are natives of your own country.

But you need not have any doubt or fear of such people who are traitors to God and their country, the worms whose conscience is ever tormenting their souls, men who cannot possibly be able to do you any great harm.

Go to then, my good soldiers. Let the noble and famous acts of your ancestors and your own honorable exploits sharpen and spur your courage:

Brace your hearts. Gather your strength. Press upon your enemies. Charge against them bravely. Break valiantly amongst these base rascals. And march over their cursed carcasses like valiant soldiers and invincible victors.

BATTLES OF KASHAR AND VALCALIA

In the middle of August, 1465, Scanderbeg smashed Ballaban Pasha's army of nearly 30,000 men at the second battle of Valcalia and captured almost his whole command. Ballaban Pasha barely escaped his sword. Three days later, in a surprise attack against lagup Arnaut's numerically superior forces, he won the bloody battle of Kashar and put lagup Arnaut to the sword. Before leaving the Valcalia battlefield, Scanderbeg prepared his victorious cavalry and guerrilla army in this oration:

Today, my good soldiers and companions, we have with the help of God gained a most memorable victory against our chief and deadly enemy.

Such was his rashness, the unhappy man, that he presumed to encircle us between two powerful and mighty armies. And so he was determined traitorously to destroy and oppress us. And he was in good hope by this notable plan and plot to wipe away his own shame and infamy and the memory of those defeats which he had received at our hands.

But now, by the grace of God and your virtue, instead of diminishing his shame, he (Ballaban Badera) has made it a great deal greater.

Yet even now lagup Arnaut, a noble and bountiful banqueter, has come to invite us to a new feast.

You see, my dear friends, how even before we have gotten out of this valley and before we have washed our hands from the blood of our enemies, before we have wiped the blood from our swords and before sheathing them in our scabbards, lagup Arnaut has likewise come unto us.

He offers us goodly presents: That is, he offers us his troops and squadrons so that you may dispose of them at your pleasure.

Therefore, let us go to this feast to which lagup does earnestly call us. Let us have our fill of his dainties, and when we shall have glutted ourselves, let us also carry some part of it away with us.

Let us with speed and diligence go from here. And let us go and meet with lagup, whom, I dare assure you, we will quickly overthrow and bring to confusion.

For his are but a handful of men in comparison to those with Ballaban. Besides, I think I see that the warlike fury and martial fierceness of your courage is still flaming within you.

God speed!

In a surprise assault from the Tirana side, at the gray light of dawn, Scanderbeg suddenly fell upon lagup Arnaut's forces at Kashar. Meanwhile, his men loudly informed the enemy camp that Ballaban Pasha's greater army had already been soundly defeated at the second battle of Valcalia. Then, to prove it, they at once flung captured regimental standards to the center of the camp. In the bloody battle that followed later that day, Scanderbeg put lagup Arnaut to the sword. His inspired army won a second major victory in one week.

Fortunately for Scanderbeg, the victory at Kashar was won after receiving high-level intelligence. Widowed Mamitsa Castrioti, whose husband, Musachi Thopia, was killed at the siege of Berat ten years earlier, most urgently informed him that lagup Arnaut's army had already slipped secretly into Albania. It had reached lower Tirana and was heading straight for Croya. Scanderbeg had just defeated Ballaban Pasha at the second battle of Valcalia when her messenger breathlessly so informed him.

Mamitsa was the youngest of his five sisters. The others were: Angelina, Iella, Mara, and Vlaida. They were all married, their fate immediately unknown. His three brothers—Constantine, Reposhi and Stanishi—had been reported put to death by order of Sultan Murad. His mother, Voysava, who was a descendant of the royal house of Triballi, an Illyrian clan, had died shortly after her husband's death in 1443.

THE SIEGE OF CROYA AND THE VATICAN

In June of 1466, Sultan Mehmed hurled a mighty army of more than 200,000 men against Scanderbeg's puny defensive forces. He first ordered Ballaban Pasha with 80,000 men to besiege Croya. The siege lasted for nearly eleven months.

Scanderbeg, just before Christmas, 1466, left Lt. General Tanush Thopia in command. Then, with a handful of cavalry officers, he boarded a ship to Rome. Dressed as a poor wayfarer, he appeared before Pope Paul II and the Consistory of Cardinals, in St. Peter's. After being honored with a sword of heraldic significance and the blessed robe of a crusader, Scanderbeg appealed for immediate aid in this stirring oration:

Most Holy Father and Prelates: If my tongue and eloquence were able to recount your virtues, which exceed far beyond all praises and commendations, if I were able to do it, yet the infinite perils wherein both I and my people are plunged and drowned in blood more than any other nation in Christendom do not permit me to enjoy the sweet pleasure and benefits of your perfections.

The just grief of my oppressed country does withdraw me. The Turkish Prince, following in the footsteps of his ancestors, will not suffer me to do so. Every day he does invade your flock, does dismember and persecute your people. Not being satisfied with so many murders, rapines and atrocities which he has committed in Asia and Europe, he now strives with all his overwhelming power to suppress and destroy me and my people, with our poor Realm being left as the last objective of his cruelty.

The long continuous wars and the many battles, which we have had, have worn out and have eaten up and consumed our forces. We are now in our last cast, so much that not any part of our body is left whole and sound enough to receive any more new wounds. Neither have we any blood left to us which we may shed and bestow for the commonweal of Christendom.

Wherefore, most holy Father of all princes of the Church of God, if your Holiness and clemency do not speedily and readily help us to withstand and prevent this devastation, then the nation of Albania will be forever gone and lost.

This is the cause which has brought me here. This it is that has caused me to call upon you. I have left behind a great fire kindled and flaming in my house. The enemy is even now at my door. He has not only destroyed and laid desolate my Nation but has as well murdered and holds captive my people. He holds Croya, the key and bulwark of my Realm, in a tight siege and has resolved never to depart from there until it becomes Turkish. And I have no doubt that he will almost do it, if we are not immediately aided by your greatness and authority.

While there is time left, provide me in the swiftest time possible, I beseech you, with the most urgently needed aid so that we may repress his violence and stem his fury, which has grown so mighty that it threatens and menaces not only the existence of Christendom but also the Church of God and even our faith as well.

He (Sultan Mehmed) has already inflicted upon the Christian people all the cruel examples of inhumanity which can possibly be imagined. He has already seized two Christian empires. The greater part of Asia is in slavery under him. The Greeks are in a manner destroyed. The Bulgarians and the Serbs and the Thracians are brought under his subjection. Croatia is subdued under his forces. Morea is in servitude. And almost all of Macedonia and Epirus are burned and sacked by his fury and outrage.

You see the relics of so many princes, of so many chieftains of Macedonia and of all Greece, you have heard of how many wars and struggles and encounters my ancestors have had against the Ottomans. I myself have not had one day, not one minute of rest, but ceaselessly during these twenty years have waged bloody conflicts against these faithless people, especially against Mehmed, who has now afflicted my country with so many devastations. I have until this day resisted and turned him back. With the help of God, I have almost continuously emerged victorious against him.

But now, at this time, most holy Father, being wearied with so many struggles and discommodities both past and present, consumed by so many battles, having lost many excellent commanders, and so many of my soldiers and citizens being now slain and destroyed, we have not much left of our ancient fortune.

And now I call on you, your Holiness and most worthy prelates, to give us aid. I beseech you to provide us with the means of war so that I may with less peril be able to bear and sustain the brunt of this struggle.

If the private miseries of your soldier do not move you, then at least let the common necessity, the imminent peril to your flock and the future devastation of the realm of Christendom stir you up and persuade you.

On his return to Croya, early in 1467, Scanderbeg broke the terrible siege of Croya and defeated the mighty Turkish armies. He first trapped Ballaban Pasha between himself and Tanush Thopia. An alert soldier on his security staff stole the bloody show: He shot Ballaban Pasha dead with his flintlock gun. His name: Gjergj Aleksi.

VALEDICTORY

Again, during the summer of 1467, Scanderbeg soundly defeated a far greater army under the supreme command of Sultan Mehmed himself. That's when the Ottoman ruler, heading home with his shattered army, took a vengeful toll of lives in the lesser defended provinces. Deeply anxious about the ominously uncertain future of his country, Scanderbeg urgently summoned the Albanian League, which he had secretly organized in 1444, to meet in Alessio.

But just before calling the meeting to order at the Cathedral of St. Nicholas there, "he was suddenly stricken with a strong and violent fever." Presumably it was pneumonia. At sixty-three, worn out and weary by ceaseless battles for twenty-four years, he now realized that his end was fast drawing closer. At once, he ordered certain staff officers to bring in from the White Castle in Croya Donica and John Castrioti II, their only son and sole heir. Then, without losing a moment, he called the League members to his bedside and delivered this valedictory—his historic farewell oration:

The sovereign and paramount virtue as well as the true and most perfect religion, most worthy Princes and you my beloved comrades, is in my opinion this: First to reverence, serve, and adore God the most high and omnipotent—in justice, sanctity, and piety. And next, not only to love dearly and have a continuous care and regard for our country but, if need be, even to give our lives and to shed our blood for our country's preservation and safety.

For my part, with singular desire and affection, I have always fought and embraced these tenets. All my thoughts have continuously been bent and employed toward that end, and I have endeavored with all my forces and to the utmost of my power to attain them.

A quarter of a century has passed since I escaped from the unclean hands of Murad, King of the Turks, and came into this realm which has been the ancient patrimony and heritage of our ancestors.

Ever since that time, I have waged war against the rage and fury of the Ottoman for the defense of our Crown and Kingdom, and for the dignity of our people and the

commonweal of Christendom. In all that time, by the grace and favor of the Divine Providence, we have had a happy and most fortunate success, according to our heart's desire. And you never have seen me return either vanquished or repulsed in true and waged battle. But I always had the advantage over the enemy. And I do not remember ever being hurt or wounded except once, when a Turk shot me in my foot with an arrow. And, even then, I slew him before the eyes of the enemy.

But now, my dear friends, in the ordinary course of human events, when I have reached three score and three years of my age, seized by a grievous sickness and shorn of my accustomed strength, I begin to wax feeble. And, by little and little, I go by the way of all flesh. I perceive, my dear friends, that it is the will and pleasure of the Divine Providence for me to lay aside this mortal and frail burden of my body.

I protest unto you before God that this necessity which is laid upon me now does not in any way trouble nor grieve me. I do not repine against that law which at the time of our birth destiny imposed on us. I have run the race which it pleased God to appoint for me.

However, before my soul departs from my body and before I leave you, there is one thing of which I find it necessary to admonish you and to plead with you: Until now, during my lifetime, you have endured all suffering for the safety and dignity of our Christian religion and our country. By these means you have won the favor, honor and admiration of all the Princes of Christendom.

Even hereafter, when I am dead and gone, let that be the only and the whole desire of your hearts. All things, I can assure you, will fall out happily for you as long as you continue steadfastly united and as long as you put the public and common good above personal interest.

If you join together as brothers and friends, and live with each other in perfect love and harmony, no enemy whatsoever shall be able to hurt you or cause you grief. Your scepters and your crowns shall endure permanently. Then shall you maintain your people, your provinces, your wives, your children, and your property in perpetual security and felicity.

Under these circumstances, you need never fear the fury of the Ottoman Empire, nor the rage of the barbarians. Then their frauds, subtleties and cunning deceptions shall never harm you or prevail against you.

But have no doubt whatsoever that the Ottoman tyrant will seek to cause disunity among you, to divide your forces. He will use many plots and devices to turn you one against the other. And when he sees you are at variance with each other, he will in the long run oppress you one by one and utterly consume and destroy all of you.

Moreover, my good friends and companions, there is Gjon, my son, whom with all possible care and love as a father can most heartily do, I do recommend and commit and dedicate and leave him to your faith and loyalty and to your singular virtue.

His tender years and the innocence of his age render him unfit either to foresee or to repulse the imminent danger from the enemy. He is not able to preserve himself from being devoured by those fierce and enraged tigers. He is not able to keep himself from being oppressed by Mehmed, who so greedily covets his Kingdom. As soon as he hears of my death, this enemy will endeavor ceaselessly to reach that very goal—if your arms and your valor do not protect and preserve him.

As you know, I have not lived for myself alone, but for all of you and your children. I have so labored day and night that I have not spared myself any pains for your sake. During the course of my life, I have not enjoyed any time or rest or leisure to myself. I never kept any hours, nor any set time to eat and drink or sleep. The nights and the days have been to me the same. I have taken no less care of your welfare than of my own.

In all cares and services in the field of honor, in all duties and sentinels, I have not treated you as mere soldiers or as servants or subjects: I have always held and loved you as my brothers and companions. And, as you know, whenever each battle onset began against our enemies, I faced the hazard and peril together with you by being the foremost against them and the last in returning from combat.

But now, my dear friends and companions, I leave you. It is time for me to go hence. Wherefore, I pray and request

all of you that the faith and affection and love which I have had toward you, you must now bestow upon Gjon, my son, who is the living image of his father. I now offer and dedicate him unto you as Vicar and Lieutenant for me and in my stead.

After dismissing them, he asked Lek Dukagjini to bring Donica and Gjon who had arrived later. Left alone with his family, Scanderbeg fondly recited his paternal legacy to his young son. It was in the spirit and regal manner of King Philip's legacy to his son—Alexander the Great.

Scanderbeg died early on the 17th day of January, 1468. His death deeply grieved his people. Europe was stunned. Even his phantom horse, waiting in vain for his master to ride him again, died of remorse five days later. George Castrioti, alias Scanderbeg, was buried inside the Cathedral of St. Nicholas, Alessio, Albania.

On hearing of Scanderbeg's death. King Ferdinand sent this letter of condolence to widowed Donica Castrioti:

Most Illustrious and Dear Lady:

We are deeply grieved to hear that the most Illustrious Scanderbeg, your beloved husband and one who was like a father to us, is dead, according to God's will. His death has brought us no less grief than the death of our reverend father, King Alphonse, of immortal remembrance.

We are more deeply touched because his death has now been confirmed by your Ambassador. For this reason, we are sending to you Ieronimo de Carvineo, our noble relative, who will come to you in our behalf. Therefore, we ask you to listen to him with full confidence, as if we were there in person.

Dated in Capua, the 24th day of February, 1468.

POSTSCRIPT

THE LONG AFTERMATH: When he heard of Scanderbeg's death, Sultan Mehmed—as Swire reports—exclaimed with great satisfaction: "Asia and Europe are mine at last. Woe to Christendom! She has lost her sword and her shield."

An incredibly charmed knight, Scanderbeg had both stunned and baffled Sultan Mehmed and Sultan Murad. In twenty-four years of waging relentless guerrilla warfare against their mighty legions, he had been wounded only once in his foot. Even then, he flashed his sword and swiftly slew the bowman whose arrow had struck him. Had he been killed then, his battlefield enemy would have gained immortal glory. The Ottoman Empire had put an extremely high price on his head.

Authorities have rightfully wondered about Scanderbeg's most unusual stamina and superhuman endurance. Turkish commanders had had countless chances to slay him in battle and thereby achieve their most glorious objective. He had always been in the forefront of every onset, plainly visible to the enemy in open-field clashes. The answer lies partly in what Marin Barletius has told us in two significant passages. Before engaging a Scythian knight in a duel unto death, for example, Scanderbeg quickly stripped to his waist. Then, suddenly turning to his boastful challenger, he warned him not to violate any of the most acceptable rules of knightly combat:

"Scanderbeg, both by voice and countenance, betrayed a wonderful resolution and assurance. And the audience was impressed with his manly perfection.

"His arms looked as if nothing like them had ever been seen. His neck was strong and somewhat bending, such as possessed by wrestlers. His shoulders were big and marvellously spread. The color of his visage was fair and white, with traces of heraldic tincture. And the cast of his eyes was straight and pleasant, without any blemish or imperfection."

Like Alexander the Great, he was built like a giant. Physically he was invincible. As a youth, before being taken as hostage, Scanderbeg had already experienced both the blessings and the hardships of physical endurance. In the winter, he would vigorously train himself on the crest of

Mount Croyna or elsewhere. Come blizzard or frozen hell, he would then choose to sleepover improvised beds of snow. In the scorching heat of summer, he would again and again keep on hardening himself like an invincible guerrilla.

But, unlike. Alexander the Great, Scanderbeg derived his strength in other blessed ways as well. In the field, at mealtime, he would drink wine in sane moderation. And he would eat heartily. Meat, usually beef stew or roasted leg of lamb, was his preferred food. Morally, he'd never succumb to excesses of any sort. Until he was married, Scanderbeg led the life of a saintly general. And his subordinates as well lived by the Golden Rule. Family life was held sacred in Albania.

Scanderbeg possessed deeply rooted spiritual qualities. Before each major battle, for example, he would kneel and devoutly pray to God for guidance to victory. As a child and youth, he had been carefully brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. In his time, the flaming spirit of the earlier Crusades—10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th Centuries—was still strongly felt in Roman Catholic Albania. And it was much more intensified by ruthless ravages. Both Sultan Murad and Sultan Mehmed were ruthlessly bent on exterminating him and his people.

During Scanderbeg's lifetime, however, their Ottoman armed might failed miserably to snatch victory. After his death, Sultan Mehmed finally achieved his most cherished goal in Albania's lowland regions especially. What escaped his sword during the 15th Century was almost fully accomplished by succeeding sultans in the 16th and 17th. And it was particularly during this period that Islam began making its deepest penetration in Albania.

Albanian leaders had to choose forcibly between oblivion and Islam. They could either stay on in Albania or escape with only their lives. Those leaders who chose to remain at home as Christians could not exercise any rule over their people. In such a case, both they and their people were allowed to survive as rayahs. Others who of urgent necessity embraced Islam could enjoy both power and privilege in ruling their people. Eventually, this nominal conversion proved to be a very strong hold on whatever precious freedom they could salvage and preserve.

Meanwhile, the clans of the northern highlands struggled to remain untouched. The inaccessible mountain fastness—the same mountains which had always aided Scanderbeg to victory—favored their limited independence. Lek Dukagjini, Scanderbeg's great general, soon gave them a sort of 'Napoleonic Code' by which to live and govern themselves. It was called Kanuni i Lek Dukagjinit. It lasted for centuries. It still does to a limited degree among the highland folk.

But a certain number of Albania's first families, north and south, fled to Italy. Even widowed Donica herself and her son, John Castrioti II, took refuge there under the benevolent protection of the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. From those early roots of emigration, there are now some 350,000 people of Albanian origin in Italy, most of them in the south. They still adhere to certain everlasting customs and traditions which their ancestors had enjoyed in the old homeland. At home, they still speak Albanian. It is of Renaissance quality known as Epirotic. Lexicographer Franciscus Blancus has immortalized it in his Dictionarium Latino-Epiroticum; Rome, 1635.

Strangely enough, their old customs and traditions as well as their ancestral tongue are now being perpetuated in the United States. These are being preserved by early Italo-Albanian immigrants here. These families have come to America mostly from Calabria and Sicily. They are descendants of those Albanian families which first crossed the Adriatic Sea to Italy during the 15th and 16th Centuries.

And they number today about 150,000. Most of them live in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, and California. A good number have distinguished themselves in the higher professions—teachers, judges, lawyers, and great operatic singers. A great many more have won high honors with the U.S. Armed Forces. And you'd find them serving most ably as members of police forces. Even in business they have been successful. To cite an example, the American Fruit Company was founded and built to its present prestige by a financial genius of Italo-Albanian background.

These people take great pride in their family origin. While serving as a press reporter in suburban New York, for instance, the author met a trial lawyer who was a

descendant of Tanush Thopia, Scanderbeg's brilliant general. While a guest at dinner one evening, his mother proudly brought out from an ancient chest and showed him a carefully preserved Bible with Tanush's imprint on it. In her bubbling enthusiasm about her family background, she began talking in a tongue vividly reflecting Renaissance Albanian, which Scanderbeg used to call Epirotic.

Elsewhere in America, whenever the author chanced to break bread with many more such friends, other Italo-Albanian Americans usually spoke with keen enthusiasm of their triple-heritage. Even the younger generations among them have readily and willingly continued honoring certain ancestral customs and traditions. And most all of them still hold rather well their end of any conversation in the tongue of the old-old homeland. Thanks to Scanderbeg's deathless influence, Americans of Albanian heritage constitute a distinctively fine segment in America.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND SOURCES: For his own research in writing this book, the author is gratefully indebted to many people and many sources.

Among the very first who long convinced him of the worthiness of the subject have been—in addition to his Father and Grandmother—two leaders of their people: Bishop F. S. Noli, founder and head of the Albanian Orthodox Church in America; and Faik Konitza, editor of Albania and long his country's diplomatic envoy in Washington.

In his magazine, published in England and Belgium, Faik Konitza wrote a series of historically important articles, the result of scholarly research on the life and deeds of Scanderbeg. He was the first scholar to discover what colors and insignia the Albanian knight used on his standard and shield. A brilliant student of history and letters at Oxford, Harvard, and the University of Paris, he has left a lasting influence among his people. Particularly Americans of Albanian descent who have become beneficiaries of Vatra, which both he and Bishop Noli nurtured into being as a cultural and educational society, have at least that much more to remember him by.

But he had greatly influenced as well Noli's history of Scanderbeg. In 1921, Noli wrote Historia e Skënderbeut. It soon made a good impression on Albanian readers

especially. And it was basically factual. But he had made certain errors of interpretation. In my countless talks with Konitza on a variety of subjects, both in Washington and Boston, he once confidentially expressed keen disappointment over it.

But in 1937, when another important book on Scanderbeg was published, apparently Bishop Noli himself became much more keenly aware of his own errors. That year, the library of the Catholic University of Louvain published Dr. Athanas Gegaj's doctoral dissertation under the title: L'Albanie et l'invasion Turque au XVe Siècle. It is a scholarly work. And it contains an exhaustive list of authoritative sources on the life and period of Scanderbeg.

Later that year, soon after the Boston Trustees of Vatra appointed me editor of Dielli, Bishop Noli and diplomat Konitza—the first a once-impoverished Orthodox Christian and the other a Bektashi aristocrat—readily accepted my invitation to dinner. It was 'in honor of their reunion,' editorially designed as a special occasion. Ever since 1924, when Bishop Noli became Albanian Prime Minister after ousting Ahmed Zogu from that office in Tirana, the two former Harvard schoolmates hadn't exactly been on cordial terms. Nor had they seen each other for nearly two decades. Faik Konitza now was King Zog's personal envoy in Washington.

That evening, when we met at a Boston restaurant all three of us liked, both of them immediately acted like two lonely children who had long missed each other. At first, they hardly touched their favorite food. Their running conversation kept on bubbling over with rare enthusiasm. After dinner as well, at Bishop Noli's apartment back of the Boston Public Library, the occasion became more alive with most significant literary and cultural reminiscences. It also afforded Konitza an opportunity to inject a friendly hint: Noli's book on Scanderbeg needed editorial retouching.

At long last, in 1947, perhaps more as a result of being influenced by Gegaj's book, Bishop Noli wrote a revised version in English of his earlier book. Its title: George Castrioti Scanderbeg, published by International Universities Press. It is a short, critical analysis, well documented. Three years later, he wrote a revised edition in Albanian of his 1921 work. Both books contain a long list of im-

portant references, which might well serve as acceptable guidelines on Scanderbeg.

But all three of them—Noli, Konitza, Gegaj—agree, as the author does, that the basic source of information on the life and deeds of Scanderbeg has inevitably been derived from four original books: Historia Scanderbegi by Antivarino; Scanderbeg, Principe d'Epyro by Demeter Franco; Genealogy by Gjin Musachia; and—biographically the most complete of them all—Vita by Marin Barletius. But were it not for dedicated research scholars, we might never have come across such highly important original sources. Such men have preserved for us so much precious data supporting especially Vita.

For this book, the correspondence and orations of Scanderbeg have chiefly come from Vita. The subsequent sources of Knolles, Lavardin, Z. I. Gentleman, and Moore have been considerably helpful. And the quotations, unless otherwise specified, have also come from Vita. The rest of the correspondence has been gleaned and photostated from the works of great research scholars.

For example, the letters in Renaissance Italian between Scanderbeg and the Prince of Taranto, as well as between the Albanian Knight and King Ferdinand, were photostated from Vol. II of Monumenta Historica Slavorum by V. V. Makushev. And the two 1457 and 1458 letters in Latin by Pope Calixtus III to Scanderbeg were similarly photostated from two books of Augustinus Theiner's Vol. II, Monumenta Historica Hungaricum Sacrum; and Vol. I, Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalum. The letter of Pope Pius II to Scanderbeg is from Daniello Farlati's Illyricum Sacrum, Vol. VII. Scanderbeg's letter to Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, is photostated from Vol. I of Monumenta Historica Hungaricum Sacrum by Ivan Nagy and Albert Nyary. King Ferdinand's letter of condolence to Donica Castrioti is photostated from Francesco Trinchera's Codice Aragonese, Vol. I. And the letter of Pope Calixtus III to King Alphonse V about Scanderbeg is photostated from Daniello Farlati's Illyricum Sacrum, Vol. VII.

Other valuable sources which have been measurably helpful in writing this book are as follows: Joseph Swire's Albania, the Rise of a Kingdom, issued by R. S. Smith, N.Y.; Edward Gibbon: Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,

Modern Library, Vol. III; Mary Edith Durham's books: Some Tribal Origins and Laws of the Balkans, Allen and Unwin, London; and High Albania, Arnold, London; Margaret Hasluck: The Unwritten Law of Albania, Cambridge University Press, London; Shtjefen Gjepov: Kanuni i Lek Dukagjinit, Shtypshkroja Franceskane, Scutari; Wadham Peacock: Albania, the Foundling State of Europe, Chapman and Hall, London; H. N. Brailsford: Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future, Methuen, London; John Cam Hobhouse (Lord Broughton): Journey Through Albania, London; Byron: Complete Poetic Works (Childe Harold Pilgrimage), Oxford University Press; William Martin Leake: Researches in Greece, London; C. A. Chekrezi: Albania, Past and Present, Macmillan, N.Y.; Christo A. Dako: Albania, The Master Key to the Near East, Grimes, Boston; Encyclopedia of Islam; Giuseppe Schiro: Gli Albanesi e la Questione Balcanica, Bideri, Napoli.

Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey, edited by S. Story, Constable, London; Arturo Galanti: L'Albania, Biblioteca Italo-Albanese, Vol. I, Societa Editrice Dante Alighieri, Rome; Demetrio Camarda: ... Lingua Albanese, Livorno; Clement Clarke Moore: George Castrioti Scanderbeg, Appleton, N.Y.; Critoboulos of Imbros: Vie de Mohamet, A. P. Dethier edition; Beggles Willson: The Life and Letters of James Wolfe, Dodd, Mead & Co., N.Y.; Andre Maurois: Byron, Appleton, N.Y.; Wassa (Pasha) Effendi: La Verite sur l'Albanie et les Albanais, Paris; Luigi Salvatorelli: Concise History of Italy, Oxford University Press, N. Y.; Dr. J. G. von Hahn: Albanesische Studien, Vienna; Antonio Baldacci: L'Albania, Riccardo Carroni, Rome; Carl Hopf: Chroniques Greco-Romanes, Berlin; Julian Amery: Sons of the Eagle, A Study in Guerrilla War, Macmillan, N.Y.; Brigadier Davies: Illyrian Venture: The Study of the British Military Mission to Enemy-Occupied Albania, Bodley Head, London; Encyclopaedia Britannica.

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS: For his 'footwork' in research, the author extends his sincere thanks to the following libraries and their staffs: Butler Library, Columbia University; Widener Library, Harvard University; Yale Library; the Boston Public Library; the New York Public Library, especially to its Photographic and Research staffs.

And his special thanks go to the following libraries which have contributed substantially to the writing of this book: General Library, University of California, Berkeley, for extending to him the courtesy of personal research as well as for its photostatic services; the University of Michigan Library, Photographic Service; the University of Pennsylvania Library, particularly to its Photographic Service; to Ruth Galvin Thornburg, chief librarian, Harrison Memorial Library, and her efficient staff for locating valuable material available only faraway from his residence; and the Library of Congress for its fabulous resources and its most efficient Research and Photographic Service.

Also to the following individuals, his special thanks: Father Emod Brunner, of the Benedictine School, Budapest, Hungary, and former Headmaster of the York School, Laguna Seca, Monterey, for his translation from Latin of the Papal letters to Scanderbeg; Stanley Fabian, of the Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies, for his aid in rendering letters from Renaissance Italian into English; Professor Hilmi Voskay, formerly member of the Turkish Faculty, Defense Language Institute, West Coast, for his sidelights on the Ottoman Empire during Scanderbeg's time; to Professor Giulio de Petra, Chairman of the Italian Department, Defense Language Institute, for his aid in translating King Ferdinand's letter to Donica Castrioti; Father Lloyd Burns of the University of San Francisco for valuable suggestions; and Brig. Gen. A. T. Mason, USMC, for going over the manuscript. Limited space precludes mentioning quite a few others who have been helpful.

They all have made the writing of this book less difficult and more rewarding.

N. D.

- Acroceraunian Mountains, xx ix
 Adrianople, viii, ix, xxiv, 27
 Adriatic Sea, xvi
 Ak-Hissar, x, xii; see Croya
 Albania, ix, xxii, xxv, xxvii, xxxi, xxxii, 72
 Albanian League, xvi, 9
 Albula, battle of, 53
 Alessio, xvi, xviii, 89
 Alexander I of Mollosia, xxix
 Alexander the Great, vi, xiv, 89
 Ali Feriz Pasha, slain by Scanderbeg, xx, 30
 Ali Pasha, defeat of, xviii, xx, xxv, 14
 Ali Pasha the Albanian, ruler in Janina, xxv
 Alphonse V, King, 46, 59
 Angelina, Musachi, 79
 Angella, Archbishop Paul, xv
 Anjous, French, xx, 59, 66
 Antivarino, xv, xvi, xvii
 Apulia, battle of, 67
 Arnaut, Gen. Iagup, 79
 Arta, Gulf of, xvii

 Ballaban Pasha Badera, besieges Croya, 77, 79, 83, 84; slain, 85
 Bardhyllus, xxix
 Barletius, Marin, xiii, xiv, xvii, xxii
 Barletta, Scanderbeg at, 65
 Bayazid, Sultan, xxxiii
 Belissarius, 65
 Berat, siege of, xxxii, 48
 Berisha, Nicholas, 79
 Biemmi, Giammaria, xvi
 Bishop of Rome, 44

 Buda, City of, 22
 Bulgaria, vi, xxxiii
 Byron, Lord, xxv, xxvi
 Byzantine Empire, v, xviii, xxii

 Calixtus III, Pope, letters to Scanderbeg, 55, 57, 58
 Cape Rodoni, xxiii
 Castrioti: Angelina, sister of Scanderbeg, 82; Constantine, brother of Scanderbeg, 82; George, see under Scanderbeg; Hamza, nephew of Scanderbeg, 2, 51, 53; Iella, sister of Scanderbeg, 82; John, father of Scanderbeg, v, vi, ix; John II, son of Scanderbeg, 86, 89, 92; Mara, sister of Scanderbeg, 82; Mamitsa, sister of Scanderbeg, 82; Reposhi, brother of Scanderbeg, 82; Stanishi, brother of Scanderbeg, 82; Vlaida, sister of Scanderbeg, 82; Voysava, mother of Scanderbeg, 82
 Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, xxv, xxvi
 Chuku, Gjergj, 79
 Churrill, City of, burned by Mehmed, xxiii
 Constantine, Scanderbeg's brother, 82
 Constantinople, xviii, xxi, xxii, xxxiii
 Croya, vi, xi, xvii, xxi, xxii, xxxiii; sieges of, 42, 73, 83, 84

Dalmatia, xxvii
 Dayna, battle of, 30, 33, 47
 Debreas Pasha, defeated and slain, 46
 Dibra, xii, xviii, xx
 Dukagjini, Lek, xxiv, 93
 Durazzo, Archbishop of, xv, xxi, xxiii; battle of, xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxiv
 Edirne, Ottoman capital, vi, vii, 42
 Elizabeth I, Queen, xiv
 Enderun, Military Academy of Princes, vi, vii
 Epidamnus, xxii
 Epirots, King of, xiii, xxix, xxxii, 43, 46; Prince of, 23
 Epirus, xxviii, xxx, xxxii; Prince of, xxxii, 23, 28
 Eugenius IV, Pope, xxxii
 Fabius Maximus, xx
 Fallmerayer, Johann, xvi
 Ferdinand, King of Aragon and Sicily, xx, 59, 61, 62, 89
 Franco, see Frangu
 Frangu, Dimitri, secretary-treasurer and biographer, xvi, xvii
 French Anjous, xx, 59, 66
 Gentius, King, xxix, xxx
 Gentleman, Z. I., author, xiv, xv, xvii
 George, Despot of Serbia, 24
 Gibbon, Edward, xiv, xv, xx
 Golemi, Gen. Moisi, 30, 78; defects to Mehmed, 51; defeated and pardoned by

Scanderbeg, 51, 55; prisoner, 79
 Greece, vi, xxv, xxvi
 Greek, 9
 Gulf of Arta, xxvii
 Himara, xxv
 Hopf, Carl, xvi, xvii
 Huniades, Janko, xi, xiv
 Hungarian army, ix, x, 25
 Hyllus, Illyrian king, xxvii, xxix
 Illyria, xxii, xxiv, xxvii, xxx, xxxi
 Irish, xxxi
 Iskander Bey, vi
 Islam, v
 Italian, xxxi
 Italy, wars of, 59, 67
 Janina, capital of Albania under Ali Pasha, xxv
 Janissaries, vii, viii
 Johnson, Samuel, xvi
 John, Prince, v
 Kashar, battle of, 81
 Kastrioti, Gjon, see Castrioti, John
 Kharambeg, ix
 Kavaja, xvi
 Konitza, Faik, 95
 Kruja, see Croya
 Kulthi, Mount, xxviii, xxix, xxxii
 Laberia, xxv, xxix
 Ladislaus, King, ix, 20
 Lavardin, Jacques de, xiii, xiv, xvii
 Longfellow, x, xii, xviii
 Lucan, see Marcus

Macedonia, xxiv
 Malakastra, xvi, xxviii, xxix, xxxii
 Malasia, xxvii, xxix, xxx, xxxi
 Maneshi, Gjin, 79
 Marcus Annaeus Lucan, Roman poet, xxi, xxii
 Maximus, Fabius, xx
 Mehmed II, Sultan, xxiii, xxiv, xxxii, 42, 44, 68, 69, 70, 73, 83, 84
 Milan, Duke of, 67
 Mirdita, xxviii
 Mocra, battle of, 30
 Mollosia, xxvii
 Montenegro, xxvii
 Murad II, Sultan, v, vi, vii; xiv, xxi, xxxiii, 25, 42, 44
 Musachia, Gjin, xvi, 79
 Mustapha Pasha, defeat of, 30, 32, 73
 Myzeqeia, xvi
 Nish, ix
 Noli, Bishop F. S., 95
 Norman invasion, xxxi
 Ochrida, battle of, 75
 Olympia, mother of Alexander the Great, xxix
 Oronica, battle of, 79
 Orsini, Prince of Taranto, xxxii, 60, 61
 Ottoman Empire, v, vi, ix, xvii, xxv, xxxiii, 39, 68, 69
 Ottoman Military Academy of Princes, vi
 Paul II, Pope, xxxii, 83
 Perlati, Gjon, 79
 Persia, viii

Petralba, fortress of, 5
 Petrella, fortress of, 5
 Phranzes, Georges, xiv, xvii, xviii
 Piccinino, Gen. Count Jacopo, 59
 Pius II, Pope, xvii, xxxii, 59, 60
 Pyrrhus, xv, xxix
 Quebec, siege of, xiv
 Quintus Fabius, 51
 Romania, vi, xxxiii
 Roman Empire, v, xxix
 Scutari, xiii, xxvi
 Seraglio, viii
 Serbia, vi, xxvii, xxviii
 Sermet Pasha, defeat at Ochrida, 75
 Sfetigrad, battle of, 39, 79
 Sforza, Francesco, 67
 Shkumbini River, xxiii
 Sidney, Lord, xiv
 Signa, Mount, xxxii
 St. Nicholas, Cathedral of, 89
 Spenser, Edmund, xv
 Stellusa, fortress of, 5
 Stephen, Prince of Serbia, 67
 Suli, xxv, xxvii
 SCANDERBEG: hostage, v, vi; cadet, vii; brigadier general, vii; his father's death, ix; at battle of Nish, ix; lionized by Longfellow, x; escape to Albania, xii; „prajsed, xiv, xv; organizes Albanian army, xix; his stradiots imitated in

Europe, xx; defeats Sultan Murad at siege of Croya, xxi; defeats Ballaban Pasha and Sultan Mehmed in Croya, xxiii, xxiv; Epirot, xxx; oration on return to Croya, 1; forms Albanian League, 9; oration in Alessio, 9; letter to King Ladislaus, 23; letter to Sultan Murad, 28; oration at battle of Mocra, 30; oration at battle of Dayna, 33; before Venetian delegation, 37; oration before siege of Sfetigrad, 39; speech before slaying Ali Feriz Pasha, 41; defeats Sultan Murad in Croya, 42; married to Princess Donica Araniti, 43; letter to King Alphonse, 46; oration before battle of Berat, 48; oration before battle of Albula against Hamza Castrioti, 53; rejects Sultan Mehmed's peace offer, 53; seeks Papal aid, 55; letter to Prince of Taranto, 61; letter to King Ferdinand, 64; leads stradiot expedition to Italy, 65; oration at Barletta, 65; letter to Sultan Mehmed, 69; oration, first battle of Valcalia, 77; oration before second battle

of Valcalia, 79; oration before battle of Kashar, 81; victory at Kashar, 82; slays Gen. Iagup Arnaut, 82; oration before Pope Paul II and cardinals, 83; defeats Ballaban Pasha's and Mehmed's armies before Croya, 83, 84, 85, 86; deathbed oration, 87; death, 89

Taranto, Prince of, xxxii
Teuta, Illyrian queen, xxix, xxx

Thopia, Musachi, at battle of Mocra, 30; killed at siege of Berat, 48, 49

Thopia, Lt. Gen. Tanush, 42

Tomori, sacred Mount, xxvii, xxxii

Torviolli, battle of, 14

Valcalia, first battle of, 77; second battle of, 79

Varna, battle of, 25

Venice, Republic of, 33; its armies defeated at Dayna, 33

Vlaidane, Gurizi de, 79

Wolfe, Maj. Gen. James, xiv

Zacharia, Prince Lech, 34, 37

Zog, King, 95

Zogu, Ahmed, 95