

Mercurii, 13^o die Martii, 1816.

HENRY BANKES, Esq. *in the Chair.*

Rev. Dr. PHILIP HUNT, LL. D. *called in, and Examined.*

IN what year were you at Constantinople, and in what character?—I went out with Lord Elgin, as his chaplain, and occasionally acting as his secretary.

Did you ever see any of the written permissions which were granted to him for removing the Marbles from the Temple of Minerva?—Yes; I found on my first visit to Athens that the fermauns which had been granted to Lord Elgin's artists were not sufficiently extensive to attain the objects they had in view, that their operations were frequently interrupted by the Disdar or military governor of the Citadel, and by his Janizaries, and other considerable obstacles thrown in their way, by sometimes refusing them admission and destroying their scaffolding: on my return, therefore, to Constantinople, in 1801, I advised Lord Elgin to apply to the Porte for a fermaun embracing the particular objects I pointed out to him; and as I had been before deceived with respect to the pretended contents of a fermaun, I begged that this might be accompanied by a literal translation: the fermaun was sent with a translation, and that translation I now possess. It is left at Bedford, and I have no means of directing any person to obtain it: I would have brought it if I had been aware I should have been summoned by this Committee before I left Bedford.

What was the substance of that fermaun?—It began by stating, that it was well known to the Sublime Porte that foreigners of rank, particularly English noblemen and gentlemen, were very anxious to visit and examine the works of ancient art in Greece, particularly the temples of the Idols; that the Porte had always gladly gratified that wish; and that, in order to show their particular respect to the Ambassador of Great Britain, the august Ally of the Porte, with whom they were now, and had long been, in the strictest alliance, they gave to his Excellency, and to his Secretary, and the Artists employed by him, the most extensive permission to view, draw, and model, the ancient temples of the Idols, and the sculptures upon them, and to make excavations, and to take away any stones that might appear interesting to them.

Was this fermaun granted after the conquest of Egypt by the British arms?—It was after their first successes.

Was the obstruction, which you mentioned in your former answer, before the success of the British arms?—It continued to be shown till I arrived with the second fermaun.

Was the tenor of the second fermaun so full and explicit as to convey upon the face of it a right to displace and take away whatever the artists might take a fancy to?—Not whatever the artists might take a fancy to; but when the original was read to the Vaivode of Athens, he seemed disposed to gratify any wish of mine with respect to the pursuits of Lord Elgin's artists; in consequence of which I asked him permission to detach from the Parthenon the most perfect, and, as it appeared to me, the most beautiful Metope: I obtained that permission, and acted upon it immediately: I had one carefully packed and put on board a Ragusan ship, which was under my orders; from which it was transferred to a frigate, and sent to England. The facility with which this had been obtained, induced Lord Elgin to apply for permission to lower other groupes of sculpture from the Parthenon:

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which he did to a considerable extent, not only on the Parthenon, but on other edifices in the Acropolis.

Was this under the authority of the same fermaun?—It was.

Was there any difficulty in persuading the Vaivode to give this interpretation to the fermaun?—Not a great deal of difficulty.

Was there any sum of money given to the Vaivode, anterior to his interpretation of the fermaun?—Presents were given to him at the time of presenting the fermaun; but I am not aware of any money being given.

Do you recollect what was the essential difference of the two fermauns?—I never saw any translation of the first, but found it had been inefficient.

Have you any idea of the difficulty and expense of obtaining the fermauns from the Porte?—I am not aware of difficulty or expense being incurred at Constantinople in obtaining that fermaun.

Did you ever hear of any negotiations with the servants of the Sultana Validè?—I recollect none; but that negotiation might have taken place without my knowledge; and, if it did, it must have been through the agency of the dragoman of the British embassy.

Have you any information to give the Committee with regard to the expense incurred in the way of bribes, either in obtaining the fermaun at Constantinople, or on acting upon it at Athens?—Nothing sufficiently precise, to enable me even to conjecture the amount.

Did Lord Elgin's local expenses at Athens pass through your hands?—No; I merely gave the presents to the local authorities on my audience.

Can you give any information to the Committee respecting the subsequent expenses incurred by Lord Elgin in the operation of removing the Marbles, and bringing them to England?—No, I cannot.

Was there any interference used by any persons to prevent the removal of these Marbles?—Not that I recollect; as the permission to lower the Metope was given me by the Vaivode, who has the highest authority at Athens.

Was any opposition shown by any class of the natives?—None.

Did you continue at Athens after the removal of the first Metope?—I remained there a few weeks, and revisited Athens subsequently.

Did Lord Elgin experience any difficulty in removing his Marbles from Turkey?—Interruptions were given by some of the Janizaries residing in the Acropolis, from fear of their houses being injured by the operations of his Lordship's artists; but those houses were bought by his Lordship and pulled down, and excavations made where they had stood: no subsequent opposition was given on the part of the Turkish Government, and I found the common inhabitants of Athens always very ready to act as labourers in removing the sculptures.

Do you conceive that a fermaun of such extensive powers would have been granted by the Turkish Government at any other period, to any British subject?—Certainly not; and if it had not been at so favourable a moment, I should not have thought of proposing many of the requests it contained.

Do you think that any British subject, not in the situation of ambassador, would have been able to obtain from the Turkish Government a fermaun of such extensive powers?—Certainly not.

In your opinion, was this permission given to Lord Elgin entirely in consequence of the situation he held as British ambassador?—I am inclined to think such a permission would not have been asked for by any person not an ambassador of a highly favoured ally, nor granted to any other individual.

Does it appear to you, that the permission under which Lord Elgin acted, was granted as a private favour to himself, or as a tribute of respect and gratitude to the British nation?—I cannot presume to explain the motives of the Porte, but I think it was influenced by great personal respect to the

ambassador, as well as gratitude for the successful efforts of our army in Egypt: but I always thought the objects so to be obtained, were to be the property of Lord Elgin.

Did you see any particular fermaun granting authority to purchase and pull down a house?—No. I am confident no such permission was in the fermaun I took to Athens, though it contained general permission to excavate near the temples.

In what year did you return to Athens?—I was there at different times, and sailed from thence, with the ambassador, at the termination of the embassy, having procured for him, at different visits, most of the inscriptions, and many detached pieces of sculpture.

When you finally left Athens, were all the Marbles now in Lord Elgin's Collection removed or lowered from their original places?—I believe most of them were.

Were all the large figures lowered?—They had been, during my absence from Athens.

Was one of the Caryatides removed at that time?—I think it was.

Do you know whether the removal of that piece of sculpture created any discontent or sensation among the people of Athens?—I had no personal knowledge that it did; no such discontent was ever expressed to me.

Do you imagine that the fermaun gave a direct permission to remove figures and pieces of sculpture from the walls of temples, or that that must have been a matter of private arrangement with the local authorities of Athens?—That was the interpretation which the Vaivode of Athens was induced to allow it to bear.

In consequence of what was the Vaivode induced to give it this interpretation?—With respect to the first metope, it was to gratify what he conceived to be the favourable wishes of the Turkish Government towards Lord Elgin, and which induced him rather to extend than contract the precise permissions of the fermaun.

Can you form any idea of the value of the presents which you gave to the Vaivode?—I cannot now; they consisted of brilliant cut glass lustres, fire-arms, and other articles of English manufacture.

Can you form any estimate of the expense incurred by Lord Elgin in forming this Collection of Marbles, and bringing them to England?—I have no data on which to form any accurate idea of the expense of procuring them and putting them on board ship; but it must have been very considerable, both in procuring them, and the great local difficulties he met with in taking them to the Piræus.

Do you know the weekly or monthly expenses incurred on Lord Elgin's account during your stay at Athens?—I do not; but it must have been very considerable, owing to the expense of the salaries and maintenance of his numerous artists, and the continued presents that were given to the Turkish officers at Athens, and the numerous labourers employed in transporting the heavy masses of Marble.

Do you know the weekly sums paid in salaries to the artists or the labourers employed by Lord Elgin?—I do not; I believe all pecuniary disbursements on his Lordship's account at Athens were made by Signior Lusieri, his principal artist.

Can you conjecture whether, upon the whole, Lord Elgin's expenses are likely to have exceeded the sum of £. 30,000?—I have no means of forming any opinion upon that subject: his Lordship was indefatigable in his researches, not only at Athens and its neighbourhood, but throughout the Morea and Proper Greece, and the shores of Asia Minor, in endeavouring to procure whatever might tend to the improvement of the arts, particularly in sculpture, architecture, and medals, as well as ancient inscriptions, tending to elucidate the progress of the Greek language from the Βασσαφικον mode of writing, through all its changes to the latest periods of Greece: he also procured specimens

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of the different orders of architecture, such as capitals and bases, &c. from the earliest to the latest styles.
