

An unfortunate feud, however, against the Prince of Moldavia, Stephen the Great, soon put an end to the reign of Vlad.

A period of the most lamentable decadence followed. During an interval of twenty-five years (1521-46) no less than eleven princes succeeded one another on the throne of Wallachia, whilst of the nineteen princes who ruled during the last three-quarters of the sixteenth century, only two died a natural death while still reigning. The Turkish domination prevailed more and more in the country. But it is worthy of note that even at the lowest ebb of their fortune, the Rumanian provinces never became what Hungary was for a century and a half, a Turkish province.

In Moldavia also internal struggles were weakening the country. Not being powerful enough to do away with one another, the various aspirants to the throne contented themselves with occupying and ruling over parts of the province. Between 1443-7 there were no less than three princes reigning simultaneously, whilst one of them, Peter III, lost and regained the throne three times.

But it was as if the country reawakened with the accession of *Stephen the Great* (1457-1504) to the throne of Moldavia. It was this prince who dealt the most serious blows to the Ottoman power. For forty-seven years he defended his country against innumerable enemies and, dying, he left Moldavia independent. Far spread the fame of his exploits. The Shah of Persia, Uzun Hasan, who was also fighting the Turks, offered him an alliance, urging him at the same time to induce all the Christian princes to unite with the Persians against the common foe. These princes, as well as Pope Sixtus IV, gave him great praise: but when Stephen asked