

*Fresh from his defeat by the Russians,
the King of Sweden and a body of faithful
adherents took refuge in the Turkish
Empire. There he remained for five years,
as an increasingly unwelcome guest.*

THE LAST OF THE WARRIOR KINGS, styled by his contemporaries "the Lion of the North," Charles XII of Sweden was a brilliant and daring commander in the field, who none the less lost an empire and reduced his kingdom to a third-class power. Of statesmanship and grand strategy he was ignorant; for overwhelming odds, he had nothing but contempt. He was a hero of legendary proportions, the doer of great and fantastic deeds; and one of these was the Kalabalik. A combination of two Turkish words, Kalabalik means "tumult" or "the hunting down of dangerous game." Here the "game" was King Charles, who, with only fifty men, did battle against ten thousand or more Turks and Tartars. The time was February 1st, 1713; the place was near Bender, then a fortress-city in the Ottoman Empire, now Bendery in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

This episode was the climax of an adventure story that had begun sixteen years earlier when Charles became King at the age of fifteen. The accession of a boy-King, who seemed to be interested only in riding and hunting, tempted the enemies of Sweden to seize Swedish provinces they had long coveted. Peter the Great of Russia, Augustus the Strong, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, and Frederick IV of Denmark conspired to relieve Sweden of her lands on the eastern and southern shores of the Baltic Sea. The conflict that ensued is called the Great Northern War (1700-1721). But Charles soon proved to be a formidable fighter. Within a few weeks, the Danes were obliged to quit the war when Charles brought his army to Copenhagen. He then led eight thousand Swedes to rout a Russian horde of fifty thousand at Narva, in Estonia; and Tsar Peter fled in panic at the news of the Swedes' approach.

CHARLES XII of Sweden, portrait by David von Krafft
(1697-1718)

From: "The Life of Charles XII" by F. G. Bengtsson; Macmillan,
1960

The Kalabalik

BY DENNIS J. McCARTHY





From: "König Karl XII" by Otto Haintz; Berlin, 1935
AUGUSTUS II, *King of Poland (1697-1733) and Elector of Saxony; one of the rulers to whom the accession of a Swedish boy-king seemed a heaven-sent opportunity*

There followed six years of mostly successful battles in Poland, which, however, failed to dislodge Augustus, although Charles secured the election of Stanislas Leszczynski as a rival King. But Augustus was disposed of when Charles marched boldly through imperial territory into Saxony in 1706. While Charles was enmeshed in Polish politics, Peter was busy building a modern, disciplined, Western-style army. He plundered Karelia, Ingria and Estonia, and set about annexing them. He even began building

a new capital, St. Petersburg, in the conquered land. Charles had previously ignored the Muscovite seizures. Now he was ready to deal with the third member of the treacherous trio.

In the summer of 1707, Charles marched out of Saxony, determined to destroy Peter's armies and dictate his own terms of peace. But he never reached Moscow. Everything went wrong in the Russian campaign. General Lewenhaupt failed to deliver badly needed supplies and reinforcements. A revolt of the Cossacks, led by their Hetman, Mazeppa, failed because the plot was revealed to the Tsar by a chieftain whose daughter the Cossack leader had seduced. Moreover, King Stanislas and General Krassow failed to bring their armies from Poland. Yet, despite these misadventures, Charles stubbornly pushed ahead. The retreating Russian armies scorched the earth; and the winter of 1708-09, the coldest in living memory, took a heavy toll among the Swedes. Instead of going to Moscow on the great road from Smolensk, Charles led his army south-eastward into the Ukraine. There, at the town of Poltava in the spring of 1709, the decimated Swedish army was confronted by the Tsar's numerically superior and greatly improved forces. Several days before the battle, King Charles had been seriously wounded in the foot, and was therefore unable to lead the attack. Confined to a litter, he could neither see the battle nor direct it. The Swedes were soundly beaten, and the King barely escaped capture. Thus a battle near an obscure Ukrainian town brought an end to Sweden's existence as a great European power and enabled Russia to enter the arena of international politics. It also ended Charles's career as a conqueror and inaugurated a bizarre period of five years as a refugee in the Ottoman Empire.

The survivors of Poltava, the sick and wounded, and various troops scattered in the vicinity—a total of about 15,000—fled southward along the east bank of the Vorskla River. Fortunately, the Russians did not give immediate pursuit. Instead of fording the Vorskla, the remnants of the Swedish army continued southward to Perevolotnya, where the Vorskla joins the Dnieper River. It was impossible to ford the wide Dnieper; and only a few boats were available. Though reluctant to leave his

men, Charles was induced to cross the river with the wounded and a small fighting force. About one thousand Swedes were ferried across in boats, while Mazeppa's Cossacks swam the river with their horses. The rest of the army was placed under the command of General Lewenhaupt, with orders to detour by way of the Crimea and to join the King later. Next morning, the Russians appeared; and Lewenhaupt surrendered without a fight.

Charles, who was confined by his wound to a wagon, the Swedish refugees, and the Cossacks made their way southward through the desolate steppe country that lay beyond the Dnieper. Through 220 miles of unrelieved wilderness they travelled in the heat of summer. Dead horses provided them with food. Water from muddy streams had to be filtered through handkerchiefs before it could be drunk. Swarms of locusts darkened the sky. But they pressed onward; for the Russians were in pursuit. The refugees reached the domain of the Ottoman Turks, beyond the Bug River, on July 5th, and sought permission from the Governor of Oczakov to enter the Empire. Their crossing of the river was delayed for a few days, since the Governor, Abderrahman Pasha, insisted that he must secure authority from his superior, the Seraskier, or provincial Governor, whose capital was at Bender, about seventy miles to the west. Abderrahman would allow only the King and his immediate servants to cross without the Seraskier's permission. But the Russians were still giving chase; so the Swedes began seizing boats. Once again, the Cossacks and their horses swam the flood. Only about half the Swedes had been ferried across when the Russians came upon the scene. Those who were not lost in the river were taken prisoner by the Muscovites.

The Seraskier, Yussuf Pasha, a high-ranking official and a pasha of three horsetails, was a provincial Governor and a military commander. When he learned of the plight of the Swedish King, he invited Charles and his men to come to Bender. They arrived at Bender, which was about fifty miles above the mouth of the Dniester River, on July 24th, to be greeted by the white-bearded Seraskier and his elaborately costumed footguards. Rather than take up residence in the city, Charles chose to establish

a camp outside its walls. Tents were erected for the Swedish and Cossack guests. All necessary provisions were supplied by the hospitable Sultan through his agent, the Seraskier; and a contingent of Janissaries was assigned to the Swedish camp as a guard of honour.

Apparently, Charles had originally intended to stay in the Turkish Empire only until his foot had healed; then, with an escort of Turkish cavalry, he would return through Poland to Swedish lands. He did not accept Poltava as an irrevocable defeat. Almost as soon as he reached Bender, he sent orders to Stockholm to raise new armies; and he expected to enter into alliances against the Tsar with the Sultan and the Khan of the Crimean Tartars. To the Sultan, Ahmed III, he wrote proposing such an alliance and requesting an escort of cavalry to enable him to join his army in Poland. But Turkish politics were devious, and Palace and harem diplomacy was to keep Charles at Bender for three-and-a-half years.

Though only five hundred Swedes and Mazeppa's Cossacks had arrived at Bender with the King, the number in the camp grew steadily, as Swedish stragglers drifted in. Other Swedes, who had entered Russian service after their capture, deserted when they learned of the King's whereabouts. There were also a sizeable number of Poles, who had supported King Stanislas but found it expedient to leave Poland when Augustus again assumed the throne. Swedes, Poles, and Cossacks totalled about six thousand to eight thousand. There were also many visitors, especially ambassadors of European states. Most notable among the diplomatic personnel were the British representative at Bender, Mr. Jeffreys, and the envoy of the Duke of Holstein, Baron Fabrice.

In the Swedish service were five generals, thirty-eight staff officers, fifty-five junior officers, twenty-four Drabants (all that was left of the royal bodyguard), twenty preachers, twenty-eight gentlemen of the Chancery, soldiers and domestics. Not all, however, were Swedes. Stanislas Poniatowski, a Polish Prince, was the most distinguished of the non-Swedes. He was made a major-general, and served Charles chiefly as an intermediary with the Sultan's Government in Constantinople. Another important non-Swede in the King's



From: "Karl XII" by F. G. Bengtsson; Koehler Verlag, Stuttgart, 1957

PETER THE GREAT (1682-1725); during the Great Northern War, he "fled in panic at the news of the Swedes' approach"

service was Baron Christian Albrecht Grothusen, a German and the King's favourite. At Bender he was in charge of finances. Despite the daily provisions (or *thaim*) supplied by the Turks, Charles had to borrow money in order to pay his men and keep the favour of the Janissaries. Grothusen arranged loans from Louis XIV of France, English merchants in Constantinople, and local Jewish and Turkish merchants; but he kept no books, cared nothing about the rate of interest, and failed to get receipts or the return of notes that had been paid. Charles cared little how his favourite handled the finances.

The original quarters of the Swedes had been just outside the walls of Bender, at a spot where the Dniester makes a sharp bend. Then, in July, 1711, a flood obliged him to move to a height about two miles from Bender, between

the river and the village of Varnitza, where Charles built a large stone house. It had only one storey, but very thick walls and many rooms including a large dining hall, an audience chamber, a bedchamber with closets and wardrobes, and an apartment of four rooms for Mr. Duben, the Marshal of the Court. There was also a large hall for divine services; for, in the army of this staunch Lutheran King, services were held twice daily. The walls were adorned with damask and other fine cloths; the floors were covered with rich carpets; among the furniture were Turkish sofas with gold brocade and velvet cushions. A chancellery, kitchen, larder, wine cellar and a small building to house the royal silver were located nearby. The officers built houses around the King's residence to form a roughly pentagonal figure; and, slightly farther off, the soldiers' houses were constructed on wide streets.

While King Charles occupied himself with riding several hours every day, exercising his troops, reading French playwrights and playing chess, Poniatowski was busy in Constantinople seeking to promote war between the Turks and the Russians. Thanks in part to his harem diplomacy—the Sultan's mother was extremely favourable to King Charles—the Sublime Porte declared war on Muscovy in 1711. Assured of the assistance of the Hospodars of Moldavia and Wallachia, the Tsar marched a large army into Bessarabia; and the Grand Vizier, Baltaji, commanding 200,000 Turkish forces, moved northwards from Adrianople, across the Danube and into Moldavia. Peter advanced to the Pruth River, not far from Jassy, the Moldavian capital, and only about seventy-five miles west of Bender. When the Turkish army came into sight, the Hospodars defected and brought to the Turks the provisions upon which the Tsar was counting to sustain his army. Peter suffered wholesale desertions; and his conquering army was reduced to 30,000.

Baltaji had the Russians in a trap. But the Grand Vizier was no fighter. The trap was not sprung. Instead, Baltaji agreed to discuss terms of peace, and made what he considered to be a very satisfactory treaty. Peter agreed to return Azov and neighbouring territory, which he had secured by the Treaty of Carlowitz in 1699; he was required to raze fortifications, remove

ships from the Black Sea, and withdraw troops from Poland. It was a humiliating treaty for the Tsar; but he was able to march away with his army almost intact and his power undiminished. The opportunity to crush Muscovy would not again be given to the Turks. The Treaty of the Pruth also included a clause by which the Tsar promised free passage for King Charles to return to his kingdom. So long as Charles remained in the Ottoman Empire, efforts would be made to re-ignite a Russo-Turk war. Neither Baltaji nor Peter wanted this; so the Swedish King must leave. Baltaji, too, had a personal reason for hastening the royal guest's departure: Charles had helped bring about the overthrow of previous Grand Viziers; and he would certainly seek to oust Baltaji, who had made a treaty that did not serve his interests.

Having secured for Charles a safe conduct from the Holy Roman Emperor, the Vizier sent three pashas to Bender to invite him to depart. They couched their request in polite terms; but it was received by the King with complete silence. Then Baltaji instructed Ismail Pasha, the current Seraskier of Bender, to threaten him with the Sultan's displeasure; at which the King replied that he would only leave on two conditions: Baltaji must be punished and he himself provided with 100,000 men to escort him through Poland. Baltaji now suspended the *thaim* and posted guards to intercept any letters that Charles might send to the Sultan. But, despite this precaution, the Grand Vizier was soon banished, when his chief lieutenant, Osman Aga, was revealed to have twenty thousand pieces of Russian and Saxon gold and a ring that belonged to Peter's wife, the Tsarina Catherine. Chiefly responsible for Baltaji's overthrow was the ambitious Ali Coumourgi, who chose, however, to manipulate a puppet Grand Vizier, Yussuf Pasha, rather than assume that office. Although the *thaim* was restored, the change of Vizier did not benefit the King; for Ali Coumourgi also favoured peace with Russia.

In April 1712, Ahmed III sent a letter to King Charles informing him that he must return to his own lands. The Sultan would provide money and supplies, but not the 100,000 men Charles had demanded. Instead, there would be an escort of 2,000 Janissaries and

12,000 Tartars. In an answering letter, Charles objected to "the simple guard of a flying camp," and pointed out that the Russians, in violation of the Treaty of the Pruth, were sending troops into Poland. When the Sublime Porte learned of the Russian move, war was again declared. But Ali Coumourgi induced the Sultan to accept the promises of the Russian ambassadors that the troops would be withdrawn; and, before any fighting had taken place, a treaty to this effect was signed. Once more there was a reference to King Charles leaving the Ottoman Empire; and Peter and Augustus, who also signed the treaty, promised to give him safe conduct.

But Charles would not leave. He did not trust Peter and Augustus; and, when pressed to set a date for his departure, he told Ismail Pasha that he could not leave until he had settled his debts, which would involve the payment of one thousand purses, or 1,500,000 gold crowns. So anxious was the Sultan to be rid of him that he sent 1,200 purses, 200 wagons, 500 horses, and some camels. But Grothusen, acting for his King, demanded the money before making preparations to leave. Upon the Baron's solemn promise that the King would depart, Ismail surrendered the money in violation of his orders. A few days later, when the Pasha returned to the Swedish camp, Charles demanded another one thousand purses. He can hardly have been serious. The King, who suspected a plot by which the Khan of the Tartars, Devlet Geray, would turn him over to Augustus, was merely playing for time. An intercepted letter from the Khan had convinced him that he was to be betrayed into the hands of his enemy.

Ahmed was enraged at Charles's new demand; and, in December 1712, he consulted the *Divan*, or imperial council, on the propriety of forcing the Swedish King to leave the Empire. The *Divan* agreed that force was proper in the circumstances. The imperial orders were brought to Bender; and, early in January, Kapuji Pasha, a pasha of three horse-tails, called upon Charles to ask him when he meant to leave. Still temporizing, the King informed the Pasha that he was awaiting the Sultan's one thousand purses, and that his officers had gone to Wallachia to procure



From: "Karl XII," by F. G. Bengtsson

GENERAL LEWENHAUPT; while the Swedish army was retreating from Poltava, he surrendered to the Russians without a fight

mounts. When the Pasha answered that he had orders to drive him out, Charles replied that, as a faithful servant, he should execute them; and the frustrated Kapuji galloped all the way to Bender in a rage.

The Janissaries were immediately ordered to quit the Swedish camp; and the next day the *thaim* was once more cut off. Swedes and Poles who had taken up residence in the village of Varnitza were expelled. The Swedes joined the King; whereas the Poles and the Cossacks took up a neutral position and placed themselves under the protection of the Turks, so that their *thaim* might continue. The Janissaries and the Tartars, who had come to Bender to provide

part of the King's escort, blockaded the camp to prevent the Swedes from obtaining provisions. Undeterred, Charles began preparing for an attack upon his camp. Retrenchment lines were drawn between the officers' houses, with the King's buildings in the centre; and, as the frozen ground prevented the Swedes from digging trenches, parapets were constructed of old wagons, bedsteads, casks, piles of dung, and boards from houses that had been torn down. All the King's attendants, including domestics and scullions, were armed. Officers and soldiers manned the defences; and officers not assigned to the lines were detailed to defend the King's house. The royal apartment would be defended by Marshal Duben, the "gentlemen of the court," and the King's footmen and domestics. An effective blockade of the camp could have starved the Swedes into submission; but the blockade proved to be rather half-hearted. Baron Fabrice, who was attempting to act as a mediator between Charles and the Turks, had the privilege of passing freely in and out of the camp; and, through Grothusen's Jewish friends, he arranged for the Janissaries to permit the passage of provisions. Supplies were moved into the camp nightly.

As soon as the blockade had been imposed on January 13th, Baron Fabrice and Mr. Jeffreys set about trying to arrange a peaceful settlement. But Charles seemed confident that the Turks would not attack; and, when Fabrice urged him to arrange his departure, the King refused his friend's appeal; while the Turkish officials continued to insist that he must fix a definite date. Fabrice and Jeffreys, however, did their best to reach an accommodation, or at least to delay any violent steps against the King, and managed to procure an invitation to a *divan*, made up of Kapuji Pasha, Ismail Pasha, the Tartar Khan, and other officials, where the question was debated. The Khan recommended the use of force; but, the two foreign diplomats having impressed upon the meeting that King Charles would not surrender, the *divan* decided to seek explicit orders from the Sublime Porte. Late in January, the Sultan's new and explicit orders were brought to Bender; and Fabrice pleaded for one more chance to reason with the King. He found Charles riding around the retrenchments. In

answer to the envoy's pleas, Charles claimed that the orders were forged; but, when Fabrice asked if he would leave were their authenticity to be established, the King replied that he would not. "Well, Sir," said Fabrice; "if your Majesty will not do what religion, reason, and your own glory require, I have no more business here, and shall withdraw." The King showed no anger at this rebuke; he merely answered, "I know what I am doing."

It was impossible to sway King Charles once he had made up his mind. The Turks called him "Demirbash," or "Ironhead"; and Grothusen, who perhaps understood him better than any other man, told Fabrice that the King wanted to push matters to an extremity; that "his imagination was tickled" by the prospect of such a remarkable engagement. Similarly, one of the officers, Colonel Carl Klingspor, noted: "His imagination was already set on fire at the thought of the extraordinary battle which was about to be fought." Although Baron Fabrice must have been exasperated by Charles's obstinacy, he had become a close friend and now offered to fight at the King's side. Charles declined his offer; and, when the Baron took leave of the Swedish camp, many officers gave him their purses and valuables; for they did not think they would survive. Fabrice left sadly, but stayed in Varnitza and continued to issue appeals upon the King's behalf.

On Saturday, January 31st, 1713, the Ottoman forces marched out of Bender to expel the King of Sweden. First in line of march were 3,000 Janissaries, followed by ten or twelve field pieces, ammunition wagons and gunners. Behind them came Ismail Pasha, the Seraskier of Bender, other pashas and officials and their retinues. Devlet Geray, the Tartar Khan, led a large number of Tartars, Circasians and Myrfas. This imposing array of fighting men joined the Janissaries and Tartars who had been blockading the Swedish camp. But the Turks were still reluctant to resort to force; and a Janissary Aga was sent to the camp to inform Charles that, if he had not changed his mind, they were ready to attack. The King said simply that he, too, was ready. He did, however, permit Grothusen to seek an audience with the Seraskier and the Khan at which he

appealed for three days' grace. But Ismail Pasha explained that their orders permitted no further delay. Returning from the interview, Grothusen walked through the Janissary lines, harangued them about taking arms against friends, and casually threw money among them, as a reminder of past benefactions.

Then drums rolled and hautboys blew to signal the attack; while, not to be outdone, Charles sent six trumpeters to his roof. Cannon roared, the shot tore holes in the soft, thick stone of the walls, and one of the trumpeters fell dead with an arrow through his nose. Abruptly the cannonade ceased. The troops were ordered to advance. But a strange thing happened — the Janissaries turned around, shouting "*Almas, Almas!*" ("That shall not be.") An officer, who sought to force them on, was shot down; and their leaders went to the Seraskier's tent and announced that they would not attack, and that the three days King Charles had requested should be granted to him. The Seraskier affected to comply, and marched his forces back to Bender. But that night thirty Janissaries were strangled in their beds and their bodies, weighted with large stones, thrown into the Dniester.

In the morning, Ismail Pasha assembled the Janissaries. The Sultan's orders were read to them, and Ismail invited them to examine the seal and signature. He warned them that they would be guilty of high treason if they failed to obey the orders of the Sublime Porte. He also tempted them with the prospect of booty and slaves, and offered 500 ducats to the man who would kill the King, or 2,000 ducats to those who took him alive. Still some of the Janissaries demurred; and a group of about fifty officers went to the camp, carrying white staves, an emblem of truce, to entreat the King to leave under their protection. Charles refused to see the Janissaries. Instead, he sent them a message to the effect that if they did not depart immediately he would singe their beards. Somewhat later that Sunday morning, the first day of February 1713, the Janissaries again marched out of Bender, and were drawn up in attack formation where the retrenchments appeared to be weakest. This time they were determined.

At noon, as the King and some of the Swedes

were gathered in the chapel, the attack began with artillery fire upon the house. Charles hurried out, mounted a horse, and prepared to direct the defence. The Janissaries fired their muskets into the air as they advanced, and, in a short time, were through the retrenchments and had disarmed the Swedes. Seeing the Turks and Tartars pour into the camp, Charles rushed towards his house, dismounted and, with a score of officers and men, began cutting his way through a crowd of Janissaries. A Turk grabbed him by the arm. He tore himself free, but fell to the ground. When he regained his feet, there was a swarm of Turks about him. A bullet grazed his nose and cheek and nicked his ear. One of the Drabants, a certain Axel Roos, thereupon seized Charles around the waist and pulled him through the door which was just opened by Colonel Chamber. The Swedes pushed into the vestibule, leaving ten or twelve Turks dead. Some thirty men entered the house with the King. Turks and Tartars had broken through the barricaded windows and had overcome the defenders; only twenty-two out of a hundred escaped being killed or taken. These twenty-two were gathered in the large vestibule, the only room still in Swedish hands. Here Charles rallied all that was left of his army.

Meanwhile, the enemy was busy looting. About 200 Turks and Tartars occupied the great hall, next to the vestibule, where they had broken open the strongbox containing the royal silver. Charles led his men into the hall. Both sides discharged their muskets; then, amid dense smoke, they closed in hand-to-hand combat, sword against scimitar. Some of the Turks fled through the windows. Others fought bravely. The floor was soon slippery with blood, and the smoke was so dense that it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Amid the general confusion, Charles found himself cut off by three Janissaries. He drove his sword into two of them, parried a scimitar with his left hand, and knocked down the third Turk with a blow of his right arm. Another Turk grabbed the King and pinned him against a wall; but an alert cook saved the King by shooting his assailant. Yet another Turk swung at Charles from the rear. A Drabant named Tchammer deflected the blow with his carbine,

and the blade slashed Charles's otterskin cap. The remaining Turks and Tartars thereupon turned and fled. The great hall was cleared; and the Swedes then set about clearing the other rooms. Charles entered the High Steward's chamber alone; but luckily he was followed by Axel Roos, who, as he entered, saw the King fighting off three Janissaries. He shot one in the back, Charles put his sword through the second, and Roos felled the third with another well-placed shot.

After about one hour of hard fighting, the house was entirely cleared of the enemy; and the weary defenders, reduced in number by eight, washed their bloody faces and hands in Spanish wine and prepared to meet a further onslaught. But no new assault came; though sporadic artillery fire continued. As darkness set in, the Seraskier ordered his archers to fire burning arrows. Bales of burning hay were also placed at one corner of the building. Soon the house was ablaze, and burning timbers began to fall into the rooms. For the first time since he had left Stockholm thirteen years earlier, King Charles took a glass of wine.

As the fire spread, the Swedes moved from room to room until all were in the King's bed-chamber. Charles urged them to fight and die rather than lay down their arms; but they could not put out the fire; the smoke became so thick they could hardly breathe, and muskets were accidentally discharged by falling pieces of burning wood. A soldier named Rosen suggested making a dash to the Chancery building, which had a stone roof. Charles accepted the suggestion with alacrity, and with sword and pistol in hand, led the way. The Janissaries were forced back some paces; but, as Charles ran, he tripped and fell to the ground. Lieutenant Aloh Aberg, who had thrown himself on top of the King, was pulled away; and the Turks fell upon the King, ripping and biting off pieces of his clothing that they might gain the reward promised to those who helped to capture him. The "Lion of the North" was a prisoner. The other Swedes were quickly disarmed and robbed.

The *Kalabalik* was over. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. Fifteen Swedes were dead; 200 or more of the enemy had fallen. Once disarmed, Charles became calm. He was



Mansell Collection

"Turkish Dresses," an eighteenth-century engraving. Left to right: a Turkish gentleman, an Officer of the Janissaries and a Bashaw of Three Tails. On January 31st, 1713, a force of three thousand Janissaries was launched against the Swedish camp at Bender

carried by his arms and legs to the Seraskier, covered in blood, his clothes in rags. His left hand, the tip of his nose, and his ear were bleeding; his eyebrows had been singed off; and his face was black and sweaty. Standing before Ismail Pasha, he told him that the game would still be going on if his men at the barricades had fought as bravely as those in the house. The Turk observed: "It was a rough game." And the King answered: "For sport it was too much; for a fight too little."

After the *Kalabalik*, Charles was taken to Demotica, near Adrianople. The devious twists and turns of Turkish politics once again altered the Sultan's feelings. There were

apologies; and the Seraskier, the Khan and others were made the scapegoats of the affair, and paid the penalty with their lives and fortunes. Charles remained abed for many months with a broken foot, though many thought he was feigning illness to avoid expulsion. At length, he quitted the Ottoman Empire, late in 1714, and travelled incognito through Germany to the Swedish city of Stralsund in Pomerania. Charles and Sweden had both been defeated; but this the King would not admit. He continued fighting until a November night in 1718, when a bullet ripped through his skull amid the trenches around the Norwegian city of Fredrikstad.