

THE GREEKS AND TURKS.

ATHENS AND CONSTANTINOPLE.

THE TWO CITIES CONTRASTED—THE GREEK CAPITAL BEFORE AND SINCE THE REVOLUTION—THE GREEK QUARTER OF CONSTANTINOPLE—THE TURKISH CAPITAL IN WAR TIME.

From Our Special Correspondent.

CONSTANTINOPLE, Monday, May 7, 1877.

The best preparation for visiting Athens is a year at Constantinople, at least for the man who is interested in the world of to-day and honestly wishes to understand the many-sided Orient. The best informed travelers read up Stuart, Pearson, Beulé, and Burnouf for the archæology of Attica, and Grote and perhaps even Curtius for its history, and fancy that they have thus prepared themselves for forming a perfectly enlightened opinion on all they may see. Only too many of these cultivated observers go home as flippant and ill-natured as About or as stupidly prejudiced as Lever. It is as hard for clever writers to tell the truth about Greece as it was in the days of Basil Hall and Mrs. Trollope for the scribbling tourist to be just toward America. The Eastern question is usually at the bottom of the mental twist; that unfortunate question contorts the intellectual vision of the average European as a quinine powder would the muscles of his face. But even in the case of sympathetic and unprejudiced travelers, an unfortunate bias is given to their judgments by the route they follow in approaching Athens. They come from countries where centuries of effort have resulted in the civilization of comfort and apple-pie order so dear to us all. To them the Greek administration is painfully suggestive of having just moved into its quarters, and not having had time yet to arrange the furniture. There remains so much to be done that one forgets that in the housekeeping of a nation 45 years are, after all, not a very long time.

The true corrective for the traveler's judgment is, as I said before, a year's previous residence in Constantinople, or some other Turkish town largely inhabited by Greeks. Turkey is perhaps a trifle more civilized than it was half a century ago; in the great seaport towns there are fewer Turks; and European intervention has done something to ameliorate the lot of Christian residents. Still, the state of these towns is to-day such that it is not difficult to guess at the condition of them in the days before Greek independence was a thing accomplished. Go to the Phanar, the Greek quarter of Constantinople, and you may get an idea of what Athens was under Turkish rule. You will surely be able to understand better the Athens of King George. Here even wealth puts a modest face toward the street. The uncrowned descendants of the last emperors of Byzantium may be comfortable enough inside their prison-fronted homes, but luxury must needs be timid under barbarian rule. Before the door of the best house the street is a river of mud in wet weather, a honey-comb of stony pits in Summer. No street lamp, no policeman near. Each house is a fortress and a den of refuge—outside is the wilderness where danger prowls, and where no honest man wishes to linger. To be sure, in spite of the uncertainty of the present and the certainty of the past, the streets in daytime are livelier than those of the Turkish quarters adjacent. The cafés are filled with an active-minded, ready-tongued people, a thousand years removed from the lotus land around the corner, where Turks dream all day amid tobacco smoke, and improvise a sort of cross-legged earthly paradise, where happiness is always attainable in the contemplation of the perfection of the present. But the wakeful and the sleepy world both close their doors shortly after sundown—the night is consecrated to silence, if not to sleep. The only sound is made by the *Sekyee*, the night-watchman, who advertises his coming to honest men and rogues alike by beating the pavement with a club and shouting out the whereabouts of any fire that may be then preying upon the too-combustible Stamboul. After seeing all this, you may go home and open a historical romance of the Middle Ages—murder, rapine, insecurity. It is the Phanar over again, plus something of poetry and splendor. You must eliminate all that in order to bring down your romance to the every-day life of the Phanar. You may retain the dirt and the death, the misery and the squalor, in short, a shabby, out-at-the-elbows, sickly, and unsightly mediæval reality—the romance you must perforce leave to him who has the heart for it.

Now, in order to accentuate every feature, to get your opposition of light and shade, go to Athens. Before the revolution, Athens was a wretched Turkish village of 12,000 or 15,000 souls, nearly exterminated in 1821. Now Cinderella has risen from her ashes, and Athens, with its port, numbers about 70,000 inhabitants. You can scarcely recognize the relationship with the Phanar. Here is a neat, bustling European town. The people sit before the cafés as on the boulevards of Paris. You may hire a good carriage for a reasonable price, and may drive out of the city in any direction over the smoothest macadam. You may enjoy a comfortable room in a hotel, with an unexceptionable table, for 10 francs a day. You suffer neither from bad smells nor beggars. You go out at night without fear of being strangled, and feel the same security of life and property that you enjoy in any capital of Western Europe. There is a theatre—unhappily, I am unable to vouch for its quality; there are good and growing museums; there is an admirable public library, and the monuments of the past, instead of being abandoned to willful spoliation, are the objects of intelligent care. And yet Athens is only the Phanar—plus freedom from Turkish misrule. But then, freedom means cleanliness, order, refinement, security, progress. To understand all this it is necessary first to know what the same people were and are without the blessing of freedom, and he who visits Athens without this knowledge is not qualified to judge of the present position of Greece or of her accomplishment in the 40 years or so of her independence.

With the aid of such weather as heaven blesses Attica with in the month of April, we had been enjoying Greece somewhat as two schoolboys might enjoy the neatness and elegance of home after the frowzy confinement of a cheap boarding-school, when the word of recall came, brief but decisive: "War is declared!" The rumors from Constantinople had for some days been more persistently dark than usual. It was evident that the feeling of both Mussulmans and Christians there had been increasingly excited and feverish. At last there came a day of pouring rain, in the midst of which the force of the Russian Embassy was seen to drive away in the direction of the Golden Horn. An hour or two later the final news was proclaimed. War is at last declared.

The first feeling was, I think, one of relief. The continual question of the last six months was at length answered; no more uncertainty with regard to one most important point, at least, and anything is better than uncertainty. Accordingly, on our return from Athens, we found Constantinople in such a state of tranquillity that there was absolutely nothing to distract our attention from the hideous filth and smells that now derived a new force from contrast with the neatness we had left behind us. However, we hastened to no unconsidered

conclusion. We remembered certain English fellow-travelers who were on the steamer with us. They had never been in Athens, to be sure, but then they know all about it. They know what a noisy, self-seeking crew it was that managed the politics of Greece. They knew how the pestilent little country asserted itself, and was forever in a row, forever envious of the possessions of its beneficent neighbor, and former master. They only wished, in the interests of Greece, you know, that the country were again quiet under Turkish rule. Europe would no more be bothered with their pretensions, and the Greeks would once again be in the line of true progress. I say that in memory of this wisdom we rushed to no conclusions of our own. We held our noses over the streets of Pera, and remembered the carefully swept streets of Athens. We also remembered that in the early days of Ottoman rule Turkey was traversed in every direction by excellent carriage roads, not one of which is now in existence. We considered that 40 years of independence had sufficed to restore such conveniences to a good part of Greece, and though we wished not to be rash, we could not wish the country back under Turkish rule.

Still it was much that Constantinople was tranquil. It might have been disagreeable had it been otherwise, and we might therefore be thankful for the blessing of tranquillity. To be sure, a few nights ago, 500 houses were burned in the Phanar, without in the least ruffling the repose of the city; the fact had not even been telegraphed to Athens. Even a year in Constantinople does not enable one to understand the torpor of the city at certain times when a European would certainly expect excitement. But ignorance is bliss when nothing is so dreaded, even by the Turk-lover, as excitement. Excitement may take the form of massacre, or, at least, of pillage and general conflagration. Accordingly, no matter how much you have the welfare of Turkey at heart, you must be thankful for the continuance of the lotus-dream of the Stamboul officials, wherein they intrigue and rob and extort backsheesh and refuse justice and the performance of every duty, while the country drifts, and drifts, and drifts, heaven alone knows whither.

The torpor, however, is not absolute. Levantine and foreign residents are quietly slipping off by the ship load. All the places in Mediterranean steamers are taken weeks in advance. The return steamers come here empty. The Perotes who remain manufacture rumors in such quantity that one has no occasion to reject their brethren already defeated. We have a dozen Turkish victories and as many Russian ones every day. Kars is taken, and it is not taken; the fields about Batoum are covered with Turkish or Russian dead, as it may happen; the whole course of the lower Danube is enlivened by fierce attacks and deadly repulses, until to-day the English Embassy declares that nobody, Turk or Russian, has as yet been defeated, and that everything is yet to begin.

But though the greater warfare still holds on in expectancy, the Porte maintains its usual small warfare against honor and decency. For instance, all the world knows that Germany has assumed the protectorate of Russian subjects in Turkey. The task could not be intrusted to better hands. Downright Germany undertakes the duty as she would any other. In case of duty, she does not understand tom-foolery. The Porte, probably anxious to shift the responsibility of any possible acts of violence on the part of his ungovernable subjects, intimated to Count Radolinsky, the German Chargé d'Affaires, a few days ago, that she must consider the Russian subjects left in Turkey not only as unprotected, but as hostile to Ottoman pretensions. Count Radolinsky at once replied, that in such case he must immediately demand his passports, and although he could not undertake to answer for his Emperor, he had little doubt that such action on the part of the Porte would be regarded as constituting a *casus belli*. The Porte always knows how to listen to such language as that. Count Radolinsky was visited within 24 hours by a Pasha from the Porte, who assured him that Russian subjects might consider themselves happy not only in the friendly interest of the Sublime Porte, always the friend of a liberal and humane policy toward the Christians enjoying her beneficent care. That was very pleasant language; still I am glad that Russian diplomacy has confided her interest here to the most undiplomatic of powers. For once we may rejoice in Germany's inability to learn the crooked ways of conciliation. Characteristic of the difference between the two countries represented in this colloquy is the following: Pasha—But as to your dispatch, one may say such things—that is one thing; that doesn't mean anything; but, then, one doesn't write them. Count Radolinsky—I write them. What is shuffling and evasion to do with such Bismarckian diplomacy?

The American Government has at last, thanks perhaps to a new Administration, come to an understanding of its interest in the East. The Vandalia has returned to Constantinople, and other ships have been sent to various Levantine stations. American residents at last feel that they have a Government which, it tardy, can in its own time wake to a sense of their needs.

HOW THEY WRITE HISTORY.

The New-Orleans *Picayune* of May 31 begins a long article in this astounding and barefaced manner: "The Republican Party is, as always been, the party of disunion. It was its mischievous and meddlesome spirit which excited the alarm of the South and led to the war of secession. It is true that when the Federal Armies had been badly beaten in the field, and when the triumph of the Southern cause seemed all but certain, the Republican members of Congress joined with the Democratic in a declaration that the war was waged only to restore the Union as it was, and that it should not be prosecuted beyond the attainment of that end. Such a declaration served to recruit their ranks from the conservative Democracy of the North, which, though it had no sympathy with the fanatical schemes of black Republicanism, might be relied upon in defense of the imperiled Union. It was sectionalism appealing to the Union sentiment in order to save itself; for the Republicans understood perfectly well that the establishment of the Confederacy would be tantamount to the disruption of their party."

ANOTHER COUNTY CONCILIATED.

Orangeburg County, S. C., last November gave Chamberlain 4,469, Hampton 2,870; Republican majority, 1,599. Last week a special election was held for a member of the House of Representatives, and the Democrats "carried" the county by 230 majority. The *Charleston News* thus tells how the vote came: "redeemed." "The canvassing of the vote cast for S. Dibble (Dem.) and D. A. Straker (colored) at the special election for a member of the House of Representatives began at 3 P. M. Fogle's box was thrown out, as none of the voters were sworn; the Club-house box was rejected, as it was not sealed, and Avinger's box was rejected, as it was closed against the voters before 6 o'clock. Dibble's majority is 230; 2,757 votes were cast for him, and 2,527 for Straker. Mr. Dibble gets his certificate of election, and will soon be in his seat at Columbia."

ANOTHER STORY OF THE BORDER.

The *Pittsburg* (Penn.) *Telegraph* is not impressed with the necessity of sending more troops to the Rio Grande and authorizing Gen. Ord to pursue the Mexican marauders across the border. It says: "Well-informed gentlemen of our own community, who have just returned from the border, state that the American population along the line is simply able to take care of itself without the assistance of Government troops. The balance of trade is decidedly in our favor, for our people steal three sheep from them for every one they capture from us, and make reprisals of cattle at the rate of about 200 per cent. The Texans themselves say that if they are let alone they will manage to keep even, and experience demonstrates that they do contrive to hold their own, with pretty fair interest added."