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Excerpt

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JOURNEY THROUGH ALBANIA,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Patriotism of the Greeks—Their ardent desire of emancipation—War-song—Attachment to Russia—Views directed towards France—Their notions of England—Chance of emancipation—Importance of their marine—Short Remarks on the political conduct of the English in the Levant.

MR. DE GUYS'S long thirty-seventh Letter, entitled 'Patriotism of the Greeks,' is much such an essay as Montaigne's on a custom in the island of Cea; or, like that chapter on Snakes which Dr. Johnson could repeat entire, it leaves us only to conclude that there is no patriotism worth speaking of to be found amongst the modern Greeks, or indeed amongst any of the moderns; for the whole of his remarks and examples are adduced from the two great nations of antiquity. But notwithstanding such a deficiency in an express panegyric of this people, it is most true that the generality of the Greeks are devotedly attached to their country and nation, and, even to a degree which may appear foolish and incautious, continually express their hatred of their masters, and their confidence in themselves. This latter feeling is, however, tempered by a complete sense of their own degradation; for, whatever may be their discourse to one another, they never fail to enlarge upon this subject to a stranger. A common commencement of a conversation with them is, "Your Excellency will find but poor fare in our country; but

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you are not in Christendom. What can be done amongst these beasts the Turks?" The detestation of their master breaks out on every occasion; and when the chanter from the Minaret is announcing the death of a Mahometan, each Greek that meets his friend in the street salutes him thus,—“A dog is dead” (*ἀπέθανε σκυλί*).¹ The Archons, who enjoy the confidence of the Turks, are infected with the same spirit, and, in proportion as they are more powerful, feel a stronger desire of revenge. Signor Londo, of Vostizza, the son of the person who, under Veli Pasha, may be said to govern the Morea, on hearing the name of Riga, when he was playing with me a party of chess, jumped suddenly from the sofa, threw over the board, and, clasping his hands, repeated the name of the patriot with a thousand passionate exclamations, the tears streaming down his cheeks. The same person recited with ecstasy the war-song of that unfortunate Greek. The strain is of a higher mood, and I have endeavoured to preserve

¹ This expression, *σκυλί*, a dog, is the favourite term of reproach with the Greeks, whose convitiatory language is most violent and abusive. The vulgar phrases, which are too indecent to be translated, are some of them borrowed from, or are similar to, the Turkish. The *γαμῶ τὴν μάναν σου*, the most common, is the “anassinny sictim” of the Mahometans. Most of the assertions of the Greeks are confirmed by an oath, the ancient form being preserved. The most usual are—*Μὰ τὸ Θεοῦ*, “By God;” *Μὰ τὸ κεφάλι μου*, “By my head;” *Μὰ τὸ γένι μου*, or *Μὰ τὸ γένι τοῦ πατρὸς μου*, “By my beard,” or “By my father’s beard;” *Μὰ τὸ ψωμὴ*, “By my bread;” *Μα τῆ ψυχῇ τῶν παιδιῶν μου*, “By the life of my children.” The women in common conversation say, *Μὰ τὰ μάτια μου*, or *Μὰ τὰ ψυχῇ μου*, or *Νὰ ξίω*, “By my eyes,” “By my soul,” or “Let me live.” The strongest expression of anger is the extension of the five fingers, with the exclamation *Νὰ τὰ πέντε*, “There are five for ye.” Nearly all, if not all of these phrases, are of a high antiquity. One of the most singular instances of a transmitted habit is, that the Greeks of Tino universally carry their long sticks, or guns, across their shoulders, with their arms over them on each side. Now an ancient coin of that island represents a man carrying a staff exactly in the same position. A very usual expression of anger is *Κέρατα*, “Horns.”* The Athenian oath mentioned by Spon, *Διὰ τὸν ἀσθέντι τοῦ κοσμοῦ*, “By the Master of the world,” I do not remember to have heard; but Lord Byron recollects two or three instances of it. The words of tenderness, **Υιε μου*, “My son,” have an odd sound in the mouths of the young girls, by whom they are frequently used.

* Colonel Leake (Researches, p. 423) says but *κερατᾶ*, “cuckold.” I thought the that this ought not to be *κέρατα*, “horns,” words equivalent.—[1854.]

the metre of it,² and, with a little variation, the position of its rhymes, in the following version of the four first stanzas :—

1.

Δέυτε παῖδες τῶν Ἑλλήνων
 Ὁ καῖρος τῆς δόξης ἦλθεν
 * Ἀς φανῶμεν ἄξιοι ἐκείνων
 Ποῦ μᾶς δῶσαν τὴν ἀρχὴν
 * Ἀς πατήσομεν ἀνδρείως
 Τὸν ζυγὸν τῆς τυραννίδος
 Εκδικήσομεν πατρίδος
 Κάθε δνειδος ἀσχροῦν
 Τὰ ὄπλα ἄς λάβωμεν,
 Παῖδες Ἑλλήνων ἄγωμεν,
 Ποταμιδῶν ποταμιδῶν
 Τὼν ἐχθρῶν τὸ ἅμα
 * Ἀς τρέξῃ ὑπὸ ποδῶν.

2.

Ὅθεν εἰσθε τῶν Ἑλλήνων
 Κόκκαλα ἀνδρειομένα ;
 Πνέματα ἐσκορπισμένα
 Τᾶρα λάβετε πνοήν.
 * Στὴν φωνὴν τῆς σαλπικγός μου
 συναχθῆτε ὅλα ὄμου,
 Τὴν ἐπτάλοφον ζητεῖτε
 καὶ νικᾶτε πρὸ παντοῦ.
 Τὰ ὄπλα, κ. τ. λ.

3.

Σπάρτα, Σπάρτα, τί κοιμᾶσθε
 ὕπνον λήθαργον βαθύν ;
 Ξύπνησον, κράξε Ἀθήνας,
 σύμμαχον παντοτεινὴν.
 Ἐνθμειθῆτε Λεονίδου
 Ἥρωος τοῦ ξακοστοῦ,
 Τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἔπαινεμένου,
 Φοβεροῦ καὶ τρομεροῦ.
 Τὰ ὄπλα, κ. τ. λ.

4.

Ὅπου εἰς τὰς Θερμοπύλας
 Πόλεμον ἀντὸς κρατεῖ,
 Καὶ τοὺς Πέρσας ἀφανίζει,
 Καὶ ἀντῶν κατὰ κρατεῖ.
 Μέτριοκόσιους ἄνδρας
 * Εἰς τὸ κέντρον πρόχωρει,
 Καὶ ὡς λέων θυμωμένος
 * Εἰς τὸ ἅμα τῶν βουτεῖ.
 Τὰ ὄπλα, κ. τ. λ.

1.

Greeks arise! the day of glory
 Comes at last, your swords to claim.
 Let us all in future story
 Rival our forefathers' fame.
 Under foot the yoke of tyrants
 Let us now indignant trample,
 Mindful of the great example,
 And avenge our country's shame.
 To arms, then, our country cries,
 Sons of the Greeks, arise, arise ;
 Until the blood—in purple flood
 From the hated foe
 Beneath our feet shall flow.

2.

Whither now, alas! retreating,
 Limbs where Grecian blood is beating?
 Breathe again ye spirits fleeing,
 Now your scatter'd force recall.
 At my trumpet's voice resounding,
 Each his country's flag surrounding,
 Towards the seven-hill'd city bounding,
 Fly, and conquer for your all.
 To arms then, &c.

3.

Sparta! Sparta! why in slumber,
 Why in lethargy so deep?
 Rouse thyself, thy friend awaken,
 Glorious Athens, from her sleep.
 Call to mind thy ancient warrior,
 Great Leonidas of old,
 Mighty man of fame immortal,
 The tremendous and the bold.
 To arms then, &c.

4.

See him, where the noble patriot
 All th' invading war withstands,
 At Thermopylæ victorious
 O'er the flying Persian bands.
 With his brave three hundred heroes,
 Forwards now the Lion goes,
 Plunging through the blood of battle
 To the centre of his foes.
 To arms then, &c.

² A mixed trochaic, except the chorus, the fourth line of which, for the sake of rhyming with the fifth, is shorter by one foot in the translation than in the original. The difference between the two languages has prevented me from filling up all the syllables in the translation without some trifling amplification of the original sense, a circumstance which, if it does not bespeak want of pains on my part, may serve to contrast the ancient and modern Greek. This song, the chorus particularly, is sung to a tune very nearly the same as the Marseillois Hymn.

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There may appear a triteness in reminding the Greeks of Leonidas; but the truth is, that of him, and of the other heroes of antiquity, the generality of the people have but a very confused notion, and that very few of them trace the period of their former glory farther back than the days of the Greek emperors. Such as are most fond of recurring to past times dwell on the power and merits of those princes, and begin their history with the great Constantine, the Emperor of the Greeks (Ὁ Μέγας Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ρωμαίων). All their hopes are directed towards the restoration of the Byzantine kingdom in the person of any Christian, but more particularly a Christian of their own Church; and I believe they have never for an instant entertained the project of establishing an independent confederacy on the model of their ancient republics. Their views have naturally been turned towards Russia for more than half a century; and every one is acquainted with their two desperate attempts to create a diversion in favour of that power in the heart of European Turkey.

Notwithstanding the failure of their efforts in the Russian war concluded at Kainargi in 1774, the Greeks prepared to take up arms in 1790, and Sulli, then in open rebellion, was the centre of their operations. Three Greeks from that town arrived at St. Petersburg, and hailed the Archduke Constantine with the new and august title of Emperor of the Hellenes (Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἑλλήνων).³ A plan was agreed upon, according to which the Greek army was to set out from Sulli to Livadia and Athens, in two divisions, to be joined by the Moreotes and Negropontines. Crossing the plains of Thessaly, it was then to march to Salonica, and, after

³ The word Βασιλεὺς answers to Imperator. The Greeks called Charlemagne "Vasileus," but the petty princes "Reges" (Ρῆγες). Lieutprand says, "Petrus Bulgarorum Vasileus." (Decline and Fall, cap. 55, note 16.) This proves that the Greek B was decidedly the Latin V, so early, at least, as the twelfth century.

collecting the Greeks of Macedonia, proceed with the whole force, which would amount, they supposed, to three hundred thousand, to Adrianople. Constantinople was to be the immediate prey of the confederate forces, even without the combined attack of the Russians, who, however, were expected to sail from the Crimea to the Bosphorus, and decide the fate of the Turkish empire. Lambro Canziani, the celebrated Greek, was to cruise with his squadron in the Archipelago; and this was the only part of the project which was accomplished; for Lambro, although not supported after the peace between Russia and the Porte in 1791, and declared a pirate, kept the sea until his ships were destroyed by a French squadron. The Sulliotés did not stir, but defended their mountains, as they had before done, against the Pasha of Ioannina. The result of their struggles is already known.

Mr. Eton, who has detailed this account,⁴ conceives the plans of Pano-Kiri, Christo Lazzotti, and Nicolo Pangalo, the Sullioté ambassadors, to have been wise, and every way calculated for the attainment of the great object in view, and condemns the policy of those who differed from them in opinion; namely, the British, Prussian, and Russian cabinets.

Wherever the fault lay, the Russians ceased to be the favourites of the Greeks, who, however, did not on that account lose sight of their darling object; for, at the news of the French revolution, they began to form other projects, or at least to indulge fresh hopes. The friends of universal freedom were, of course, the friends of the Greeks, and long before the cession of the Seven Islands to the tri-coloured flag, the Carmagnole was danced on the shores of the Ionian Sea.⁵

⁴ Survey, p. 37, *et seq.*

⁵ Μὰ οἱ Φραντζέζοι λέγουσι 'Tis true the French would have it known
Ποῦ τοὺς Κορφοὺς τοὺς θέλουσι Corfû shall shortly be their own,
Κεφαλοῖνια καὶ Τζάντε Cefalonia too, and Zante,
Ποῦ εἶναι τὸ φῖδρα τοῦ Λευάντε. The fairest flower of the Levant.

During the expedition to Egypt the health of Bonaparte was the daily toast at Athens; and the Greeks of Crete were so far assured of their approaching independence, that, until the victories of the English over the French destroyed their hopes, they had in a manner taken the island into their own hands, and had come to an agreement with the Turks, each of whom they undertook, upon certain conditions, to protect. A small mountainous district in this island contains, indeed, the only Greeks in the whole empire who have never been subdued either by the Venetians or Turks. It is called Sphakia (*Σφακία*), and has one town and twenty villages, each governed by its own primates. It can send about four thousand men into the field. The person, himself a Sphakiote, who furnished a late author⁶ with an account of these Cretans, makes rather a favourable report of them, but others have represented them to be a horde of bloodthirsty savages.

In fact, in the French army in Egypt there were some Greek soldiers whose patriotism was roused and kept alive by the muse of Polyzois, the new Tyrtæus. His song of nine stanzas in trochaics is called *Ἄσμα πολεμιστήριον τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ περὶ ἐλευθερίας μαχομένων Γραικῶν*, 'War Song of the Greeks in Egypt, fighting in the cause of Freedom;' and it opens with the following exclamation:—

Φίλοι μου συμπατριῶτάι
 Δεῦλοι νὰ ᾿μεθα ὡς πότε
 Τῶν ἀχρείων Μουσουλμάνων
 Τῆς Ἑλλάδος τῶν τυράννων;
 Ἐκδικήσεως ἡ ᾶρα
 Ἐφθασιν, ὦ φίλοι, τῶρα.

Gallant countrymen! for ever
 Shall we dread the vile enslaver?
 Shall the Mussulman victorious
 Reign in Greece, the great, the glorious?
 Friends! the tyranny is past,
 Vengeance is our own at last.

The concluding verses are in the same strain.

Ἄφανισθῆτω
 Κ' ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐξαλειφθῆτω
 Ἡ κατάρατος δουλεία—
 Ζήτω ἡ ἐλευθερία.

Fading from the face of day,
 Banish'd from the world away,
 Cursed slavery expire—
 Freedom is my fond desire.

The last of these four lines is the burthen of the song,

⁶ Leckie on Foreign Affairs, Tract xiii. p. 211.

of which one more specimen, part of the fifth stanza, may suffice :—

Ἔἰς τυράννων τὴν θυσίαν	To the sacrifice of tyrants,
* Ἀπαντες μὲ προθυμίαν	All, with eagerness combining,
* Ἐχροντ', ἄλλος ἄλλυχόθεν	Rush from every Grecian region,
Τῆς Ἑλλάδος πανταχόθεν.	Each his country's standard joining.
Ὡς εἰς ἑορτὴν συντρεχουν,	To the festival they fly,
Ὡς πανηγύριον τὴν ἔχουν.	To the feast of victory.
Καὶ δὲν σπέργεται κανένας	No one from the danger shrinking
Ἀπ' αὐτοῦς, μικρὸς ἢ μέγας.	Hesitates, or small or great,
* Ἐξοπίσω νὰ ὑπομένῃ	Forward each advances, thinking
* Ἔναι, λέγει, κατασχύνῃ.	Nothing shameful but retreat.
Τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν οἰ πατέρες	Hark, their valiant sons inflaming,
* Ἐγκαρδιώνουν, καὶ αἱ μητέρες.	Fathers, mothers, all exclaiming,
* Εὐγε! τεκνᾶ μου, τοὺς λέγουν	“ Children brave! well done,” they cry,
Κ' εἰς τὸν πόλεμον τοὺς στέλλουν	“ To the glorious combat fly,
Ἔως πότε ἡ δουλεία	Till the fall of slavery,
Πίπτει, καὶ ἡ τυραννία.	Till the fall of tyranny.” ⁷

At the same time another Greek, in a small work printed at Paris, but written at Rome, made this decisive declaration: “Since this city (meaning Rome) has, contrary to all expectation, been delivered from the tyranny of the popes, it must be averred, in the face of the world, that the hatred of tyrants is rooted in our hearts, and that what has as yet prevented us from being delivered from their yoke, is not our own want of courage—it is the jealousy of the greater part of the princes of Europe.”⁸ The sentiments of all the nation were not, however, in unison, for the Patriarch of Constantinople, in his circular letter of the year 1798, informs the Greeks that “the wicked serpent, the origin of all evil, had designed the nation of the Gauls to be the damnation of the human race;”⁹ a phrase which is

⁷ These extracts are part of a communication made by M. Villoison to Harles, and are contained in vol. xi. p. 563, of his *Bibliotheca Græca*.

⁸ See Letter from Villoison to Harles, in the page before cited.

⁹ Ὁ ἀρχέκακος καὶ ποιηρὸς ὄφεις ἐπενόησι τὸ ἔθνος τῶν Γάλλων, δια νὰ κολάσῃ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος.

^a These sentiments are those of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, quoted in the *Researches* (p. 193), who, after condemning the heresies which the devil had excited in the course of his warfare on mankind—including those of the Latin Church, and the Calvinists and Lutherans, its offspring—congratulates his fellow-countrymen upon their “singular good fortune, and the particular favour of Heaven shown towards them, in raising up, in the place of the Greek Empire, which had begun to waver in its orthodox faith,

cited, and indignantly refuted, by a writer, apparently the same quoted above, in a pamphlet of eight pages, printed at the press of Pogozi, in October 1798, and addressed “to the Romans of Greece, by a Patriot and Friend to Freedom.”¹⁰

If Bonaparte had marched an army from Vallona, across Macedonia to Constantinople, which he is said to have been prevented from doing only by his war with Russia, there can be no doubt that every Greek would have joined his standard.

The events of the last ten years have turned the attention of the Greeks to the English nation, and, by degrees, their former misconceptions as to the extent of our power and resources have begun to be dissipated. Hopes were entertained, during our short war with the Porte, that we were to be the liberators of Greece, or, at least, of her islands. In June 1807, a body of fifteen hundred Macedonian Greeks seized upon the isles of Skiathus and Childrona, not far from the mouth of the Gulf of Salonica, and offered to co-operate with the English squadron off the Dardanelles with a force of ten thousand men, but were advised by their intended allies to lay down their arms. The islanders of Hydra, which maintained three thousand seamen and one hundred and fifty ships, actually fitted out privateers against the Turks, and were disarmed, not by the Capudan Pasha, but by the British admiral.¹¹

This conduct, and the subsequent peace, checked any expectations which the Greek patriots might have entertained of being assisted by the English; and even now that the Mediterranean is in our possession, and even since we have occupied the Six Islands, they do

¹⁰ Πρὸς τοὺς Ῥωμαιοὺς τῆς Ἑλλάδος—Φιλόπατρις ἐλευθεριάδης.

¹¹ Leckie, Tract xxxiv. pp. 34, 40, 41, 42, 43.

the powerful nation of the Turks, to protect them against the infection of heresy, and to be a bridle to the na-

tions of the Western Church and a succour to those of the Latin.”— [1854.]

not, as far as I could judge, hope to receive at our hands any decisive measures in their favour. They think of the vicinity of the Russians and French, whom, notwithstanding our prowess in Egypt, and our unrivalled naval superiority, they still consider the most formidable soldiers in the world (*πολὺ φοβεροὶ στρατιώται*, is their eulogy of them), and they believe us placed at the extremity of the world—at too great a distance to afford them any material support.

Even so late as the time of our travels, the notions prevalent amongst the generality of the continental Greeks, and other people of the Levant, respecting our nation and country, were altogether laughable. I was informed that England was an island, a little bigger than Cefalonia, the chief town of which is called London; of this, however, all are not certain, for one person asked me whether England was in London, or London in England? In this town all the English who are not employed at sea are supposed to live, except a few peasants, who inhabit the villages. But the far greater part of the nation exist upon the water, either in merchant-vessels or ships of war, the management of which is the sole purpose and occupation of their lives; and in which, together with manufacturing cloth, hardware, and trinkets, the English excel all the world. An Albanian directed a letter to his son, who was in Lord Byron's service, with this address:—

To

Dervish Tacheere,
In the English Ships,
at Constantinople.

He supposed that my fellow-traveller and myself belonged, of course, to the English fleet, and, after looking at the country by land, would join our vessels at the port of the great city. Some of the higher orders are doubtless better informed, and know as much about England as the majority of our countrymen know about

the present state of Greece; and thus, although they are far from being acquainted with the actual extent of our resources, they still believe us to be extremely powerful, and richer than any people in the world. They frequently advert to the great subject of their independence in their conversations with English travellers, and protest to them, as they do to French, Russians, Danes, Swedes, Dutch, and to every Frank, that with money, arms, and ten thousand foreign troops, they would expel the Turks from Europe.

It is easy then to see that the Greeks consider their country to belong to them as much as it ever did, and look upon their right to the soil as not at all affected by an ejection of three centuries and a half. Their patriotism is a flame that has never been utterly smothered, although it has so long glimmered in obscurity, and has narrowly escaped from being, like the lamp of Rosicrucius, for ever extinguished by a heedless discovery.

It cannot, perhaps, be justly determined that the Ottoman empire in the Levant is now to be called a usurpation, and that the Greeks, when in revolt, are therefore to be regarded, not as rebels, but as patriots fighting for the recovery of their birthright. If the Grand Signor cannot establish a claim to the throne of Constantinople, I know not of any sovereign in Europe whose title will bear an examination. The singularity of two nations living on the same spot, and of the conquered having been kept so entirely distinct from the conquerors, preserves the original injustice of the subjection fresh before our eyes. Were it not for this circumstance, neither the importance nor the character of the Greeks is such as to awaken the political or moral sympathies of the nations of Christendom. The country called Turkey in Europe has received such a perpetual succession of invaders and settlers, that it would be impossible to fix upon those in whom the right of pos-