



Constantinople Volume 2

Edwin Grosvenor

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This is Volume 2 of a comprehensive history of Constantinople, established by Constantine the Great as a capital of the Roman Empire. It subsequently became the capital of the Byzantine Empire and a focal point of politics in both Europe and the Middle East. Today, it is known as Istanbul, but its culture and history are still widely celebrated and studied.

From the intro:

"The reading world, both of Europe and America, has long needed a history of Constantinople which will enable one wandering through the modernities of the city to identify its hills and sites, and at least measurably reconstruct it. So only can it be redeemed, not merely from unsentimental guide-books, but more particularly from the Agopes, Leandros, and Dimitries, and the guild of couriers, hungry, insolent, insistent, and marvelously ignorant, whom the landlords of Pera permit to lie around their halls and doors in lurk for unprotected travelers.

Such a book would be a surprise to visitors who, having been led down through Galata and across the beggar haunted bridge over the Golden Horn, to the Hippodrome, the Janissary Museum, the Treasury, and Sancta Sophia, are solemnly told they have seen all there is worth seeing.

But of the components of the reading world within the meaning of the opening reference, no class would be so greatly profited by such a history as students of the East, who know that under the superficialities of Stamboul lie the remains of Byzantium, Queen of the Propontis, for whose siren splendors the Greeks forgot their more glorious Athens, and the Latins, in the following of Constantine, actually abandoned Rome, leaving it a moldy bone to be contended for by the hordes first from the North. In the light of that volume, an inquirer delighting in comparison will be astonished to find that the present Constantinople, overlying Byzantium, as the dead often overlies each other in Turkish cemeteries, is yet clothed with attractions rivaled only by Rome and Cairo. It were hard rendering the philosophy of the influence of history in the enhancement of interest in localities; nevertheless, the influence exists, and has for its most remarkable feature the fact that it is generally derived from the struggles of men and nations, illustrated by sufferings and extraordinary triumphs, or what we commonly term heroisms. It is largely by virtue of such an influence that we have the three cities probably the most interesting of the earth, — Rome, Constantinople, and Cairo. This remark is certainly very broad, and exceptions might be demanded in behalf of Jerusalem, and Mecca, and farther still, according to the impulses of pious veneration; but the interest in those places, it is to be observed, is obviously referable to sacred incidents of one kind or another, on account of which they are above the comparison.

Rome has first place in the mention; but it is as a concession to scholars whose reading and education are permeated with Latinity, and to that other section of the world yet more numerous—tourists who, at the foot of the Capitoline Hill, or in the moon-lit area of the mighty murder-mill of Vespasian and Titus, forget that there is an East awaiting them with attractions in endless programme. None the less there are delvers, inscription-hunters, and savants of undoubted judgment, familiar with the regions along the morning shores of the Mediterranean, who boldly declare themselves unconditional partisans of Constantinople. And, to say truth, if the comparison, which will be perfectly possible through the history spoken of, is pursued to its end by a student really impartial, he will be amazed by the discovery that all the elements which enter into his veneration for the old Rome belong not less distinctly to the later Rome,"

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Jennifer Garrison:

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