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Suleyman the Magnificent page 552 - 601

“His letters to other monarchs are arrogant: “I, the Sultan of Sultans, the Sovereign of Sovereigns, dispenser of crowns to the monarchs on the face of the earth....” This is the head of Islam responding to the Most Christian King of France, held prisoner by the Holy Roman Emperor. Suleyman acknowledges Francis’s plea for “aid for your deliverance...at the foot of my throne, refuge of the world.”

Charles’s bite noire, Martin Luther, interests Suleyman. How old is he? Forty-eight? “I wish he were even younger; he would find me a gracious protector.” When told of this, the earthy theologian takes another draft of Wittenberg beer and guffaws: “May God protect me from such a gracious protector!” page 573-574

The battle for Hungry at Mohacs

The Hungarian cavalry charges across the sodden ground. The divisions of Anatolia and Rumelia draw apart, feigning a break. The Hungarians throw their entire force into the gap.

Thirty knights, who have vowed to slay the sultan or die, break through. An arrow glances off Suleyman’s armor. Three knights reach him, wounding him, before he cuts them down.

Then the Janissaries, massed around him, open fire, on line volleying while the next reloads. And when the main body of Hungarians reaches the back center, the Ottoman cannon, lined up and chained together, open at point-blank range, blasting great holes in the Hungarian ranks.

The Anatolian and Rumelian divisions close like a steel trap on the milling Hungarians. Rout turns into slaughter. Those who break free are run down by the akincis, or stumble into marshes, armor bearing them down. In two hours all is over.

Next morning King Louis’s body is found. As he fled, his horse slipped on a slope. Thrown, he rolled into a stream. Held down by his golden armor, he drowned, face in the mud.

“May God be merciful to him,” Suleiman says, “and punish those who misled his inexperience. I came indeed in arms against him; but it was not my wish that he should be thus cut off while he had scarcely tasted the sweets of life and royalty.”

Mohacs struck the fear of God in Europe. With Hungary gone, Austria would be next, then Germany. Earlier Luther, whose Reformation was able to take root because of the empire’s distraction by the Turks, had declared that “fight against the Turks is to resist the Lord, who visits our sins with such rods.” Page 580-581