

Ismail Sophi I. (1514,) conquered the provinces of Diarbekir and Algezira, beyond the Euphrates.

The same prince overturned the powerful Empire of the Mamelukes, who reigned over Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and part of Arabia. He defeated the last Sultans, Cansoul-Algouri, and Toumanbey (1516,) and totally annihilated that dynasty. Cairo, the capital of the Empire of Egypt, was taken by assault (1517,) and the whole of the Mameluke States incorporated with the Ottoman Empire. The Scheriff of Mecca likewise submitted to the Porte, with several tribes of the Arabs.

Soliman the Great, who succeeded his father Selim, raised the Turkish Empire to the highest pitch of glory. Besides the island of Rhodes, which he took from the Knights of St. John, and the greater part of Hungary, he reduced the provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia to a state of dependence, and made their princes vassals and tributaries of his Empire. He likewise conquered Bagdad and Irak-Arabia, which happened, according to the Turkish authors, about the year 1534.

That prince distinguished his reign, by the efforts which he made to increase the maritime strength of the Empire, which his predecessors had neglected. He took into his service the famous pirate Barbarossa, King of Algiers, whom he created Capitan Pacha, or Grand Admiral. Barbarossa equipped a fleet of more than a hundred sail, with which he chased the Imperialists from the Archipelago; and infested the coasts of Spain, Italy and Sicily (1565.) Soliman miscarried, however, in his enterprise against Malta. The courageous defence made by the Knights, together with the arrival of the fleet from Sicily, obliged the Ottomans to retreat.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire began with the death of Soliman the Great (1566.) The sultans, his successors, rendering themselves to luxury and effeminacy, and shut up in their seraglios and harems, left to their Grand Viziers the government of the Empire, and the management of the army. The sons of these Sultans, educated by women and eunuchs, and excluded from all civil and military affairs, contracted from the earliest infancy all the vices of their fathers, and no longer brought to the throne that vigorous and enterprising spirit which had been the soul of the Ottoman government, and the basis of all their institutions. Selim II., the son of Soliman, was the first who set this fatal example to his successors. In his time, the Turks took the Isle of Cyprus from the Venetians (1570,) which they maintained in spite of the terrible defeat which they received at Lepanto (1571,) and which was followed by the ruin of their marine.