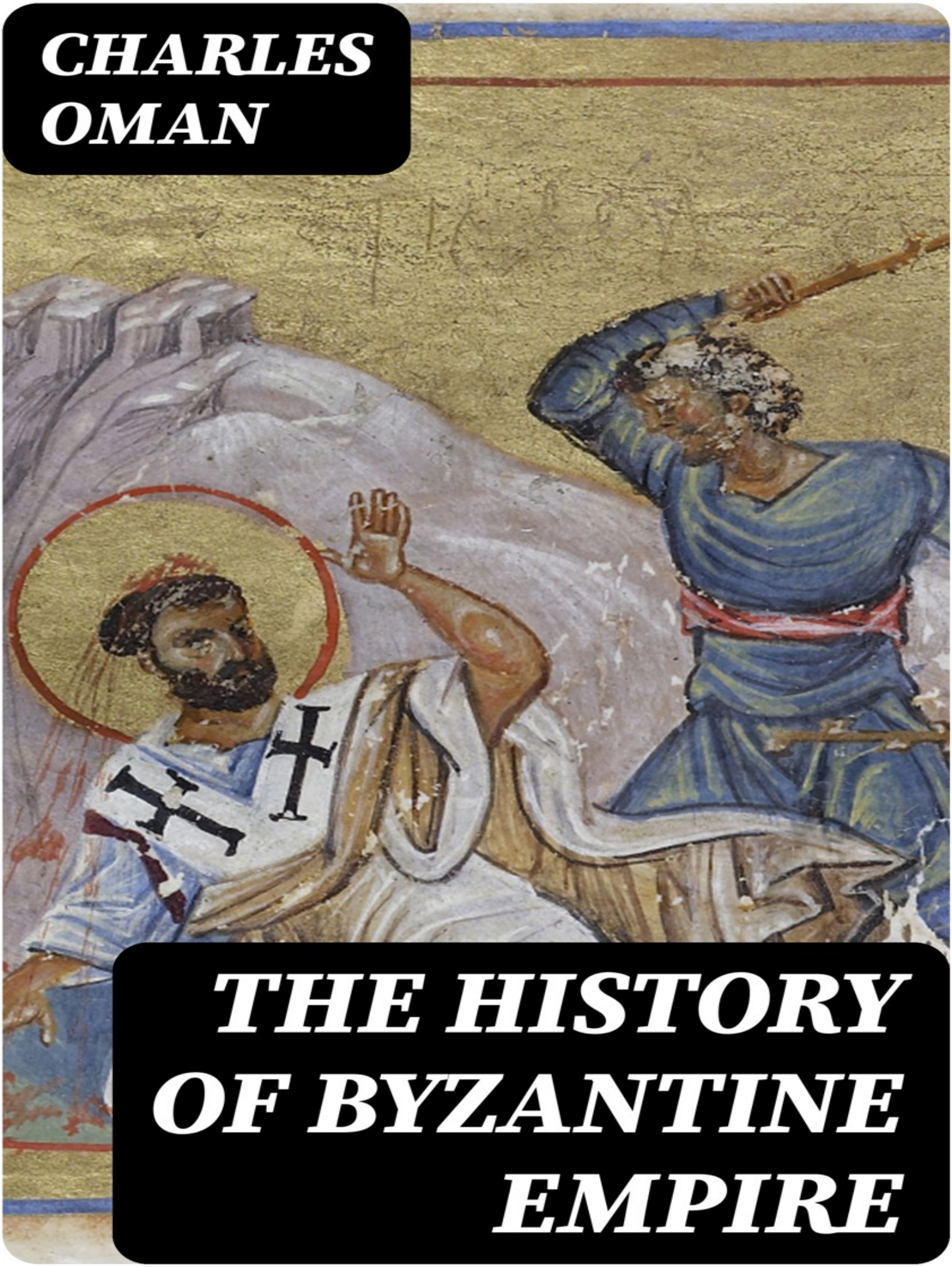
CHARLES OMAN



THE HISTORY OF BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Charles Oman

The History of Byzantine Empire

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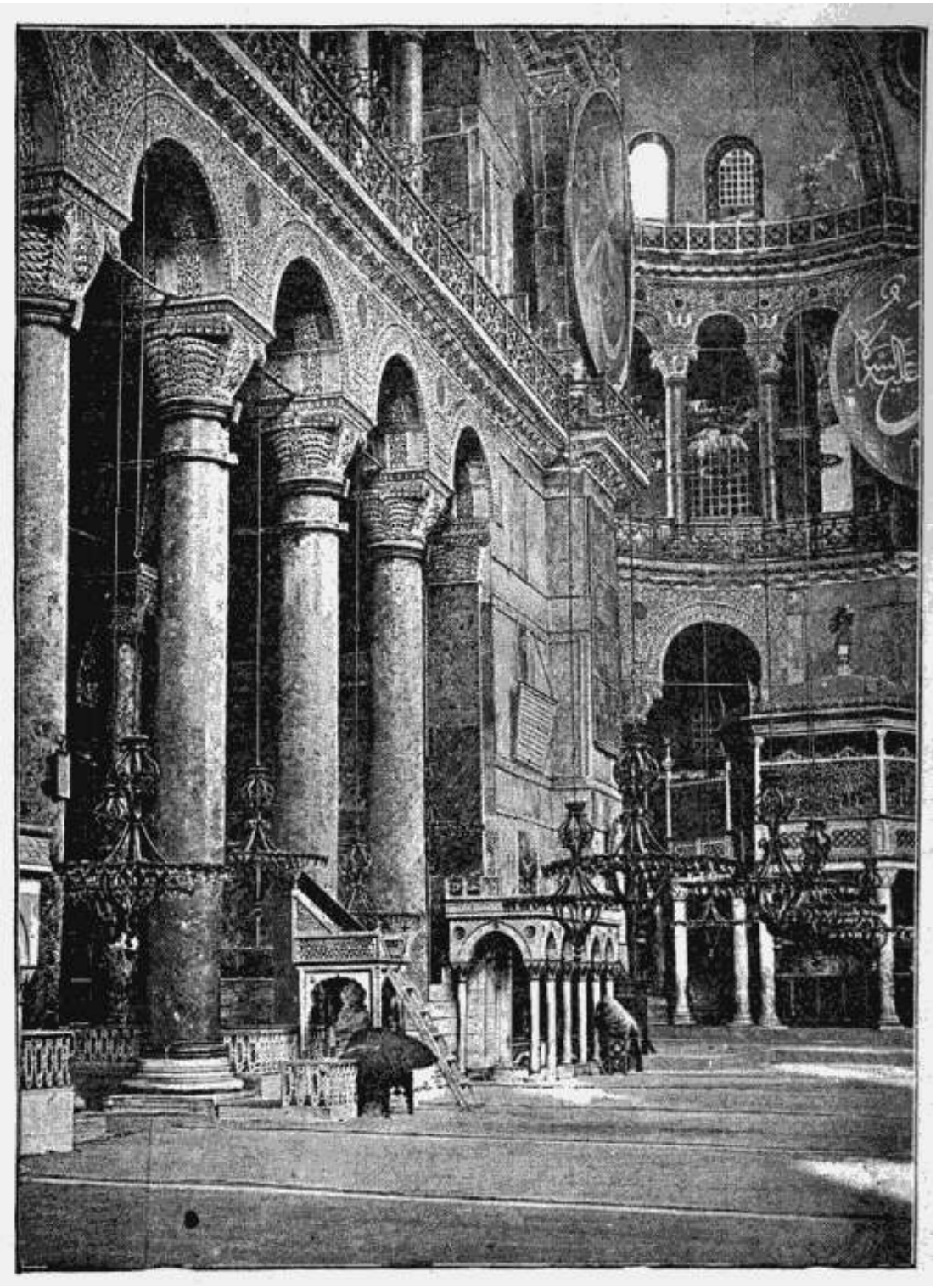

Interior of St. Sophia

Preface.

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Fifty years ago the word “Byzantine” was used as a synonym for all that was corrupt and decadent, and the tale of the East-Roman Empire was dismissed by modern historians as depressing and monotonous. The great Gibbon had branded the successors of Justinian and Heraclius as a series of vicious weaklings, and for several generations no one dared to contradict him.

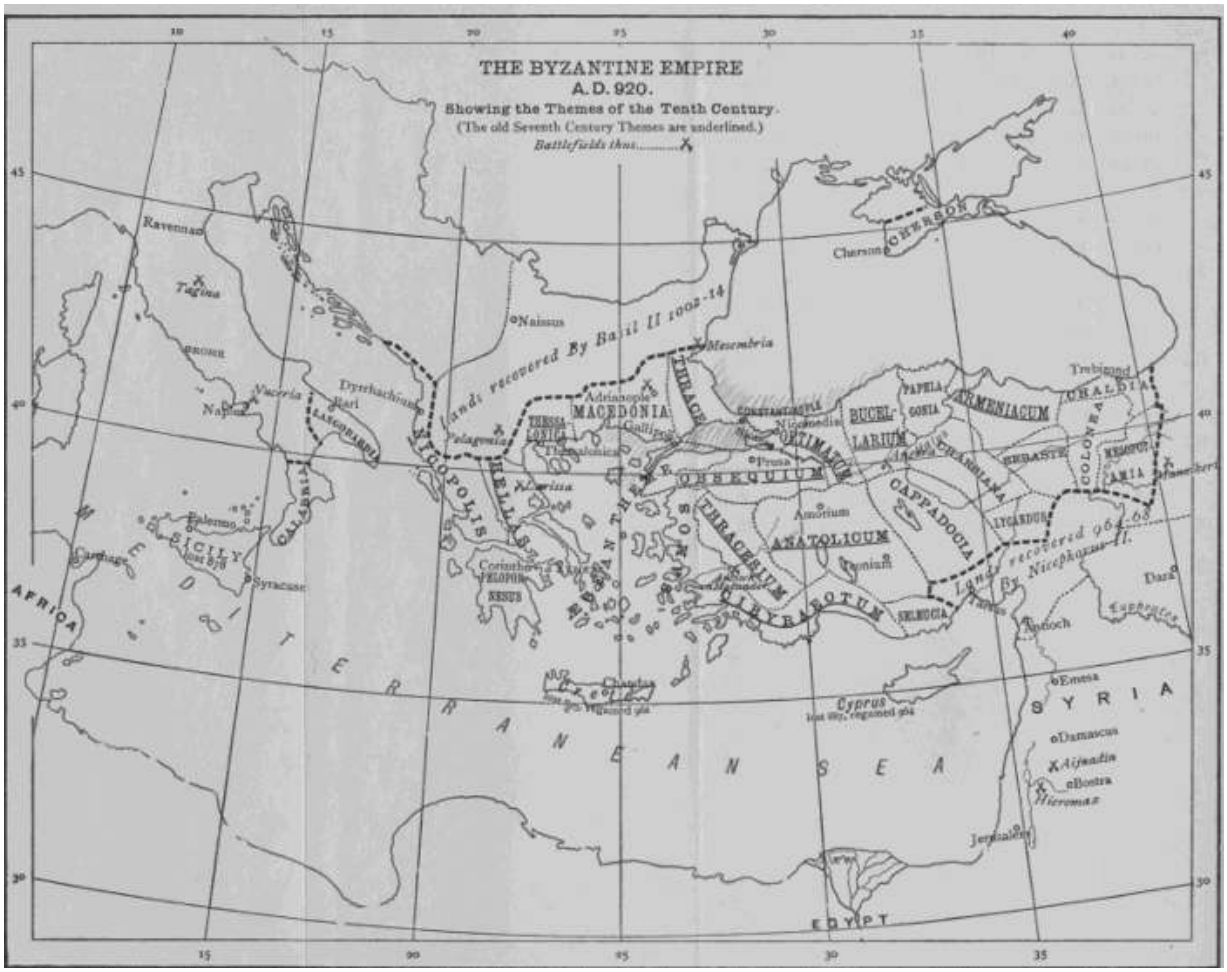
Two books have served to undeceive the English reader, the monumental work of Finlay, published in 1856, and the more modern volumes of Mr. Bury, which appeared in 1889. Since they have written, the Byzantines no longer need an apologist, and the great work of the East-Roman Empire in holding back the Saracen, and in keeping alive throughout the Dark Ages the lamp of learning, is beginning to be realized.

The writer of this book has endeavoured to tell the story of Byzantium in the spirit of Finlay and Bury, not in that of Gibbon. He wishes to acknowledge his debts both to the veteran of the war of Greek Independence, and to the young Dublin professor. Without their aid his task would have been very heavy—with it the difficulty was removed.

The author does not claim to have grappled with all the chroniclers of the Eastern realm, but thinks that some acquaintance with Ammianus, Procopius, Maurice's “Strategikon,” Leo the Deacon, Leo the Wise, Constantine

Porphyrogenitus, Anna Comnena and Nicetas, may justify his having undertaken the task he has essayed.

Oxford,
February, 1892.



I. Byzantium.

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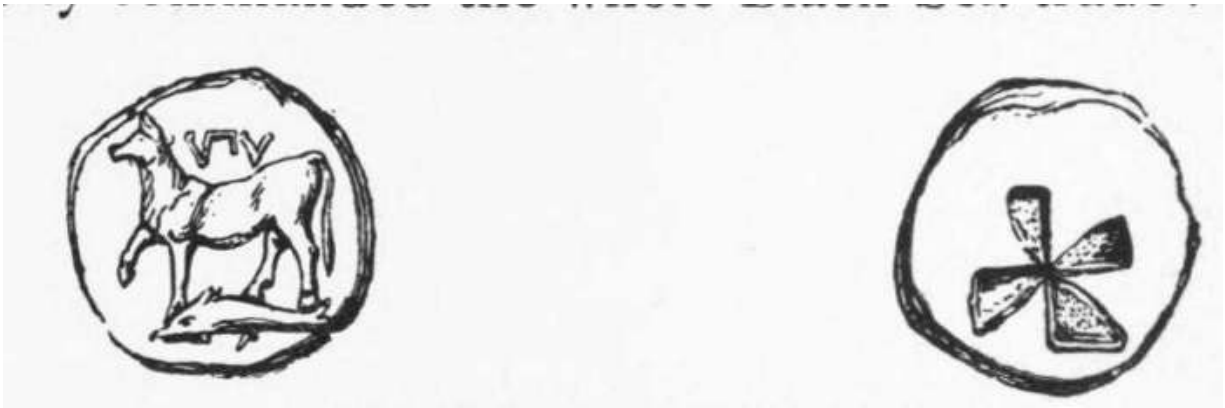
Two thousand five hundred and fifty-eight years ago a little fleet of galleys toiled painfully against the current up the long strait of the Hellespont, rowed across the broad Propontis, and came to anchor in the smooth waters of the first inlet which cuts into the European shore of the Bosphorus. There a long crescent-shaped creek, which after-ages were to know as the Golden Horn, strikes inland for seven miles, forming a quiet backwater from the rapid stream which runs outside. On the headland, enclosed between this inlet and the open sea, a few hundred colonists disembarked, and hastily secured themselves from the wild tribes of the inland, by running some rough sort of a stockade across the ground from beach to beach. Thus was founded the city of Byzantium.

The settlers were Greeks of the Dorian race, natives of the thriving seaport-state of Megara, one of the most enterprising of all the cities of Hellas in the time of colonial and commercial expansion which was then at its height. Wherever a Greek prow had cut its way into unknown waters, there Megarian seamen were soon found following in its wake. One band of these venturesome traders pushed far to the West to plant colonies in Sicily, but the larger share of the attention of Megara was turned towards the sunrising, towards the mist-enshrouded entrance of the Black Sea and the fabulous lands that lay beyond. There, as legends told, was to be found the realm of the Golden

Fleece, the Eldorado of the ancient world, where kings of untold wealth reigned over the tribes of Colchis: there dwelt, by the banks of the river Thermodon, the Amazons, the warlike women who had once vexed far-off Greece by their inroads: there, too, was to be found, if one could but struggle far enough up its northern shore, the land of the Hyperboreans, the blessed folk who dwell behind the North Wind and know nothing of storm and winter. To seek these fabled wonders the Greeks sailed ever North and East till they had come to the extreme limits of the sea. The riches of the Golden Fleece they did not find, nor the country of the Hyperboreans, nor the tribes of the Amazons; but they did discover many lands well worth the knowing, and grew rich on the profits which they drew from the metals of Colchis and the forests of Paphlagonia, from the rich corn lands by the banks of the Dnieper and Bug, and the fisheries of the Bosphorus and the Maeotic Lake. Presently the whole coastland of the sea, which the Greeks, on their first coming, called Axeinos—"the Inhospitable"—became fringed with trading settlements, and its name was changed to Euxeinos—"the Hospitable"—in recognition of its friendly ports. It was in a similar spirit that, two thousand years later, the seamen who led the next great impulse of exploration that rose in Europe, turned the name of the "Cape of Storms" into that of the "Cape of Good Hope."

The Megarians, almost more than any other Greeks, devoted their attention to the Euxine, and the foundation of Byzantium was but one of their many achievements. Already, seventeen years before Byzantium came into being, another band of Megarian colonists had established

themselves at Chalcedon, on the opposite Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus. The settlers who were destined to found the greater city applied to the oracle of Delphi to give them advice as to the site of their new home, and Apollo, we are told, bade them “build their town over against the city of the blind.” They therefore pitched upon the headland by the Golden Horn, reasoning that the Chalcedonians were truly blind to have neglected the more eligible site on the Thracian shore, in order to found a colony on the far less inviting Bithynian side of the strait.



Early Coin Of Byzantium.

Late Coin Of Byzantium Showing Crescent And Star.

From the first its situation marked out Byzantium as destined for a great future. Alike from the military and from the commercial point of view no city could have been better

placed. Looking out from the easternmost headland of Thrace, with all Europe behind it and all Asia before, it was equally well suited to be the frontier fortress to defend the border of the one, or the basis of operations for an invasion from the other. As fortresses went in those early days it was almost impregnable—two sides protected by the water, the third by a strong wall not commanded by any neighbouring heights. In all its early history Byzantium never fell by storm: famine or treachery accounted for the few occasions on which it fell into the hands of an enemy. In its commercial aspect the place was even more favourably situated. It completely commanded the whole Black Sea trade: every vessel that went forth from Greece or Ionia to traffic with Scythia or Colchis, the lands by the Danube mouth or the shores of the Maeotic Lake, had to pass close under its walls, so that the prosperity of a hundred Hellenic towns on the Euxine was always at the mercy of the masters of Byzantium. The Greek loved short stages and frequent stoppages, and as a half-way house alone Byzantium would have been prosperous: but it had also a flourishing local trade of its own with the tribes of the neighbouring Thracian inland, and drew much profit from its fisheries: so much so that the city badge—its coat of arms as we should call it—comprised a tunny-fish as well as the famous ox whose form alluded to the legend of the naming of the Bosphorus.[1]

As an independent state Byzantium had a long and eventful history. For thirty years it was in the hands of the kings of Persia, but with that short exception it maintained its freedom during the first three hundred years that followed its foundation. Many stirring scenes took place

beneath its walls: it was close to them that the great Darius threw across the Bosphorus his bridge of boats, which served as a model for the more famous structure on which his son Xerxes crossed the Hellespont. Fifteen years later, when Byzantium in common with all its neighbours made an ineffectual attempt to throw off the Persian yoke, in the rising called the “Ionic Revolt,” it was held for a time by the arch-rebel Histiaeus, who—as much to enrich himself as to pay his seamen—invented strait dues. He forced every ship passing up or down the Bosphorus to pay a heavy toll, and won no small unpopularity thereby for the cause of freedom which he professed to champion. Ere long Byzantium fell back again into the hands of Persia, but she was finally freed from the Oriental yoke seventeen years later, when the victorious Greeks, fresh from the triumph of Salamis and Mycale, sailed up to her walls and after a long leaguer starved out the obstinate garrison [b.c. 479]. The fleet wintered there, and it was at Byzantium that the first foundations of the naval empire of Athens were laid, when all the Greek states of Asia placed their ships at the disposal of the Athenian admirals Cimon and Aristeides.

During the fifth century Byzantium twice declared war on Athens, now the mistress of the seas, and on each occasion fell into the hands of the enemy—once by voluntary surrender in 439 b.c., once by treachery from within, in 408 b.c. But the Athenians, except in one or two disgraceful cases, did not deal hardly with their conquered enemies, and the Byzantines escaped anything harder than the payment of a heavy war indemnity. In a few years their

commercial gains repaired all the losses of war, and the state was itself again.

We know comparatively little about the internal history of these early centuries of the life of Byzantium. Some odd fragments of information survive here and there: we know, for example, that they used iron instead of copper for small money, a peculiarity shared by no other ancient state save Sparta. Their alphabet rejoiced in an abnormally shaped B, which puzzled all other Greeks, for it resembled a Π with an extra limb.[2] The chief gods of the city were those that we might have expected—Poseidon the ruler of the sea, whose blessing gave Byzantium its chief wealth; and Demeter, the goddess who presided over the Thracian and Scythian corn lands which formed its second source of prosperity.

The Byzantines were, if ancient chroniclers tell us the truth, a luxurious as well as a busy race: they spent too much time in their numerous inns, where the excellent wines of Maronea and other neighbouring places offered great temptations. They were gluttons too as well as tipplers: on one occasion, we are assured, the whole civic militia struck work in the height of a siege, till their commander consented to allow restaurants to be erected at convenient distances round the ramparts. One comic writer informs us that the Byzantines were eating young tunny-fish —their favourite dish—so constantly, that their whole bodies had become well-nigh gelatinous, and it was thought they might melt if exposed to too great heat! Probably these tales are the scandals of neighbours who envied Byzantine prosperity, for it is at any rate certain that the city showed all through its history great energy and love of

independence, and never shrank from war as we should have expected a nation of epicures to do.

It was not till the rise of Philip of Macedon and his greater son Alexander that Byzantium fell for the fifth time into the hands of an enemy. The elder king was repulsed from the city's walls after a long siege, culminating in an attempt at an escalade by night, which was frustrated owing to the sudden appearance of a light in heaven, which revealed the advancing enemy and was taken by the Byzantines as a token of special divine aid [b.c. 339]. In commemoration of it they assumed as one of their civic badges the blazing crescent and star, which has descended to our own days and is still used as an emblem by the present owners of the city—the Ottoman Sultans. But after repulsing Philip the Byzantines had to submit some years later to Alexander. They formed under him part of the enormous Macedonian empire, and passed on his decease through the hands of his successors—Demetrius Poliorcetes, and Lysimachus. After the death of the latter in battle, however, they recovered a precarious freedom, and were again an independent community for a hundred years, till the power of Rome invaded the regions of Thrace and the Hellespont.

Byzantium was one of the cities which took the wise course of making an early alliance with the Romans, and obtained good and easy terms in consequence. During the wars of Rome with Macedon and Antiochus the Great it proved such a faithful assistant that the Senate gave it the status of a *civitas libera et foederata*, “a free and confederate city,” and it was not taken under direct Roman government, but allowed complete liberty in everything

save the control of its foreign relations and the payment of a tribute to Rome. It was not till the Roman Republic had long passed away, that the Emperor Vespasian stripped it of these privileges, and threw it into the province of Thrace, to exist for the future as an ordinary provincial town [a.d. 73].

Though deprived of a liberty which had for long years been almost nominal, Byzantium could not be deprived of its unrivalled position for commerce. It continued to flourish under the *Pax Romana*, the long-continued peace which all the inner countries of the empire enjoyed during the first two centuries of the imperial *régime*, and is mentioned again and again as one of the most important cities of the middle regions of the Roman world.

But an evil time for Byzantium, as for all the other parts of the civilized world, began when the golden age of the Antonines ceased, and the epoch of the military emperors followed. In 192 a.d., Commodus, the unworthy son of the great and good Marcus Aurelius, was murdered, and ere long three military usurpers were wrangling for his blood-stained diadem. Most unhappily for itself Byzantium lay on the line of division between the eastern provinces, where Pescennius Niger had been proclaimed, and the Illyrian provinces, where Severus had assumed the imperial style. The city was seized by the army of Syria, and strengthened in haste. Presently Severus appeared from the west, after he had made himself master of Rome and Italy, and fell upon the forces of his rival Pescennius. Victory followed the arms of the Illyrian legions, the east was subdued, and the Syrian emperor put to death. But when all his other adherents had yielded, the garrison of Byzantium refused to submit. For

more than two years they maintained the impregnable city against the lieutenants of Severus, and it was not till a.d. 196 that they were forced to yield. The emperor appeared in person to punish the long-protracted resistance of the town; not only the garrison, but the civil magistrates of Byzantium were slain before his eyes. The massive walls “so firmly built with great square stones clamped together with bolts of iron, that the whole seemed but one block,” were laboriously cast down. The property of the citizens was confiscated, and the town itself deprived of all municipal privileges and handed over to be governed like a dependent village by its neighbours of Perinthus.

Caracalla, the son of Severus, gave back to the Byzantines the right to govern themselves, but the town had received a hard blow, and would have required a long spell of peace to recover its prosperity. Peace however it was not destined to see. All through the middle years of the third century it was vexed by the incursions of the Goths, who harried mercilessly the countries on the Black Sea whose commerce sustained its trade. Under Gallienus in a.d. 263 it was again seized by an usurping emperor, and shared the fate of his adherents. The soldiers of Gallienus sacked Byzantium from cellar to garret, and made such a slaughter of its inhabitants that it is said that the old Megarian race who had so long possessed it were absolutely exterminated. But the irresistible attraction of the site was too great to allow its ruins to remain desolate. Within ten years after its sack by the army of Gallienus, we find Byzantium again a populous town, and its inhabitants are specially praised by

the historian Trebellius Pollio for the courage with which they repelled a Gothic raid in the reign of Claudius II.

The strong Illyrian emperors, who staved off from the Roman Empire the ruin which appeared about to overwhelm it in the third quarter of the third century, gave Byzantium time and peace to recover its ancient prosperity. It profited especially from the constant neighbourhood of the imperial court, after Diocletian fixed his residence at Nicomedia, only sixty miles away, on the Bithynian side of the Propontis. But the military importance of Byzantium was always interfering with its commercial greatness. After the abdication of Diocletian the empire was for twenty years vexed by constant partitions of territory between the colleagues whom he left behind him. Byzantium after a while found itself the border fortress of Licinius, the emperor who ruled in the Balkan Peninsula, while Maximinus Daza was governing the Asiatic provinces. While Licinius was absent in Italy, Maximinus treacherously attacked his rival's dominions without declaration of war, and took Byzantium by surprise. But the Illyrian emperor returned in haste, defeated his grasping neighbour not far from the walls of the city, and recovered his great frontier fortress after it had been only a few months out of his hands [a.d. 314]. The town must have suffered severely by changing masters twice in the same year; it does not, however, seem to have been sacked or burnt, as was so often the case with a captured city in those dismal days. But Licinius when he had recovered the place set to work to render it impregnable. Though it was not his capital he made it the chief fortress of

his realm, which, since the defeat of Maximinus, embraced the whole eastern half of the Roman world.

It was accordingly at Byzantium that Licinius made his last desperate stand, when in a.d. 323 he found himself engaged in an unsuccessful war with his brother-in-law Constantine, the Emperor of the West. For many months the war stood still beneath the walls of the city; but Constantine persevered in the siege, raising great mounds which overlooked the walls, and sweeping away the defenders by a constant stream of missiles, launched from dozens of military engines which he had erected on these artificial heights. At last the city surrendered, and the cause of Licinius was lost. Constantine, the last of his rivals subdued, became the sole emperor of the Roman world, and stood a victor on the ramparts which were ever afterwards to bear his name.

II. The Foundation Of Constantinople. (A.D. 328-330.)

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When the fall of Byzantium had wrecked the fortunes of Licinius, the Roman world was again united beneath the sceptre of a single master. For thirty-seven years, ever since Diocletian parcelled out the provinces with his colleagues, unity had been unknown, and emperors, whose number had sometimes risen to six and sometimes sunk to two, had administered their realms on different principles and with varying success.

Constantine, whose victory over his rivals had been secured by his talents as an administrator and a diplomatist no less than by his military skill, was one of those men whose hard practical ability has stamped upon the history of the world a much deeper impress than has been left by many conquerors and legislators of infinitely greater genius. He was a man of that self-contained, self-reliant, unsympathetic type of mind which we recognize in his great predecessor Augustus, or in Frederic the Great of Prussia.

Constantine the Great

Though the strain of old Roman blood in his veins must have been but small, Constantine was in many ways a

typical Roman; the hard, cold, steady, unwearying energy, which in earlier centuries had won the empire of the world, was once more incarnate in him. But if Roman in character, he was anything but Roman in his sympathies. Born by the Danube, reared in the courts and camps of Asia and Gaul, he was absolutely free from any of that superstitious reverence for the ancient glories of the city on the Tiber which had inspired so many of his predecessors. Italy was to him but a secondary province amongst his wide realms. When he distributed his dominions among his heirs, it was Gaul that he gave as the noblest share to his eldest and best-loved son: Italy was to him a younger child's portion. There had been emperors before him who had neglected Rome: the barbarian Maximinus I. had dwelt by the Rhine and the Danube; the politic Diocletian had chosen Nicomedia as his favourite residence. But no one had yet dreamed of raising up a rival to the mistress of the world, and of turning Rome into a provincial town. If preceding emperors had dwelt far afield, it was to meet the exigencies of war on the frontiers or the government of distant provinces. It was reserved for Constantine to erect over against Rome a rival metropolis for the civilized world, an imperial city which was to be neither a mere camp nor a mere court, but the administrative and commercial centre of the Roman world.

For more than a hundred years Rome had been a most inconvenient residence for the emperors. The main problem which had been before them was the repelling of incessant barbarian inroads on the Balkan Peninsula; the troubles on the Rhine and the Euphrates, though real enough, had been

but minor evils. Rome, placed half way down the long projection of Italy, handicapped by its bad harbours and separated from the rest of the empire by the passes of the Alps, was too far away from the points where the emperor was most wanted—the banks of the Danube and the walls of Sirmium and Singidunum. For the ever-recurring wars with Persia it was even more inconvenient; but these were less pressing dangers; no Persian army had yet penetrated beyond Antioch—only 200 miles from the frontier—while in the Balkan Peninsula the Goths had broken so far into the heart of the empire as to sack Athens and Thessalonica.

Constantine, with all the Roman world at his feet, and all its responsibilities weighing on his mind, was far too able a man to overlook the great need of the day—a more conveniently placed administrative and military centre for his empire. He required a place that should be easily accessible by land and sea—which Rome had never been in spite of its wonderful roads—that should overlook the Danube lands, without being too far away from the East; that should be so strongly situated that it might prove an impregnable arsenal and citadel against barbarian attacks from the north; that should at the same time be far enough away from the turmoil of the actual frontier to afford a safe and splendid residence for the imperial court. The names of several towns are given by historians as having suggested themselves to Constantine. First was his own birth-place—Naissus (Nisch) on the Morava, in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula; but Naissus had little to recommend it: it was too close to the frontier and too far from the sea. Sardica—the modern Sofia in Bulgaria—was liable to the same objections,

and had not the sole advantage of Naissus, that of being connected in sentiment with the emperor's early days. Nicomedia on its long gulf at the east end of the Propontis was a more eligible situation in every way, and had already served as an imperial residence. But all that could be urged in favour of Nicomedia applied with double force to Byzantium, and, in addition, Constantine had no wish to choose a city in which his own memory would be eclipsed by that of his predecessor Diocletian, and whose name was associated by the Christians, the class of his subjects whom he had most favoured of late, with the persecutions of Diocletian and Galerius. For Ilium, the last place on which Constantine had cast his mind, nothing could be alleged except its ancient legendary glories, and the fact that the mythologists of Rome had always fabled that their city drew its origin from the exiled Trojans of Æneas. Though close to the sea it had no good harbour, and it was just too far from the mouth of the Hellespont to command effectually the exit of the Euxine.

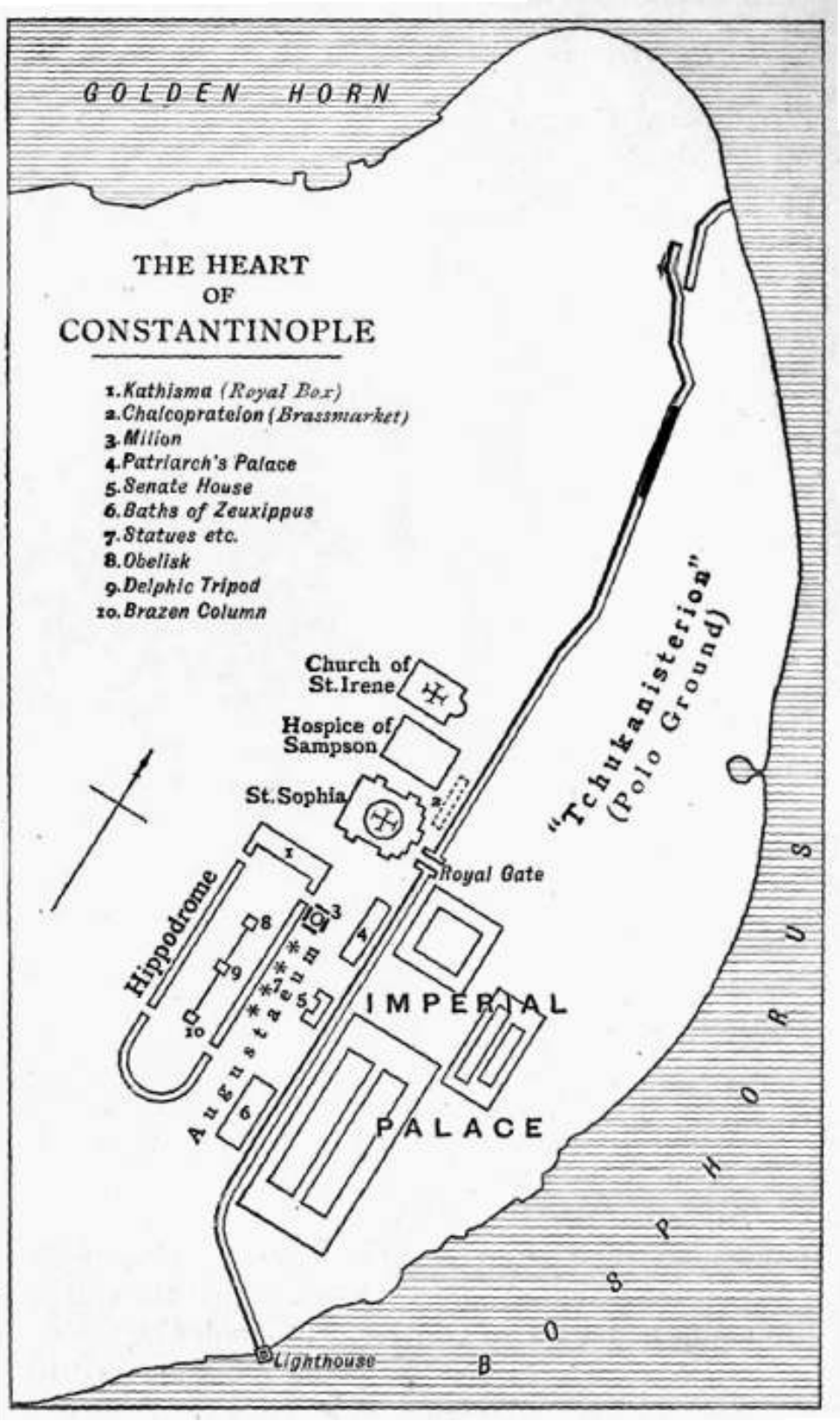
Byzantium, on the other hand, was thoroughly well known to Constantine. For months his camp had been pitched beneath its walls; he must have known accurately every inch of its environs, and none of its military advantages can have missed his eye. Nothing, then, could have been more natural than his selection of the old Megarian city for his new capital. Yet the Roman world was startled at the first news of his choice; Byzantium had been so long known merely as a great port of call for the Euxine trade, and as a first-class provincial fortress, that it was hard to conceive of it as a destined seat of empire.

When once Constantine had determined to make Byzantium his capital, in preference to any other place in the Balkan lands, his measures were taken with his usual energy and thoroughness. The limits of the new city were at once marked out by solemn processions in the old Roman style. In later ages a picturesque legend was told to account for the magnificent scale on which it was planned. The emperor, we read, marched out on foot, followed by all his court, and traced with his spear the line where the new fortifications were to be drawn. As he paced on further and further westward along the shore of the Golden Horn, till he was more than two miles away from his starting-point, the gate of old Byzantium, his attendants grew more and more surprised at the vastness of his scheme. At last they ventured to observe that he had already exceeded the most ample limits that an imperial city could require. But Constantine turned to rebuke them: “I shall go on,” he said, “until He, the invisible guide who marches before me, thinks fit to stop.” Guided by his mysterious presentiment of greatness, the emperor advanced till he was three miles from the eastern angle of Byzantium, and only turned his steps when he had included in his boundary line all the seven hills which are embraced in the peninsula between the Propontis and the Golden Horn.

The rising ground just outside the walls of the old city, where Constantine's tent had been pitched during the siege of a.d. 323, was selected out as the market-place of the new foundation. There he erected the *Milion*, or “golden milestone,” from which all the distances of the eastern world were in future to be measured. This “central point of

the world” was not a mere single stone, but a small building like a temple, its roof supported by seven pillars; within was placed the statue of the emperor, together with that of his venerated mother, the Christian Empress Helena.

The south-eastern part of the old town of Byzantium was chosen by Constantine for the site of his imperial palace. The spot was cleared of all private dwellings for a space of 150 acres, to give space not only for a magnificent residence for his whole court, but for spacious gardens and pleasure-grounds. A wall, commencing at the Lighthouse, where the Bosphorus joins the Propontis, turned inland and swept along parallel to the shore for about a mile, in order to shut off the imperial precinct from the city.



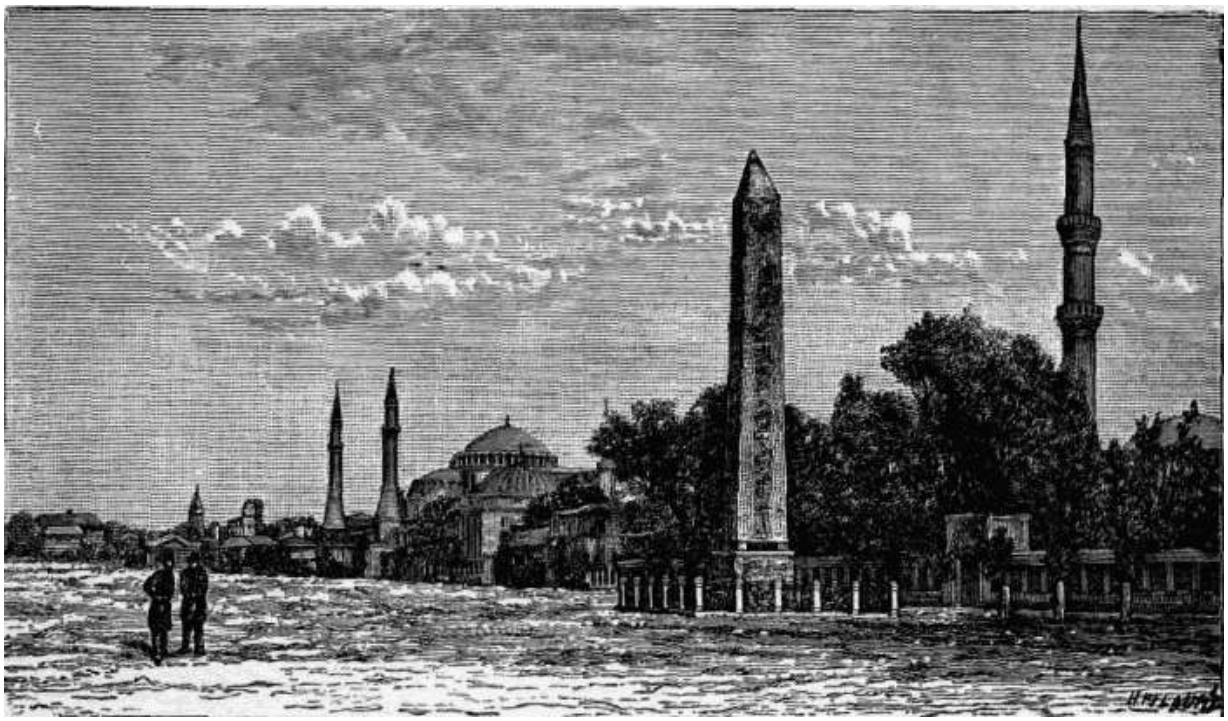
The Heart of Constantinople

North-west of the palace lay the central open space in which the life of Constantinople was to find its centre. This was the “Augustaeum,” a splendid oblong forum, about a thousand feet long by three hundred broad. It was paved with marble and surrounded on all sides by stately public buildings. To its east, as we have already said, lay the imperial palace, but between the palace and the open space were three detached edifices connected by a colonnade. Of these, the most easterly was the Great Baths, known, from their builder, as the “Baths of Zeuxippus.” They were built on the same magnificent scale which the earlier emperors had used in Old Rome, though they could not, perhaps, vie in size with the enormous Baths of Caracalla. Constantine utilized and enlarged the old public bath of Byzantium, which had been rebuilt after the taking of the city by Severus. He adorned the frontage and courts of the edifice with statues taken from every prominent town of Greece and Asia, the old Hellenic masterpieces which had escaped the rapacious hands of twelve generations of plundering proconsuls and Cæsars. There were to be seen the Athene of Lyndus, the Amphithrite of Rhodes, the Pan which had been consecrated by the Greeks after the defeat of Xerxes, and the Zeus of Dodona.

Adjoining the Baths, to the north, lay the second great building, on the east side of the Augustaeum—the Senate House. Constantine had determined to endow his new city with a senate modelled on that of Old Rome, and had indeed persuaded many old senatorial families to migrate eastward by judicious gifts of pensions and houses. We know that the assembly was worthily housed, but no details

survive about Constantine's building, on account of its having been twice destroyed within the century. But, like the Baths of Zeuxippus, it was adorned with ancient statuary, among which the Nine Muses of Helicon are specially cited by the historian who describes the burning of the place in a.d. 404.

Linked to the Senate House by a colonnade, lay on the north the Palace of the Patriarch, as the Bishop of Byzantium was ere long to be called, when raised to the same status as his brethren of Antioch and Alexandria. A fine building in itself, with a spacious hall of audience and a garden, the patriarchal dwelling was yet completely overshadowed by the imperial palace which rose behind it. And so it was with the patriarch himself: he lived too near his royal master to be able to gain any independent authority. Physically and morally alike he was too much overlooked by his august neighbour, and never found the least opportunity of setting up an independent spiritual authority over against the civil government, or of founding an *imperium in imperio* like the Bishop of Rome.



The Atmeidan Hippodrome And St. Sophia.

All along the western side of the Augustaeum, facing the three buildings which we have already described, lay an edifice which played a very prominent part in the public life of Constantinople. This was the great Hippodrome, a splendid circus 640 cubits long and 160 broad, in which were renewed the games that Old Rome had known so well. The whole system the chariot-races between the teams that represented the “factions” of the Circus was reproduced at Byzantium with an energy that even surpassed the devotion of the Romans to horse racing. From the first foundation of the city the rivalry of the “Blues” and the “Greens” was one of the most striking features of the life of the place. It was carried far beyond the circus, and spread into all branches of life. We often hear of the “Green” faction identifying itself with Arianism, or of the “Blue” supporting a pretender to the throne. Not merely men of sporting interests, but persons of

all ranks and professions, chose their colour and backed their faction. The system was a positive danger to the public peace, and constantly led to riots, culminating in the great sedition of a.d. 523, which we shall presently have to describe at length. In the Hippodrome the “Greens” always entered by the north-eastern gate, and sat on the east side; the “Blues” approached by the north-western gate and stretched along the western side. The emperor's box, called the Kathisma, occupied the whole of the short northern side, and contained many hundreds of seats for the imperial retinue. The great central throne of the Kathisma was the place in which the monarch showed himself most frequently to his subjects, and around it many strange scenes were enacted. It was on this throne that the rebel Hypatius was crowned emperor by the mob, with his own wife's necklace for an impromptu diadem. Here also, two centuries later, the Emperor Justinian II. sat in state after his reconquest of Constantinople, with his rivals, Leontius and Apsimarus, bound beneath his footstool, while the populace chanted, in allusion to the names of the vanquished princes, the verse, “Thou shalt trample on the Lion and the Asp.”

Down the centre of the Hippodrome ran the “spina,” or division wall, which every circus showed; it was ornamented with three most curious monuments, whose strange juxtaposition seemed almost to typify the heterogeneous materials from which the new city was built up. The first and oldest was an obelisk brought from Egypt, and covered with the usual hieroglyphic inscriptions; the second was the most notable, though one of the least beautiful, of the antiquities of Constantinople: it was the three-headed brazen serpent