

TRANSLATION OF LETTER

Donato Soranzo (recipient)

In the name of Christ 1402 on  
August 30 in Venice

Like (?) a good brother, to maintain the good customs used by friends, that is when one cannot make a visit in person, one visits with letters, and therefore I send you this telling you that by the grace of God your family is well and we hope to hear the same of you.

I will not write about the state of business, because you will be fully informed about this by your brother; I will write about the news from here and there (?).

As you know, at your leaving the ambassadors from King Vingilaus were here, and they have made a pact with our Government as follows, that the abovementioned king leaves to this Government Corfu and Durazzo, with the condition that he have thirty thousand ducats, of which we must have half by next Christmas, and the other half at \_\_\_\_\_ (?), and he has remained a great friend of our Government.

The Duke of Milan cut off the water (dammed the river?) at Padua on the fifth of this month and blocked it for about 13 hours; then because of the weight the water exerted on the bridge, the bridge could not last and of 24 bridges (transcription says 'porte', but should probably be 'ponte') he had, seven have been (would be?) broken, and yesterday a tower at the end of the bridge was ruined. Everyone thought that the Duke could not dam(?) the water at Padua this year.

The Florentines have set a price on the head of the Lord of Mantua, that is, whoever will hand him over alive will have 20 thousand florentines (coins) and if the person (who claims the reward) has been exiled (from Florence) he can return along with a friend and if his possessions have been confiscated they will be returned to him (as a reward), and whoever brings in (the Lord of Mantua) dead will have 10 thousand florentines with the conditions above stated, that is, that if he had been in exile he can return with a friend and if his possessions have been confiscated they will be returned.

The embassy of the new emperor has arrived here, and it is said he has many soldiers (?) and that he will surely come here before long(?).

The Captain of the Gulf (Venetian admiral of the Adriatic Sea) has written to the government that in the Morea (Pelopponesus) there is important news, and he writes thus: The castle and land of Gustiza has been largely destroyed; at the castle of Diocopa in the Greek lands the pass with the mountain has all been destroyed and it is

impossible to pass through there. Another fortress called Sachixli which is on top of another mountain, which is very high, has been breached in four places; another fort called Chisilocastro has been destroyed completely with the mountain and many persons are dead (killed). Another fort called Moecastro seems to have been burned, it is not known for sure if the fire began in the fort or in another way (?); but it is certainly said that there were storms there and there was much lightning -- near the sea, lands and mountains have been destroyed. And at present the sea waves go more than three balestrade (a balestrada is the distance a catapult can shoot) farther up on the land than usually; even when the sea had more than a half balestrada more than usual and salt water (brackish water) has been discovered in some wells (?) in a few places which is a sign that the water has risen up to that point and this would be more than half a balestrada as I said. And because of the rising of the sea, fish have been left on the land, which were picked up by the inhabitants as proof. The sweet water of the places rose and it increased much more than usually. And these things have happened from Patras all the way to Chioranto. In the ports of Suola and Vetroniza it appears there was an earthquake more in the sea than on land; because of the great murmuring and movement of the sea it seemed that the sea was subsiding and then it returned with force and then it rose more than half a balestrada all the way to some areas where men were harvesting wheat; and the men who were harvesting took away the wheat they were cutting and also some other wheat near the sea; the sea took it away and scattered it. Then the sea subsided and it did this two times; and when it was down the men were sure they were safe (?) and went to the coast, where there were quantities of several kinds of fish. The earthquake was also in the land of Suola and destroyed several battlements near Suola in a short time. A fortress (level place?) took fire and the flames spread down and burned over a whole mountain, all of which was denuded of trees. And on that day there was very bad weather with lightning and thunder; more than 500 houses burned, presumably from lightning; it was a storm so violent it destroyed grape vines and other things on land. And it killed all domestic animals (cows?) which were outside. Other incredible things are also related, but all the abovementioned things were witnessed by several persons and our admiral says this happened in July.

I have nothing else to relate, except that where I am established I am at your disposal, I beg Christ to preserve you and offer him thanks if we see each other again in good health as my heart desires.

Zan (Giovanni) Contarini,  
son of Sir Nicolo, your cousin.  
Salutations.