

THE GREEKS AND THEIR DETRACTORS

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The Greeks and Their Detractors by S. J. Cassimati

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S. J. CASSIMATI

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THEIR DETRACTORS**

Cassimati, S. J.

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G R E E K S
AND THEIR
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BY
DR. S. J. CASSIMATI.

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P R E F A C E .

IN consigning the following pages to the press, the author feels he must apologize for having treated of subjects which are ill-treated in a book less voluminous than a treatise. But a whole book about *the Greeks and their Detractors* is more than he, as a visitor to this country, and a handler of a foreign language, could write, and far more than English statesmen or Encyclopædians could peruse. And yet, a pamphlet purporting to refute imputations characterizing the Greeks as depraved and anarchical, and assertions denying them a nationality—and, therefore, embracing the much mooted themes of Ethnology, and Ethnography, and balance of both international and political power—such a pamphlet, addressed as it is to English readers, against English denunciators, would, if confined to the mere statement of facts, amount to a bare and unauthoritative denial, made against assertions, grounded on either an acknowledged authority, or *false* but still *existing* appearances, supporting our detractors, and militating against us.

The necessity of writing a refutation and not a simple denial, and yet condensing it into a small volume, creates a difficulty which none but highly dexterous hands can overcome with justice to the cause of Greece. The absence of those hands, however, must not dispose the gentle reader unfavourably to a cause, which is far more just than it seems to be at the hands of the author of these pages.

S. J. CASSIMATI.

*7, Prince's Street, Hanover Square,
London, Nov. 18th, 1867.*

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THE subject, which some of the organs of the London press, as well as some of the higher officials of the state, and anonymous pamphleteers, have been, both a little before and after the Cretan insurrection, treating as a favourite one, is that regarding the misgovernment of Greece and the depravity of the Greek nation.

To him, who either intently or even cursorily peruses what has been written and spoken on that subject, Greece must appear a haunt of criminals and crime, not differing much from those so vividly depicted by Lord Lytton, as existing in this metropolis and concealing inmates, who, deriving, as they do, their livelihood from rapacity alone, cheer the successful of their comrades and browbeat and upbraid the unsuccessful. Not long since, our present detractors could not find words glowing enough to eulogize our virtue; now, the bitterest vituperation seems to them blunted of all acrimony when darted against a Greek. The least that can be said of us is, that we have the virtue of loving our country, but that our love is "often exaggerated to the bounds of absurdity," and ultimately eclipsed by our having the faults of a Levantine race, and by our not having paid our debts.

To this treatment the Greek, now groaning and now fretting, asks himself whether such accusers and defenders of the Greek name are the compatriots of the Guildfords, the Byrons, the Hastings, the Hamiltons, the Codringtons, and their associates in the same cause, who, Royalty likewise most graciously assenting, aided us to break the shackles of bondage, and once more become an independent nation; and the result of his inquiry is, that they are the compatriots of the Castlereaghs, the Strangfords, the Maitlands, and the Campbells, whose policy was solemnly disavowed by the English nation, which, through the instrumentality

of the Aberdeens and the Cannings, proclaimed to the whole world that Greece is an object not only of philanthropy and sympathy on the part of the European Powers, but also of elevation to exclusive sovereignty over the Archipelago, which its possessor could not and must not hold; to which none but the Greek has a right; and which, added to one of the three great continental races—the Latin, or the Germanic, or the Sclavonic—would bring the whole of Europe to fierce strife and contest, to which nothing short of Russian preponderance could put an end, and which would ultimately destroy that equipoise from which the other nations derive an unqualified equality and liberty of action.

Those were days replete with happiness for the Greek.

Dismal and waste though his home had been reduced by the sword and the firebrand of his oppressor, he, the unclothed, and uncanopied but by the vault of heaven or of some grotto, felt enraptured with joy, for he had quaffed the brimful cup of exhilarating Hope, tendered to him by a friend, the mightiest on earth, who, by fully recognizing the holiness and wholesomeness of his cause, encouraged him to believe that his future would be unfadingly roseate.

Now, although the former desolation of his soil has been dispelled by his industrious hand, and a luxuriant vegetation, mostly of noble trees and shrubs, has mastered the plains, and slopes, and dales, and is rapidly climbing up the hills; although the lofty vault of purely azure heaven is no longer his only roof, he having crowned his shores and plains with clean and regular cities and villages, and studded his groves and fields with spacious and comfortable villas, hamlets, and cottages; although he has strewn that land with millions of cattle in the widest sense, supplying him with exquisite food, which only the aromatic pastures of Olenos and Parnassus can yield to flocks migrant from dale to plain, and from plain to hill, and to the summit of mountains; although he is daily enhancing the gladness of the "glad waters of his dark blue sea," by decorating them with thousands of ships of every size and kind, which, after having busily and dexterously ploughed far and wide on the deep, glide glibly homewards with a plenteous harvest; although hives of industry are daily settling in that land, and already meet some of his own and of his neighbours' wants; although he rejoices in perceiving that each day finds him better than yesterday, which permits him to hope that the morrow will find him better than to-day—such are the fruits of the indefatigable exertions of his learned professors and teachers, and the Christian aid granted by a venerable and enlightened clergy, and of the thousand and hundreds of schools, and of the many seminaries and colleges, and of the one university, from which every

species of education available for both sexes, and sacerdotal instruction is copiously diffused; although for all this, under better circumstances, he would have been most happy, still now, under present circumstances he is not, nor can he be, not because the administration of government is defective—this he is scarcely to blame for, and it may be easily corrected, as will be forthwith shown; nor again, because he regrets to see himself surrounded by whole Greek provinces still groaning under the Ottoman yoke—their liberation is a question of time; but because his friend—that friend, who, late, but warmly, clasped his hand, and spoke words as encouraging as his ardent wishes could expect, and as kind as his best hopes could imagine—that very friend, listening now to the by-thoughts and by-purposes of a covetous member of his family, is to the Greek now cross, now cold, and now lukewarm, which is worse than cold and cross.

“What have I done,” he asks himself, “to cause this cruel change? Have I been ungrateful to my friend, or unwilling to fulfil the mission confided to me? Have I not told that friend, as early as could be, that, the ways of politics being mazy and perilous, he ought to induce one of the members of his royal family, under whom he lived so happy and prosperous, to accept the Greek throne? If I chose a Greek governor—and whom else but Count Capodistria—was it not my friend that advised me to do so? And when this governor, biassed by his love and gratitude to another friend of not an unqualified feeling, pursued a policy inconsonant to my expectations, and to those of my better friends, did not Greek hands, highly deserving of their country, and higher placed in Greece than Brutus stood in Rome, slay the man who was to Greece more than Cæsar to Rome? And when to the Bavarian prince the Greek throne was given to meet those expectations, but in lieu of that he sternly shunned self-government, did not the Greek army, obeying the nation’s voice, rise against that monarch? And, while the danger from that rising was still pending, and political shibboleths, then pregnant with meaning, propounded—one of them, the dethronement; another, the waiving of the insurrection by a mock constitution; and a third, the success of the insurrection in the sense of self-government—did not General Kallergi, although bound by promise, and urged by the indignant soldiery and people to adopt the first of these measures, did he not sheath his sword at Lord Lyons’ advice to aim only at self-government? And when, during the debates of the constitution, the friends of self-government discovered that their success was undermined through the machinations that were all the while being wrought out by royalty, and Kallergi, their interpreter, told Lord Lyons that self-government could not be attained under that monarch,