

For a short time the country had peace, until it was again subdued by the Sultan Mohammed. In 1411 Wallachia had to submit once more to the payment of an annual tribute; but the country was otherwise kept free from any Turkish interference, and it was on this basis that the relations between Turkey and Rumania rested up to 1877.

After Mircea's death internal struggles for the throne racked Wallachia for nearly half a century. Some of the claimants having sought the assistance of the Turks in this strife, the latter made use of the circumstance by imposing upon Wallachia a yearly tribute of five hundred children for the corps of the Janissaries.

To do away with this obligation was the first thought of *Vlad the Impaler* (1458-62) when he acceded to the throne. Torn between the Ottoman oppression from without, and the moral corruption of his country from within, one may understand, and perhaps excuse the means of which this prince availed himself, impaling without hesitation all whom he suspected. But he was as fair in his judgements as he was cruel in his punishments. Vlad having impaled 2,000 Turks, sent to seize him by stratagem, Mohammed II himself led a punitive expedition against the Wallachian prince. Vlad projected no less a deed than the murder of the Sultan in his own tent. Speaking Turkish perfectly, he entered the Turkish camp at night with a few hundred of his men in disguise, penetrated to the tent in which he expected to find the Sultan, and killed the sentries and the Pasha he found there. The Turks, attributing the deed to some of their own soldiers, began a promiscuous massacre amongst themselves, which only ended at dawn. Vlad and his men, profiting by the confusion into which the Turks were thrown, crushed the Sultan's army completely.