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Literary & Scientific Institute of Malta.

THE LAST PAGES
OF THE HISTORY
OF THE
LAST GREEK REPUBLIC

BY

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THE following paper was read by the President of the Institute on the evening commencing the Session for 1852-53, and was proposed to be published and circulated among the Subscribers. The Institute has already published two papers, *one*, "ON THE GENIUS OF CHAUCER," and *another* the "FINAL ADDRESS," for last Session 1851-52 with the body of "RULES AND REGULATIONS," passed by the Members. This paper forms the *third* of a series of papers on subjects of Literary and Scientific interest, which it is hoped will be preserved by the Members and bound together when future papers shall have been printed and circulated; forming a not uninteresting volume of the records of the Institute and a token of its progress.

Literary and Scientific Institute of Malta,
1st January, 1853.

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LAST GREEK REPUBLIC.

Gibbon tells us that, "in the year 695 the emperor Justinian the Second, was banished to Chersonæ in Crim-Tartary, a lonely settlement, where corn, wine, and oil, were imported as foreign luxuries."¹ This passage is taken from the work of the emperor Constantine (VII) Porphyrogeistus, "*On the imperial administration*," addressed to his son Romanus II. which was written in the year 952, more than a century after Cherson had been deprived of its independence by the emperor Theophilus.²—The few words extracted by Gibbon from their context, convey the impression that Cherson was a wretched spot, though it may be said that corn, wine, and oil, have always been imported into Venice and Amsterdam as foreign luxuries with as much justice. The passage of the imperial historian which mentions the importation of the necessaries of life into Cherson, proves that it was a city of

¹ Decline and Fall chapter xlviil., vol. ix., page 18, octavo ed.

² De administrando imperio, c. 35, page 270, line 12 in the Bonn ed. Several passages in the work fix the date of its composition. They are cited by Krug Chronologie der Byzantier. St. Petersburg, 1810, page 266, note.

great wealth, possessing a numerous commercial navy, and able, even in its dependent condition, [to place a check on the arbitrary administration of the Byzantine emperors. The object of the emperor in the passage in question, is to instruct his son what measures the central government of the empire ought to adopt in case of an insurrection in Cherson, or a refusal of the inhabitants to obey an imperial decree. He says, that all the ships belonging to Cherson in the port of Constantinople must be seized, the cargoes sequestered, and the crews imprisoned; that three imperial commissioners must immediately be despatched to the Armeniac theme, the theme of Paphlagonia and the Boukellarian, which in the Byzantine geographical nomenclature embraced almost the whole of the southern shores of the Black Sea, to seize the ships cargoes and crews of the Chersonites in these provinces; that measures should be adopted to render ships belonging to subjects of the empire *from transporting wheat, wine, and other necessaries to Cherson*, and that the imperial governor who resided in Cherson should quit that city, and retire to some neighbouring fortress, taking care to stop the payment of twelve pounds weight of gold which was made annually by the imperial treasury to the municipality of Cherson. The emperor adds, that if the merchants of Cherson were prevented from selling their skins, or what we call Russia leather, and the wax they purchased from the Patzinaks in the Roman empire,¹ they would be unable to live.

This introduction concerning the condition of Cherson, more than a century after the loss of its independence, is necessary to remove any erroneous impression which Gibbon's words may have produced. Let us now turn to the last records of this distant, but not lonely Greek settlement.

The Greek city of Cherson, situated on the extreme verge of ancient civilization, escaped for ages from the impoverishment and demoralization into which the Hellenic race was

¹ Romania is the word the Emperor uses. Among the treasures paid to Alaric to raise the siege of Rome were 3,000 skins of red leather. Zosimus, p. 306 ad Bonn.

precipitated by the Roman system of concentrating all power in the capital of the empire. Cherson was governed for centuries¹ by its own elective magistrates, and it was not until the middle of the ninth century that its independence was destroyed. Its inhabitants cherished the institutions of Hellas, and looked with indifference on the power and the pageantry of the Roman empire. Cherson remained free a thousand years after the rest of the Greek nation was sunk in irremediable slavery. Such a phenomenon as the existence of manly feeling in one city, when the rest of mankind slept contented under the political degradation of Roman despotism, deserves attentive consideration. We may be better able to appreciate correctly the causes that corrupted the Greeks in the eastern empire, if we can ascertain those which enabled Cherson though surrounded by barbarous nations, to preserve

A Homer's language murmuring in her streets
And in her haven many a mast from Tyre.

The history of mankind in every age shows us that the material improvement of the people, the first great works of public utility and the extension of commerce are effected by the impulsion of local institutions. Such progress is the expression of the popular feeling that excites every man to better the condition of the mass of humanity. Order, unfortunately too, often expresses only the feelings of the class possessing wealth. Its necessity may be felt by all, but the problem of connecting it with equity, and making it dependent on legal justice and not governmental force, is one not easily settled; and hence, the pretext of its maintenance serves for the creation of irresponsible power. The government in which the family and the parish have had the greatest influence, appears always to have been the best.—It *must* secure that deference to truth and honesty, which a mere extended circle attempts to transfer to the conventional virtues of honour and politeness. It is in the family, and the

¹ Cherson replaced Chersonesus, Strabo vii. 308. Seylax, 29 Hudson. Sevastopol stands near its ruins.

parish, that the foundation of virtue is laid, long before the citizen enters the camp, the senate, or the court. The twelve nomes of Egypt doubled the extent of the land watered by the Nile.—They dug the canal of Joseph, and probably formed the lake of Moeris before the Pharaohs became conquerors and builders of pyramids. The energy of municipal institutions filled the Mediterranean with Phœnician, and Greek colonies. Rome rose to greatness as a municipality; centralization of power arrested her progress, and depopulated the world. We may rest satisfied that the citizens of Cherson enjoyed the advantages of a virtuous education suitable to make them honest and patriotic members of their own community. It was their family education, *not* their political institutions, which saved them from the factious intrigues that induced all the other Greeks to make themselves slaves by inviting *in* foreign troops to serve their party interests.

In the reign of Diocletian, while Themistós was president of Cherson, Sauromates King of Bosporos, passing along the eastern shores of the Euxine, invaded the Roman empire.—He overran Lazia and Pontus without difficulty, but on the banks of the Halys, he found a Roman army assembled under the command of Constantius Chlorus. On hearing of this invasion Diocletian sent ambassadors to invite the people of Cherson to attack the territories of the King of Bosporos, in order to compel him to return home. Cherson, as an allied city, had an offensive and defensive alliance with the Roman empire, and the importance of its commerce compelled it to concede to the imperial power prompt assistance.—The Chersonites sent to besiege the city of Bosporos which fell into their hands. But they sought *peace* not conquests, and they treated the royal family whom they had taken prisoners, and the inhabitants of the towns captured, in such a way as to conciliate the conquered. Their success forced Sauromates to conclude peace, and evacuate the Roman territory in order to recover possession of his family and capital. As a reward for their services Diocletian granted the Chersonites additional security for their trade and extensive commercial privileges throughout the Roman empire—A. D. 291 or 292.

In the year 332, when Constantine the Great in his declining age had laid aside the warlike energy of his earlier years, the Goths and Sarmatians invaded the empire. He called on the Chersonites who were then presided over by Diogenes to take up arms. They sent a force well furnished with field machines for throwing stones, and darts to attack the Goths who had already crossed the Danube, and defeated the barbarians with great slaughter. Constantine to reward them for this example of promptitude and courage in the service of the empire, sent them a golden statue of himself in the imperial robes, to be placed in the hall of the Senate, accompanied with a charter ratifying every privilege and commercial immunity granted to their city by preceding emperors. He also sent them rings, on which his portrait was engraved, to be used in certain official communications with the imperial authorities. In addition to these honours he granted an annual supply of the materials used in the construction of the field artillery of which they had made so good a use, and a sum of money sufficient for the pay of 1000 artillery men. This subsidy however seems to have amounted only to 12 pounds weight of gold or 558 sovereigns, if we are to believe the testimony of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who asserts that it continued to be paid in the middle of the tenth century. It is probable however, that this payment, made in his time, was only a small portion of the original grant.

Years passed on, and Sauromates the grandson of that King who invaded the empire in the time of Diocletian, determined to efface the memory of his grandfather's disgrace. He declared war with Cherson, and a battle was fought at Kapha where the Chersonites, under the command of their president Vyskos, were victorious. Peace was concluded, but the King of Bosphoros was compelled to yield Kapha and allow the territory of Cherson to be greatly extended.

Another Sauromates having again succeeded to the throne of Bosphoros, determined to regain possession of Kapha, and all the territory conquered from his predecessor by Vyskos. Pharnakes was then president of the republic, and he led out the army to meet the forces of the King. The monarch of

Bosporos was remarkable for his great size, strength, and skill in the use of arms, while Pharnakes was small in stature; but yet Pharnakes from sentiments of patriotism challenged Sauromates to end the war by a single combat. He trusted in his activity to gain the victory by a stratagem. The challenge was joyfully accepted, and the two leaders engaged before their armies. But while Sauromates had his back to the troops of Cherson, they raised suddenly a loud cry, and the King turning his head a little to see the cause of this strange proceeding, received a mortal blow from Pharnakes. This event had been concerted by Pharnakes with the Chersonites beforehand, and his object during the combat had been to place Sauromates with his back to the army of Cherson. The dynasty of the Sauromatian Kings ended with this monarch, and Bosporos becoming a free city, formed an alliance with Cherson and raised a statue to Pharnakes as a testimonial of his moderation and philanthropy.¹

Some years of oblivion again veil the history of Cherson. The people of Bosporos corrupted by the eagerness for rank and sinecure profits from nominal employments, and loving pageantry better than liberty, again elected a King whose name was Asandros. The President of the republic of Cherson was Lamachos. The court of Bosporos proposed, that, in order to avoid all future wars and draw closer the alliance which had now for many years existed uninterruptedly between their city and Cherson, a marriage should be contracted between the son of Asandros and the only daughter of Lamachos, who was the richest heiress of Cherson. The Senate of Cherson consented, but required as a condition of this marriage that the young Asandros should resign all right to the throne of Bosporos and take up his residence at Cherson, binding himself by oath never to return to Bosporos even under the pretext of paying the shortest visit to the King his father, under pain of death.

¹ The dynasty of the name of Sauromates. Kings of Bosporos, is better known to coin collectors than to historians. A date on their coins shows that the æra from which they computed, whether their own accession to the throne, or some other event in the history of Bosporos, was the year 296 Before Christ,

The marriage was celebrated, and young Asander dwelt with the beautiful Gycia in the palace of Lamachos; but two years after this happy event Lamachos died.

Gycia succeeded to the whole of her father's princely fortune and Zetho was elected president of Cherson. The palace of Lamachos in which Asander and Gycia resided, was a building of immense extent, occupying four of the quadrangles formed by the intersection of the rectangular streets in the best quarter of Cherson, called Sousa. It possessed warehouses for goods communicating with the port, and store houses for produce and cattle, communicating with the country by its own gate in the city walls. When a year elapsed after the death of Lamachos, Gycia went out to decorate her father's tomb with flowers, and wishing to honour his memory which was dear to all his fellow citizens, she received permission from the president and Senate to make a funeral banquet for all the citizens of Cherson, which she was authorised to repeat every year on the anniversary of her father's death, as long as she lived. The celebration of this ceremony suggested to her husband a plan for rendering himself sovereign of Cherson. He occupied himself for two years in collecting warlike stores which he brought secretly from Bosporos in ships engaged in the commercial affairs of his own and his wife's fortune. When his store of arms was completed, he introduced a number of his father's guards in the same way, and kept them concealed in the warehouses of his wife's palace, which he had taken care to set aside for special purposes of trade that did not require to be visited at the season he filled them with armed men. Three of his followers whom he had brought with him from Bosporos were the only persons in the palace entrusted with his secret. Asander had collected two hundred Bosporians in complete armour, and concealed them in the warehouses, when the celebration of the third anniversary of the death of Lamachos approached, on which he hoped to destroy the liberty of Cherson.

It happened at this time, that a favourite maid of Gycia offending her mistress, was ordered to be banished from her presence, and confined in a room over the warehouse in which

the Bosphorian soldiers were concealed. As the girl was sitting alone, singing and spinning in a room paved with tiles of terra cotta, her spindle dropped, and rolling along the floor fell into a hole near the wall, from which she could only recover it by raising up one of the tiles. While she was leaning down to recover the spindle, she saw through a chink in the ceiling of the warehouse below, a crowd of armed men whom she knew by their dress to be Bosphorians and soldiers. She immediately called a servant, and sent a message to her mistress conjuring her to come and visit her in her prison. Gycia, curious to see the effect of the punishment on her favourite, lost no time in going to see her, and was shewn the strange spectacle of a crowd of foreign soldiers, and a magazine of arms concealed in her own palace. The truth flashed on her mind—She perceived that her husband was plotting to destroy the liberty of her country, and she felt every feeling of her heart wounded.

She assembled her relations, and through them communicated with the Senate, whom she requested to name a committee to treat with her privately, concerning some business of importance. To this committee she revealed her discovery, after she had obtained from the Senate an assurance that when she died she should be buried within the walls of the city, though such a thing was at variance with the Hellenic usages of Cherson.

Whether from the danger of attacking two hundred heavy armed men, or in order to avoid a collision that might produce a war with Bosphoros, the President and Senate of Cherson resolved to destroy all the conspirators before the news of the discovery of the plot could be known in the city of Bosphoros. It was resolved to burn the magazines in which they and their military stores were concealed, and Gycia consented to give her ancestral palace to the flames, as an offering to secure the liberty of her country.

When the day of the anniversary of her father's funeral arrived, Gycia ordered the preparations for the funeral banquet to be made with more than ordinary liberality and splendour; and her husband delighted to avail himself of the opportunity for futhering his scheme made a lavish distribution of wine,

The government of Cherson had however adopted due precautions for making all the citizens enter the walls at the usual hour, and the circumstances of the festival enabled them to place additional guards at the gates, and have them closed exactly at the usual hour, without these precautions exciting any attention.

A funeral feast was also held in the palace of Gycia. It would seem from the expressions of the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus that it was not unusual even for *ladies* on such occasions to drink more wine than was altogether suitable. Gycia thought it necessary to adopt precautions that justify this suspicion—Her slave presented her with nothing but water which she drank out of a purple glass; but Asander was liberally supplied with the richest wines.¹ To the delight of her husband, Gycia proposed that all should retire early to rest. She then took a melancholy leave of her husband, who hastened to give his three confidants their instructions, and then threw himself on a couch to rest until midnight should call him to complete his treachery. The doors, gates, and windows of the palace were closed, and the keys according to the usual custom were laid beside Gycia in her room. Her maids had packed up all her jewels that had not been previously removed, and soon entered her room to warn her that she must retire. She rose, and locked the door of every corridor as she passed on. Asander lay buried in sleep on the sofa of an antichamber. Gycia passed, quitted the palace, locked the outer door, and hastened to the palace of the Senate. The order was immediately given to set fire to the building on every side—Thus the liberty of Cherson was preserved by the patriotism of Gycia.

The spot on which the palace of Lamachus had stood, remained a vacant space in the time of the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Gycia during her lifetime would not allow the ruins to be cleared away.—The republic of Cherson erected

¹ This proves that Constantine Porphyrogenitus himself must have been in the habit of drinking his own wine, and history tells us he had a cellar of the choicest, in transparent glasses.

two statues of bronze to honour her patriotism. One was placed in the agora and represented her in the flower of youth, dressed in her native costume, and was an exact portrait of her at the time of the deed. The other was an heroic statue, and displayed her as a heroine armed to defend the city. On both inscriptions were placed commemorating her sacrifices; and no better deed could for many years be performed at Cherson, than to keep the bases of these statues bright, and the inscriptions freshly gilt, in order that the memory of the treason of Asander and the patriotism of Gycia, might be fresh in the hearts of the citizens.

Some years after this when Stratophios was president, Gycia saw reason to suspect that the gratitude of her countrymen was weakened, and that the promise given by the Senate of burying her within the walls, was not likely to be fulfilled. She resolved to put them to the proof by pretending to be dead. The result showed that her suspicions were just—Her funeral procession was formed, and proceeded to quit the city to bear her to the family tomb; but scarcely had it passed the gates when Gycia rose from the bier and exclaimed: “Men of Cherson! is this the way you keep your promise to the deliverer of your country?” Shame proved more powerful than gratitude. The Chersonites swore that she should be buried within the walls if she would pardon their falsehood, and the Senate passed a decree, that her tomb should be erected during her lifetime, and a gilded statue of bronze was erected over it as an assurance that the faith of Cherson would not be violated. In that tomb Gycia was buried; and it stood uninjured in the year 952 when the Emperor Constantine VII wrote the account I have transcribed. Her patriotism made a deep impression on the mind of the emperor of Constantinople. It was unlike anything his political experience had revealed as existing in the breasts of the other Greeks in his wide extended empire, and he has saved her name from oblivion by handing down the only record that exist of her, but also of her country for several centuries.

Cherson retained its position as an independent city until

towards the middle of the ninth century. The revolutions in the countries to the north of the Black sea, and the Caspian, which followed the destruction of the empire of the Khazars diminished the commerce of all the regions round, and Cherson lost something of its wealth, population, and power. Theophilus who then reigned at Constantinople found it necessary to send his brother in law Petronas to construct a fortress called Sarkel on the banks of the Don.¹ His object was to protect Byzantine commerce from the incursions of the Patzinaks a Turkish tribe that had recently invaded the country between the Don and the Danube. The circumstances were favourable for the Byzantine emperor to make himself the protector of the commerce of Cherson. The Senate was induced to allow a Byzantine governor to reside in the city, and to acknowledge that it formed a part of the eastern Roman empire, for such was the style of the Byzantine government. Yet even under the sway of the Byzantine despots of the Basilian dynasty, Cherson as we have already seen boasted of its ancient constitution, and continued to maintain the same degree of self government in its municipal affairs, which characterised Venice at the same period. This spirit of independence on the one hand, and the despotic pretensions of the Byzantine emperors on the others, caused the frequent insurrections against which Constantine VII. instructed his son to take measures. Cherson remained a part of the Byzantine empire until the year 988, when it was conquered by Vladimir the Sovereign of Russia.

NOTE.—Hase in his notes to Leo Diaconus (page 258 of the original folio edition) has published a very curious fragment from a M S. of the tenth or eleventh century. It relates to the affairs of the Byzantine subjects in the Tauric Chersonesus, about the time of the conquest of Cherson, or shortly after. I subjoin the most remarkable passage relating to the people of the country at that time, and I have ventured to add a literal translation.

¹ Now Bielaveja near Tcherkask the capital of the Don Cossacks.

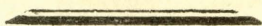
Ἀφιγμένων δὲ ἀπανταχόθεν, καὶ ἐκκλησίας ἐκ τῶν ἀρίστων γενομένης, ἃ μὲν εἶπον ἐγὼ τότε, καὶ ὡς οἶων δεσποτῶν μᾶλλον ἀντιποιεῖσθαι προσηκεί, καὶ πρὸς οἷους ἐλθόντας τίνα ὠφέλειαν περιῶσθαι ἀπὸ αὐτῶν εὐρίσκειν, καὶ τί ποιντέον ἐστὶ, καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα, ὅσα τότε εὐδον ἐγὼ, ἃ καὶ, παντὸς μᾶλλον τιμησαίμην, μακρὸν, ἂν εἴη πάντα ἐψεξῆς λέγειν Βούλεσθαι. Οἱ δὲ, εἴτε ὡς μηδέποτε Βασιλικῆς εὐνοίας ἀπολελαυκότες, μηδ, Ἐλληνικωτέρων τρόπων ἐπιμελούμενοι, αὐτονόμων δέμαλιστα Ἐργῶν ἀντιποιούμενοι, εἴτε ὄμοροι ὄντες πρὸς τὸν κατὰ τὰ Βόρεια τοῦ Ἰστροῦ Βασιλεύοντα, μετὰ τοῦ στρατῶ ἰσχύειν πολλῶ καὶ δυναμει μαχῆς ἐπαίρεσθαι, ἤθεσι τε τοῖς ἐκεῖ τὰ παρὰ σφῶν αὐτῶν οὐκ ἀποδία φέροντες, ἐκείνων καὶ σπείσασθαι καὶ παραδώσειν σφᾶς ξυνέθεντο, κάμει τὰ τοιαῦτα πράξειν κοινῇ πάντες ἐπεψηφίσαντο. Καὶ ἀπήειν, ἵνα τὰ ἡμέτερα σωθῶσι, καὶ ἐνέτυχον αὐτῶ ὡς εὔξαιτ' ἂν μάλιστα τις. Καὶ, ὡς δυνατὸν ἐν βράχει λογιῶ πᾶν συμπεράνας αὐτῶ, ἐκεῖνος μὲν παντὸς μᾶλλον μειζον τὸ πρᾶγμα ἐλογισατο, ἐμοὶ δὲ τὴν τῶν κλημάτων ἀρχὴν αὔθις ἀσμένως πᾶσαν ἔδοτο, καὶ προσέδωκε καὶ σατραπείαν ὀλην, ἐν τε γῆ τῇ αὐτοῦ προσόδους ἐπετείους ἱκανὰς ἐδώρησατο.

Translation.

All having arrived, an assembly of the chief men was held, at which it is unnecessary to relate in detail what I said. I told them of the duty they owed to such good masters (as the Byzantine emperors had been), and what service they should be ready to proffer to them. What was to be done in the circumstances, and to what it was necessary to pay most honour. But they, *either because they had never felt the advantages imperial favour confers, or that they were indifferent to Greek¹ manners although they make great pretensions to self government*; or because being neighbours of the Sovereign of the country north of the Danube, from whose subjects indeed they differ little in manners, they have a high opinion of his army and military power; they determined to capitulate, and lay down their arms. So all with one accord called on me to

¹ Greek is here evidently used for Byzantine contrary to the general practice of the age—Roman is applied to the empire—Hellenic generally means pagan.

carry this decision into execution. To save us all, I therefore underlook the mission, and succeeded in obtaining from him every thing that could be expected, I stated all that had happened as briefly as possible. He deemed the business worthy of the greatest attention and conferred on me the government of Klemata,¹ to which he added the whole district and granted me a sufficient annual revenue from his own territory.



¹ Κληματα, τὰ Κληματα, τὰ Καδρα τῶν Κλιματων. This fortress or collection of forts is mentioned by Constantine Porph. as lying between Cherson and Bosporos de adin. imp. c. 42. also several times in Chap. 1, and in de thematibus. lib. II. p. 63 ed Bonn.



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