

VARIOUS

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CONSTANTINOPLE



CONSTANTINOPLE

"Queen of the Morn! Sultana of the East!"

The splendour and extent of Constantinople are not within the compass of one of our pages; but the annexed Engraving furnishes some idea of a section of this queen of cities. It extends from Seraglio Point to the Janissaries' Tower, and though commanding only a portion of the city, includes the domes of the magnificent mosques of Santa Sophia and the Sultan Achmet, which rise from a vast assemblage of towers, palaces, minarets, &c. in every style of architecture.

We have so often and so recently touched upon the ancient and modern state of Constantinople, that we fear a recapitulation of its splendour would be uninviting to our readers.¹ Nevertheless, as its mention is so frequently coupled with the seat of war, and the "expulsion of the Turks from Europe," our illustration will at this period be interesting, as well as in some measure, explanatory of the position of the city, which is so advantageous as to make it appear fit for the seat of dominion over the whole world. Can we then be surprised at its forming so tempting a lure to surrounding nations?

The city stands at the eastern extremity of Romania, on a neck of land that advances towards Natolia; on the south it is washed by the sea of Marmora, and on the north-east by the gulf of the Golden Horn. It is built, like ancient Rome, on seven hills, rising one above the other in beautiful succession, and sloping gently towards the water; the whole forming an irregular triangle, about twelve miles in circumference, the entire of which space is closely covered with palaces, mosques, baths, fountains, and houses; at a short distance the proudly swelling domes of 300 mosques, the tall and elegant minarets, crowned by glittering crescents, the ancient towers on the walls, and the gaudily coloured kiosks and houses rising above the stupendous trees in the seraglio, situated on the extreme point, form a rich, picturesque, and extraordinary scene. The gulf of the Golden Horn, to the north-east of the city, forms a noble and capacious harbour, four miles in length, by half a mile in breadth, capable of securely containing 1,200 ships of the largest size, and is generally filled with the curiously built vessels and gaily decorated boats of the Turks; on the opposite shore is the maritime town of Galata, containing the docks, arsenals, cannon founderies, barracks, &c.; above which stands the populous suburb of Pera, the residence of the foreign ministers of the Porte, and all foreigners of distinction, none whatever being allowed to reside in the city. Beyond, as far as the eye can reach, is an immense forest of cypress and mulberry trees, being the extensive cemeteries of all persuasions. From Galata, the European shore of the Bosphorus forms one continued line of towns; palaces in every style of architecture, pleasure gardens, and romantic villages. On the opposite, or Asiatic shore, stands the extensive town of Scutari, also a suburb of Constantinople, although in another quarter of the globe, and separated by a sea a mile in breadth; and at a short distance is the ancient and ruinous city of Calcedone. The group of the Prince's Islands, in the Sea of Marmora, and the snow-clad summit of Mount Olympus, close the prospect. Such is a mere outline of the natural and artificial beauty of Constantinople.

The city itself is surrounded by walls, built of freestone, with alternate layers of Roman brick, flanked by 478 towers; the walls, however, are in several places so dilapidated as to be incapable of any defence without great reparation. On the land side, the fortifications consist of a triple wall, with towers at every 150 yards; the first wall being 30 feet in height; the second 20, and about 30 feet from the first; the third is twelve feet in height; beyond this is a fosse, thirty feet wide, now converted

¹ See "Sailing round Constantinople," MIRROR, vol. x. p. 278. Engraving and Description of the Castle of the Seven Towers, *ibid.*, vol. x. p. 361. Extent of Constantinople, vol. xi. p. 298. Lines on Constantinople, vol. xii. p. 58. Taking of the City by the Turks, vol. xii. p. 274.

into gardens, and filled with fine grown trees, and a low counterscarp. There are five gates on this side, and several to the water. The streets, of which there are 3,770, with the exception of two or three, are narrow, irregular, badly paved, and exceedingly dirty, the only scavengers being vultures and half-starved dogs. There are fourteen imperial mosques, about 200 others, and above that number of messjids or chapels. The number of houses is prodigious; in 1796, the register of Effendissy gave 88,185 within the walls; they are mostly constructed of wood, and the dwellings of the lower classes are mere wooden boxes, cool in summer, the windows being unglazed, and in winter heated by pans of charcoal. Fires are consequently very frequent. The khans, or warehouses of the merchants are, however, fireproof; the bazaars are also defended from fire, and are well built; and coffeehouses very numerous. The city is amply supplied with water, there being 730 public baths, a superb fountain in the Chinese taste in every street, and few houses without similar provision. The population of the city and suburbs is estimated at upwards of 600,000; of these above one half are Turks, the remainder Jews, Franks, Greeks, &c.

We have only space to particularize a few of the most prominent buildings in our view. To the left is the Seraglio Point, or superb palace of the Sultan, whose treasures almost realize the fables of romance. Next is the superb dome of the Mosque of the Sultan Achmet, without exception the finest building ever raised by the Turks. It is surrounded by a lofty colonnade of marble, of various colours, surmounted by 30 small domes: the large dome is supported by four gigantic piers, covered as well as most of the interior, with fresco paintings; it is rich in columns of verd antique, Egyptian granite, and white marble; there are also four smaller domes, similarly ornamented. Next, near the centre of the Engraving is the Mosque of Santa Sophia, a truly superb and perfect monument of antiquity, built at an expense of 320,000 pounds of silver, (some authors say gold.²) Next in importance are the Mosques of the Sultans Osmyn, Bajazet, and Selim; and the Gulf of the Golden Horn, or the Harbour.

Among the suburbs of Constantinople, Scutari is not the least interesting, inasmuch as it leads us to notice the funereal customs of the Turks, and their cemeteries, of which Scutari is the principal site.

Interment almost immediately follows upon the decease of the person; a practice common to all classes at Constantinople. The corpse is carried to the grave on a bier by the friends of the deceased: this is considered as a religious duty, it being declared in the Koran, that he who carries a dead body the space of forty paces, procures for himself the expiation of a great sin.³ The graves are shallow, and thin boards only, laid over the corpse, protect it from the immediate pressure of the earth, which is set with flowers, according to the custom of the Pythagoreans, and a cypress tree is planted near every new grave. As a grave is never opened a second time, a vast tract of country is occupied with these burial-fields, which add by no means to the salubrity of the vicinity. Much is gained, unquestionably, as regards the health of the inhabitants, by burying without the cities; but the shallowness of the graves contributes to render these vast accumulations of animal dust, at certain seasons more especially, a source of pestilential miasmata. The cemeteries near Scutari are immense, owing to the predilection which the Turks of Europe preserve for being buried in Asia—that quarter of the world in which are situated the holy cities, Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, and Damascus. The author of Anastasius gives the following vivid description of this extraordinary spot:—

² For an Engraving and full description of the Mosque of Santa Sophia, see the MIRROR, vol. ii. p.p. 473, 486.

³ Mr. Hobhouse has pointed out some remarkable points of similarity between the funereal customs of the Greeks and those of the Irish; in particular, the howling lament, the interrogating the corpse, "Why did you die?" and the wake and feast. "But a more singular resemblance," he adds, "is that which is to be remarked between a Mahommedan and an Irish opinion relative to the same ceremony. When a dead Mussulman is carried on his plank towards the cemetery, the devout Turk runs from his house as the procession passes his door, for a short distance relieves one of the bearers of the body, and then gives up his place to another, who hastens to perform the same charitable and holy office. No one who has been in Ireland, but must have seen the peasants leave their cottages or their work, to give a temporary assistance to those employed in bearing the dead to the grave an exertion by which they approach so many steps nearer to Paradise."

"A dense and motionless cloud of stagnant vapours ever shrouds these dreary realms. From afar, a chilling sensation informs the traveller that he approaches their dark and dismal precincts; and as he enters them, an icy blast, rising from their inmost bosom, rushes forth to meet his breath, suddenly strikes his chest, and seems to oppose his progress. His very horse snuffs up the deadly effluvia with signs of manifest terror, and, exhaling a cold and clammy sweat, advances reluctantly over a hollow ground, which shakes as he treads it, and loudly re-echoes his slow and fearful step. So long and so busily has time been at work to fill this chosen spot—so repeatedly has Constantinople poured into this ultimate receptacle almost its whole contents—that the capital of the living, spite of its immense population, scarcely counts a single breathing inhabitant for every ten silent inmates of this city of the dead. Already do its fields of blooming sepulchres stretch far away on every side, across the brow of the hills and the bend of the valleys; already are the avenues which cross each other at every step in this domain of death, so lengthened, that the weary stranger, from whatever point he comes, still finds before him many a dreary mile of road between marshalled tombs and mournful cypresses, ere he reaches his journey's seemingly receding end; and yet, every year does this common patrimony of all the heirs to decay, still exhibit a rapidly increasing size, a fresh and wider line of boundary, and a new belt of young plantations, growing up between new flower beds of graves.

"There, said I to myself, lie, scarcely one foot beneath the surface of a swelling soil, ready to burst at every point with its festering contents, more than half the generations whom death has continued to mow down for nearly four centuries in the vast capital of Islamism. There lie, side by side, on the same level, in cells the size of their bodies, and only distinguished by a marble turban somewhat longer or deeper—somewhat rounder or squarer—personages, in life, far as heaven and earth asunder, in birth, in station, in gifts of nature, and in long laboured acquirements. There lie, sunk alike in their last sleep—alike food for the worm that lives on death—the conqueror who filled the universe with his name, and the peasant scarcely known in his own hamlet; Sultan Mahmoud, and Sultan Mahmoud's perhaps more deserving horse;⁴ elders bending under the weight of years, and infants of a single hour; men with intellects of angels, and men with understandings inferior to those of brutes; the beauty of Georgia and the black of Sennaar; visiers, beggars, heroes, and women."

The approach to Constantinople from the sea of Marmora is likewise thus beautifully described by the same author, and will form an appropriate conclusion:

"With eyes rivetted on the expanding splendour, I watched as they came out of the bosom of the surrounding waters, the pointed minarets, the swelling cupolas, and the innumerable habitations, either stretching along the jagged shore, and reflecting their shape in the mirror of the deep, or creeping up the crested mountain, and tracing their outline on the expanse of the sky. At first agglomerated in a single confused mass, the lesser part of this immense whole seemed, as we advanced, by degrees to unfold, to disengage themselves from each other, and to grow into various groups, divided by wide chasms and deep indentures; until at last the clusters, thus far still distantly connected, became transformed, as if by magic, into three distinct cities, each individually of prodigious extent, and each separated from the other two by a wide arm of that sea whose silver tide encompassed their base, and made its vast circuit rest half on Europe, and half on Asia."

Since writing the above we have visited Mr. Burford's *New Panorama of Constantinople*, which has lately been opened for exhibition in the Strand; and although we cannot in this Number enter into the detail of its merits, we recommend it to our lionizing friends as one of Mr. Burford's most finished paintings, and equal if not superior in effect to any exhibition in the metropolis; but we reserve an account of its pictorial beauties for our next publication.

⁴ "Sultan Mahmoud's horse was actually interred in the cemetery of Scutari, under a dome supported by eight pillars."

TWO SONNETS

To M— F—

(For the Mirror.)

I

I met thee, —, when the leaves were green
And living verdure clothed the countless trees
When meadow flowers allured the summer bees
And silvery skies shone o'er the cloudless scene
Bright as my thoughts when wand'ring to thy home
Where Nature looks *as though she were divine*
Not in the richness of the rip'ning vine
Not in the splendour of imperial Rome.
It is a ruder scene of rocks and trees
Where even barrenness is beauty—where
The glassy lake, below the mountain bare
Curls up its waters 'neath the casual breeze
And, 'midst the plenitude of flower and bud
Sweet violets hide them in the hilly wood.

II

I parted with thee one autumnal day
When o'er the woods the northern tempest beat—
The spoils of autumn rustling at our feet
And Nature wept to see her own decay.
The pliant poplar bent beneath the blast
The moveless oak stood warring with the storm
Which bow'd the pensive willow's weaker form
And naught gave token that thy love would last
Save the mute eloquence of forcing tears
Save the low pleading of thy ardent sighs
The fervent gazing of thy glowing eyes
A firm assurance, spite of all my fears
That, as the sunshine dries the summer rain
Thy *future* smile should bless for parting pain.

* * *H.*

ILLUSTRATION OF SOME OLD PROVERBS, &c

(For the Mirror.)

"Ax." *To ask.* This word which now passes for a mere vulgarism, is the original Saxon form, and used by Chaucer and others. See "Tyrwhitt's Glossary." We find it also in Bishop Bale's "God's Promises." "That their synne vengeaunce *axed* continually." Old Plays. i. 18. Also in the "Four P.'s," by Heywood, "And *axed* them thys question than." Old Pl. i. 84. An *axing* is used by Chaucer for a request. Ben Jonson introduces it jocularly:

"A man out of wax,
As a lady would ax."

Masques, vol. 6, p. 85.

"*Between the Cup and the Lip.*" The proverb that many things fall out between the cup and the lip, is a literal version of one in Latin. *Multo inter pocula ac libra cadunt.* The origin of which was as follows:—A king of Thrace had planted a vineyard, when one of his slaves, whom he had much oppressed in that very work, prophesied that he should never taste of the wine produced in it. The monarch disregarded the prediction, and when at an entertainment he held a glassful of his own wine made from the grape of that vineyard, he sent for the slave, and asked him what he thought of his prophecy now; to which the other replied, "Many things fall out between the cup and the lip," and he had scarcely delivered this singular response, before news was brought that a monstrous boar was laying waste the favourite vineyard. The king, in a rage, put down the cup which he held in his hand, and hurried out with his people to attack the boar; but being too eager, the boar rushed upon him and killed him, without having tasted of the wine. Such is the story related by some of the Greek writers, and though evidently apocryphal, it certainly is productive of a good practical moral.

"*In the merry pin.*" This is said of those who have drunk freely and are cheerful in their cups. Among the ancient northern nations, it was customary to drink out of large horns, in which were placed small pins, like a scale of distances, and he who quaffed most was considered as a toper of the first magnitude, and respected accordingly. The merry pin was that which stood pretty far from the mouth of the horn, and he who, at a draught, reduced the liquor to that point, was a man of no ordinary prowess in bacchanalian contest.

"*Under the Rose be it spoken.*" The rose being dedicated by Cupid to Harpocrates, the god of Silence, to engage him to conceal the amours of Venus, was an emblem of Silence; whence to present it or hold it up to any person in discourse, served instead of an admonition, that it was time for him to hold his peace; and in entertaining rooms it was customary to place a rose above the table, to signify that what was there spoken should be kept private. This practice is described by the following epigram:—

Est rosa flos, Veneris cujus quo facta laterunt,
Harpocrati matri dona dicavit Amor,
Inde rosam mensis hospes suspendit amicis
Convivii et sub ea dicta tacenda sciat.

Potter's Ant. Greece.

"*Cant.*" This word, which is now generally applied to fanatical preachers, and hypocritical apprentices in religion, derives its name from two Scotch Presbyterian ministers, in the reign of

Charles II. They were father and son, both called Andrew Cant; and Whitelocke in his "Memoirs," p. 511, after narrating the defeat at Worcester, in 1651, says, "Divers Scotch ministers were permitted to meet at Edinburgh, to keep a day of humiliation, as they pretended, for their too much compliance with the King," and in the same month when Lord Argyll had called a parliament, Mr. Andrew Cant, a minister, said in his pulpit, that "God was bound to hold this parliament, for that all other parliaments was called by man, but this was brought about by his own hand."

"*An't please the Pigs.*" In this phrase there is not only a peculiarity of dialect, but the corruption of a word, and a change of one thing for another. In the first place, *an*, in the midland counties, is used for *if*; and *pigs* is evidently a corruption of *Pyx*, the sacred vessel containing the host in Roman Catholic countries. In the last place, the vessel is substituted for the power itself, by an easy metonymy in the same manner as when we talk of "the sense of the house," we do not mean to ascribe intelligence to a material building; but to the persons in it assembled for a deliberate purpose; the expression therefore signifies no more than "*Deo volente*," or God willing.

"*Bumper.*" In many parts of England any thing large is called a bumper. Hence a bumping lass is a large girl of her age, and a bumpkin is a large-limbed, uncivilized rustic; the idea of grossness of size entering into the idea of a country bumpkin, as well as that of unpolished rudeness. Dr. Johnson, however, strangely enough deduces the word bumpkin from bump; but what if it should prove to be a corruption of *bumbard*, or *bombard*: in low Latin, *bombardus*, a great gun, and from thence applied to a large flagon, or full glass. Thus the Lord Chamberlain says to the porters who had been negligent in keeping out the mob.

"You are lazy knaves:
And here ye lie, baiting of bombard, when
Ye should do service."

Shaks. Hen. VIII. Act 5, Scene 3.

"Baiting of bombard" is a term for sitting and drinking, which Nash in his "Supplycacyon to the Deuyll," calls by the like metaphor, "bear baiting." So Shakspeare again in the "Tempest," says,

"Yond same black cloud, yond huge one,
Seems like foul bombard, that would shed his liquor."

Tempest, Act 2, Scene 2.

Which Theobald rightly explains thus: "A large vessel for holding drink, as well as the piece of ordinance so called."

"*Latter Lammas.*" Lammas day is the first day of August, so called quasi, Lamb-mass, on which day the tenants that hold lands of the Cathedral of York, which is dedicated to St. Peter, ad Vincula, were bound by that tenure to bring a living lamb into the church at high mass.—*Cornell's Interpreter.* Lammas day was always a great day of account, for in the payment of rents our ancestors distributed the year into four quarters, ending at Candlemas, Whitsuntide, Lammas, and Martinmas, and this was as common as the present divisions of Lady day, Midsummer, Michaelmas, and Christmas. In regard to Lammas, in addition to its being one of the days of reckoning, it appears from the Confessor's laws, that it was the specific day whereon the Peter-pence, a tax very rigorously executed, and the punctual payment of which was enforced under a severe penalty, was paid. In this view then, Lammas stands as a day of account, and Latter Lammas will consequently signify the day of doom, which in effect, as to all payments of money, or worldly transactions in money, is never. Latter here is used for last, or the comparative for the superlative, just as it is in a like case in our version of the book of Job, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth," meaning of course the last day, or the end of the world. That the last day, or Latter Lammas, as to

all temporal affairs is never, may be illustrated by the following story:—A man at confession owned his having stolen a sow and pigs; the father confessor exhorted him to make restitution. The penitent said some were sold, and some were killed, but the priest not satisfied with this excuse, told him they would appear against him at the day of judgment if he did not make restitution to the owner, upon which the man replied, "Well, I'll return them to him then."

"*Lydford Law*." In Devonshire and Cornwall this saying is common:

"First hang and draw,
Then hear the cause by Lydford Law."

Sometimes it is expressed in this manner; "Lydford Law, by which they hang men first, and try them afterwards." Lydford was formerly a town of note, but now an inconsiderable village on the borders of Dartmoor, not far from Tavistock. It is famous for a ruined castle, under which is a dungeon that used to be a prison for the confinement of persons who offended against the Stannary Courts of Tavistock, Ashburton, Chapford, and Plimpton. These Stannary Courts were erected by a charter of Edward III. for the purpose of regulating the affairs of the tin mines in Devonshire, and of determining causes among the tanners, whether criminal, or actions for debt. The proceedings were very summary, and the prison horribly offensive. Near Lydford is a famous waterfall, and a most romantic view down the river Lyd; over which is a curious bridge built with one arch. The parish is the largest in the kingdom, including the whole Forest of Dartmoor. William Browne of Tavistock, and the author of *Britannia's Pastorals*, gives a humorous description of Lydford in the reign of James I.

THE CONTEMPORARY TRAVELLER

JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF THE RED INDIANS OF NEWFOUNDLAND

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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