

II.—CHRYSTOM AT CONSTANTINOPLE.

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NO. II.

AFTER the death of Nectarius (successor to Gregory Nazianzen), toward the end of the year 397, Chrysostom was chosen, entirely without his own agency and even against his remonstrance, Archbishop or Patriarch of Constantinople. He was hurried away from Antioch by a military escort, to avoid a commotion in the congregation and make resistance useless. He was consecrated February 26, 398, by his enemy Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, who reluctantly yielded to the command of the Emperor Arcadius, or rather his Prime Minister, the eunuch Eutropius, and nursed his revenge for a more convenient season.

Constantinople, built by Constantine the Great, in 330, on the site of Byzantium, assumed, as the eastern capital of the Roman Empire, the first position among the patriarchal sees of the East, and became the center of court theology, court intrigues and theological controversies. The second œcumenical council, which was held there in 381, under Theodosius the Great, the last Roman Emperor worthy of the name, decided the victory of Nicene orthodoxy over the Arian heresy, and gave the Bishop of Constantinople the title of Patriarch, next in rank to the Bishop of old Rome—a position which was afterwards confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon, but disputed by Pope Leo and his successors.

Chrysostom soon gained by his eloquent sermons the admiration of the people, of the weak Emperor Arcadius, and, at first, even of his wife Eudoxia, with whom he afterwards waged a deadly war. He extended his pastoral care to the Goths, who were becoming numerous in Constantinople, had a part of the Bible translated for them, often preached to them himself through an interpreter, and sent missionaries to the Gothic and Scythian tribes on the Danube. He continued to direct by correspondence those missionary operations even during his exile. For a short time he enjoyed the height of power and popularity.

But he also made enemies by his denunciations of the vices and follies of the clergy and aristocracy. He emptied the episcopal palace of its costly plate and furniture and sold it for the benefit of the poor and the hospitals. He introduced his strict ascetic habits and reduced the luxurious household of his predecessors to the strictest simplicity. He refused invitations to banquets, gave no dinner parties, and ate the simplest fare in his solitary chamber. He denounced unsparingly luxurious habits in eating and dressing, and enjoined upon the rich the duty of alms-giving to an extent that tended to increase rather than diminish the number of beggars who swarmed in the streets and around the churches and public baths. He disciplined the vicious clergy and opposed the perilous and immoral habit of the clergy to live under one