

# LINES

ON

HEARING, THREE OR FOUR YEARS AGO, THAT  
CONSTANTINOPLE WAS SWALLOWED UP  
BY AN EARTHQUAKE;

*A Report, though false, at that time generally believed.*

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FALLEN are thy towers, Byzantium! towers that  
stood

Before the Turk's dread fury, when he came,  
The crescent sparkling amidst Christian blood,  
And to the reeking den of Moloch turned  
Sophia's holy fane! Where, where are now,  
Imperial city, the late proud remains



Of thy brave founder's greatness, when he clothed  
In worldly grandeur pure Religion's form ;  
Then placed beside him, placed upon a throne,  
The lowly Nazarene's meek simple child !...  
He, wandering then upon a Christian land,  
Stranger at home had been, nor known again  
His artless rites, his followers, in the domes  
Filled with the sparkling shrine, the rich-robed  
priests,  
And pomp of earthly greatness.....But not long  
Lived there his name....Science and art, farewell !  
The foe of light and love, Mohammed, comes,  
And Constantine's proud race exists no more.



But, sons of Mahomet, the towers he built,  
Though by your anger spared, have fallen now,  
And crushed your bloody race ! A mightier arm  
Than his who raised, or spared, yon domes came  
forth ;

From the hot sable rolling cloud it came,  
And crumbled them to dust !....The wind, the air,  
Seem in strict silence bound, but smiling still  
Appears the face of day ; assassin-like,  
Smiling, though conscious of intended death.  
But Nature trembles at her own repose ;  
The brute creation dread forebodings shake ;  
While man alone is bold.....But see where now  
The labouring ocean, in fantastic shapes



And sudden swells, her heaving bosom rears ;  
Like the mad Pythia, when the Delphian god  
Spoke by her fraudulent lips....But here, alas !  
A real God that world of waters moves  
To do his dreadful bidding !....

Hark ! he comes !

The thunder's roar, the rush of winds proclaim  
The Mighty One is near....But oh ! when past  
His power, and those he spared raised up their  
heads,

Where was the eye could bear upon the waste  
To gaze, and mark the ruin stretching wide !  
Oh ! ye were blest, ye victims, ye who fell  
Deep in the yawning chasm !....“ Where are now,”



The sad survivor cries, "my peaceful home,  
The sacred mosque I loved, the child, the wife  
I clasped but now; the city towering high,  
Proud in its strength?....Disperse, thou gloomy cloud,  
And let me gaze on them!" The cloud's dispersed;  
But he beholds no city, he can trace  
No vestige of his home: a putrid lake  
Or barren ground replace them, and proclaim,  
Devouring earthquake, thy resistless power.

ENGLAND! blest country, from such woes as these  
Thy temperate clime preserves thee; lightly felt,  
If ever, by thy comfort-breathing shores,  
The earthquake desolating distant lands:



And....thou hast cause to lift thy voice most high,  
In the great choir of nations hymning praise.  
But ye, who wander from your native shores,  
While haply such calamity draws near  
As sunk Byzantium ; ye, whose eager hearts  
Anticipate a glad return to scenes  
Ye shall behold no more, for ever swept  
From off the earth, unconscious heirs of woe ;  
For you I mourn !....Methinks I see the cheek  
Flushed with delight, chastized perhaps by fear,  
When your own land approaches....See the eye  
Misty with tears ope wide its eager lid  
To catch the well-known objects ! Horrid change !  
Fear pales that glowing cheek, and dries that eye,



“ It is our native shore,....but where are gone  
The fanes, the spires, erewhile our city's pride ?”  
I hear you cry. “ The pilot is deceived,  
And hope deceived us too....’Tis not our land !”  
But soon the mournful certainty ye guess,  
And leap to shore ; and there ye call in vain  
On all ye loved....Throughout the silent streets  
That yet remain, perhaps some meagre form  
May trembling steal along, and tell the tale ;  
While on the ruins some lone maniac sits,  
And, as he points to where the chasm yawned,  
Boasts of the treasures earth preserves for him ;  
Or, while a sudden beam of reason darts,  
Screams his discordant anguish, and commands  
Earth to give back his children!....



Angel of woe, that from the eternal hand  
Receivest thy dread commission, going forth  
To flap thy sable pinions o'er the world,  
And shed unnumbered evils, which appear  
To piety's uplifted eye as good  
Concealed in evil's garb;....angel of woe,  
Upon thy awful power I've pondered oft,  
In all its dark varieties. I've sought  
The horrid path where Madness stalks along  
In fancied majesty, or from his cell  
Sends the loud shriek, or more afflicting laugh;  
And, as I hurried from the o'erwhelming scene,  
Have shuddering owned thy awful presence *there*,....  
I've seen thee by the death-bed sit, and bid  
The silent corse to speak again, and urge



The eyes for ever closed to ope once more  
And beam as they were wont:....and I have walked  
In slow procession to the opening grave,  
And seen thee triumph when the earth received  
The form beloved, and the deep bursting groan  
Bespoke affliction's forced composure o'er,  
And agony victorious! I have gazed  
Upon the guilty wretch, when, doomed to die,  
Terror has vanquished him, and his pale cheek  
Has proved the falsehood of his vaunting tongue,  
While, to his startled fancy, in the rear  
Of Death came judgement, and the world to come  
Unfolded all its horrors! There, O there,  
Thee I beheld, and fled from!....and I've heard  
How on the sultry suffocating breath



Of livid pestilence, thou, floating wide,  
Hast done thy master's bidding! Vain were then  
The ties of nature! from the parent's grasp  
The child has forced its once sustaining hand,  
And, horror-struck, has from contagion fled!  
While the fond parent, from his dying child  
Vainly his aid imploring, terror-winged,  
Has urged his selfish flight\*! And *there* thou wert....  
But when the earthquake's varied horrors come,  
All, all thy ministers are waiting round,  
Fear, Madness, Pestilence, Pain, Famine, Death,  
And all the AGONIES COMBINED are there!

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\* It is said that scenes like this were only too frequent in America, when the yellow fever first raged there.