

TRAVELS,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

Difficulty of procuring Historical Records for a History of Ioannina—Cursory View of the different Nations who have inhabited Epirus—Conjectures on the Origin of Ioannina—Its History in the Middle Ages—Its Capture by the Turks—Story of Dionysius the Skelosophist—Present Condition of Ioannina in Public Buildings, Schools, &c.—Commerce—Produce of its Soil—Food of the Inhabitants—Climate—Diseases—Cruel Instance of Ali Pasha's Tyranny.

I HOPE I shall not act contrary to the reader's inclination by commencing this volume with a few historical details respecting the city in which we at this time resided; especially since it has been hitherto very slightly noticed by travellers. Indeed the difficulty of collecting any accurate information respecting it is very great, since neither in its origin, nor in its early progress towards grandeur, was it of consequence enough to engage the particular attention of historians: they merely mention it casually, and in a very unsatisfactory manner. Many historical documents however are said to have once existed in the archives of Ioannina; but I was informed that all or greatest part of these had been destroyed by Mahomet Effendi, Ali's prime minister, to shew his sovereign contempt for the literature of the Franks. I paid a visit to this extraordinary character for the purpose of rescuing, if

possible, some of these records from destruction, but he put me off with a declaration that he had none at all in his possession: the vizir himself had no better success, although he condescended to make an application to the minister in my behalf. Just before we left Ioannina however I was fortunate enough to procure a considerable number of extracts relating to its annals which had been copied at various times by a very learned and respectable Greek gentleman, before the originals came into the possession of Mahomet: of these I shall make considerable use in the latter part of the present memoir.

Before however we enter upon the particular history of this city, it will be right to advert, as briefly as is consistent with the connexion of events, to the various tribes who have acted a part upon the theatre in which it is situated. In very early ages Epirus was inhabited, as I have before observed, by fourteen semibarbarous nations, intermingled with many Grecian colonies. North of these lay the still more rude and savage Illyrians, with whom the Epirotic tribes became insensibly intermingled*. They were long defended from invaders not more by their own valour than by the lofty chains of mountains that intersect their rugged country, and prevented the Greeks from subduing them. In process of time the Molossi first emerged from the state of surrounding barbarism: Tharyps, their patriotic prince, improved both the manners and the language of this nation; Philip king of Macedonia raised them into notice by his union with Olympias, sister of Alexander their sovereign, and Pyrrhus spread around them the glory of martial exploits and consummate military skill. Before this time however the Illyrian provinces had been united, though with no very firm bond, to the Macedonian dynasty, under which they remained till the defeat of Perseus: but the period now approached when the Romans, those inveterate enemies of every thing great, and noble, and free in all other nations, took a severe re-

* *Ἀναμέμκται δὲ τέτοις τὰ Ἰλλυρικὰ ἔθνη, &c.* Strab. l. vii. p. 502.

WHO HAVE INHABITED EPIRUS.

3

venge for the invasion of Pyrrhus: after various and cruel ravages in the Illyrian, Ætolian, and Macedonian wars, the whole country was laid waste by the Consul Æmilius Paulus, whose fierce army in one day sacked seventy cities*, sold 150,000 of the wretched inhabitants into slavery, overthrew their walls, and left them in a state of ruin which at this day attests the fury of those inhuman conquerors.

After this scene of destruction the Epirotic nations were governed by Roman prefects, Macedonia being divided into four distinct provinces, called Macedonia the First, Second, Third, and Fourth; in which latter were comprised the Illyrian tribes†. When Augustus separated the provinces of the empire into Imperial, and Prætorian or Senatorial, he left amongst the latter class Macedonia and Illyria, with Epirus, which, conjointly with Acarnania, Ætolia, Thessaly, and the rest of Grecia Propria, formed the province of Achaia‡. Tiberius took Macedonia and Achaia into the number of Imperial provinces§, but they were restored again to the senate by Claudius||. Under the reign of Constantine the Great, Illyricum and Epirus were comprised in the province of Pannonia and governed by an officer with the appellation of vice-præfect¶. In the division of the empire after the death of Constantine, Illyricum Macedonia and Greece, with Italy and Africa, acknowledged the sovereignty of Constans his youngest son, who after-

* A.A.C. 166.

† MAKEΔONIA ΠΡΩΤΗ, ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ, ΤΡΙΤΗ, ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ. I have seen many medals relating to these divisions. One is in the possession of my friend Mr. Parker, on the obverse of which is a beautiful female head with a diadem, and on the reverse a knotted club surrounded with an oak garland and the legend—

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 MAKEΔONΩN
 ΠΡΩΤΗΣ
 N.

‡ Dion Cass. l. liii. § 12. Strab. l. xvii. sub fin.

§ Tac. Ann. l. i. c. 76.

|| Dion Cass. lx. § 24. Sueton. c. 25.

¶ Rome and Constantinople at this time were governed by præfects, under whom vice-præfects administered justice in the provinces. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 109. Pancirolus, p. 161. Cod. Justin. l. xii. tit. 56 and 57.

wards put his elder brother to death and seized upon the throne of Constantinople: after his own murder by Magnentius, the veteran general Vetrico, who had been governor of the Illyrian provinces, usurped the purple. Epirus, with the rest of Greece, appears to have benefited by the taste and liberality of Julian, who repaired many of its cities, especially Nicopolis, where he celebrated and restored the Actian games to a considerable degree of splendour.

At the elevation of Theodosius to a participation of imperial honours, the præfecture of Illyricum was dismembered, whilst Thessalonica was strongly fortified against the incursions of barbarians, and made the capital of all the Illyrian provinces. No ravages which these countries suffered since the days of Æmilius Paulus, are to be compared with those inflicted on them by Alaric in his invasion of Greece at the latter end of the fourth century, when he retreated from Peloponnesus, after his defeat by Stilicho: through the timid policy of the Byzantine court this Gothic general was himself created prefect of Illyricum, from whence he issued to plunder the fruitful plains of Italy.

In the middle of the fifth century, under the contemptible reign of Theodosius the younger, these provinces were again afflicted by the scourge of war in the hands of Attila, nor did they suffer much less in the subsequent devastations committed by Genseric and his Vandals.

Near the middle of the sixth century they were laid waste, together with the rest of the European empire, by a terrible incursion of Huns or Bulgarians, so dreadful, says Gibbon, as almost to efface the memory of past inroads*: these barbarians spreading from the suburbs of Constantinople to the Ionian gulf, destroyed thirty-two cities or castles, razed Potidœa to the ground, and then repassed the Danube, dragging at their horses' tails 120,000 subjects of Justinian, whilst 3,000 Slavonians plundered with impunity the cities of Illyricum and Thrace.

* Vol. iv. p. 221.

WHO HAVE INHABITED EPIRUS.

5

On the contraction of the Byzantine empire after the death of Heraclius, it was divided into districts called Themes, seventeen of which were included in the Asiatic, and twelve in the European part. One of these was called the Macedonian Theme, another the Theme of Nicopolis, comprising old Epirus and Acarnania, another of Thessalonica, and a fourth of Dyrachium, which was the capital of those southern Illyrian tribes, comprehended under the title of New Epirus or *Provincia Prævalitana*.

Of all the barbarous nations which overran that part of the Byzantine empire now called European Turkey, none sent forth such immense and continual hordes as the Bulgarians. From the middle of the sixth century to the fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth, this wild and fierce people issuing from the vast plains of Russia, Lithuania, and Poland, spread themselves over the finest provinces, sometimes being defeated with terrible slaughter, at others obtaining settlements by force of arms or the weak policy of the emperors, to whom they paid a nominal subjection, or exacted tribute from his coffers according to their own circumstances. They occupied very considerable districts in Epirus and Illyricum, in which country, about the latter part of the ninth century they established their capital at Achris or Ochris, the ancient Lychnidus, to whose ruler, named Peter, the emperor Romanus gave the title of king, together with his grand-daughter in marriage. This capital was in the beginning of the 10th century destroyed by Basil II. surnamed the Bulgarian-Killer*. (*βυλγαροκτόνος.*) At the sacking of the city, he found a treasure consisting of 10,000 pounds weight in gold, but his cruelty left an indelible stain upon his character which no valour could obliterate: he blinded 15,000 of his captives, leaving a single eye alone to one out of each hundred, that he might lead his companions to the presence of their sovereign: that compassionate prince is said to have died with grief at the sight, but the

* Acropolita, c. xi.

unfortunate victims lived to excite the spirit of revenge in a succeeding generation, and bequeath it to their posterity. But though the Bulgarians lost Achris they still continued in possession of other districts, and by the end of the tenth century had extended themselves to the most southern parts of Epirus, being masters of the city of Nicopolis*. Probably at this time the Albanians were driven by these and other invaders into the more inaccessible parts of the country, from whence they emerged about a century after the destruction of Achris and began to act a more important part upon this theatre.

Conjointly with the Bulgarians we often find the Servians mentioned by the Byzantine historians as making inroads and establishments in the eastern empire. These people were of a Sclavonian origin, and chiefly established themselves upon the Danube, in that district which still bears their name: they were governed by an hereditary monarch, under the title of Cral, a Sclavonic word signifying king, and in the twelfth century they are mentioned by Cantacuzene as having colonies and settlements in the southern part of Macedonia, towards the borders of Thessaly, where a city remains to this day, which testifies their dominion by its appellation of Servia. Even so early as in the tenth century there is reason to believe that nearly all Greece was colonised and interspersed with various tribes of Sclavonian descent, who contributed to alter the manners and debase the language of its people†. Among these tribes a very curious people were found, who still exist in considerable numbers, retaining all their peculiarities of language habits and customs, amidst the mountain ridges of Epirus and Macedonia. These were the Vlaxhi or Valachians, whose dialect, containing a large intermixture of Latin words, supplies a reason for referring their origin to the Roman colonies planted in Dacia and Mœsia by Trajan and his

* Cedrenus, p. 628.

† *Καὶ γὰρ δὲ πᾶσαν Ἠπειρον καὶ Ἑλλάδα σχεδὸν καὶ Πελοπόννησον καὶ Μακεδονίαν Σκύθαι Σκλάβοι νεμονται.* Epit. Strab. Geog. l. vii. p. 99. ed. Huds.

successors. The original Valachians were so warlike that they frequently endangered the very seat of empire*, but their descendants are a peaceable, inoffensive race, addicted principally to pastoral occupations. They were extirpated in the more northern districts by the conquering arms of the Turks, and the remnant now found were preserved in the mountain fastnesses of the south.

It seemed as if each tempest of war that troubled Europe cast a wave upon the devoted shores of this country, and that every emigratory inundation left a portion of slime upon its plains. In the latter part of the eleventh century Robert Guiscard and his son Bohemond led their fierce adventurous Normans out of the kingdom of Apulia, in which they had been firmly established, to attack the frontiers of the eastern empire on the other side of the Adriatic. Their first enterprise was the siege of Durazzo, which was bravely defended by its governor George Palæologus till the arrival of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus†. This enterprise not only introduces the Albanians for the first time into historical notice, a people destined hereafter to act so conspicuous a part in the annals of Epirus, but occasions the earliest mention of Ioannina, the capital of their extended empire.

After an unsuccessful battle fought by Alexius under the walls of Durazzo, he fled to Achris, leaving a Venetian garrison in command of the citadel, and the city itself under the government of Comiscorta an *Albanian* chieftain‡. The victorious Robert deliberated for some time whether he should press the siege, as the season was far advanced, or retire into winter quarters at Glabinitza, and re-commence operations in the ensuing spring. A secret correspondence which he entered into with one of the Venetian garrison determined him to remain, and

* They contributed chiefly, with the Bulgarian and other northern tribes, to gain the battle of Adrianople, which led to the expulsion of Baldwin from the Byzantine throne, A. D. 1205. The Vlaxhi of Epirus are called Κέρζο-Βλάχοι (or lame Vlaxhi) to distinguish them from the original settlers on the Danube named Μαύρο-Βλάχοι (or black Vlaxhi.)

† Father of the celebrated Anna the historian. The siege commenced in June, A. D. 1081.

‡ Annæ Comn. Alex. l. iv. sub fin.

the city was delivered up on the 8th of February, 1082. After this success he was recalled to Italy by a rebellion among his own states*, and left his son Bohemond to prosecute the war.

This celebrated warrior trod in the footsteps of his victorious father. According to the account of Anna Comnena he led his troops through the heart of Epirus, and occupied a most important and advantageous station at Ioannina, fortifying its castron or citadel† and repairing the walls, whilst he entrenched his army amongst the beautiful vineyards in its vicinity. From this post he sent out parties to ravage the adjacent towns: these committed so many enormities that the emperor once more collected an army with all possible expedition and marched forth to give them battle. In the conflict which ensued under the walls of Ioannina, and which lasted from the rising to the setting of the sun, the imperial forces were totally routed, although Alexius, according to the partial but very pardonable account of his filial historian, performed prodigies of valour, standing like a vast tower opposed to the raging waves of battle, remaining till his best troops and officers were all cut in pieces around him, and then only flying to preserve himself for better hopes and greater dangers.

The course of events hath thus brought us to the city of Ioannina: we shall however have occasion to dwell for a short time only upon its early annals; since no historian has left us any account of its origin, or progress, or the character of its people, in those ages when human beings were reduced to the lowest point of degradation and all the energies of mind corrupted or destroyed by the enervating influence of the Byzantine government: neither does it derive any importance from its connexion with literature and the fine arts, nor claim a share

* In 1084 he marched to the relief of Pope Gregory VII. of whom he declared himself the protector, though he had formerly been excommunicated by that pontiff. He died in Cephalonia, July 17th, 1085, as he was preparing a renewal of his attack upon the eastern empire.

† That incomparable geographer Meletius says it was fortified by Michael Ducas, the Sebastocrator (read protostrator), uncle of the Princess Anna Comnena.

CONJECTURES ON THE ORIGIN OF IOANNINA.

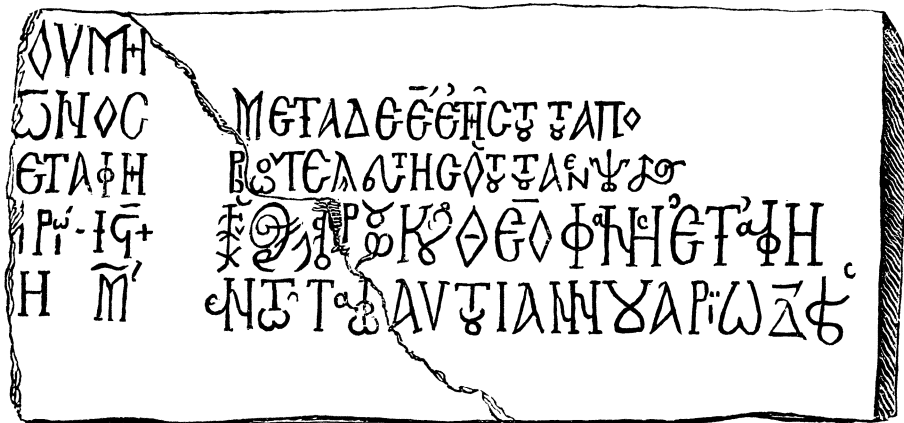
9

of that partiality which we so indelibly acquire for the Grecian name. Its annals are enveloped in an obscurity which I am afraid no labour of research can now dissipate: its inhabitants have passed from the face of the earth without leaving any traces of their existence that can enable us to enjoy their triumphs or sympathize in their misfortunes, and even those which an imperfect history endeavours to designate, appear like shadows in the twilight, which the eye can barely distinguish from the surrounding gloom. The sole interest connected with Ioannina rests, for a basis, upon the character and exploits of its present ruler, who, during a series of the most eventful circumstances, has raised it from the head of a small pashalic to be the capital of Old and New Epirus.

Respecting the first foundation of this city nothing is certain. Some refer it to the celebrated John Cantacuzene, others to Michael Ducas and an unknown despot Thomas*, others again to an equally unidentified despot John: but many things seem to denote that its foundation took place long before the title of despot was given to the ruler of a province: nor can it be surprising that the security of its site, the fertility of its plains, the advantage of its spacious and magnificent lake, the barriers of its mountain ridges, should attract the eye of the citizen and the soldier, both as an agreeable residence and an impregnable fortress. There can be no doubt but that it was occupied in very early ages of the Byzantine empire. From Anna Comnena, who first makes mention of it in the eleventh century, we find that its castron or citadel was then *dilapidated* and *repaired* by the gallant Bohemond: many centuries therefore had probably elapsed before this dilapidation took place, through neglect and confidence; for the very silence of history concerning it affords presumptive evidence that its commanding

*This opinion seems to have arisen from a monumental inscription discovered in digging for the foundations of a house in Ioannina, which signifies **HERE LIES DUKE THOMAS, GOVERNOR OF IOANNINA**. This Mr. Jones saw, but I did not: it however proves nothing with regard to the foundation of the city.

situation imposed awe and respect upon invaders. A minute inspection of some ancient ruins still remaining in the castron inclined me to refer the original edifice to the age of Justinian, who, as we learn from Procopius, erected innumerable castles and fortresses throughout all parts of his dominions, particularly in Epirus and Macedonia*: the style of building too very accurately coincides with other edifices attributed to that emperor, especially with one at Konizza, situated at the distance of one day and a half from Ioannina. What light may be thrown upon the matter by the following inscription, which I copied at the mosque of the serai, which stands upon the site of an ancient church, is left to the decision of those who are better acquainted with palæography than myself†.



* He is mentioned by this author as ὄλην τὴν Ελλάδα περιβαλὼν τοῖς ὀχυρώμασι he gives lists of the forts built and repaired, of which those in Old and New Epirus alone amounted to 44 built, and 50 repaired. De Ædif. l. iv. c. 1. *ἔγω συνεχῆ τὰ ἐρύματα ἐν τοῖς χωρίοις ἀπεργασάμενος, ὥστε ἀγρὸς ἕκαστος ἢ φέρριον ἀποτερόνεται, ἢ τῷ τειχισμένῳ πρόσκοκός ἐστιν, ἐνταῦθά τε καὶ ἐν Ἡπίρῳ τῇ τε νέῃ καὶ τῇ παλαιᾷ καθεμένη.* Lib. iv. c. 2.

† The name, which is always written in the plural number τὰ Ἰωάννινα, leads us to suppose that its immediate founder was some person of the name of Ἰωάννης, or John: otherwise we might suspect, connecting other circumstances with it, that its appellation was derived from Ioannina, the daughter and sole heiress of the Great Belisarius, who was forcibly married to Anastasius, who is called the grandson (θυγατριδὸς) of the Empress Theodora. (Procop. Hist. Arcan. c. iv. v.) Gibbon would