

THE GREAT PALACE OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

CHAPTER I.

I HAVE never undertaken the discussion of any Byzantine problem more difficult than the present. My intention is to attempt to determine the site and boundaries of the Byzantine Palace in the Akropolis of Constantinople,¹ which is often called the Great Palace, to distinguish it from other palaces erected by our Emperors both in Constantinople and in the suburbs of Thrace and Anatole; namely, those of Eleutherios and of the Mangana, the Pegaia near to the Church of the Blessed Virgin styled the Life-receiving Spring (*Ζωοδόχος πηγή*), the Palace of the Virtues now *Daout Pasha*, that of Aphameia the present Makrochorion, the Heraion,² and various others, where they resided during the summer.³

According to the historians, the Akropolis, as it

¹ Χρῆ γνώσκειν ὅτι τοῦ Βύζαντος τὰ παλάτια ἐν τῇ Ἀκροπόλει ἦσαν. G. Kodinos, p. 24.

² τῶν παλατιῶν τῆς Ἱερῆας. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, Vol. I., pp. 373, 438, 497, 504; Nikephoros Patriarches, p. 28. Τὰ ἐν τῷ Ἡραίῳ παλάτια. G. Kodinos, pp. 117, 276.

³ Du Cange, *Constantinopolis Christiana*, lib. ii., p. 125. G. Kodinos, p. 117.

appeared in Byzantine times, was the work of Severus.¹ Xenophon calls it Akra.² It was sometimes called the Eastern Akropolis, to distinguish it from the Pentapyrgion and Heptapyrgion, to which the name Akropolis was also frequently applied.³

When I say I have undertaken a most difficult task, the reader must not suppose that I desire to unduly magnify the labour which such works involve. It would indeed be well if any one desirous of going through this work, would first read all that has been written both in Greece and in the West on the topography of the Palace in the Akropolis. For upwards of a thousand years this famous spot has been the scene of the most noteworthy events in our own history, and in that of the present Ottoman dynasty. Yet all accounts of the Palace are obscure or utterly unintelligible.⁴ The student of the many years of Byzantine history, as he reads of the horrors perpetrated within the Palace—of men blinded or put to death, of the collisions between the populace and the rulers—is perplexed, because up to the present day we have no knowledge of the Palace, or of the walls that once surrounded its magnificent buildings,

¹ *Eis meizona kai perifanē kōsmōn epānēgarge tō Byzāntiōn* [*i. e.*, Severus]. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

² *Anab.*, vii., 1, 5.

³ *Cpolis Christiana*, lib. i., p. 44; lib. iv., p. 171; Nikephoros Gregoras, Vol. II., p. 779.

⁴ Les révolutions du palais tiennent en effet beaucoup de place dans l'histoire de l'empire d'Orient. . . . Dans l'ignorance absolue où l'on est de la disposition des lieux cités, le récit devient obscur pour le lecteur J. Labarte, *Le Palais Impérial*, p. 2.

and protected them against popular risings and pillage.¹

As for the history of the Akropolis before the time of Severus, it does not lie within the scope of the present work. Very little is said of it in the histories of Byzantion.²

Our Byzantine historians enumerate all the Emperors, from Constantine the Great downwards, who built or adorned the Palace;³ but it never occurred to them to describe its walls. Of the many halls, and splendid churches and chapels, raised within the Imperial precincts, nothing has been preserved to us, except some pillars, bases or capitals, some sarcophagi with inscriptions, and several foundations and vaults. These alone bear witness to the former greatness of the Akropolis, once filled with the wonders of Greek art and Byzantine architecture.

I have often had occasion to complain bitterly of the Byzantine historians. Most of the accounts of Constantinople preserved in their writings are by no means clear. Writing for contemporaries, they never thought of posterity. To this short-sighted neglect of the Mediæval writers, we all alike owe the depth of our ignorance and the barrenness of our labour on this subject.

The Akropolis and its Palace are, as I before said,

¹ S. Byzantios, *Κωνσταντινούπολις*, Vol. I., p. 206.

² Nam quae fuerint Byzantii antiqui, antequam eversum fuisset a Severo, monumenta, nemo scribit. Gyllius, *De Topographia Cpolcos.*, lib. iv., c. 11.

G. Kodinos, p. 18.