Chapter 1

Into a Larger World

On the 20th day of September, in the year 1519, five ships sailed from the coast of Spain, their tar-blackened bows pointed to the west. Below the decks were food and supplies for two years of travel: barrels of flour and almonds, wheels of cheese, bags of lentils, and plenty of salted meat, along with seven cows and three pigs rooting about in fenced pens. The sailors' cries rang across the water as they prepared the sturdy vessels for the journey ahead.

Even though many of the crewmen and officers were Spaniards, the commander of this little fleet was Ferdinand Magellan, a sailor from the kingdom of Portugal. As he gazed over the wind-ruffled waves of the Atlantic Ocean, his heart lifted with joy and relief. For many years, he had been consumed with one idea: a voyage to Asia. Now, at last, that dream was becoming real.

Just 27 years earlier, in 1492, Christopher Columbus had also set out across the Atlantic, searching for a westward route to Asia. He found instead the continents of North and South America, a New World. The news of his discovery had exploded across Europe like a string of firecrackers, startling the people and their kings into a whirl of confusion and wonder. The world they knew was suddenly a much larger place.

This is that world: the world of the early 1500s.

In 1519, as Magellan departed from Spain, every corner of Europe was awash in a sea of mighty change. Since the middle of the 1300s, Europe had suffered one horror after another: wars, diseases, famines, floods. Many, many lives had been lost; among those who survived, most were poor peasants, toiling day after day on enormous estates that belonged to highborn lords. But by 1500, after two centuries of hardship and loss, the peoples of Europe were once again growing in number, and now they were people on the move. The peasants left the farms and villages and made their way to ever-growing cities, where they could find freedom from their former masters. They became a new group of people, neither poor farmers nor idle noblemen. They were a *middle class* of craftsmen and merchants, whose shops lined the city streets.

And what cities! Teeming with people, full of energy and noise! Let us consider London, where in 1519, 60,000 people were crowded together like pickles in a barrel. They lived in wooden houses whose upper stories overhung the dark and narrow passages below. Every street in the city, from the poorest district to the grand entrances of rich men's mansions, was made of packed dirt; when it rained, the streets became miry bogs of muddy black puddles. But, since the city was huddled on the northern bank of the Thames River, wealthy Londoners would avoid the filthy streets entirely by traveling from one end of the city to the other on little river boats called *wherries*. Boats were, in any case, the most convenient way to cross the river, for there was only one bridge: London Bridge, the most impressive structure in all of England. It soared 60 feet above the water on great stone arches, adorned with shops and houses, and also with the heads of executed criminals.

Muddy or not, the streets bustled night and day. Chickens and cats darted between the wheels of hundreds of carts as they made their way to the markets, bringing grain, fish, meat, and

fruit to feed the city dwellers. Customers elbowed their way into taverns, quenching their thirst with tankards of ale, since clean drinking water was exceedingly rare. They might also try their luck at a game of chance or join a crowd to laugh at a *mummer's* play. From almost any street in the city, Londoners could look down toward the Thames and see a bristling forest of masts, as riverside *quays* served ships from all across Europe. There, the dock workers, who were called *porters*, hefted bales of rough cloth, made from the wool of England's sheep by humble families out in the countryside and then shipped from London's docks. High overhead, above the raucous noise of the porters' shouts, rang the bells from hundreds of churches, nunneries, and monasteries: over a third of London's land was owned by the *Catholic Church*.

And yet, in the year 1519, the largest city in the world was not London, nor Paris, nor the headquarters of the Church in Rome. It was Beijing, China, where over 1 million people lived. There, the emperor ruled from the Forbidden City, his magnificent imperial palace, secure in his belief that China was the center of the world. For many years, the emperors of China had turned their faces away from foreign traders, forbidding merchant ships from Japan or India to land anywhere but at three carefully watched *ports*. But, just three years previously, in 1516, a ship commanded by a cousin of Christopher Columbus had docked at one of these, the first European since the days of Marco Polo to travel to China and trade with the merchants there. His visit provided a glimpse into the wider world beyond the Middle Kingdom. For the emperor, though, the people of Europe were a closed door, one that he had no interest in opening. His land was prosperous, his people content, and his power in China was absolute; why would he want anything to change?

Of course, China's emperor was not the only powerful monarch in the world. Europe, too, was a domain of kings, a

patchwork of kingdoms and duchies and principalities. One of these, the land of Spain, was ruled by Charles, the grandson of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, who had sent Columbus on his way to the New World. In 1519, the same year that Magellan sailed, Charles became Charles V, the *Holy Roman Emperor*, which meant that much of Europe lay in his grasp, and other kings struggled to remove themselves from his giant shadow. In England, King Henry VIII had come to the throne in 1509, a relative of Charles's by marriage. Tall, handsome, and merry in his youth, his life had slowly darkened, shadowed by his fervent desire for a son to rule after him. He married six wives in turn, hoping each time to be blessed with the birth of a son who would then lead England to greatness. But in the end, when he died at the age of 55, it was his daughter, Elizabeth, who would ultimately ascend his throne after her siblings each ruled for a short time, and it was Elizabeth who would finally confront the mighty kingdom of Spain. You will read her story in a chapter to come.

Beyond Europe's borders, we find still more kings. In western Africa, the Songhai Empire was a land of gold. Its power was centered around the Niger River, which you can find on your globe; within the bulging curve of western Africa, you will see the long arching course of the Niger River as it rises in Guinea and then traces its way eastward through the modern-day nations of Mali and Nigeria. During the latter half of the 15th century, the Songhai people had united under their powerful king Sonni Ali and conquered all their neighbors. From their capital in the city of Gao, the Songhai people welcomed merchants from all corners of Africa. Gao's markets were filled with riches: casks of nuts and spices, glistening blocks of salt, ivory, ostrich feathers, colorful woven cloth, precious gems, and mounds of gold. All of the fabulous things that Ferdinand Magellan hoped to find in Asia were offered for sale in the Songhai markets.

Equally rich and equally strong was the king of the Aztecs in Central America. His name was Moctezuma (maak-tuh-*zoo*-muh), and he reigned from the city of Tenochtitlan (tuh-nowch-teet-*laan*). The city was a marvel, built on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco in the land that today we know as Mexico. Three broad avenues crossed the city, each one leading to an earthen bridge—a *causeway*—connecting the city to the lakeshore. The causeways were surrounded with floating gardens constructed of reeds and anchored to the lake's muddy bottom. Narrow canals glimmered between stone villas that could only be approached by wooden bridges, which were drawn away at night. In the city's center lay a great public square, lined with temples to the Aztec gods. There also stood Moctezuma's palace, which boasted 100 guest rooms, each with its own bath. The palace housed a school, a music room, and two zoos: one for birds of prey, and one for reptiles and monkeys; Moctezuma kept 300 servants in the palace solely to care for his zoo animals. He was a king of enormous splendor and consequence, and yet he would soon be dead and his empire gone. For, in 1519, as Magellan was preparing to sail from Spain, a man named Hernán Cortés landed in Mexico with a few hundred soldiers, 20 horses, and 15 cannons. They were looking for gold and for conquest. By 1521, they would attack and kill Moctezuma and burn Tenochtitlan; the Aztec empire would be no more. Cortés would be among the first of many to come to the New World in search of wealth and power.

Of course, these are not the only forces that move men to action. A desire for truth and a love for beauty were also at work in the early 1500s. Sometime around 1503, in the city of Florence, the painter and craftsman Leonardo da Vinci finished a portrait of an Italian noblewoman, Lisa del Giacondo. In our modern age, it is called the *Mona Lisa,* the most famous painting in the world. In Rome, an artist named Michelangelo labored for four years to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in St.

Peter's Cathedral, creating a work of art so momentous that it still leaves people speechless when they enter the room. All over Europe, art and music and drama were blossoming in a movement called the *Renaissance*. We shall see some of the fruit of these years in the chapters to come.

A yearning for truth was also at work in the Catholic Church. For centuries, the Catholic Church had been centered in the city of Rome and led from there by a ruler called the *pope*. But in 1517, a German monk named Martin Luther began to question the pope's leadership, and the doctrines and practices that the Catholic Church was teaching. Many others followed Luther's lead. Because they were protesting the Roman Church's established ways, they were called *Protestants;* in turn, those who remained loyal to the pope and the Church in Rome were called *Catholics.* The Protestants meant to shake the Catholic Church awake, to purify and reform it, and so the movement that Luther started is called the *Reformation*. In the early 1500s, the Reformation was just beginning, but it would grow and spread until it encompassed all of Europe, and the New World as well.

The growing, bustling cities, the Renaissance, the Reformation: the world was already abuzz with change when Columbus's voyage in 1492 revealed that it was also bigger than anyone had ever imagined, a world of empires and nations whose stories were filled with peril and wonder. As Magellan sailed out on that September day in 1519 with the wind at his back, he had no way of knowing that his own voyage would open the gateway into that larger world.

Let us turn the page now and follow him out into the open sea and over the horizon into all the stories of our neighbors, the nations of the world.

Chapter 2

The Voyage of Ferdinand Magellan

Like Columbus before him, Ferdinand Magellan planned to reach the East by sailing to the west.

If you look at your globe, you can find the nation of Spain on the west coast of Europe, with Portugal snuggled up against it. Far to the east lie the lands of Asia, bathed along their southern shores by the Indian Ocean. The merchants and kings of Europe looked longingly toward Asia with all its riches—spices, silk, tea, and gems—but you can see for yourself that it is no easy journey to sail eastward from Europe, for the vast continent of Africa blocks the way.

But what if you were to sail to the west? You could cross the Atlantic Ocean and then the Pacific and find yourself approaching Asia from the other direction. A fine plan indeed, except, as Columbus discovered for himself, the way to the west is also blocked by the long sweeping curves of North and South America.

But Ferdinand Magellan had studied the sea charts and listened to tales of Columbus's voyages and consulted with astronomers and scientists. He was certain that he could reach the riches of Asia by traveling west across the Atlantic and then south, seeking a *strait*—a watery passage—through the continent

of South America. Then, he would sail out across the Pacific Ocean to arrive in triumph on Asian shores.

Of course, to put this plan into action, he needed ships and supplies, and thus, the support of a king. Magellan had been born into a noble family and had spent much of his boyhood serving as a *page* to Queen Eleanor of Portugal. He had labored many long years in the Portuguese navy, fighting in battles and suffering injury, all for the glory of his homeland. So, you might think that Magellan would sail under a Portuguese flag with money and men supplied by the king, Manuel I. But, alas, Magellan found no friendship in King Manuel's court. During his years in the navy, Magellan had been accused of theft, and, even though he was proven innocent, the king still looked on him with stiff disfavor. Three times Magellan went to Manuel, head humbly bent, asking for permission and support to sail west, and three times he was coldly turned away.

So, Magellan turned away as well, leaving Portugal behind and traveling into the lands of Charles, King of Spain and soon-to-be Holy Roman Emperor, whom we've already met back in chapter 1. King Charles welcomed Magellan, listened to his plans, and then bestowed on him his heart's desire: money, ships, and crewmen for a voyage to Asia. Charles was willing to do whatever was necessary to thwart the ambitions of the king of Portugal.

You see, from almost the moment of Columbus's return from his voyage of discovery in 1492, the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal had been wrestling each other for control of trade routes across the oceans. In 1494, they signed an agreement called the *Treaty of Tordesillas*, which drew an imaginary line down the center of the Atlantic Ocean and declared that Spain would control all the newly-discovered lands to the west of that line, and Portugal all the lands and trade routes to the east. If Magellan could find a westward route to Asia, King Charles would triumph over his Portuguese rival.

So, under a Spanish flag, Magellan's fleet glided away from Europe in September of 1519. Along with food and water, his five ships carried interesting trinkets to trade with the people that they might meet on the other side of the world: glass beads, polished knives and scissors, cotton handkerchiefs, and thousands of tiny silver bells. The fleet was also prepared for danger with bundles of spears, swords, and crossbows. In the captain's quarters aboard his flagship, Magellan had carefully stowed the tools he would need to find his way across the trackless oceans, including a compass, 7 astrolabes, and 21 *quadrants*. He had packed a set of charts that showed the positions of sun and stars to help him determine his location. He was as ready as he could be.

And yet he could not have known the hardships and dangers that lay before him and the men under his command.

When the golden hills of Spain disappeared behind him, Magellan turned at once to the south, sailing down toward Africa. He had received news that King Manuel had declared him a traitor and had sent a Portuguese fleet to hunt him. He knew that these hunters would assume that he would navigate westward out into the Atlantic, and, by aiming for Africa instead, he neatly avoided them.

One danger passed, then: no Portuguese captain would find Magellan and haul him back to face King Manuel's wrath. But other difficulties loomed. When his ships stopped to gather supplies in the Canary Islands off the west coast of Africa, Magellan was surprised to receive a letter from his father-in-law, brought to him in secret by a messenger aboard a fast sailboat. *Be warned*, the letter urged him, *The captains of the other four ships, Spaniards all, are plotting to take command of the fleet away from you. They will kill you if you resist.*

Magellan knew that his Spanish captains distrusted him; they suspected that his allegiance still lay with Portugal and that he was a spy for King Manuel. With this warning in hand, he

would need to watch them closely and guard himself against any disloyalty.

Leaving the Canary Islands behind, the ships steered west. Almost at once, the journey became a struggle. Life aboard a sailing ship in the 1500s was harsh and difficult, even on the sunniest of days. The ships were crowded and uncomfortable, and with fresh food and water often in short supply, illness and injury were common. But Magellan's men soon met with woes beyond the usual hardships. First, they were battered by fierce storms, and then the clouds disappeared, and they lost the wind entirely, their sails hanging limp in the hot sun. Their supply of fresh water grew foul, their food infested with insects, and sickness began to spread. After many weeks of suffering, everyone aboard rejoiced when the green forests and white beaches of South America finally appeared on the horizon in the middle of December 1519.

The ships anchored near a village, a tiny place which would one day become the city of Rio de Janeiro. The native people there greeted them warmly, happy to trade water and food for metal tools and cotton cloth. The men, slowly restored from the harrowing Atlantic crossing, settled in to enjoy a few weeks of respite. But Magellan was eager to press onward. After all, their journey had only begun; now they must carefully explore the coastline, searching for a passage that would lead them through the continent and into the ocean on the other side. So, just after Christmas, Magellan ordered the ships back out to sea.

Slowly, for the next three months, they made their way south, anticipation blossoming each time they found a river's mouth and then withering when none of these waterways proved to be the hoped-for passage. Discouragement hovered over the five ships like a heavy cloud, and, to make matters worse, the weather was turning cold. They were deep in the Southern Hemisphere, you see, where winter settles in by May or June and lasts until September. Magellan knew that they needed to halt

their search. Along the shores of the land that is now Argentina, in a sheltered harbor called *Port St. Julian*, the five ships dropped their anchors to wait out the winter.

It was then that, just as the letter from his father-in-law had warned, Magellan faced an uprising—a *mutiny*—among his captains. Three of them took control of their own ships, locking up all the men who remained loyal to Magellan and then sending a message demanding that he surrender to them. But Magellan fought back, killing one of the mutinous captains in battle and capturing the other two. His judgment upon them was immediate: one was executed, and the other was marooned, which means that, when spring arrived and the ships sailed away, he was left behind on that wild shore.

As difficult as these troubles were, the sorrows of that winter were not yet over. Just a few weeks after the mutiny, Magellan commanded one of the ships to put back out to sea and scout the shoreline ahead for signs of a strait. But she was caught in a storm and ran aground on a shoal of jagged rocks; although all of her crew escaped, the ship was lost forever.

Now just four ships strong, the fleet set out again. By October, they had reached the furthest regions of South America, where the land curves like the tip of a dragon's tail. There Magellan found a deep bay and at its far end a passage leading off to the west. His hopes rising, Magellan sent one of the ships ahead as a scout. But now another act of treachery occurred, for that ship, as soon as it had passed from sight, turned around and sailed off into the Atlantic back to Spain. The men aboard were certain that the expedition was doomed and chose to save their own lives rather than do their duty and press onward under Magellan's command.

Only three ships were left, and the way before them was fraught with danger. The passage they had found was indeed the long-sought strait—it would later become known as the *Strait of Magellan*—but it was narrow, twisting, and difficult, with sheer

cliffs on either side, and swift, deadly currents swirling through the water as it washed back and forth with the ocean tides. The fleet crept forward; sometimes they could only make progress by using rowboats to tow the ships. But finally, after an anxious journey of 38 days, Magellan and his men found themselves in a large cape that opened out into a far, blue horizon. It was November 28, 1520. They had finally reached the great ocean on the other side of the Americas.

Magellan, and indeed all Europeans, knew very little about it. A Spanish conquistador named Vasco de Balboa had been the first to spot this "southern ocean" when he climbed a mountain in South America and glimpsed its waters. Now, as Magellan lifted his face into its cool breezes and watched the gentle swell of its waves, he named it the *Pacific Ocean*, from a word that means "calm." After all the storms and struggles that his expedition had faced, the voyage ahead looked quiet and easy. He did not know—he could not know—how truly vast the Pacific is. The scholars and mapmakers of Magellan's day did not realize the actual size of the earth; Magellan believed that the lands of Asia were just a few days' sail away.

He could not have been more mistaken.

For the next 98 days, the ships traced their way across trackless waters. Although they had filled their holds with fish and fresh water before leaving the Strait, their supplies quickly ran low. They suffered the pangs of starvation, even eating the shipboard rats. Many crewmen fell desperately ill; many died. When they finally, after almost four months, reached the island of Guam, their food was completely gone, and they were eating sawdust and the leather straps that were wrapped around the ships' masts.

A few weeks later, strengthened by the lifesaving supplies they had taken aboard in Guam, the three ships anchored in the islands that today we call the Philippines, located just south of China and east of Vietnam. Magellan had shown that Asia

could indeed be reached by sailing west, around and through the Americas! Surely, now, he would return home in triumph.

But that was not to be. In a battle with the local people, Magellan was slain. The sailors of his fleet, shocked and frightened, realized that there were no longer enough men among them to sail the three ships. They burned one, and sorrowfully boarded the other two, wanting nothing more than to sail back to Spain.

But how to get there? By now they had come so far that they could not endure the thought of retracing their path back across the endless Pacific Ocean and through the terrifying Strait: it seemed impossible. So, they pressed forward, often resorting to kidnapping native people to guide them from island to island. Eventually, they reached the Spice Islands off the coast of India, a place that was already known to European traders. As they ventured out across the Indian Ocean, another of the ships was lost. With their one remaining vessel, they sailed along the east coast of Africa, and then, after many terrified attempts, succeeded in rounding the tip of Africa to find themselves back in the Atlantic Ocean.

On September 6, 1522, that last ship entered the harbor at *Sanlúcar de Barrameda,* Spain. She was barely afloat, her timbers rotted, and her sails ragged. Aboard her were just 18 men, thin as skeletons. But the ship's hold was stuffed with spices, and the men themselves bore something even more precious: knowledge. They were the first to ever *circumnavigate*—go all the way around—the globe. Although Magellan himself did not live to see that day, the little band of 18 survivors were living monuments to his discovery that the oceans could be conquered, that Asia could be reached, and that the world was indeed much larger than anyone could ever have suspected.

Chapter 3

Empire of the Ottomans

Have you ever sat upon an ottoman?

If you have, you know that it is a soft, round, tufted stool, where your father might rest his feet in comfort after a long day at work. When furniture makers began making this new kind of padded stool back in the 1800s, they called it an *ottoman* because its shape reminded people of the round hats worn by officials of the Ottoman Empire.

You might be smiling now, imagining men walking about in tall, round hats shaped like footstools, but for many years, Europeans did not smile when they thought of the Ottomans. They trembled in fear, for the Ottomans were a strong, warlike people, who came sweeping out of Asia like a storm-blown wind to conquer all before them.

Look at a globe or a map of our world and find the large continent of Asia. Then study its westernmost part, and you will find what is today the country of Turkey. It is bound on the north by the Black Sea, on the west by the Aegean Sea, and on the south by the Mediterranean Sea. The famous Euphrates River curls along its eastern edge before it wanders down through the region known as Mesopotamia. Men have lived in this part of the world for all of recorded history: Hittites, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and, of course, Turks.

These Turks were once scattered tribes in the central part of Asia, but, during the 1200s, they moved west into Anatolia, the land that would one day become Turkey. They were mostly Muslim people, followers of the religion of Islam. They spoke their own Turkish language, and they came to be called *Ottoman* after the name of their first great leader, a man named Osman. Soon they controlled all of Anatolia and, like a cat waking from a long nap, began to stretch outward. In 1453, they captured the ancient city of Constantinople, making it the center of a new empire, the Ottoman Empire—so it would remain for hundreds of years. They renamed it *Istanbul* which means "to the city," rather than Constantinople after Roman Emperor Constantine, who had established it centuries before.

From Istanbul, the Ottomans continued to enlarge their empire: they conquered Syria, Palestine, and Egypt and claimed kingship over the holy city of Jerusalem. The Ottoman navy ruled the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, securing for the Turks a rich trade in spices and slaves. Ottoman soldiers even marched into cold and snowy Russia to their northeast. The Ottoman Empire rippled out in every direction, like a growing pool of water.

And this is why the Europeans did not smile when they thought of the Ottoman Turks, for the Ottomans were beginning to cast hungry glances toward Europe as well.

In 1520, a new sultan, or king, arose in Istanbul, who would be known forever after as Suleiman the Magnificent. A grand title, to be sure, but many would argue that he was worthy of it.

Suleiman was the son of a man who had also been the sultan, a man named Selim the Grim. There seems to have been little love between father and son, for Selim sent his son far away into the most rural provinces for long stretches of years and rarely asked after his well-being. But Suleiman was an able prince, respected among the army officers and members of the

court who surrounded him. He became so well liked, in fact, that soon Selim began to fear his son's popularity. A popular story about Selim claims that one day, he sent to Suleiman a vicious gift: a colorful silken shirt whose gleaming fibers had been coated with poison. To wear it meant certain death. It was not, I think you'll agree, the gift of a loving father!

Happily for the prince, his mother was suspicious of this unexpected present, beautiful though it was. As a great-granddaughter of Genghis Khan, about whose fierceness and cleverness you may have read, she knew well how kings and rulers often try to deceive and destroy each other—even those within their own families—in their desperate quests to hold onto power. She directed a nearby slave to lift the lovely garment from its packaging and put it on. In just a few minutes, the unfortunate slave collapsed, gasping his last breath. Suleiman's life was saved, though at the cost of another's.

Soon after this, Selim the Grim died, and Suleiman was crowned Sultan of the Ottoman Turks. From this moment, he sought to increase the glory and power of the Ottoman Empire. He struck out into Europe, conquering the nation of Hungary and the Greek island of Rhodes. He besieged the city of Vienna, an attack that failed only because bitingly cold winter weather came early that year and drove his forces back.

He was an accomplished warrior, personally leading his armies into battle. The nations of Europe trembled before him, and he knew how much they feared him. He described himself this way: "Slave of God, master of the world, I am Suleiman, and my name is read in all the prayers in all the cities of Islam. I am the Shah of Baghdad and Iraq, Caesar of all the lands of Rome, and the Sultan of Egypt. I seized the Hungarian crown and gave it to the least of my slaves." With all those titles of kingship and mastery, you can understand why all of Europe and Asia considered Suleiman the most powerful of the world's leaders and called him *the Magnificent*.

But, of course, one person can carry many different titles. Among the Ottomans, Suleiman was known as a wise lawgiver. They called him *Suleiman the Just*, because he set himself the task of creating a set of laws that would govern the life of all the citizens across his vast empire. The overarching law of the Ottomans was the *Shari'ah*, which is the law of the Muslim religion, Islam, and which no sultan had the power to change. But a sultan could issue laws concerning the parts of Turkish life that Shari'ah did not address. In these things, Suleiman sought to make the Ottoman Empire a just and honorable place. He made certain that all the trade routes through Ottoman lands were kept open and safe for merchants and travelers. He decreed that the caravans that moved along these routes must be taxed fairly, regardless of who they were and where they had come from. He recognized that Christians within his Muslim kingdom were often taxed heavily, and he sought to remove this burden from them.

He saw that the laws were different in the various regions of the empire, which meant that the law could not be truly trustworthy. He set about to revise the laws and make sure that they were the same everywhere. He collected the whole set of laws into one book and then sent copies of it to every corner of his kingdom. These actions increased his renown, and even today his picture is included among the portraits of lawmakers throughout history that hang in the halls of the United States Capitol.

A warrior and a lawgiver, Suleiman had other gifts as well. He was a polished poet, whose works are still memorized and quoted. He was a masterful planner, determined to make Istanbul the finest city in the world. Under his leadership, the Ottomans built towering bridges, mosques, and palaces, which still adorn the city to this day. A lover of art and craftsmanship, he employed hundreds of artists to fill his palaces with beauty. He wanted to export Turkish artistry to the rest of the world,

too, and soon every great house in Europe was covering its floors with lustrous Turkish carpets.

When Suleiman died in 1566, he left the Ottoman Empire as one of the most powerful kingdoms in the world—immensely wealthy, well ordered, and at peace. The Empire sat upon the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and ruled over large portions of all three of these continents.

But it did not stay that way, as is so often the case with mighty kings and their kingdoms.

Strong rulers are often followed by weak ones. The sultans who came after Suleiman were not men of the same mettle. Prior to Suleiman's time, it had been the practice of the Ottoman Turks for the sons of the Sultan to spend many years in training for leadership. They participated in military campaigns and ruled over far-flung provinces until they had proven themselves worthy to be kings. Suleiman's own father, you may remember, had sent him away to govern various borderlands of the empire.

Suleiman followed this tradition with his older son, Mustapha, teaching him carefully. But Mustapha betrayed Suleiman, and this terrible grief caused Suleiman to change his methods. He abandoned his younger son, Selim, leaving him isolated in the palace and giving him no guidance or training in kingship. When Selim came to the throne after his father's death, he was weak and foolish, concerned only with his own pleasures and caring nothing for the needs of his people.

This sad story became the example for all the sultans thereafter. They imprisoned their sons, keeping them in small rooms within the palace and never allowing them to leave and grow in wisdom and skill. Many of these sons went mad; those who did not lived lives of luxury and ease, knowing little of ruling the empire or governing the people. They left all such decisions to officials of the court, who, without strong and just leadership, grew steadily more evil and corrupt.

The Ottoman army began to lose its battles. The navy no longer ruled the ocean. The officials began to charge such heavy taxes on the trade routes that other nations stopped using them and found other ways to travel. The empire's wealth and power eroded away, like a great oceanside cliff scoured by waves and wind.

Nations rise and fall depending upon the quality of their kings. A wise king would have worked to solve these problems, but the empire no longer possessed any wise kings. And so, without the leadership of strong sultans, the Ottoman Empire slowly crumbled. By the early days of the 20th century, it was gone, leaving behind only the single nation of Turkey, with its capital city of Istanbul, as reminders of the greatness that once towered over the entire world.