

But in this abject distress, the emperor and empire were still possessed of an ideal treasure, which drew its fantastic value from the superstition of the Christian world. The merit of the true cross was somewhat impaired by its frequent division; and a long captivity among the infidels might shed some suspicion on the fragments that were produced in the East and West. But another relic of the Passion was preserved in the Imperial chapel of Constantinople; and the crown of thorns which had been placed on the head of Christ was equally precious and authentic. It had formerly been the practice of the Egyptian debtors to deposit, as a security, the mummies of their parents; and both their honor and religion were bound for the redemption of the pledge. In the same manner, and in the absence of the emperor, the barons of Romania borrowed the sum of thirteen thousand one hundred and thirty-four pieces of gold [50] on the credit of the holy crown: they failed in the performance of their contract; and a rich Venetian, Nicholas Querini, undertook to satisfy their impatient creditors, on condition that the relic should be lodged at Venice, to become his absolute property, if it were not redeemed within a short and definite term. The barons apprised their sovereign of the hard treaty and impending loss and as the empire could not afford a ransom of seven thousand pounds sterling, Baldwin was anxious to snatch the prize from the Venetians, and to vest it with more honor and emolument in the hands of the most Christian king. [51] Yet the negotiation was attended with some delicacy. In the purchase of relics, the saint would have started at the guilt of simony; but if the mode of

expression were changed, he might lawfully repay the debt, accept the gift, and acknowledge the obligation. His ambassadors, two Dominicans, were despatched to Venice to redeem and receive the holy crown which had escaped the dangers of the sea and the galleys of Vataces. On opening a wooden box, they recognized the seals of the doge and barons, which were applied on a shrine of silver; and within this shrine the monument of the Passion was enclosed in a golden vase. The reluctant Venetians yielded to justice and power: the emperor Frederic granted a free and honorable passage; the court of France advanced as far as Troyes in Champagne, to meet with devotion this inestimable relic: it was borne in triumph through Paris by the king himself, barefoot, and in his shirt; and a free gift of ten thousand marks of silver reconciled Baldwin to his loss. The success of this transaction tempted the Latin emperor to offer with the same generosity the remaining furniture of his chapel; [52] a large and authentic portion of the true cross; the baby-linen of the Son of God, the lance, the sponge, and the chain, of his Passion; the rod of Moses, and part of the skull of St. John the Baptist. For the reception of these spiritual treasures, twenty thousand marks were expended by St. Louis on a stately foundation, the holy chapel of Paris, on which the muse of Boileau has bestowed a comic immortality. The truth of such remote and ancient relics, which cannot be proved by any human testimony, must be admitted by those who believe in the miracles which they have performed. About the middle of the last age, an inveterate ulcer was touched and cured by a holy prickle of the holy crown: [53] the prodigy is attested by the most pious and enlightened Christians of France; nor will the fact be easily disproved, except by those who are

armed with a general antidote against religious credulity. [54]

[Footnote 50: Under the words *Perparus*, *Perpera*, *Hyperperum*, Ducange is short and vague: *Monetæ genus*. From a corrupt passage of Guntherus, (*Hist. C. P. c. 8*, p. 10,) I guess that the *Perpera* was the *nummus aureus*, the fourth part of a mark of silver, or about ten shillings sterling in value. In lead it would be too contemptible.]

[Footnote 51: For the translation of the holy crown, &c., from Constantinople to Paris, see Ducange (*Hist. de C. P. l. iv. c. 11--14*, 24, 35) and Fleury, (*Hist. Ecclés. tom. xvii. p. 201--204.*)]

[Footnote 52: *Mélanges tirés d'une Grande Bibliothèque*, tom. xliii. p. 201--205. The *Lutrin* of Boileau exhibits the inside, the soul and manners of the *Sainte Chapelle*; and many facts relative to the institution are collected and explained by his commentators, Brosset and De St. Marc.]

[Footnote 53: It was performed A.D. 1656, March 24, on the niece of Pascal; and that superior genius, with Arnauld, Nicole, &c., were on the spot, to believe and attest a miracle which confounded the Jesuits, and saved Port Royal, (*uvres de Racine*, tom. vi. p. 176--187, in his eloquent *History of Port Royal.*)]

[Footnote 54: Voltaire (*Siècle de Louis XIV. c. 37*, *uvres*, tom. ix. p. 178, 179) strives to invalidate the fact: but Hume, (*Essays*, vol. ii.

p. 483, 484,) with more skill and success, seizes the battery, and turns the cannon against his enemies.]

The Latins of Constantinople [55] were on all sides encompassed and pressed; their sole hope, the last delay of their ruin, was in the division of their Greek and Bulgarian enemies; and of this hope they were deprived by the superior arms and policy of Vataces, emperor of Nice. From the Propontis to the rocky coast of Pamphylia, Asia was peaceful and prosperous under his reign; and the events of every campaign extended his influence in Europe. The strong cities of the hills of Macedonia and Thrace were rescued from the Bulgarians; and their kingdom was circumscribed by its present and proper limits, along the southern banks of the Danube. The sole emperor of the Romans could no longer brook that a lord of Epirus, a Comnenian prince of the West, should presume to dispute or share the honors of the purple; and the humble Demetrius changed the color of his buskins, and accepted with gratitude the appellation of despot. His own subjects were exasperated by his baseness and incapacity; they implored the protection of their supreme lord. After some resistance, the kingdom of Thessalonica was united to the empire of Nice; and Vataces reigned without a competitor from the Turkish borders to the Adriatic Gulf. The princes of Europe revered his merit and power; and had he subscribed an orthodox creed, it should seem that the pope would have abandoned without reluctance the Latin throne of Constantinople. But the death of Vataces, the short and busy reign of Theodore his son, and the helpless infancy of his grandson John, suspended the restoration of the Greeks. In the next chapter,

I shall explain their domestic revolutions; in this place, it will be sufficient to observe, that the young prince was oppressed by the ambition of his guardian and colleague, Michael Palæologus, who displayed the virtues and vices that belong to the founder of a new dynasty. The emperor Baldwin had flattered himself, that he might recover some provinces or cities by an impotent negotiation. His ambassadors were dismissed from Nice with mockery and contempt. At every place which they named, Palæologus alleged some special reason, which rendered it dear and valuable in his eyes: in the one he was born; in another he had been first promoted to military command; and in a third he had enjoyed, and hoped long to enjoy, the pleasures of the chase.

"And what then do you propose to give us?" said the astonished deputies.

"Nothing," replied the Greek, "not a foot of land. If your master be desirous of peace, let him pay me, as an annual tribute, the sum which he receives from the trade and customs of Constantinople. On these terms, I may allow him to reign. If he refuses, it is war. I am not ignorant of the art of war, and I trust the event to God and my sword."

[56] An expedition against the despot of Epirus was the first prelude of his arms. If a victory was followed by a defeat; if the race of the Comneni or Angeli survived in those mountains his efforts and his reign; the captivity of Villehardouin, prince of Achaia, deprived the Latins of the most active and powerful vassal of their expiring monarchy. The republics of Venice and Genoa disputed, in the first of their naval wars, the command of the sea and the commerce of the East. Pride and interest attached the Venetians to the defence of Constantinople; their rivals were tempted to promote the designs of her enemies, and the

alliance of the Genoese with the schismatic conqueror provoked the indignation of the Latin church. [57]

[Footnote 55: The gradual losses of the Latins may be traced in the third fourth, and fifth books of the compilation of Ducange: but of the Greek conquests he has dropped many circumstances, which may be recovered from the larger history of George Acropolita, and the three first books of Nicephorus, Gregoras, two writers of the Byzantine series, who have had the good fortune to meet with learned editors Leo Allatius at Rome, and John Boivin in the Academy of Inscriptions of Paris.]

[Footnote 56: George Acropolita, c. 78, p. 89, 90. edit. Paris.]

[Footnote 57: The Greeks, ashamed of any foreign aid, disguise the alliance and succor of the Genoese: but the fact is proved by the testimony of J Villani (Chron. 1. vi. c. 71, in Muratori, Script. Rerum Italicarum, tom. xiii. p. 202, 203) and William de Nangis, (Annales de St. Louis, p. 248 in the Louvre Joinville,) two impartial foreigners; and Urban IV threatened to deprive Genoa of her archbishop.]

Intent on his great object, the emperor Michael visited in person and strengthened the troops and fortifications of Thrace. The remains of the Latins were driven from their last possessions: he assaulted without success the suburb of Galata; and corresponded with a perfidious baron, who proved unwilling, or unable, to open the gates of the metropolis.

The next spring, his favorite general, Alexius Strategopulus, whom he had decorated with the title of Cæsar, passed the Hellespont with eight hundred horse and some infantry, [58] on a secret expedition. His instructions enjoined him to approach, to listen, to watch, but not to risk any doubtful or dangerous enterprise against the city. The adjacent territory between the Propontis and the Black Sea was cultivated by a hardy race of peasants and outlaws, exercised in arms, uncertain in their allegiance, but inclined by language, religion, and present advantage, to the party of the Greeks. They were styled the volunteers; [59] and by their free service the army of Alexius, with the regulars of Thrace and the Coman auxiliaries, [60] was augmented to the number of five-and-twenty thousand men. By the ardor of the volunteers, and by his own ambition, the Cæsar was stimulated to disobey the precise orders of his master, in the just confidence that success would plead his pardon and reward. The weakness of Constantinople, and the distress and terror of the Latins, were familiar to the observation of the volunteers; and they represented the present moment as the most propitious to surprise and conquest. A rash youth, the new governor of the Venetian colony, had sailed away with thirty galleys, and the best of the French knights, on a wild expedition to Daphnusia, a town on the Black Sea, at the distance of forty leagues; [601] and the remaining Latins were without strength or suspicion. They were informed that Alexius had passed the Hellespont; but their apprehensions were lulled by the smallness of his original numbers; and their imprudence had not watched the subsequent increase of his army. If he left his main body to second and support his operations, he might advance unperceived in the night

with a chosen detachment. While some applied scaling-ladders to the lowest part of the walls, they were secure of an old Greek, who would introduce their companions through a subterraneous passage into his house; they could soon on the inside break an entrance through the golden gate, which had been long obstructed; and the conqueror would be in the heart of the city before the Latins were conscious of their danger. After some debate, the Cæsar resigned himself to the faith of the volunteers; they were trusty, bold, and successful; and in describing the plan, I have already related the execution and success. [61] But no sooner had Alexius passed the threshold of the golden gate, than he trembled at his own rashness; he paused, he deliberated; till the desperate volunteers urged him forwards, by the assurance that in retreat lay the greatest and most inevitable danger. Whilst the Cæsar kept his regulars in firm array, the Comans dispersed themselves on all sides; an alarm was sounded, and the threats of fire and pillage compelled the citizens to a decisive resolution. The Greeks of Constantinople remembered their native sovereigns; the Genoese merchants their recent alliance and Venetian foes; every quarter was in arms; and the air resounded with a general acclamation of "Long life and victory to Michael and John, the august emperors of the Romans!" Their rival, Baldwin, was awakened by the sound; but the most pressing danger could not prompt him to draw his sword in the defence of a city which he deserted, perhaps, with more pleasure than regret: he fled from the palace to the seashore, where he descried the welcome sails of the fleet returning from the vain and fruitless attempt on Daphnusia. Constantinople was irrecoverably lost; but the Latin emperor and the



principal families embarked on board the Venetian galleys, and steered for the Isle of Euba, and afterwards for Italy, where the royal fugitive was entertained by the pope and Sicilian king with a mixture of contempt and pity. From the loss of Constantinople to his death, he consumed thirteen years, soliciting the Catholic powers to join in his restoration: the lesson had been familiar to his youth; nor was his last exile more indigent or shameful than his three former pilgrimages to the courts of Europe. His son Philip was the heir of an ideal empire; and the pretensions of his daughter Catherine were transported by her marriage to Charles of Valois, the brother of Philip the Fair, king of France. The house of Courtenay was represented in the female line by successive alliances, till the title of emperor of Constantinople, too bulky and sonorous for a private name, modestly expired in silence and oblivion. [62]

[Footnote 58: Some precautions must be used in reconciling the discordant numbers; the 800 soldiers of Nicetas, the 25,000 of Spandugino, (apud Ducange, l. v. c. 24;) the Greeks and Scythians of Acropolita; and the numerous army of Michael, in the Epistles of Pope Urban IV. (i. 129.)]

[Footnote 59: Qelhmatarioi. They are described and named by Pachymer, (l. ii. c. 14.)]

[Footnote 60: It is needless to seek these Comans in the deserts of Tartary, or even of Moldavia. A part of the horde had submitted to John

Vataces, and was probably settled as a nursery of soldiers on some waste lands of Thrace, (Cantacuzen. l. i. c. 2.)]

[Footnote 60: According to several authorities, particularly Abulfaradj. Chron. Arab. p. 336, this was a stratagem on the part of the Greeks to weaken the garrison of Constantinople. The Greek commander offered to surrender the town on the appearance of the Venetians.--M.]

[Footnote 61: The loss of Constantinople is briefly told by the Latins: the conquest is described with more satisfaction by the Greeks; by Acropolita, (c. 85,) Pachymer, (l. ii. c. 26, 27,) Nicephorus Gregoras, (l. iv. c. 1, 2) See Ducange, Hist. de C. P. l. v. c. 19--27.]

[Footnote 62: See the three last books (l. v.--viii.) and the genealogical tables of Ducange. In the year 1382, the titular emperor of Constantinople was James de Baux, duke of Andria in the kingdom of Naples, the son of Margaret, daughter of Catherine de Valois, daughter of Catharine, daughter of Philip, son of Baldwin II., (Ducange, l. viii. c. 37, 38.) It is uncertain whether he left any posterity.]

After this narrative of the expeditions of the Latins to Palestine and Constantinople, I cannot dismiss the subject without resolving the general consequences on the countries that were the scene, and on the nations that were the actors, of these memorable crusades. [63] As soon as the arms of the Franks were withdrawn, the impression, though not the memory, was erased in the Mahometan realms of Egypt and Syria. The

faithful disciples of the prophet were never tempted by a profane desire to study the laws or language of the idolaters; nor did the simplicity of their primitive manners receive the slightest alteration from their intercourse in peace and war with the unknown strangers of the West. The Greeks, who thought themselves proud, but who were only vain, showed a disposition somewhat less inflexible. In the efforts for the recovery of their empire, they emulated the valor, discipline, and tactics of their antagonists. The modern literature of the West they might justly despise; but its free spirit would instruct them in the rights of man; and some institutions of public and private life were adopted from the French. The correspondence of Constantinople and Italy diffused the knowledge of the Latin tongue; and several of the fathers and classics were at length honored with a Greek version. [64] But the national and religious prejudices of the Orientals were inflamed by persecution, and the reign of the Latins confirmed the separation of the two churches.

[Footnote 63: Abulfeda, who saw the conclusion of the crusades, speaks of the kingdoms of the Franks, and those of the Negroes, as equally unknown, (Prolegom. ad Geograph.) Had he not disdained the Latin language, how easily might the Syrian prince have found books and interpreters!]

[Footnote 64: A short and superficial account of these versions from Latin into Greek is given by Huet, (de Interpretatione et de claris Interpretibus p. 131--135.) Maximus Planudes, a monk of Constantinople, (A.D. 1327--1353) has translated Cæsar's Commentaries, the Somnium

Scipionis, the Metamorphoses and Heroides of Ovid, &c., (Fabric. Bib. Græc. tom. x. p. 533.)]

If we compare the æra of the crusades, the Latins of Europe with the Greeks and Arabians, their respective degrees of knowledge, industry, and art, our rude ancestors must be content with the third rank in the scale of nations. Their successive improvement and present superiority may be ascribed to a peculiar energy of character, to an active and imitative spirit, unknown to their more polished rivals, who at that time were in a stationary or retrograde state. With such a disposition, the Latins should have derived the most early and essential benefits from a series of events which opened to their eyes the prospect of the world, and introduced them to a long and frequent intercourse with the more cultivated regions of the East. The first and most obvious progress was in trade and manufactures, in the arts which are strongly prompted by the thirst of wealth, the calls of necessity, and the gratification of the sense or vanity. Among the crowd of unthinking fanatics, a captive or a pilgrim might sometimes observe the superior refinements of Cairo and Constantinople: the first importer of windmills [65] was the benefactor of nations; and if such blessings are enjoyed without any grateful remembrance, history has condescended to notice the more apparent luxuries of silk and sugar, which were transported into Italy from Greece and Egypt. But the intellectual wants of the Latins were more slowly felt and supplied; the ardor of studious curiosity was awakened in Europe by different causes and more recent events; and, in the age of the crusades, they viewed with careless indifference the

literature of the Greeks and Arabians. Some rudiments of mathematical and medicinal knowledge might be imparted in practice and in figures; necessity might produce some interpreters for the grosser business of merchants and soldiers; but the commerce of the Orientals had not diffused the study and knowledge of their languages in the schools of Europe. [66] If a similar principle of religion repulsed the idiom of the Koran, it should have excited their patience and curiosity to understand the original text of the gospel; and the same grammar would have unfolded the sense of Plato and the beauties of Homer. Yet in a reign of sixty years, the Latins of Constantinople disdained the speech and learning of their subjects; and the manuscripts were the only treasures which the natives might enjoy without rapine or envy. Aristotle was indeed the oracle of the Western universities, but it was a barbarous Aristotle; and, instead of ascending to the fountain head, his Latin votaries humbly accepted a corrupt and remote version, from the Jews and Moors of Andalusia. The principle of the crusades was a savage fanaticism; and the most important effects were analogous to the cause. Each pilgrim was ambitious to return with his sacred spoils, the relics of Greece and Palestine; [67] and each relic was preceded and followed by a train of miracles and visions. The belief of the Catholics was corrupted by new legends, their practice by new superstitions; and the establishment of the inquisition, the mendicant orders of monks and friars, the last abuse of indulgences, and the final progress of idolatry, flowed from the baleful fountain of the holy war. The active spirit of the Latins preyed on the vitals of their reason and religion; and if the ninth and tenth centuries were the times of darkness, the

thirteenth and fourteenth were the age of absurdity and fable.

[Footnote 65: Windmills, first invented in the dry country of Asia Minor, were used in Normandy as early as the year 1105, (*Vie privée des François*, tom. i. p. 42, 43. *Ducange, Gloss. Latin.* tom. iv. p. 474.)]

[Footnote 66: See the complaints of Roger Bacon, (*Biographia Britannica*, vol. i. p. 418, Kippis's edition.) If Bacon himself, or Gerbert, understood some Greek, they were prodigies, and owed nothing to the commerce of the East.]

[Footnote 67: Such was the opinion of the great Leibnitz, (*uvres de Fontenelle*, tom. v. p. 458,) a master of the history of the middle ages. I shall only instance the pedigree of the Carmelites, and the flight of the house of Loretto, which were both derived from Palestine.]