

## BYZANTIUM.

## AN HISTORICAL POEM.

ROLL on, thou Bosphorus, in wrath or play,  
Roused by the storm or gilded by the ray;  
With thy blue billows, to the boundless sea,  
Roll on, like Time, into Eternity.  
Thy empire naught shall change—upon thy breast  
Guilt hath no record, tyranny no rest.  
Roll on, the rock-built city shall decay,  
Men sleep in death and kingdoms pass away,  
But thou unbowed shalt steal like music by,  
Or lift thy Titan head and dare the sky.

Alas for proud Byzantium! on her head  
The fire may smoulder and the foe may tread,  
Yet with heroic look and lovely form  
She mocks the deep, unconscious of the storm.  
Her footstool is the shore, which hears the moan  
Of dying waves—the mountain is her throne.  
Her princely minarets, whose spires on high  
Gleam with their crescent in the cloudless sky;  
Her temples bathed with all the pomp of day;  
Her domes that backward flash the living ray;  
Her cool kiosks 'round which from granite white  
High sparkling fountains catch a rainbow light,  
And the dark cypress, sombre and o'ercast,  
Which speaks the sleep the longest and the last,—  
Each scene around the haughty city throws  
A mingled charm of action and repose;  
Each feature breathes of glory wrapt in gloom—  
The feast, the shroud, the palace, and the tomb!

Yet thou art fair, and still my soul surveys  
A vision of delight, and still I gaze,  
Proud city, on the last, when first the beam  
Slept on thy temples in its midday dream.  
Methinks the genius of thy fatherland  
Raised his gay head and clenched his withered hand,

Exulting in a parent's pride to see  
Old Rome, without her gods, revived in thee.  
Fair Queen, unlike thy proud and high compeers,  
Thou wert not cradled in the lap of years,  
But like celestial Pallas, hymned of old,  
Thy sovereign form, inviolate and bold,  
Sprang to the zenith of its prime,  
And took no favors from the hand of Time.

Oh, every glorious gift of every zone  
Was flung before thee on thy virgin throne.  
No breeze could blow but from thy yielding slaves  
Some handmaid ship came riding o'er the waves;  
The costly treasures of the marble isle,  
The spice of Ind, the riches of the Nile,  
The stores of earth, like streams that seek the sea,  
Poured out the tribute of their wealth to thee.  
How proud was thy dominion! States and kings  
Slept 'neath the shadow of thine outstretched wings,  
And to the mortal eye how more than fair  
Were thy peculiar charms, which boasted there  
No proud Pantheon, flaming in the sun,  
To claim for many gods the meed of One,  
No scene of tranquil grove and babbling stream  
For vain philosophy to muse and dream,  
Till reason shows a maze without a clue,  
And truth seems false and falsehood's self seems true.  
Oh no! upon thy temples gladly bright  
The truth revealed shed down its living light;  
Thine was no champion badge of pagan shame,  
But that best gift, the cross of Him who came  
To lift the guilty spirit from the sod,  
To point from earth to Heaven—from man to God!

Alas, that peace so gentle, hope so fair,  
Should make but strife and herald but despair.  
Oh thine, Byzantium, thine were bitter tears,  
A couch of fever and a throne of fears,  
When Passion drugged the bowl and flashed the steel,  
When Murder followed in the track of Zeal,  
When that Religion, born to guide and bless,  
Itself became perverse and merciless,

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And factions of the circus and the shrine,  
And lords like slaves and slaves like lords were thine.  
Then did thy empire sink in slow decay;  
Then were its stately branches torn away;  
And thou, exposed and stripped, were left instead  
To bear the lightnings on thy naked head.

Yet wert thou noble—still in vain, in vain,  
The Vandal strove, he could not break the chain;  
The bold Bulgarian cursed thee as he bled;  
The Persian trembled and the pirate fled;  
Twice did the baffled Arab onward press  
To drink thy tears of danger and distress;  
Twice did the fiery Frank usurp thy halls,  
And twice the Grecian drove him from thy walls;  
And when at last up-sprang thy Tartar foe,  
With fire and sword more dread than Dandolo,  
Vain was the task, the triumph was not won  
Till fraud achieved what treason had begun.

But in that fierce distress, and at thy cry,  
Did none assist thee, and did none reply?  
No, kings were deaf, and pontiffs in their pride,  
Like Levites gazed, and like them turned aside;  
While infidels within Sophia's shrine  
Profaned the cup that held the sacred wine,  
And worse than base idolators of old,  
Proclaimed that Prophet-chief whose books unfold  
The deadliest faith that ever framed a spell  
To make of Heaven an Earth—of Earth a Hell!  
Yet stood there one, erect in might and mind,  
Before whom groaned despair and death behind.  
Oh, thou last Cæsar, greater midst thy tears  
Than all thy laureled and renowned compeers!  
I see thee yet—I see thee kneeling where  
The Patriarch lifts the cup and breathes the prayer;  
Now in the tempest of the battle's strife,  
Where trumpets drown the shrieks of parting life;  
Now with a thousand wounds upon thy breast  
I see thee pillow thy calm head in rest,  
And like a glory-circled martyr claim  
The wings of death to speed thy soul from shame.

But thou, fair city, to the Turk bowed down,  
Didst lose the brightest jewel in thy crown.  
They could not spoil thee of thy sky, thy sea,  
Thy mountain belts of strength and majesty;  
But the bright Cross, the volumes rescued long,  
Sank 'neath the feet of the barbarian throng;  
While rose the gorgeous Harem in its sin,  
So fair without, so deadly foul within—  
That sepulcher, in all except repose,  
Where woman strikes the lute and plucks the rose,  
Strives to be glad, but feels, despite the will,  
The heart, the heart is true to nature still.  
Yet for a season did the Moslem's hand  
Win for thy state an aspect of command.  
Let Syria, Egypt tell, let Persia's shame,  
Let haughty Barbarossa's deathless name,  
Let Buda speak, let Rhodes, whose knighted brave  
Were weak to serve her, impotent to save.  
Zeal in the rear and Valor in the van  
Spread far the fiats of thy sage divan,  
Till stretched the scepter of thy sway awhile  
Victorious from the Dnieper to the Nile.  
Brief, transitory glory! foul the day,  
Foul thy dishonor when in Corinth's bay  
'Neath the rich sun triumphant Venice spread  
Her lion banner as the Moslem fled;  
When proud Vienna's 'saulting troops were seen,  
When Zenta's laurels decked the brave Eugene;  
When the great Shepherd led the Persian van  
And Cyrus lived again in Kouli Khan;  
And last, and most when Freedom spurned the yoke,  
And tyrants trembled as the Greeks awoke.

That name shall be thy knell, the fostering smile  
Of five bright summers on sweet Scio's isle  
Hath beamed in vain. Oh, blood is on thy head!  
The heartless living and the tombless dead  
Invoke their just avengers. Lo, they come!  
The Muscovite is up. Hark, hark, the drum  
Speeds its prophetic summons on the gale!  
Thy Sultan trembles and thy sons turn pale.  
Up for the Prophet! Conquer or die free.

The Balkan make the Turks' Thermopylæ.  
Up for the Prophet! No, the axe and cord  
Suit Moslem hands far better than the sword.  
Then bow your heads, your towers are bought and sold,  
Prepare the parchment, weigh the bribing gold,  
While rings the welkin with the tale of doom,  
And faction smiles above her yawning tomb.

Now joy to Greece, the genius of her clime  
Shall cast her gauntlet at the tyrant Time,  
And wake again the valor and the fire  
Which rears the trophy and attunes the lyre.  
Oh, known how early and beloved how long,  
Ye sea-girt isles of battle and of song!  
Ye clustering isles that by the Ægean pressed  
In sunshine slumber on her dark blue breast!  
Land of the brave, athwart whose gloomy night  
Breaks the bright dawn and harbinger of light,  
May Glory now efface each blot of shame,  
May Freedom's torch yet light thy path to fame;  
May Christian truth, in this thy sacred birth,  
Add strength to empire, give to wisdom worth,  
And with the rich-fraught hopes of coming years  
Inspire thy triumphs while it dries thy tears!

Yet joy to Greece, but e'en a brighter star  
On Hope's horizon sheds its light afar.  
Oh Stamboul! thou who once didst clasp the sign,  
What if again Sophia's holy shrine  
Should, deaf to creeds of sensual joy and strife,  
Reecho to the words whose gift is life?  
If down those aisles the billowy music's swell  
Should pour the song of Judah, and should tell  
Of sinners met in penitence to kneel,  
And bless the rapture they have learned to feel?  
Then, though thy fortunes and thy fame decline,  
Then, oh! how more than victory were thine!

Ah, dear Religion, born of Him who smiled  
And prayed for pardon while the Jews reviled.  
No rose-decked houris, with their songs of glee,  
Strew the rich couch, no tyrants strike for thee;

Thy holier altar feeds its silent fire  
 With love, not hate, with reason, not desire.  
 Welcome in weal or woe, thy sovereign might  
 Can temper sorrow and enrich delight,  
 Can gild with hope our darkest, gloomiest hours,  
 Or crown the brimming cup of joy with flowers.  
 Thine is the peace-branch, thine the pure command  
 Which joins mankind like brothers hand in hand.  
 And oh, 'tis thine to purge each guilty stain,  
 Wrench the loose links that form this mortal chain,  
 Whisper of realms untraveled, paths untrod,  
 And lead, like Jacob's ladder, up to God!

The following letter was received with the foregoing poem:

*To the Editor of The Open Court:*

During the summer of the year 1852, there appeared in a newspaper published in the provincial town of York in Pennsylvania, a poem of rare merit and extraordinary beauty—an imitation of Byron at his best, the manuscript of which in its illiterate defects clearly indicated that the writer thereof was not the author of the poem. No trace of it could be discovered among the productions of ancient or modern poets. Twenty-five years thereafter, the poem again appeared, this time in a New York journal of high literary character, accompanied by a letter from a gentleman who had revised its first publication, and who had first mentioned its existence to the writer of this letter,—and also by a criticism from a distinguished Princeton professor, who attributed it to some Philhellene who, inspired like Lord Byron by sympathy for the Greek in his revolt against the Moslem rule, had gone to Greece to aid her cause—an Englishman or an American with an English education. Sixteen years later the poem reappeared in a magazine—*Modern Culture*, now extinct,—but as in the other publications seems to have attracted little or no attention, though the writer hopes that this does not “speak the sleep, the longest and the last.”

With “grim-visaged war rearing its terrible front” on the continents of Europe and Asia until recently, involving the continent of America and “all the world and the rest of mankind,” with Anglican, Greek, and Roman Catholic, disciples of Luther, Calvin, and Knox, with “furious Frank and fiery Hun,” aye Christendom, Israel, and Moslem in deadly conflict, may not the beautiful poem foreshadow the restoration of Byzantium and of Sophia's holy shrine, where

“The Patriarch lifted the cup and breathed the prayer,”

and of the land where from Sinai's Mount, Moses proclaimed the oracles of God, and the Son of Man “the Resurrection and the Life”?

The writer has ever had a vague suspicion, conjecture, or surmise that the author of the poem was the gentleman who was responsible for its first publication. This supposition is based upon the fact that in the schoolboy days

of the suspect, in youthful debating societies, his favorite theme was classic Greece, her grand history, and her esthetic mythology, and in later years, the writer heard him deliver an original poem which bore the earmarks of the same sympathy and train of thought and expression. The reason for concealment, the writer has failed to divine, for the gentleman was naturally proud of his literary productions, and surely this would have added to his modest fame. The writer, long and well as he knew him, never ventured to make the accusation to him, but he is sure that he could have said to him: "Thou art the man."

But whosoever may be the author, the writer hopes that the poem may be deemed worthy of republication in your valued magazine, inasmuch as he thinks that it "makes a few remarks appropriate to the occasion"—the most momentous crisis in the history of the world.

HORATIO GATES GIBSON,

Brig. General U. S. A.

## THE RELIGION OF BEAUTY.

BY F. W. FITZPATRICK.

THE eye is virtually the main doorway to the mind and is undoubtedly also one of the most important factors, or instruments, or whatever you want to call them, that can be used in the process of civilizing, educating, bettering the human kind, the *genus homo*. We have evidences of it every day.

We just naturally crave for pleasant or pretty things to look at, and light is one of them. It is also one of the greatest crime-preventors known. We are not going to delve into a lot of statistics, for this is not a scientific treatise but just a chat between friends. But we do know that nearly all crimes are "deeds of darkness." The philosophy of the thing has been known for ages, but only in very recent years have we had gumption enough to apply what we knew. For instance, certain localities in our larger cities have for years been renowned for their lawlessness and bloody deeds; those were dark and dismal streets where travel was most unsafe after sunset. Policemen in pairs patrolled those beats, expedients galore were resorted to to reduce the criminality thereabout, but murders and the like went merrily on with but slight abatement. Then some one had a flash of intelligence and a few arc-lights were installed in those streets and alleys, the ash- and the garbage-man cleaned them up with greater regularity and, presto, they're as safe now for night travel as is Broadway or the main thoroughfare of any city. A bright light and crime are not congenial bedfellows, one invariably tumbles the other out.