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Lumley Graham

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POLA.¹

THE little monograph on Pola now before us is printed in excellent type and provided with well-executed plans and illustrations. Its author is anonymous, but both the contents of the work and certain omissions appear to show that he is a citizen of Pola, and neither soldier nor sailor. His style is clear and straightforward. He does his best to interest, not only his fellow citizens, but all Austro-Hungarians and even foreigners, in his object, which consists in making known the strategical and commercial value of Pola, in defending it from certain current aspersions upon its salubrity, and in recommending the improvements which he considers necessary to render the place suitable in every respect for remaining permanently, what it has already become, the headquarters of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, one which though not of the first class is still too strong to be left out of count, and one whose strength is likely to receive much greater development if Austria-Hungary should acquire a port, as it probably will, in the *Ægean Sea*.² The author assures us that "as the root of a tree is to its stem, so is Pola to our fleet, so intimately are the two connected with and dependent upon one another. Thus whatever seems to improve and develop the fortress, the harbour, and the town of Pola, whatever contributes to its social welfare, strengthens at the same time our fleet for its duties both in peace and war." In the chapter which follows we have a sketch of the history of Pola from its foundation by the Romans in the second century B.C. through its period of glory under the Empire, when the noble amphitheatre arose which is still an object of interest to the antiquarian and the tourist, through that of its decline in the Middle Ages to its downfall in modern times followed by its second birth under Austrian rule, and its increased importance which is constantly increasing. This importance is primarily due to its geographical position at the extremity of the Istrian peninsula, which protrudes into the head of the Adriatic to a distance of 60 English miles, immediately flanking the approaches to the two principal commercial harbours of the Empire, on one side Trieste, on the other Fiume, whilst at the same time threatening the possibly hostile port of Venice, whose commercial and military importance is rapidly increasing.

The position of Pola is it must be admitted not central with regard to the coast line of the Empire, which extends some 300 English miles to the south of it, but this coast line is so completely veiled for at least two-thirds of that distance by a dense mass of islands, that no suitable place for a maritime station offers itself till you reach the beautiful natural harbour of Sebenico, which is, however, as eccentric to the northern part of the Adriatic as Pola is to the southern part, without having the advantages possessed by the latter of being close to the great commercial depôts of the Empire, and, moreover, in easy and direct communication with all parts of the interior by means of rail and telegraph. The local advantages of Pola are great from a naval and military point of view. "Its roomy, deep harbour is divided by the islands

¹ "Pola: Its Past, Present, and Future—a Study." Second edition, with four plates giving views and plans. Vienna: Printed and sold by Carl Gerold's Son, 1887. Price 4 marks.

² In 1886 the Imperial fleet consisted of 10 ironclads, 2 unarmoured frigates, 5 corvette cruizers, 6 torpedo-vessels, 16 vessels for coast defence, 2 river monitors, 34 torpedo-boats and smaller vessels. This fleet is manned by over 9,000 men in peace-time, increased to over 13,000 in time of war. (From "Statesman's Year-book.")

of Caterina, Andrea, and Pietro into an inner and outer port, the latter being again subdivided by the two first-named islands and by that of Olivi into a northern and southern bay, the former of which, called the commercial port, is large enough to accommodate almost all the merchant steamers of the Empire.¹ The war ships in reserve and the training ships are moored in the southern bay, on whose shores and on the high ground above are the naval establishments, the arsenal, barracks, observatory, &c. The inner and outer harbours, comprising together an area of 2½ square miles (geographical), afford a good anchorage, part of which is well sheltered from the wind, for a considerable fleet; the narrowest navigable part of the entrance being about 840 yards wide. The channel of Fasanò runs between the above-named islands and the mainland, having two good navigable entrances from the open sea, thus forming an outer roadstead, the anchorage in which is good, so that it would be an excellent gathering-place for a fleet when on the point of sallying forth upon an enemy.² The heights which surround the harbour are well adapted for defensive works, and if properly occupied would render a bombardment impossible.² At the same time the nature of the coast, indented as it is with bays and studded with islands, presents great facilities for the use of torpedo-boats against a hostile squadron. There is ample room at Pola for establishments of every description required for the construction, armament, and maintenance of a fleet, and of such there is ample provision. The weak points of Pola seem to be its climate, its sanitary arrangements, and its water supply. The author does his best to minimize its disadvantages in respect of these, but his admissions suffice to show that they are considerable.

The situation of Pola exposes it to the south-east wind blowing up the Adriatic on the one side and to the north-eastern blowing down over the snow-clad crest of the Julian Alps on the other, thus subjecting it to frequent and great variations of temperature, the former wind (the Sirocco) bringing with it rain and high temperature, whilst with the other (the Bora) these conditions are completely reversed. One or other of these winds blows on an average 230 days in the year.

The mean temperature of the year is 57·33° Fahr. The lowest temperature recorded being 17·88° Fahr. on January 23rd, 1869, the highest in the shade being 94·64° Fahr. on July 18th, 1881. The average number of days on which rain falls in the year is 108, and the average annual rainfall over a period of 18 years 36·99 inches. The disease, which in former days gave Pola the nickname of the *Cayenne* of Austria-Hungary and with it a bad reputation which still clings to it to a certain extent, is malaria, whose prevalence is due in part doubtless to climatic influences, but still more to a defective water supply and to bad sanitary arrangements, has much diminished of late years since it became incumbent upon the State to act with some vigour in the matter for the sake of its naval establishments. According to the Admiralty statistics the number of cases of malaria in 1877, '78, '79 amongst the 5,000 men on shore and afloat at this station amounted to 223, 234, 480 respectively, whilst in 1883, '84, '85 the record fell to 82, 85, 95. The rate of mortality is not quoted by the author, rather a remarkable omission, and he moreover informs us that although the authorities of Pola have been very industrious in the collection of meteorological and other statistics they have provided "but

¹ In 1886: Seagoing steamers 61, tonnage 69,452; coasting steamers 82, tonnage 14,491. ("Statesman's Year-book.")

² This is the substance of the author's remarks on the subject of fortification, to which he does not again allude. It is very unlikely, however, that the principal naval depot of the Austro-Hungarian Empire should remain unfortified, and the author's silence proceeds possibly either from caution or from unacquaintance with the subject.

few data on which to form an estimate of the amount of sickness and mortality amongst the civil population beyond the number of admissions to, and of deaths in, the town hospital." This is remarkable, as is also the fact that the author, who is so anxious to do away with the bad impression which still, as he says, continues to prevail in some parts as to the salubrity of Pola, omits to furnish us with even the meagre information to which he refers as existent. There is reason to fear that a complete statistical statement would be by no means satisfactory when we become acquainted with the following facts:—Up to 1859 the inhabitants and ships' crews had to fetch all their water from one open spring near the amphitheatre. A reservoir was then constructed and steam pumps established which fill it from this same spring. These works have been much extended between the time of their creation and 1876, so that there is now a fair supply of water throughout the town and dockyard sufficient for ordinary times but not in case of war, when in all probability the demand would be increased by one-half. Moreover, the course of the water which supplies the spring is such that it might be choked and the supply to the town be partially or completely interrupted. The quality of the water is far from good. It is never clear, and after heavy rains of a reddish-brown colour; it is, moreover, not free from the suspicion of being polluted by organic matter. Various measures have been proposed in order to remedy this state of things, the most promising being to sink artesian wells, the geological formation being of such a nature as to promise a good supply of water at a moderate depth. With regard to sanitary arrangements, there is still much to be done before Pola can ever attain a fair average in this respect. A large proportion of the houses have no latrines, the results of which deficiency require no description. Sewers are entirely wanting except in the military and naval quarters of the town, but even where they do exist their construction is very faulty, and their outlets being in the sea above low-water mark render the atmosphere of the quays decidedly unwholesome. Yet notwithstanding these serious drawbacks the development of Pola has been remarkable since it became the headquarters of the Imperial Navy in 1849. At the end of the last century a traveller described it as a place "whose garrison consists of nine men, who have more to fear from hunger than from the enemy." The military and naval force now permanently stationed there amounts to about 8,000 men. The civil population, which at the beginning of the century numbered only 600, rose by 1848 to 1,100, and by 1885 to over 19,000.

There is probably a great future in store for Pola, but energy is required in developing its resources and in making it fit for the important position which it has to fill.

A glance at Plates II, III, and IV, at the end of the volume, will enable the reader to realize the great improvements already accomplished. The first is a view of Pola at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the second a view of Pola as it is now, whilst the third contains plans of the town and harbour as at present, and also as they were in 1836.

LUMLEY GRAHAM.