

CHAPTER VIII

THE TURKISH CONQUEST (1420-1526)

FOR the next hundred years Ragusa remains under Hungarian protection, but bound by ties so shadowy that for all practical purposes she may be regarded as an independent State. During this period, however, she feels the weight of Turkish power more and more, and her tribute to the Porte goes on increasing, until it reaches the maximum limit of 12,500 ducats. But in spite of this ever-present danger she continues to grow in wealth, splendour, and importance, and to carry out her mission as a haven of refuge and a bulwark of Christianity and civilisation. She flourishes as a centre of learning and the arts no less than as an emporium of trade, and all the while she remains singularly free from internal troubles and constitutional changes—a unique distinction in that part of the world. She pursues the even tenour of her way undisturbed, conservative, aristocratic, narrow-minded, but on the whole successful and prosperous, and her population contented.

Very different was the condition of the neighbouring Balkan lands. Bosnia was for the present fairly quiet; the Turks had been driven out of the country, and their leader, Isak Beg, defeated in a raid into Hungary, so that King Tvrtko was able to reoccupy Vrhbosna, and Sandalj Hranić recognised his supremacy for the time