

past-masters. The Republic was in constant danger from the powerful enemies which surrounded it on all sides. The Venetians, who claimed the monopoly of the Adriatic, were ever anxious to increase their influence and to become absolute masters of the city, as they were of the other Dalmatian towns, and after their retirement from Ragusa in 1358 they made many attempts to reinstate their authority. On the mainland there was the King of Servia, the Banus of Bosnia, the Lord of Hlum, watching for an opportunity to occupy Ragusa, whose splendid harbour they envied. But the city fathers, by a policy which was often tortuous and not always straightforward, certainly achieved their object of preserving the Republic's autonomy. Although Ragusa was never absolutely independent—for she either had a Venetian Count or paid a tribute to this or that Power—she was always free from foreign control in her internal affairs, and to a great extent in her external relations. The Government always knew when to give way and when to hold out; this feature became particularly conspicuous in the Republic's dealings with the Turks.

Of the non-noble citizens we hear very little. They played no part in the Government, and were ineligible save for the very lowest offices. On the whole, they seem to have acquiesced in the oligarchical constitution, and apparently had little desire to take part in public affairs. They were ruled with wisdom and without oppression, free from faction fights, and their commercial interests, being identical with those of the aristocracy, were well cared for and protected by the Government. Both classes derived their wealth from trade.