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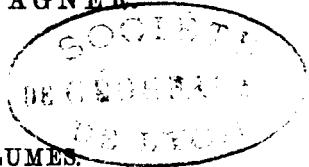


WITH

SKETCHES OF THE COSSACKS AND THE CAUCASUS.

FROM THE GERMAN OF

DR. MORITZ WAGNER.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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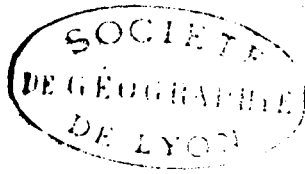
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THE COSSACKS

AND

THE CAUCASUS.

PART I.

CHAPTER XII.

The Cossacks—(*continued*).

AMONGST the mass of the Cossacks, three distinct physiognomies can be detected. First, the genuine Russian, with a broad, Slavonic countenance, a snub nose, and very light brown beard. Secondly, the nobler Cossack type, proceeding from a strong mixture of the Slavonic race with the Tartar and Circassian tribes, having the nose more curved, approaching the aquiline nose of the Caucasian, the face more oval and delicate, the eyes more animated, the beard not so light as with the Great Russians, and a character of face which

is by far the most common amongst the Cossack population of the Line. And, thirdly, the genuine Circassian type, which is presented in a small section of these Cossacks. These scattered individuals, of unmixed Caucasian blood, strike you immediately, among the remaining masses of those troopers, by their coal-black beards, their fiery eyes, long faces of very energetic expression, and their spare make. The bearing, attitude, and movements of these descendants of genuine Circassians, are decidedly more refined and nobler than those of the more robust, stiff, and plump Slavonians.

In a religious point of view, these Slavonians are inclined to the sects which are widely spread amongst the Little Russians. For the entertainment of their foreign guests, they have particular vessels, out of which, like the intolerant Schiites in Persia, they never eat food themselves, and thus they consider themselves more pious and righteous than their brethren of the north. I was very much pleased with the gaiety and vivacity of the children, which I had not observed in other Russian villages. The young Cossacks are fine lads, with awakened, sensible, and open-

hearted countenances. Most of them wear nothing but a shirt, which is fastened with a narrow girdle round the waist, trousers of the coarsest linen cloth, and a kind of sandal ; but many go bare-footed. From amongst those Cossack children, who grow up amidst danger and conflict, proceed the best soldiers of the Russian Caucasian army, worthy opponents of the contentious Tschetschensians and Circassians.

The Cossack population settled on the banks of the Kouban and Terek, were not sufficient to ward off the attacks of the mountaineers, for the purpose of yielding escorts for military convoys and travellers, as well as for many other services, in which these light cavalry in the Russian armies can be employed, and they were obliged to have recourse to the large Cossack population on the Don.

Ten regiments of Don Cossacks, each consisting of one thousand men, are required to remain in service amongst the Caucasus for three years, and are then replaced by others. In recent times, these Cossacks have received considerable reinforcements. It was easy to foresee that the Don Cossacks would not willingly engage

in a war, where, independently of great dangers, so little booty could be made. The government would gladly have transported a part of the population from the Don to the Terek, and would have forced these people to be brave like the Caucasian Cossacks, by exposing their families and property to the attacks of the mountaineers. But it appears that they are careful not to alienate this numerous and warlike cavalry population, who, though very faithful to the Emperor, and obedient to the orders of government, are still not quite so patient as the race of the Great Russians. Hence the government was cautious, it appears, not to alienate them, by removing them from their tranquil and fruitful homes, to the plains at the foot of the Caucasus; to fevers, wars, and plundering incursions; it remains satisfied with employing these Cossacks for common military service. Accordingly, the lancers of the Don and Oural do not fight, like the Tchernomorski and the Cossacks of the Line, against the Caucasians for their wives and children; they leave their domestic hearth on the Don with the greatest unwillingness, nor do they bring with them any enthusiasm or thirst

for revenge, on account of their families murdered or imprisoned in the Caucasian war. They consider their service there as an oppressive burthen. They count every day of the three years, during which they have to tarry in sight of the snowy summits of the Caucasus, longing for their homes and their beloved wives, and they often show themselves helpless novices in mountain warfare. We are not a little astonished when we become more familiarly acquainted with the spirit of these troops, that they should be the same warriors, (or, at least, descendants of the same,) who awakened such terror in the veterans of Napoleon, in the cold bivouacs in Russia.

The dislike which the Don Cossacks have to the Caucasian war, can be explained by several reasons, and it would be very erroneous for any one to accuse these troopers of cowardice, because they regret exchanging their peaceful homes for the place of combat in the Caucasus. In the last Russian campaigns against the Persians and Turks, the Don Cossacks showed, like all Russian soldiers, the utmost courage. A Russian officer once expressed himself thus: "Whoever has seen our soldiers fight at Erivan, Achalzich, and

Baiburt, would scarcely believe that they are the same men as those on our expeditions against the tribes of the Caucasus. Against the Persians and Turks, all fought with impetuosity and courage; even the wounded Cossacks would not get off their horses. With loud shouts, they all galloped cheering into the smoke of battle. But in these fearful mountain wars, as soon as an expedition is prepared, many declare themselves sick, who are not so. If one of our soldiers should be wounded on the field of battle, twenty, perhaps, will immediately press round to carry him to the rear, in order to get out of the fight along with him. Lamentable war!"

It is well known that the Don Cossacks are very skilful riders, and sit firmly in the saddle; but the Cossacks of the Line excel them in horsemanship. The great military review which took place at Tiflis, on the 7th of May, 1843, gave me a proof of this.

On the large meadow of the German colony of New Tiflis, Cossacks, Tartars and Georgians, executed before the commander in chief of the army, General Neidhardt, feats of horsemanship and evolutions. I never saw

finer cavalry manœuvres. A picked body of Tartars and Georgians, in the magnificent national costume, the Cossacks of the Line in Caucasian coats embroidered with silver, and Lancers of the Don, in their blue holiday uniforms, exercised their horses in the wildest chace, and brandishing the schaschka, throwing the lances and firing their pistols and muskets, went through the most beautiful mock fights imaginable. Everything was imitated with the most perfect exactness, even to the battle cry of the Circassians, only of course no blood was shed. Those who had never been on an expedition, gained at least an idea of the manner in which an engagement is managed on the Kouban. On the other side of the Caucasus, they are very fond of cavalry shows of this sort; hence, on that day all the inhabitants of Tiflis were abroad, and at the sight of the prancing steeds, and at the clashing of weapons, the countenances of the beautiful Georgians, usually so cold and vacant, acquired an animated expression. The Cossacks of the Line kept firmly in their saddles during the race, but five or six of the Dons were unhorsed. Envy and jealousy reign among the various

corps of the Cossacks, just as they do between different branches of the service. During my second visit to the Caucasus, I remained some days at Ananur on the Aragui, where a division of the Oural Cossacks were garrisoned.

One evening, I observed a number of Cossacks rushing to the brink, they pointed with their finger to the bed of the river, where I saw a man struggling in the water, and then heard some one say, laughing: "the fellow will certainly be drowned: but he is only a Don Cossack." "What!" indignantly cried a beautiful and slender Georgian, who stood near, "he is nevertheless your countryman and comrade, he is a Cossack like yourself; would you let him sink, because he is from the Don instead of the Oural?" The beautiful form of the Georgian, whose countenance glowed with anger, appeared to great advantage by the side of the shaggy, bearded, uncouth Oural Cossacks. After a long delay, some of them rode into the river and dragged the man out of the water. To my horror, I then first discovered that the half-drowned man was

one of the Cossacks who served me as attendant during my journey.

Amongst the Tchernomorski and Cossacks of the Line, I spent but little time ; but with the Don Cossacks I had a tolerably long intercourse. They were my constant escort in the Alps of Ossetia and in Trans-Caucasia and Armenia, and their black lances guarded my tent even on the top of Ararat, from which the eye wanders over three monarchies, over a powerful, youthful and aspiring monarchy, and two ancient and expiring ones. The Don Cossacks were also my teachers of the Russian language.

During my residence in the Crimea, I diligently studied the Russian grammar, but on a practical application of what I had learnt, I was commonly not understood ; for the German finds the true pronounciation of a Slavonic word very difficult. But through long and constant intercourse, with my Cossack attendants, ear and tongue became accustomed to the foreign tones, and by daily practice, I was at last pretty well understood by the people. Were I to give my own personal judgment respecting the character of the

Cossacks, gained during my residence with them, the verdict would not be favourable. My own peculiar view, coincides tolerably with that of other unprejudiced and clear sighted men, who have had nearer^t and longer opportunities of observing the people on the Don, than I have had.

The Cossacks are full of cunning, and dissimulation towards persons of rank, with whom they are connected as servants, escorts, or in any subordinate condition. Their submissive, officious demeanour, is often, perhaps, mistaken for good nature. We are astonished on a longer acquaintance with them, however, to observe how great the art of cunning and dissimulation is, amongst a people, in other respects, so uncultivated. Amongst themselves, the Don Cossacks are very friendly, courteous, and talkative, but always ready to take advantage of their countryman and comrade, and even to rob him. The propensity for theft appears to be a universal vice of the Cossacks; they practice it boldly and openly in a foreign land, amongst themselves, secretly and cunningly.

A foreign traveller, who receives an escort of Cossacks, from the Russian government

should be carefully warned on this score. In vain will he hope by good treatment or generosity, to awaken any gratitude, in the heart of such attendants, or to stimulate them to any honourable conduct, towards their master. I could impart much information upon this subject, from my own experience, but for many reasons, I prefer to be silent. I will only venture to relate one striking case. One day as I was preparing for a journey into the country, where plundering incursions were much to be feared, a Cossack of my escort gave into my charge, a sum of money, which, for his circumstances was very considerable. I was anxious to discover how the man became possessed of it. But since I knew the cunning, degraded character of these people, I had no hope of hearing the truth from himself, and I therefore resolved to draw the information adroitly from one of his comrades.

We were once encamped in a wood, and roasting some game by a fire; I seated myself near a Cossack, who was in a very happy state of mind, after a good draught of vodka. I first questioned him about the barrack service, pay, and so forth; and heard the usual complaint,

that a Cossack could not live on the niggardly crown pay. "But," I interrupted him, "Iwan, how is it possible for you to keep your purse always full? how in all the world did your comrade happen to have such a sum of money as that which he gave me to keep for him?"

"That came," said he quite dryly, "from stealing oxen. My comrade was fortunate enough to carry off five head of cattle; they were not lean kine either."

"But from whom did he take the cattle?"

"They were Georgians—stupid peasants," answered the Cossack, with a look of contempt.

"And you feel no qualms of conscience on this score? stealing is scandalous. And what do your officers say, if the theft is discovered?"

"The Cossack needs to steal in a foreign land. Every one does when there is an opportunity. We are compelled to steal, because we can't live on our pay. Our officers see well what is going on, but they wink at it. And, no one is foolish enough to let himself be caught in the act, or he will get stripes for it."

It appears that, with the Cossacks, as with

the Spartans of old—skilful thieves pass scot free, whilst clumsy thieves get a sound thrashing. The people on the other side the Caucasus are greatly to be pitied, especially in those parts which are so distant from Tiflis as not to be able to bring their complaints to the noble and severe commander-in-chief residing there. One of the persecuted sect of Malokani emigrants, settled at Aekta, not far from Gobtchaisen, in despair at the thieving of the Cossacks, went to Tiflis, in order to complain; but the Governor of the circle of Pipis, who feared a rebuke from the Governor-General, sent some Cossacks after him, who overtook him on the road, and beat him till he was almost lame. The Malokani kept his bed for a month, and the complaint fell to the ground. “The people are content; they love their chiefs; for no complaints ever reach us,” observed a distinguished officer on the other side of the Caucasus, to me one day.

In the Caucasian war, and even in the last campaign against Persia and the Turks, the plunder-loving Cossacks have been able to carry home very little compared with what they did from France and Germany. The women of the Don lament loudly over it, and heartily wish

that war would be again carried on in richer countries, in which so much more is to be gained than amongst the poor Tschetschensians, where no better booty is to be found than Trans-Caucasian oxen. The church in Novo-Tscherkask, the chief town of the Don Cossacks, is full of incredible treasures. The traveller sees there pictures of saints framed in gold, and ornamented with diamonds, and altar vessels set in gold of untold value. All this was supplied by the pious Cossacks, who, in the year 1815, returned to their homes laden with spoil from Germany and France. No Russian province contains so much gold as the land of the Cossacks, and not a few ducats, with the impression of German sovereigns are found among them. Klapproth relates that many distinguished widows have in their houses at Novo-Tscherkask pots quite full of ducats, which have descended from father to son untouched, and even uncounted. Many of the Cossacks have brought from their campaigns, gold ornaments for their wives and daughters; and the Cossack women carry considerable riches on their heads in pearls and precious stones, and necklaces composed of ducats. A beautiful young Russian belonging

to the higher class of society, who had been brought up on her father's property on the Don, once described to a travelling German, who was staying on the coast of the Crimea, with the most agreeable animation, the handsome dress and fashion of the young maids on the Don; and, whilst she was speaking, she herself put on one of the Cossack head-dresses, which wonderfully adorned the pretty head.

"Ah!" said the beautiful girl, describing the dress, "my people appear to have fared very well in your country, and what a number of pretty things they would bring back, if they were to visit Germany as friends instead of enemies."

"Young Lady," replied the traveller, "we Germans are so engrossed with our philosophy and poetry, that we have no time to think of the possibility of a visit from such guests, or to make preparations for a suitable reception of them. Whilst the Russians have built a magnificent fleet on the Baltic Sea; of which a score or two years ago, not one plank existed, we write a great many verses on our German fleet. Poets will celebrate its deeds of future heroism, and introduce by name those ships

which have taken part in the sea fights, but of which, not a single beam has yet been laid—and whilst in Russia, they attain the exact information respecting all that transpires in the neighbouring countries, the German expresses with good-natured gravity, his moral ideas concerning the inconceivable indiscretion of foreigners, who have dared to make disclosures about the condition of Russia.”

Those broad steppe lands, through which the Don flows, and where each man is born a soldier, are a possession of immense value to Russia. Nothing is required there, but the voice of one man to cause 100,000 warlike lancers on the Don and Oural to leap into the saddle. All military authorities have admitted the uncommon usefulness of so large a body of cavalry. Cossacks may be employed in a thousand ways, both in small and great wars, either to protect their own convoys, or to attack those of the enemy, as videttes, and mounted messengers, or as scouts in pursuit of a defeated enemy. Even in order of battle, the impetuous charge of their lances has, on many occasions, made a fearful impression. An army with Cossacks is secure against all surprisals, whilst the enemy has no

rest from their worrying. Their lances are of infinite value to Russia, because they supply many deficiencies of the Russian soldiers in military qualities. They contribute to the army, elasticity, rapidity, one of the few warlike qualities, which is wanting to the robust, brawny, massively built, Great Russian, who, moreover, in a rapid movement is impeded by an inconvenient dress.

It is inconceivable how men have endeavoured to raise any doubt, at this time of day, respecting the value of the Russian soldiers in the field, and the formidable nature of the Russian army. All those who read Modern History, who know the particulars of the battles which the Russian armies have fought against the greatest Generals during the last century, Charles XII, Frederick II, and Napoleon;—all such men ought not to require a warning respecting the power of Russia, to make them feel very anxious about the threatening and rapid increase, both of the population and military force of that empire. The Russians fought the most fiercely amongst all the enemies of Prussia, in the seven years' war. This was allowed by Frederick II himself, and it was

a fortunate thing for him, that the Russians, at that time, had no motive to press the war vigorously. Napoleon, who in a short campaign destroyed the Prussian military force, which was commanded by Generals of the school of the Great Frederick, found at Eylau, a resistance on the part of the Russians, which this spoiled child of victory had never before met with.

This dreadful and murderous battle at Eylau, between armies of almost equal numerical strength, is a very remarkable event in military history. It proves that all enthusiasm, and military ambition, imbuing an army, from the General to the drummer, can accomplish very little—against another army, whose soldiers know nothing of that inspiring quality, but instead of having it, are schooled in the severest discipline, and are accustomed to be obedient even unto death. In France especially, great stress has been laid on the *morale*, or enthusiasm of armies; but the battle of Eylau is one amongst many proofs, that soldiers of strong physical make, who stand firm on the field of battle, to the last drop of their blood, have no cause to fear adversaries who, from the love of glory, patriotism, or whatever

we may call the moral motive of bravery, are impelled to the encounter. The brawny, well-flogged Russian soldiers, consisting exclusively of peasantry, stood firm and cool against the celebrated guard of the French Emperor, which consisted almost entirely of veterans, of whom most were decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honour, and although the genius of Napoleon conducted them, still, the battle at Eylau remained undecided; indeed, the victory would have probably terminated against the French, if the Russian Commander-in-chief had thought fit to continue the battle on the following day.

The Russians, also, deserve the *honour* of having fought at Borodino, the bloodiest battle of modern times. Whether we read those terrible scenes, where the whole field was covered with dead bodies, according to the descriptions of Ségur, the Frenchman, or of the Russian, Michailowski Danilewski, we shall learn to esteem the heroic firmness of the Russians, who were at that time numerically weaker, as well as the bravery of Napoleon's warriors. I think, we rather overrate the enthusiasm of soldiers, as a means of victory; and are in

error, if we fear the Russian military power less, because it does not possess the so-called moral power. Modern strategy, in which the movements and evolutions chiefly depend on the ingenious co-operation of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, and on regular, rapid marches, has converted soldiers into links in a great machine; and the more pliant and manageable these links are, in the hands of the master who conducts the management of the machine, the surer he is of the result. The fiery and personal bravery of soldiers, which is not always restrained within the bounds of discipline, is oftentimes more an impediment and obstruction, than an assistance to the General. I grant that, in the case of the officers, moral courage should never be wanting, but we must allow that the Russian officers are not behind those of any other armies in ambition and thirst for promotion. It is incredible how this ambition in Russia is awakened, stimulated, and goaded on, by a hundred means. In no other army are rewards so lavishly bestowed on officers who have distinguished themselves in the field. There are all possible kinds of medals and marks of

honour, for "good service;" the Cross and Star of St. George, Stanislaus, Vladimir, Andrew, Anna, and other holy orders, sometimes decorated with crowns, and at other times with diamonds; special decorations by epaulettes and uniforms, &c.

I was once in a distinguished society, which consisted chiefly of military of the Caucasian army. As I found it rather tedious, I had the patience to count up all the orders and badges of honour of the company; and I found that on the breasts of thirty-five military guests, there glittered more than two hundred stars and crosses; many of the coats of Generals had more orders than buttons. As is commonly the case, ambition, through the grant of an outward mark of distinction, will be more stimulated than satisfied. He who wears a medal in Russia, uses every means to become a Knight of the Cross; and then, being adorned with the Cross, he thirsts after the Star, in order to gain which, he will make the greatest sacrifice; great stress is laid, even by the Nogay Tartars with Mogul faces, on the fact of a man having an order, and the Koordish

chieftain, Ali Beg, at Ararat, asked me to what Tchin I belonged.

Those who have been acquainted with the military organization and power of Russia in former times, and have compared them with the present, must confess that it has infinitely gained under the highly active and powerful government of the late Emperor. His unusual orderly activity and foresight for the interests of the army, has imbued the Russian government, even to the farthest frontiers. Not only in St. Petersburg do we learn to admire it, when we see the magnificent guard of 50,000 men march out to review; but it appears, perhaps, in a more striking light in New Russia, where, at the last great military spectacle at Wosnessensk, three hundred and fifty cavalry squadrons manœuvred before the Emperor.

Quietly, but with the power of the giant, the strength of Russia increases and grows on the shores of the Black Sea; and whilst at Nicolajeff and Sevastopol,* great military fortresses are raised, the nomadic Nogays are settled in

* This was written before its fall.—*Translator.*

fixed dwelling-places, and the wandering gypsies of the Crimea dressed in a uniform.

Indeed, it is a strange spectacle to see Armenians and Jews all standing in rank and file, dressed in grey coats, by the side of great Russians and gypsies, the former being generally so averse to military service.

The dirty gypsy with his lank hair, who has always been accustomed of old to a restless life, dwelling in holes, ragged, and covered with vermin, he whose great grandfather must have been a vagabond, must have thought it a dream, when he saw one day a Russian sergeant enter his hole, and found himself enrolled as a recruit. The dirty savage fellow must put aside his rags, wash himself for the first time in his life, put on unpatched trowsers, and be dressed in a splendid well buttoned green parade uniform. He, who had been accustomed from childhood to the wild freedom and independance of a wandering life, must be roused from his sleep in the barracks by the beat of the drum, polish his boots, and clean his musket; must march out well brushed and trimmed for muster, ready at the word of command "to right about." All this

must appear very strange to these dwellers in caverns, and they would have much preferred living with the vermin and eating roasted rats and hedge-hogs. At first, he behaves somewhat morosely in the service, but there are always means of converting him soon into an obedient soldier, and now we see the brawny gypsy with shining buttons, and with stiff upright carriage, standing to arms like the rest. It is almost miraculous, what Russian discipline can effect; the Tartars of the Crimea, those terrible rovers who "fly like the wind," and who, in former times, carried devastation into the very heart of the Russian empire, are now subdued under the Russian sceptre, a quiet, tamed, humiliated people. Their present condition will not long continue; for it will soon be their turn to submit to the conscription. They will have to accommodate themselves to it like the other populations, because it is not possible for them to emigrate; indeed, they could not seek refuge in the Prussian dominions like the Polish Jews. At the next serious war with a great European power, the Tartar will spur on his horse against the enemy of Russia, by the side of the Cossack, whose enemy he has been for ages.

On observing the powerful Russian empire, such as it is now, it is less the conquest of such an immense extent of territory, than its maintenance, and its speedy Russification which astonish us. The Cossacks have afforded the most important assistance in this matter. Without them, it would have been scarcely possible for the Russians to have maintained their Trans-Caucasian provinces, as they left independent mountaineers in their rear. The Circassians and Tschetschensians, with all their bravery, have not been able to check the victorious flight of the double eagle, nor to hinder the Russians from planting, as conquerors, their waving banners as far as the banks of the bridge-destroying Araxes. The secret of the cohesion of such immense regions and wastes peopled by such multifarious tribes, as are in the Russian empire, and the problem of this gigantic machine obeying the impulse of a single will, as we see in Russia, may be in a great measure solved by the character of the Cossacks.

. CHAPTER XIII.

Scenes of Caucasian Warfare.

I. THE STORMING OF AKULCHO.

NATURE has prepared a rocky '*fastness of freedom*' on the rocks of the Caucasus, over which the Russian eagle has often winged its flight for above forty years, but which it has never succeeded in bringing into subjection to its claws. Save the two passes that lead to Trans-Caucasia, and the scattered kreposts on the Black Sea, and along the line of the Terek and Kouban, the Russians have only made effectual lodgments in very few parts of the mountains. Even Christian Ossetia, is only nominally subject to the Czar, and the small number of Russian functionaries, who

have settled among this Alpine people, possess only a very slight authority, as is proved by the recent insurrection, which was only quelled by the prudent measures of the commander-in-chief at Tiflis. If the Russian looks with complacent confidence at the forts and intrenched camps that rise in continually increasing numbers, on the flanks of the mountains, the Tschetschensian on the other hand, points with a scoff of defiance at his icy mountains, like the mason's apprentice, addressing the gaoler of Uri :

“ Let's see, how many mole-hills such as this
It would require, piled upon each other
To form a mountain like the least in Uri.”

Russian columns have repeatedly penetrated amongst the Caucasian mountains, and have stormed the lairs of the Tschetschensians with a heavy loss. But they never felt any inclination to install themselves in these rocky nests, instead of the mountaineers, and hence very little advantage was derived from the sacrifice of so many lives in the capture of Himri, Hermentschuk and Akulcho. A handful of heroic fanatics were put to death, a

few stone huts were destroyed, and then they retired to their kreposts in the plain, leaving the Tschetschensians to re-occupy their rocky nests at their pleasure, and to rebuild their stony huts at their leisure.

The expedition of General Grabbe against Akulcho, in the spring of 1839, was projected more for the purpose of the moral effect produced by the conquest of this fastness, that was held to be invincible by the mountaineers, than for the sake of any positive advantage to be derived from it by the Russians. The General can never have proposed to leave a garrison behind him there. But it was hoped that the Tschetschensians would be disposed to come to terms, and submit, when they found that not a single corner or retreat in their country was safe from the attacks of their enemies. General Grabbe was confident that the chief Schamyl, like his predecessor, Chasi-Mullah, would fall into the hands of the Russians, dead or alive, on this occasion, and that the resistance of the Tschetschensians would cease, at least, for a long time, with the loss of their leader. At the end of May, 1839, the Russian troops marched out of

Temir-Chantschura and other camps, united on the Koissu, and the column advanced to Akulcho, a distance of sixty versts, along the river, almost without meeting any resistance. It was a difficult matter to draw along the artillery in many places, but the perseverance of the Russian soldiers ultimately triumphed over every difficulty, and after a few fatiguing days' march, they reached the foot of the rock, to which Schamyl had retired with a faithful band, awaiting the Russians with a firm foot.

Akulcho is singularly situated. The Koissu, which makes a great bend at this spot, almost encompasses the mountain with its raging current, leaving only one narrow access to the village by a ledge of rocks. Accordingly, the position of Akulcho is almost insulated, and nature has opposed fearful obstacles to the advance of an assailant. I have seen a picture of this deserted fortress in the Caucasus. The conical form of the rocks, which hang over the Koissu in that district, would, if this picture be correct, lead one to infer the existence of a trachyte formation, as in the loftiest chain of the Caucasus. The Russian officers, who

related to me the siege of Akulcho, assured me, on the other hand, that the rocks there are composed of a rather porous sandstone, an opinion that is partially substantiated by the fact of the rocks of Akulcho being pierced in many places with artificial caverns, like the sandstone mountains of Gori. A hard, volcanic trachyte would have offered too much resistance for this tunnelling. The mountain of Akulcho has three natural terraces, which are only reached by means of one small path, whose approaches had been fortified and defended by about five hundred Tschetschensians. Grabbe did not suffer himself to be deterred from his plan by the difficulty of the ground. The Russian column encamped on both banks of the Koissu, mortars and cannon were planted, and after two days labour, the Russian artillery thundered merrily against the rocky nest, whose defenders were only able to reply to the bomb-shells by a shower of bullets. The environs of Akulcho are very picturesque, and an admirer of nature's beauties would have been richly rewarded by a residence there during the three months siege. Lovely bowers of beech trees and oaks adorn the northern

declivity of the Caucasus. Near Akulcho, the eye was delighted both with the verdant decoration of the forests, and the sight of the grey precipices, towering aloft in rugged and savage grandeur ; to this must be added the roar of an impetuous and magnificent mountain torrent, whose waves danced in careless delight over the rocks, whilst many a fallen Russian or Tschetschensian discoloured the foaming current with his blood. The Russian general hoped to force the defenders to surrender by the operation of his artillery. Bombs, cannon-balls and congreve-rockets poured upon the rocks every day, destroying the entrenchments, and the stone huts, but inflicting little injury on the defenders themselves, as they had retired into the excavations, where the bombs were unable to reach them.

A merry mood prevailed in the Russian bivouac during the first weeks. There were no exhausting marches to be made, and the men were pleasantly quartered under the beautiful, fragrant canopy of the trees. There was no dearth of provisions, nor even of wood, to boil their soup, and warm their limbs at night. There was, moreover, plenty of vodka to gladden

the stomach and the heart ; the Cossack sang his lay by the fire, possibly thinking of his maid on the Don ; and the grey coats filled up the pauses between the reports of the guns and the roll of the drums with their semi-religious, semi-warlike chorus chaunts.

Yet this gaiety, which was possibly only put on, and which animated the Russian soldiers on their first arrival at Akulcho, was many times disturbed by a well-directed shot, which would suddenly bowl over one of the singers in the midst of his drinking or singing companions.

Hereupon, the spectators would piously make the sign of the cross, and the song would die on their lips, till the Captain would exclaim, angrily : " What is the matter ? Will you sing on ? " And then the air would burst forth anew with all the strength of their lungs. The Tschetschensians expended very little powder, compared with the besiegers, but their shots were well aimed, and their pieces carried a long way. The Russians defended themselves as well as they could against these invisible shots ; one part of the column encamped at some distance, where it was beyond musket shot ; and those who were posted nearer to the rocks were

generally protected by earth-bags, bushes, or blocks of rock. Nevertheless, it was not always in their power to protect themselves; and all imprudent men who dared to show themselves, were immediately hailed by a bullet whistling in their ears. The besiegers were occasionally astonished by another visitor, beside a well-aimed bullet.

From the beginning, the belief seemed generally prevalent, amongst the besieged, that the Russians would not retire before they had taken the stronghold by storm or famine. Consequently, they regarded themselves as a band devoted to death for their faith, and were resolved, by fighting to the last extremity, to shed as much blood as possible. So great was the wild enthusiasm of the defenders, who consisted chiefly of Murids, that many were unwilling to await the assault of the Russians, and dashed down the rock into the heart of the enemy, with the schaschka in their right hand, a pistol in their left, and the kinschal between their teeth. Fancy the terror of the besiegers, quietly encamped below, who, though they were quite prepared for the whistling of bullets, were far from anticipating the appearance of such

messengers armed to the teeth, rushing into the midst of them. The Tschetschensian would profit by their momentary surprise, dart amidst his foes with a tiger's spring, shoot down one Russian with his pistol, then, seizing his dagger from between his teeth, begin to cut and thrust like a frenzied man among the soldiers, till he fell himself, pierced with their bayonets. The Tschetschensian would commonly send two Russians into the other world, before he bit the dust himself, and his sacrifice would be applauded by his comrades above as a glorious martyrdom.

The Caucasian character loses considerably on being closely examined by the eyes of a German, who would so gladly find the ideal of a chivalrous, noble-hearted race in these mountaineers, so bravely and so perseveringly fighting against Slavonic superiority, but who soon turns away with horror from their savage and cruel natures. But their splendid heroism in battle, and the magnanimous contempt of death among the Tschetschensians, must always command our admiration. Even among the bravest European armies, very few individuals would probably be found whose enthusiasm would be sufficient to impel them to encounter alone a certain death, as was done

by the mystical Murids at Akulcho, who commonly left a wife and children behind them. It must be admitted that such actions are worthy of being recited by the Ki-koa-koa to the sound of their lyre, in order that the glorious deeds of the father may be perpetuated to their children's children.

How sublimely simple is that Caucasian ode on the heroic death of Prince Pschugui, portions of which have been given by Mr. Bell. In this poem, the mother of the slain is represented as saying: "Thank God that my son has fallen on the field of honour, and not on a plundering expedition!" Even the grief of the mourning mother is not able to weigh down her proud joy. "The son whom I bore with pain, and nourished at my breast, was chosen by God to be a martyr in the cause of freedom, and of the faith." What an iron race this must be, amongst whom a mother's love is subservient to the love of honour! Does not this triumphant mourning of the princely mother remind one of the old Scottish General, at the news of the murder of his son by Macbeth:

Had I as many sons as I have hairs,
I would not wish them to a fairer death.

Such examples of voluntary self-sacrifice on the part of the defenders of Akulcho, did not augur well to the besiegers regarding the issue of the approaching storm. But the Russians are determined soldiers, and the officers, in particular, are so ambitious of decorations and advancement, that they longed for the time to arrive, notwithstanding its perils, when they were to mount up to the assault. The Russian soldier who, notwithstanding all his bravery, obtains no cross of Vladimir, and no lieutenant's epaulettes, had to be stimulated by music, song, vodka, and the Pope's prayers, instead of ambitious hopes. Thrice was the moon renewed during this siege. When the queen of night illumined the savage scene with her silver beams, the nights were pre-eminently beautiful, the silence of the mountains being only interrupted by the solemn roar of the Koissu torrent, and occasionally by a yelling, unnatural shout descending from Akulcho, which some regarded as a *qui vive*, or challenge, and others as a call to prayers. If there are any men among the Russian officers who have read Æschylus, many of them might think at such moments of the bound Prometheus, who uttered similar screams on the same spot,

when his vitals were being gnawed by the eagle. And now, once again, as in early times, the voracious beak of the double eagle threatened this devoted and ill-fated band of Murids ; and the other Tschetschensians were able to exclaim with the chorus of the Okeanidæ :

Whatever mortals, too, cultivate the neighbouring soil of
Holy Asia,
Sympathize with thy vastly lamentable miseries.

The first attempt at storming the fortress of Akulcho, cost the Russians a great loss of life. Only a hundred and fifty men are said to have come back of fifteen hundred who ascended the rocky path. The Tschetschensians swept the approaches, where only two men could march abreast, with such destructive volleys, that not a man succeeded in reaching even the second terrace. The failure of the first attempt did not shake General Grabbe in his determination to venture two other assaults.

The lower and the intermediate mountain terraces were carried ; but the three assaults cost 2000 men. The highest terrace was the most difficult to take ; for though the Russians attacked it most gallantly, the resistance was desperate, and much blood was shed on both

sides. Without the improvidence of its defenders, the Russians would probably not have succeeded in capturing this last stronghold at all. The Russian sappers had been labouring for weeks at a mine, intended to blow up the highest rocks; and the porous nature of the stone facilitated their work. The Tschetschensians, who did not comprehend the cause of the protracted inactivity of the Russians after their last assault, heard day and night a continual knocking under their feet, and, fearing some mischief, sought to discover what the enemy was secretly doing. Thus they improvidently ventured out of their cover to see what was going on. A Russian *chef-de-bataillon*, who was concealed with his men on the second terrace, behind a rocky promontory, took advantage of this moment to rush suddenly upon the foremost Tschetschensians, and though the latter flew back to shelter with all speed, the most nimble of the Russians climbed up simultaneously with them to the upper terrace. The remaining Tschetschensians, who had stayed behind, were afraid to fire directly for fear of wounding their own people. Hence a conflict took place at close quarters with cold steel, in which the small number

of Tschetschensians, no longer protected by their rock, naturally sank beneath the superiority of numbers; for the remaining Russian battalions, when they saw the success of the first, rushed up the hill after it. Thus Akulcho was captured by a fourth assault, August 22nd. The Russians, embittered by their heavy losses, raged like tigers; and a detachment of Tschetschensian women, who assisted their husbands with arms in their hands, were cut down.

The Muscovites searched eagerly among the dead for the body of Schamyl, whose stern features were known to many of the Russians who had been taken prisoners. But he was not found among the fallen; and they eventually discovered that a part of the defenders had escaped, and were concealed in caverns facing the river, and inaccessible to any path, being only reached by ropes let down from above. The contest was continued with those who had escaped to their holes, no quarter being asked or given on either side. The cavern in which Schamyl was concealed held out the longest. But there seemed no hope of escape, as the mountain was completely invested by troops, and a chain of men were posted on both banks of the river, because

Grabbe regarded it as the chief aim of his expedition to secure the person of Schamyl.

At this critical moment, the heroism of the little band of surviving Tschetschensians showed itself in the most brilliant light. They foresaw that the death of their chief would put a stop to the resistance in the mountains for a long time; and they resolved to sacrifice themselves as willing victims to save Schamyl. Accordingly, they prepared a kind of raft of beams and planks, which they found in the caverns, and they cast themselves down on the raft into the Koissu. Clinging to the beams, they pushed off into the stream, saluted by a shower of Russian bullets from both banks. The Russian general thought that the Tschetschensian chief was on this raft in person, and gave orders to leave no expedient untried to kill or capture him. But whilst the mountaineers were thus drawing off the attention of their foes from the cavern, whilst the mounted Cossacks were dashing into the river, and the infantry followed the banks of the stream, so that not a single Tschetschensian might escape, a man jumped out of the cavern into the Koissu, swam with a powerful arm through its current, reached a part of its banks

free from Russians, and escaped to the mountains, whilst all the others, floating down on the raft, were slain. This man was Schamyl, the only individual who escaped the butchery at Akulcho. The reader may easily imagine how his romantic adventure and miraculous escape operated on the minds of a people gifted with a remarkable tendency to religious enthusiasm, and for believing in the wonderful. Accordingly, the reverence for Schamyl has immeasurably increased in the eastern Caucasus since the fall of Akulcho.

General Grabbe was very savage, that his deadly foe had escaped him, whose head alone would have been worth much more than those of all the other defenders of Akulcho together. Three thousand men had been sacrificed to take a rocky nest, which was not thought worthy of being permanently occupied, even after it was taken. All the male defenders had perished, but some hundred women and children fell into the hands of the Russians, as prisoners. These captives were shut up, till the retreat of the Russians, in the great caverns, before mentioned, and a singular adventure occurred there at this time. A young Russian

staff officer, stimulated by curiosity, entered one of these caverns, to see if any of the women were pretty. He approached one of them, who struck him by her size, and whilst he was curiously scanning the muffled figure, the latter cast away her linen wrapper. A bearded Tschetschensian, with flaming eyes, stepped forth from the disguise, rushing on the curious officer, brandishing his kinschal in his hand. The Russian naturally took to flight as fast as his legs could carry him, with the mountaineer after him. Happily, the guards had observed the occurrence, and thrust down the Tschetschensian with their bayonets, in time. This terrible fellow defended himself furiously, even when down, and was a long time dying, though pierced with many bayonets; he rolled wildly about, roared like a bull, and tore up the grass so desperately, that the spectators of the scene could not witness it without a painful shuddering.

The faces of the seven hundred Tschetschensian corpses, which were cast into the Koissu after the storming, were many of them fearfully distorted. The burning passions that

had animated the fallen Murids even in death, whilst fighting on the highest rocks face to face with the Russian grey-coats, were still visible in their grim features and glazed eyes. They commonly expressed a thirst for blood, hatred of the Russians, and triumph in their sanguinary reprisals. Dreadful war! If these wild Caucasians only knew how unwillingly and sorrowfully the poor Russian soldiers take part in the Caucasian war, they would moderate their fierce hatred, and possibly treat their unhappy prisoners with less severity. These poor fellows are the obedient slaves of that iron will, which has resolved, once for all, to subjugate this refractory Caucasus at any price. The black regulation bread, and the cruel discipline, cannot be so attractive to these men, that they leave their northern home of their own accord, and march gaily to a murderous war against the freedom of a brave people, that has never done them any injury.

2. THE DEFEAT OF THE RUSSIANS AT ITSCHKERI.

After the fall of Akulcho, Schamyl removed his residence to the aoul of Dargo, in a

mountainous country south of Girselaul, called by the inhabitants Itschkeri. The Tschetschensian chieftain, making this place his head-quarters, prosecuted the war vigorously against the Russians, appearing with his cavalry one day on the Sundscha, another on the Terek and Koissu, and cutting off convoys, or attacking kreposts and stanitzas on all hands. General Grabbe could not agree with his superior officer, General Golovin, as to the proper mode of carrying on the war. The former was always for undertaking bold expeditions into the mountains, whilst the latter, was more disposed to the defensive and blockade system. Accordingly Grabbe made a journey to Petersburg, in order to obtain a sanction for his plans there. It appears that his system was preferred by the authorities in the capital, to the more pacific measures of the Commander-in-Chief, at Tiflis, who lived somewhat remote from the scene of action. To obtain a correct insight into the state of matters in the Caucasus, the Emperor sent his Minister of War, Prince Tschernitschef, there in the summer of 1842, to inspect the strongholds of Cis- and Trans-Caucasia. But

before the Prince visited the left wing, General Grabbe determined to astonish his distinguished visitor by a splendid achievement, and to this end he undertook an expedition against Schamyl at Itschkeri.

On the 29th of May, 1842, the Russian column marched south from Girselaul, to the mountains. Girselaul is an important stronghold, one hundred and twenty versts east of Grosnaja, on the left bank of a little stream, which is called Aksai, on the Russian ordnance maps. The Russian column consisted of thirteen battalions of infantry, (about eight thousand men.) The cavalry was left behind, because of the broken nature of the ground, and Grabbe only kept a small detachment of Cossacks as his personal escort. Every soldier carried sixty cartouches with him, besides provisions for eight days, in his knapsack. The artillery consisted of mountain guns, four and six-pounders, each piece drawn by four horses; a tumbrel, laden with ammunition, was also dragged over the heavy ground with great trouble. General Grabbe had under his orders Generals Labinzoff and Baldinin.

The mountain district of Itschkeri, is covered

with beautiful groves of trees. Primeval oaks, beech trees, ashes, elms, aspens, often with trunks of immense girth, extend their thousand verdant arms to the sky. Fir trees are entirely wanting. So thick a growth of high flowers, and creepers cover the ground of this virgin forest, which has never been crushed by the woodman's axe, that the march of the heavily laden column, was impeded by it. On the evening of the 29th of May, they reached a clearance, where the column halted, and bivouacked. Not a shot had been fired, during this first day's march. The tirailleurs of the vanguard, maintained, however, that they had occasionally descried, behind the trees, the spare forms of some mountaineers, who, like the demons of the wood, scrutinized the long line of advancing bayonets, and vanished without giving any sign of friendly reception, or of hostile intent. Schamyl wished evidently to entice the Russians into the labyrinthine glades of the forest, and not to deter his opponent from his undertaking, by premature attacks. After midnight, when their soup had been swallowed, their vodka drunk, when they were beginning to extinguish the bivouac fires, and

the battalions were lying asleep in the grass, the first attack began. Shots from invisible hands, began to drop into the column from all sides. The numerous Russian outposts replied to them, firing in every direction, where the flashing of guns betrayed a foe. Few men were slain on either side, in this nocturnal engagement, but the skirmishing was so continual and persevering, that all the battalions were roused from sleep, and stood to arms. Hence the night's rest of the Russians was effectually broken, and they were sooner tired on the next day's march. The enemy had disappeared the following day, but about noon, whilst they were marching through a woody ravine, the enemy appeared again in great force, and kept up a steady fire with the Russian skirmishers. Many severely wounded Russian riflemen were carried back to the main column, where the horses and carts were soon insufficient to carry them away. Several superior staff officers, now advised General Gabbe to give up his undertaking, and to give orders to retreat, for they had not accomplished even half the distance to the aoul of Itschkeri; the

difficulty of the march was increasing, and the enemy was attacking them at every step, with more relentless fury. But the General who had set his heart on surprizing Prince Tschernitscheff with a victory, would not hear a word about retreat. They bivouacked again in a mountain meadow, amongst the forest, and skirmished with the Tschetschensians throughout the night.

On the third day's march, too, they advanced still skirmishing, the number of the dead and wounded increased every moment, and the situation of the column became so critical, that General Grabbe gave, at length, the order to retire, though they had now advanced within twelve versts of the fortified aoul of Dargo, the proposed object of the expedition, which could be distinguished with the naked eye. But scarcely had the van-guard of the column begun to fall back, when the impetuosity of the mountaineers could no longer be kept within bounds. Up to this time, the column had been saluted with a full share of bullets, but none, save the leading files, and the chain of light infantry, had

come to close quarters with cold steel. Now, however, the line of skirmishers was broken by bands of furious Tschetschensians.

These daring cavaliers dashed with flashing schaschkas into the centre of the column, into which they broke many times, in spite of the fence of bayonets opposed to them. Coolness and discipline had always secured an orderly retreat to the Russian columns on the battle fields of Europe, and tired out their pursuers; but here those useful military qualities were not sufficient. Worried and pressed by a relentless foe, who was unused to grant quarter, exhausted by fighting and marching, or by loss of blood, tormented with thirst, (no springs could be found,) many a brave soldier left his ranks, and throwing down his arms, remained behind the column, awaiting his fate at the hands of the first Tschetschensian he might meet.

The night of the 31st of May to the 1st of June was fearful. The mountaineers would not allow the Russians a single hour's sleep. They surrounded the bivouacking column, howling like wolves, which feel already secure of their prey. The Russian Generals passed

a sleepless and an anxious night, almost despairing of escape, and writing orders which could only be partially carried into effect, owing to the obscurity. The Tschetschensians were more sparing of their powder by night than by day, when they could take better aim. Their chief object, in these night attacks, seems to have been to entirely wear out their antagonists, who were already exhausted by want of sleep and rest, so that they might make light work of them in the engagements by day. A considerable number of Russian soldiers who could no longer endure the torments of thirst, took advantage of the darkness to go over to the enemy. Several of them were cut down by mistake by the Tschetschensians, who did not, in all cases, comprehend that they were deserters. The rising sun of June 1, illumined a ghastly scene.

The Russian soldiers, exhausted by fighting and watching, gave themselves up as lost; a few took leave of the sun whilst prostrate in prayer, and others suffered themselves to be cut down in silent despair. The *élite* of the freshest and bravest troops were thrown

out as skirmishers, to keep off the enemy, if possible, from the main column, where the weaker, exhausted and wounded soldiers were staggering painfully onwards under the load of their knapsacks. The tirailleur skirmish was kept up with such persevering ardour, that every soldier in many companies fired 300 shots. This rendered their muskets unserviceable, and a pressing message was sent to General Labinzoff, to relieve the chain by fresh troops, so that the others might, at least, have time to clean their pieces. But a considerable time elapsed before fresh skirmishers could be collected from the column; many of the sharpshooters engaged with the enemy, could no longer reply to their fire, because their pieces could not be discharged. Though the officers had disguised themselves in privates' great-coats, to prevent being recognized by the foe, they were the chief targets of the hostile bullets of the mountaineers, whose hawks' eyes could easily discover them by their features, notwithstanding their travestie. Thirty-six officers out of sixty were killed.

The number of the Tschetschensians who

followed close upon the Russians, attacking them in rear, and on both flanks, did not exceed 6,000 men. Thus they did not equal the Russians in strength, but had the advantage over them in activity, and in knowledge of the ground, which enabled them to collect in mass on given points, to break through the chain of skirmishers, and to attack the weakest sides of the column, sword in hand. They had taken a Russian drummer on the 31st of May, and they forced him to beat the charge. Many tirailleurs who followed the sound into the wood, thinking it the direction of the column, fell into ambushes and were cut down. All Russian eye-witnesses pay the highest tribute to the personal bravery displayed by their antagonists, particularly on the last day of the conflict. The extraordinary strength of the Tschetschensians, in handling the sword, was particularly remarkable; they parried the bayonet thrusts of the Russian infantry with the greatest dexterity, and split their skulls with a strength that had not been ascribed to these slight wasp-like mountaineers.

Whilst the Russians were marching through

a thick forest, the centre of the column was attacked with indescribable fury. They fought man to man, in the closest encounter. Six cannon were captured by the Tschetschensians, and all the artillery-men cut down. The Russian column halted outside the wood; the news of the capture of the cannon reached the vanguard; all the men were enraged at it, and they determined to fall, rather than to endure the disgrace of losing their guns at the hands of a horde of wild mountainers. Lieutenant-colonel Wittert, returned into the wood with two battalions; the officers cheering on their men at their head, sword in hand. The Russians dashed with lowered bayonets, and loud cheers on the Tschetschensians. Crowding round the captured guns, their bodily exhaustion vanished as by a miracle through the animation of this charge. The brave Lieutenant-colonel Hahn, was one of the first, who spurring his horse, cut his way through as far as the cannon. Here, placing his hand on one of the iron muzzles, he died a hero's death, cut in two by a Tschetschensian sword. Five cannon were retaken by the Russians, but one had to be left in the hands

of the enemy, because its carriage was broken, and hence it could not be dragged off. The resistance of the Tschetschensians near the cannon was terrific. Some of the boldest champions, climbed up the lofty trees, tied themselves to their upper branches, and shot down from their lofty citadel on the Russians. When the Muscovite bullets reached their foes in their shady concealment, the latter did not fall, but remained hanging in the branches, a prey to the birds, instead of the worms.

Amongst the losses of the last day's conflict, the Russians had especial cause to regret Lieutenant-colonel Trasskin, an excellent officer, who, mortally wounded by a bullet, died in a few hours.

Before his death, he is said to have requested an interview with General Grabbe, and on the latter appearing, he is reported to have reproached him bitterly as the cause of his death. He was hastily buried on the spot where he breathed his last. The Tschetschensians disinterred the corpse, without mutilating it, and sold it subsequently for two hundred silver roubles, to a brother of the deceased, the present Chief of the Staff at Tiflis, who gave a worthy

resting place to the remains of the brave officer.

Outside the woody region, the attacks of the Tschetschensians became weaker, and the cavalry alone continued to skirmish with the Russian rear. It was only on the last day's conflict, that this cavalry had appeared on the scene of action, led by Schamyl in person. This chieftain is reported to have marched through a part of the mountains during the march of the Russians, to collect his followers; whilst in his place, the chiefs, Achwerdi-Mahoma, and Hadschi-Murat, had led the infantry into action, till his arrival. If Schamyl had succeeded in bringing his cavalry two days earlier to the scene of action, Grabbe's army would possibly have been exterminated. Its loss in dead and wounded amounted to nearly two thousand men. The exhausted expeditionary column reached the fort of Girselaul in the most deplorable condition, whilst it had been joyfully anticipated as returning from a decisive victory, and preparations were making to receive it with a triumphant salute. Instead of this, they beheld a tottering band of pallid and

emaciated men, marching up with dejected looks and muffled drums. The Minister of War, Prince Tschernitschef, who happened to be at Girselaul, was an eye witness to the scene.

The Russian soldiers were able to console themselves that they had been defeated whilst fighting bravely and honourably against the obstacles of nature, and against antagonists, who, as far as their history reaches, have invariably displayed a heroic courage, and who, though in their last disaster, they were inferior to the Russians in number, had their familiarity with the ground, and with mountain warfare in their favour. All this, however, was poor consolation to the widowed mothers and fatherless children. Most of the Russian soldiers in the Caucasus are married, and it was harrowing to hear the lamentations of these poor creatures, when they found that the column had returned without their husbands. Cold comfort could they draw from the thought that those they loved had fallen on the field of honour, and in the service of the Emperor. Such is invariably the dark side of even the most glorious and successful warlike achievement.

The return from war always brings to mind the words of Iphigenia :

“ The daring fight immortalizes the man ;
For though he fall, his name shall live in song.
But no future age shall count the endless tears
Of the surviving and deserted wife ;
And the poet overlooks the thousand days
And nights of weeping.”

3. THE CAMPAIGN OF PRINCE WORONZOF AGAINST
DARGO.

(Extract from a private Russian letter.)

“ Girselanl, August 5, 1845.

“Count Woronzoff has accomplished the most daring, but also the most bloody campaign, that a Russian column has ever effected in Daghestan ; but I am sorry to have to add that the advantages obtained scarcely counterbalance our losses. We have lost more than three thousand men, including many brave and valuable officers, whose death will fill all Russia with mourning. We had the most unpropitious weather as far as Andy ; newly fallen snow lay on the pics of the main chain to the south, and even the heights of Retschel were still covered with their wintry mantle. During these cold days, the troops laboured at the krepost Gogatal,

in throwing up earth entrenchments, to surround the newly established magazines of provisions and forage. Meanwhile, our outposts, consisting of the Georgian companies, and the Caucasian militia, drove back to the hills the separate bands of Tschetschensians, which showed themselves at intervals; but, hitherto, nothing serious was undertaken. The resistance of the mountaineers on our advance to Andy, had been much slighter than we had anticipated; they seldom fired, they did not attack us with their swords, as was their wont, and they often rested satisfied with rolling down stones on our skirmishers. Many thought that the mountaineers laboured under a deficiency of gunpowder, and not a few novices in the army, thought we had exaggerated the warlike spirit of this people, and the perils of Caucasian campaigns. Meanwhile, Woronzoff had his eyes everywhere; he attended with a paternal interest to the comfort of the sick and wounded, the soldiers received good and fresh rations, their mood was more cheerful and merry than was usually the case in camp, the works proceeded amidst song and laughter, and the day was concluded with music. The weather, more-

over, had become more genial and temperate, and on the 17th of July, the Count issued orders to decamp on the following day. Our column, including the native auxiliaries, did not exceed ten thousand men, and consisted almost entirely of infantry; we had only four hundred Cossacks with us, who had the utmost difficulty in leading on their horses over the woody and broken ground. The convoy was reduced to the smallest number possible of baggage horses, and the Commander-in-chief gave especial orders that the soldiers should not be immoderately loaded, as had been the case under Grabbe, when every man carried sixty pounds weight in his knapsack. The pass of the chain of Retschel, separating Andy and the country of the Gumbeten from Itschkeri and Great Tschetschnaja, was occupied without resistance. Beyond the northern declivity of this woody mountain, lies the aoul Dargo, which was the main object of this expedition. Dargo was, since the destruction of Akulcho, one of the most usual haunts of Schamyl, who had accumulated a large store of arms, powder, and provisions there.

He had also built a mosque there, which

was visited by numerous pilgrims, from the remotest corners of Daghestan and Lesghistan, partly in order to pray there, and partly to bring intelligence respecting the state of the country, and the movements of the Russian columns to their revered and dreaded chief, who unites, in his own person, the dignities of priest and king. The most eminent adherents of Schamyl also dwelt there; nevertheless, this chieftain often shifted his residence, and dispatched his Murids to different parts of the Tschetschnaja, to preach the holy war against the Russians, to gather in tribute, and to obtain recruits under his flag. His army had recently received strong accessions of Kistes, Ingusches, Avars, and people from Lesghistan; for our march to Andy had roused all the mountain clans.

Dargo is not protected, like Akulcho, by precipitous, inaccessible rocks, but by the thick and extensive forests of beech trees, which impede its approach on all sides. General Grabbe had attempted to approach Dargo from the north, in 1842, and had failed, as is well known, in his imprudent enterprise, which cost him his command, and his military reputation.

When our vanguard penetrated into the thick groves of Itschkeri, after passing through almost impervious ravines, the enemy attacked us on all hands, with the greatest determination, firing upon us from behind the fallen trunks and fascines, which they had piled up as intrenchments behind the trees, and across our road. They did not burn much powder, but every shot told, for they took admirable aim. These invisible shots picked off especially the officers, whom they readily distinguished, though disguised by the orders of Count Woronzoff, in privates' coats, and without any decorations. The enemy probably detected our officers, by their not carrying any muskets.

The cannon effected little against these barricades; it was necessary to carry them with the bayonet. In this duty, the Georgian companies, and Caucasian militia showed themselves rather backward; and our battalions had to show them the way. Immediately that one of our men fell, he was instantly stripped of his arms and cartridges by the enemy. After this, the mountaineers paid no further attention to the Russian corpses; but they carried off their own dead and wounded

most scrupulously into the thicket. Our battalions, notwithstanding their impetuous courage, only advanced at the rate of one verst and a half (one mile) per hour, because of the natural and artificial barricades opposed to them, of the wild and tangled growth of plants impeding their progress, and of the narrow, and steep character of the path, which were even greater obstacles than the obstinate resistance of the enemy. Yet the vanguard reached Dargo before dusk. This aoul is situated on the declivity of a mountain, on the edge of a ravine, and consists of sixty or seventy stone houses ; a few more solid buildings stood near them, built of stones cemented with mortar, and not, like the others, roughly piled together, as is usual in Caucasian dwellings. One of these buildings had several irregular towers, which appeared of ancient date. A thick smoke arose from these larger buildings, and it was found that Schamyl had accumulated all the wood, corn, straw, and other combustibles, that he could not carry off to the mountains, and set fire to them, when he saw that he could not prevent the advance of our columns. The Lithuanian jägers occupied the deserted village before sunset ;

but night had set in before the staff arrived, and pitched their tents. The burning houses of Schamyl's captured residence, formed the bivouac fire of our head-quarters. It must be admitted, that this tremendous determination of the enemy, to decline all subjection, to defend the land of their fathers, step by step, and only to give up rubbish and smoking ashes, as trophies to the Russians, shows a savage grandeur which forces our admiration, though the enemy's chief be only a fanatical barbarian.

A very warm engagement took place, on the 19th of July. Schamyl occupied, with six thousand Tchetschensians, a high mountain close to Dargo, and commanding our position. He enfiladed our camp with some artillery; and, though his guns were badly pointed, and did us no injury whatever, yet it happened that once a ball fell close to the tents of the staff. These balls were six pounders, and were probably discharged from the same cannon that Schamyl had taken at the capture of Unzula. According to the report of the natives, these guns are served by Russian deserters and renegades; but they are seldom used by the enemy,

either for fear of losing them, or because they take so much powder.

The Commander-in-chief sent General Labinzoff, with five battalions of infantry and all the mounted Caucasian militia, to drive the enemy from his position, and, if possible, to capture his cannon. Our tirailleurs climbed up the hill, with their usual activity, but were soon driven in on the battalions; for the mountaineers defended themselves most vigorously. Yet, the heights were ultimately carried by our troops, at the point of the bayonet; but the hostile cannon had already disappeared in the woods. Since our column had only brought provision for five days, which was not sufficient for Count Woronzoff's projected operations in the north, the Commander-in-chief sent six battalions, under the orders of Lieutenant-General Klucke von Klugenau, to the heights of Retschel, in order to escort an envoy, which we expected from Andy.

Whilst this column, which consisted of half our force, marched in a pouring rain through the woody ground that we had passed in advancing from Andy to Dargo, it was surrounded

by swarms of mountaineers, which inflicted a heavy loss on it by their well-aimed shots ; but the attack became really furious during the return of the column to Dargo. Whoever is acquainted with the terrible nature of the ground in the mountainous territory of Daghestan, can form some idea of the immense difficulty experienced in moving a convoy, half a league in length, over steep mountain ridges, through narrow ravines and thick forests. The enemy easily find a weak point in such an extended line, where the escort can be overwhelmed by a superior force and advantageous position.

“Hitherto the mountaineers had confined themselves to a steady fire of musketry ; but, as they had been meanwhile reinforced by large accessions of Lesghian and Tschetschensian tribes, they dashed into the unfortunate column, brandishing their schaschkas and kinschals. Possibly, they may have been additionally excited by the desire of making reprisals ; for they had suffered severe losses during the preceding days ; and every Caucasian who falls, leaves behind him avengers, whom custom does not suffer to take any rest till they have atoned for

the blood of their brother or friend, by the death of an enemy. Perhaps the sight of the spoil on the horses and in the carts, acted as a still more powerful stimulant. Officers who accompanied this ill-fated column assured me, that the enemy had never exhibited such impetuosity and courage on any former occasion. They dashed in large bands through the chain of skirmishers into the column. Schamyl led the attack in person with his Murids, who always form the nucleus of his force. Two of our best Generals, Wiktorof and Passek, died heroically, not like General Fock, who, a few days before fell in a shower of bullets, but pierced by Caucasian swords; for they had to engage hand to hand with the mountaineers. Their bodies were left behind in the wood. Perhaps, we may eventually succeed in recovering them for money, so as to give them an honourable burial in a Russian fortress.

“ When General Klucke found it impossible to protect the convoy, he sacrificed a part of it; and even a cannon was lost. The column closed up, to present a more solid resistance to the enemy. In effecting this manœuvre, a

portion of the tirailleurs fell into an ambush ; for the enemy had captured some Russian trumpeters, and forced them to sound in the midst of the wood, by which means, many of our skirmishers, who were deceived by the trumpet-call, followed a false direction. The ill-fated column reached Dargo in the most deplorable plight, having left behind 1300 dead in the forest. The enemy captured more than three hundred laden mules and waggons. The weather had been throughout eminently unfavourable ; and we had almost daily showers, which did not, however, prevent the enemy from continually swarming around us. The worst thing was, that our provisions began to fail. The soldiers only received half-rations, and the cavalry, as well as the baggage-horses, had to be fed with green meat, because all our supply of oats, which we expected from Andy, had fallen into the hands of the enemy. We left Dargo on the 25th of June, and began our retreat through the Aksai valley. We found everywhere new barricades erected, which often entirely filled up the narrow pass between the river and the mountain side ; and our brave rifle battalions,

who marched at the head of the column, and had to receive the fire of the enemy, had a hard time of it.

“ When we once more entered the thickets of those primeval forests, the contest became extremely hot ; and our rifles had to be reinforced several times, in order not to be entirely crushed by the superiority of the enemy. It was in this same wood, on the left bank of the Aksai, that General Grabbe had experienced his celebrated defeat, in 1842 ; and the chief of our staff, General Trasskin, must have been affected by bitter feelings at this spot ; for it was here that his brave brother, Colonel Trasskin fell. It was very unlucky for us, that, during these continual and hot skirmishes, in which we were perpetually engaged with the enemy, our means of transport for carrying off the wounded and sick, were quite insufficient. Almost all the Cossack horses were already laden with wounded officers and soldiers, and our troopers were forced to march on foot. But even this sacrifice did not suffice. Those who were only slightly wounded staggered along as well as they could ; but all who were wounded in the legs

were commonly lost. Many sick or weary soldiers lagging behind, fell also into the hands of our cruel enemy, who cut them down without mercy.

“The perplexity occasioned by the difficulty of transporting the wounded, determined our humane commander, who was deeply pained that brave soldiers who were unable to keep up with the column from sickness, or loss of blood, should fall victims to certain death, to halt without the woody territory, near the aoul of Schaugal Berdy, in the Aksai valley. Some natives, tempted by the offer of a large reward, succeeded in creeping through by night with despatches to Girselaul.

“On receiving the intelligence of our critical situation, the gallant General Freytag forced his way through the hostile bands to our bivouac, at the head of 6000 infantry, and 300 Cossacks. His arrival was welcomed by us with indescribable rejoicings. Measures were now adopted to forward the sick and wounded; and the gallant soldiers of the newly arrived column, divided the rations in their knapsacks with our starving battalions. The two corps united, and returned to Girselaul. The attacks of the enemy became

continually weakened the farther we advanced from the woods. On the 1st of August, we reached the fortress, where we could repose after the unheard-of hardships of this campaign, and nurse our wounded.”

CHAPTER XIV.

Prince Michael Woronzoff.

A MAN who has enjoyed the rare felicity of possessing equal favour with the court, nobility, middle ranks and common people, and of preserving it unchanged through a long series of years, and amidst difficult trials, can scarcely be denied the gift of extraordinary qualities, even by the most jealous detractors. Prince Woronzoff is a favourite of this kind, with the four stages of Russian society, and there is scarcely a second name in that vast empire, to dispute this honour with him. At the period when I visited the Crimea, and when I had the good fortune to become personally acquainted with this rarely gifted man, I was well aware that the first members

of the aristocracy paid every respect to the Governor-General of New Russia, and I also heard of the unanimous favour, with which he was regarded by the whole of the middle class, which possesses much more numerous representatives, in the shape of merchants and small farmers, in the south of Russia, than in the north. I also, myself, witnessed how people of the lower classes, such as, Russian peasants, Tartars, Jews and gypsies displayed, on every occasion, their warmest affection for their protector and benefactor. But I was ignorant at that time that Count Woronzoff (as he was then styled) also enjoyed the special favour of his sovereign. When among well-informed men, in private circles, the conversation touched on the relations of the Count with the court, their countenance usually assumed an expression of secrecy. I have never succeeded in discovering if this proceeded from a wish to conceal their ignorance on the matter. The prevailing opinion was, that Count Woronzoff was only tolerated at his post, because no plausible reason could be adduced for removing him, and because even an autocrat was *obliged* to spare a servant

of such distinguished talents and character, of such reputation and wealth, and of such great popularity. It was affirmed, however, that the Count had been more than once blackened at court; at all events, that he could not be reckoned among the favourites of the Emperor, such as Orloff, Kleinmichel, Adlerberg, Wolkonski, Tschernitscheff, &c., and that he was treated as an eminent '*foreigner*' at St. Petersburg, where he went as seldom, and stayed as short a time as he could. His position was never considered very secure. Though the higher officials had entertained a great and universal respect for his character, he nevertheless had bitter enemies, and men were designated by name, who were not only supposed accurately to scrutinize his measures, but even to make reports of his expressions at table, to the chief of the secret police at St. Petersburg. Under these circumstances, this motive was assigned for his reserved behaviour towards such odious *employés* as the man who was then governor of the Crimea, M——ff, whose wife was a Bibikoff and a relation to Benkendorf. Two years after my departure from the Crimea,

Woronzoff was appointed Governor-General of the Caucasian provinces. In this manner, the widely diffused error, that Count Woronzoff was viewed in an unfavourable light by his sovereign, was triumphantly refuted.

The state of affairs in the Caucasus, in the year 1844, was very critical. For twenty years, attempts had been made to govern it with men of the most opposite qualities and characteristics, but the right man had never been found. No Russian Governor, since Jermoloff, had been quite equal to the magnitude of the task. Paskewitsch had been more successful in his wars against the Persians and Turks, than in his administrative measures. Rosen was only reckoned a clever man of business. Golovin brought to Trans-Caucasia the majestic pomp and diplomatic placidity of an Asiatic grandee, besides a good will in the cause, but no very striking ability. Neidhardt, the military commandant of Moscow, had come under the notice of the Emperor, as a man of unshakable integrity and conscientiousness, as an indefatigably active worker, and for these reasons he had been appointed to the head of Caucasian affairs, but he was wanting in the

eagle eye of Jermoloff, and in his powerful activity. Changes of the subordinate Generals along the line were quite as frequent as those of the *Korpski* commanders in Tiflis, according as the Emperor favoured a warlike, or a peaceable system. The enterprising leader of *razzias*, Sass, was superseded by the Hetman Sawadofski, who was opposed to mountain warfare, and the combative General Grabbe was relieved by the prudent, vacillating and peace-loving General Gurko. But the events of 1843, disappointed and put to flight all the plans and hopes which Prince Tschernitscheff and his adherents had built, on a defensive blockade system.

Schamyl broke through the line of the Russian blockade, took the fortress of Unzula, destroyed a Russian corps, which attempted to relieve the garrison, besieged General Kluke in Chunsak, and laid waste and depopulated the entire province of Avaria, which had sided with the Russian. Neidhardt marched forth the following year with a great force against Schamyl, without obtaining the slightest advantage. He was not a favourite either with the army or civilians, on account of the vexatious attention to trifles with which he managed all

affairs. It was a common thing to hear the genuine Russians, who are always jealous of the favour shown to Germans by the court, say: "how could it be expected that a *German pedant* should effect anything in the Caucasus. Since the new plan of operations, that had been decreed after the journey of inspection of the Minister of War had failed in its results, and it was quite clear that Neidhardt and Gurko were not equal to their post, the new decision of the Emperor was anticipated with the greatest anxiety. A few thought that Jermoloff would be now restored to the command of the army, though he was older, and the ingratitude shown to his eminent services, had broken his health. Others thought that the Minister of War, Prince Tschernitscheff, would take into his own hands the immediate direction of the Circassian affairs.

The appointment of the most popular man in Russia to the command of the army, and the supreme Government of all the provinces, from the Pruth to the Araxes, was a surprise to every one. The Emperor handed over dictatorial powers to Count Woronzoff, in ruling the Caucasian territory. This nobleman has

authority over the life and death of the natives, he can appoint or degrade an *employé* up to the sixth rank in the army of the Caucasus without referring to the Emperor; he can distribute rewards and decorations, according to his own good pleasure, and can hand over functionaries and officials to judgment, of his own accord. In this instance, the Emperor has given up a great part of his autocratic power to his servant. Such an instance is almost unexampled in Russian history. Even Prince Paskewitsch in Poland, is not invested with any authority approaching to that of Woronzoff. This nobleman was, at the same time, confirmed in his post as Governor of Little Russia, a territory exceeding the united surface of Germany, France and England. No Russian grandee has possessed so much power since Potemkin, the all powerful favourite of Catherine, who peopled Siberia with Boyards.

It is a very prevalent opinion, even in Russia, that the noble house of Woronzoff is one of the oldest Boyard families, and is descended from that family of counts, which played such an important part in the fifteenth century.

Prince Peter Dolgorouki, who has made careful inquiries into the Russian noble families, contradicts this in the most decided manner, in his "*Notices sur les principales familles de la Russie.*" That old family of Boyards, became extinct in the year 1576, as Dolgorouki proves from the archives of the state. Amongst the ancestors of the present family, no member is mentioned in Russian history, before the time of Gabriel Woronzoff, who fell in 1678, at the siege of Tschirigin. This nobleman had three grandsons, Roman, Michael, and Ivan. Michael Woronzoff was a man of remarkable manly beauty, and was in favour with the Empress Elizabeth, who named him her State-Chancellor, and who obtained for him a diploma of Count of the Holy Roman Empire, from Charles VII, in 1714.

He was a long time a favourite of the Empress, who married him to one of her cousins, Anna Skavronski. Michael Woronzoff had no male issue, but he succeeded in obtaining from the Empress, that the title of Count of the Roman Empire should devolve on both his brothers consecutively. Count Roman had two sons, Alexander and Simon, who both

raised themselves to the highest offices. The first was a Chancellor of the Empire, under Catherine ; Count Simon was Ambassador to London. Prince Michael Woronzoff, Commander-in-chief in the Caucasus, is the son of the latter. He received his first education in England, where his father, after losing the post of ambassador, lived as an exile, during the rule of the Emperor Paul. When Alexander ascended the throne, his confiscated property was restored to him. Michael Woronzoff, ever since his youth, has retained a great partiality for English society and the English language, but he shows a mixture of the English and French character in his manner and address. Nor can we doubt that he is indebted to the land of freedom for the humane and noble-hearted spirit which distinguishes him from all other Russian grandees ; for there is no other model of these qualities in Russia. In fact, he does not attempt to disguise his affection for English manners and institutions.

We do not purpose here to give a comprehensive biography of this remarkable man ; we only propose to give a sketch of his person and of his administration in the south of Russia, where

we beheld him a few years ago. Russian pens have already portrayed his former military services in the Caucasus, where he began his career, in the war of 1812 to 1814, against France, and in the last campaign against the Turks, when he took Varna. The laurels he won in the field do not, however, cast into the shade his services as a statesman. As successor of the highly respected Duke of Richelieu as Governor in Southern Russia, he had no slight task before him. Richelieu had acquired a lasting fame by his administration of Southern Russia, and especially by the advantages he had conferred on Odessa, a city that sprang up with wonderful rapidity under his fostering care, and where his name was almost deified. The beginning of the *European* importance of Odessa, dates from his administration. Woronzoff has continued the work of his predecessor, but on a still more magnificent scale. Not only did the trade of all sea-ports between Odessa and Taganrog increased amazingly under his administration, but he even founded new towns on the coast, and devoted the greater part of the income (which amounts to 1,200,000 paper roubles) to improve the

state of cultivation in the Crimea, which had been hitherto much neglected. Jalta, on the sea-coast of the Crimea, and Perdjansk, on the Sea of Azof, were founded by him. Perdjansk reckoned, in the year 1843, after it had been in existence scarcely five years, almost 6000 inhabitants, and is at the present moment one of the most important harbours in Russia for the exportation of corn. All the wheat from the steppes of the Maloschna, proceeding from the villages of the Malokani, and the flourishing colonies of the German Mermonites, is conveyed to Perdjansk. The whole sea-coast of the Crimea, from Balaklava to Sudagh, a distance of more than a hundred versts, which formerly was almost a wilderness, was converted into a blooming garden by the stimulus of his example.

The Count caused several thousand vines to be brought from Germany, France, and Spain, and distributed them gratuitously among the colonists and proprietors. The cultivation of vines, which was previously almost unknown in that region, has, since then, made such remarkable progress, that the amount of wine annually produced in the Crimea, is able to

supply half the requirements of the empire. Unfortunately, the present difficulty of transport, and the preference of rich Russians for wines of foreign growth, are still obstacles, impeding the spread of this cultivation.

Many Russian noblemen, being stimulated by the example of Woronzoff, bought estates on the Crimean coast, and built splendid castles there, and laid out broad parks. Amongst them, we must especially notice Potocki, Narischkin, Mordvinoff, Gallitzin, Witt, Gagarin, Rajewski, and others. At present, there is one continuous series of chateaux and estates from Aj-Petri to Ajudagh. One of the most splendid properties, Oreanda, belongs to the Dowager Empress of Russia, who has caused a most magnificent palace to be erected there.

Though not nearly so highly endowed by nature as the enchanting district of Mingrelia, the sea-coast of the Crimea has become the most habitable and agreeable part of the whole Russian Empire, by the assistance of art, and by landscape-gardening on an extensive scale, which unites the two objects of utility and embellishment. Woronzoff himself has laid out the handsomest estate. It bears the name of

Alupka, and is situated at the foot of Aj-Petri, whose grey rocks tower above the castle in the background, presenting the most picturesque forms. Oreanda, the property of the Empress, is situated a few versts more to the eastward. The chateau of Alupka is built in the Gothic style, the material consisting entirely of greenstone, and it was planned by an English architect. The internal arrangements combine English comfort with French elegance.

The building was not quite completed in the year 1843, although the Count had already inhabited the chateau for several years, during the summer months. The environs of Odessa are proverbially bare and tedious, and the heat and dust are insupportable in summer. But the Count loves the beauties of nature, and rural tranquillity, and appeared always happy, when his affairs allowed him to leave Odessa, and to remove to Alupka. In the summer of 1842, public duties had detained him unusually long at St. Petersburg, much against his inclination; nor does he attempt to disguise his antipathy to St. Petersburg life. He only returned to the Crimea in October, and his arrival, as usual, occasioned a most

pleasurable excitement amongst the population. He was saluted, on all hands, as the head of his large public family, and this child-like love, which the lowest and most indigent class experiences for him in the highest degree, is really not an empty name, it springs from the inmost heart, and whoever has seen the Count, in the midst of the people, and has witnessed the manner in which he receives petitions, listens to complaints, and endeavours, on all hands, to afford relief, will not for a moment countenance the idea that this is mere display, either on the part of this noble personage, in whom a magnanimous character seems a gift of nature, or on that of the poor people, whose moist eyes quietly proclaim their gratitude to their benefactor.

Late in the autumn of the year 1843, I was seated in the large dining-hall of the Chateau of Alupka, in a society in which the plain black coat of the civilian predominated over epaulettes and laced uniforms, a circumstance which is a rarity in the assemblies of the higher classes in Russia. The splendid and spacious apartments of this chateau dazzled

the eyes of Herr Koch to such an extent, that he says: "I should only wish to dine in the hall at Alupka, if I were a king or a hero." The company, when I was there, consisted of sixty invited guests, chiefly landed proprietors of the neighbourhood, stewards and physicians; but though none of us were either kings or heroes, a right royal repast was served up to us. The unembarrassed cheerfulness of the company, and the kindness of the noble host, gave the principal zest to the repast, which consisted of somewhat plain dishes; Crimean wines alone appearing on the table, the harsh and sharp taste of which is not of the most fragrant bouquet. Woronzoff sat at the centre of the table, between the two Princesses Gallitizin. A correspondent of the "Allgemeine Zeitung," at Tiflis, once observed that Woronzoff is the handsomest man in Russia, after the Emperor Nicholas. He is, in fact, almost as tall as that Emperor, of the same graceful form, and broad chest; a particularly vigorous old man, if a man past sixty ought to be called so. His beautiful countenance, and very healthy complexion, are heightened in effect

by his snow-white hair. A remarkable and noble mien speaks clearly out of his large eyes, and is imprinted on his broad and capacious forehead. Majesty, benevolence and cheerfulness form the most prominent characteristics of his physiognomy, whilst his bearing bespeaks repose and confidence; nature has, moreover, conferred on Woronzoff a dignity which has evidently marked him out for a distinguished part in life. You recognize, at the first glance, in his whole personality, a man of the world and a statesman, but without any study to display, or create an effect. He exercises a peculiar personal superiority and influence over all who surround him. He is tranquil and natural in conversation, never hunts after choice expressions, but even the most ordinary word appears, in his mouth, to attain an impress of significance, so that every one involuntarily listens to him. The conversation at table was directed, on that occasion to the most common-place generalities, and yet each guest listened to it with as much interest as if he had been present at a great intellectual entertainment.

Michael Woronzoff is one of the largest

landed proprietors in Russia. He has forty thousand serfs, of whom only a few reside at Alupka and Massandra, the greater number being on his estates in the interior. The Count has always devoted especial attention to the condition of these peasants, he would be so glad to see them all well off and happy, and he is, moreover, regarded as one of the adherents of the unconditional emancipation of the serfs. It may be here asked, why, if he entertain such sentiments, does he not enfranchise his forty thousand slaves. This, however, would exceed his power, for an emancipation of the masses in Russia is impossible. This could only be tolerated, under the condition that the serfs of Woronzoff should become crown serfs, or, in other words, serfs of the Emperor. In this case, the Count would lose half his income without essentially improving the condition of the peasants. But he gives their freedom to many individual serfs, who then cause their names to be inscribed in some commercial guild. I saw at Alupka, a freedman of this description, who had made a considerable fortune by trade and speculation, but who would not leave the neighbourhood of the Count, and

persisted in serving him, so much did he love his old master. He furnished materials for building the castle, and he still wore the long beard of the serfs. On one occasion, he was required to promise the Count to shave his beard. He resisted a long time, but at length consented to do so.

“It shall be done,” he said, “the next time your Excellency comes to Alupka.”

The time arrived, and not without many sighs, and sorely against the will of his better half, Ivan sacrificed the splendid forest of hair on his chin. His face, however, was so altered by this process, that the Count no longer recognized him. I, myself, witnessed the scene, when the faithful, but now beardless retainer appeared before his lord, and the latter broke forth into the heartiest laughter, when Ivan disclosed who he was.

Whoever is acquainted with the humane spirit of the Governor of New Russia, would be disposed to think that the serfs of Woronzoff must actually be as happy as free peasants in other countries. But it is a curse attending every reprehensible institution that the good intentions of one single man, who attempts

to mitigate their barbarity, in many cases only converts them into more terrible scourges. So long as Woronzoff does not succeed in imprinting his philanthropic spirit, even on those most intimate with him, no reform of a radical description is possible. He has severely prohibited ill-usage of the serfs, and yet beating goes on as much on his estates as on any others.

The following occurrence took place a short time before my arrival in the Crimea. The upper steward at Alupka and Massandra, is a pensioned officer, Colonel Jarnizki. This man has some good qualities, but being extremely addicted to paroxysms of passion, he caused one of the serfs to receive a hundred blows with rods, under the influence of one of these fits. The victim cast himself at the feet of Countess Woronzoff, and complained of Jarnizki. The Countess caused the officer to be summoned, upbraided him bitterly, and warned him seriously not to repeat such an act again. Jarnizki bowed, promised to do all he could to prevent it, and ordered the peasant to appear before him.

“Fellow, thou hast dared to accuse me! Give him instantly five hundred strokes, and if

thou darest to open thy mouth, I will have thee beaten to death !”

The punishment is said to have been punctually inflicted, and every complaint was silenced for the future. At all events, such was the story told me. The Count once visited the new hospital at Jalta. He went from bed to bed, and found a serf of Baroness Bergheim suffering severely in the back. The surgeon attempted to deceive the Count with the assurance that the man was suffering from a syphilitic eruption ; but the bearded peasant broke out into a complaining howl, and related that he had been dreadfully beaten, and had not been able to move a limb for weeks. The matter was carefully inquired into, and the statement of the serf was found to be correct. Leschmad, the German steward of the estate of Baroness Bergheim, who had personally inflicted the punishment, was delivered up to judgment, which condemned him to be beaten, after an imprisonment of several months.

The saying of the Count, that a man who half killed his peasant with beating, deserved the whip himself, had great weight with the judges, who would, otherwise, have preferred to

let Leschmad slip through their fingers. It was ordered that the punishment should be inflicted without any mitigation. At this intelligence, all the proprietors and overseers of serfs in the Crimea were roused into opposition against the Count, and the influential Count Potocki, the proprietor of Livadia, succeeded in obtaining the acquittal of Leschmad, through his wealthy connections. The occurrence appeared to me quite peculiar. To my great astonishment, all my acquaintances in the Crimea, took part against the Count in the affair, though justice was evidently on his side.

The condemnation of Leschmad appeared to them an unheard-of act of tyranny, whilst not an individual uttered a word of compassion for the poor peasant in the hospital, who had been beaten within an inch of his life. It is the ordinary result of the long continuation of such a system of slavery, that even men who usually appear gentle and amiable in society, become easily accustomed to practise unmeasured severity towards their serfs, and entirely lose sight of the idea, that a peasant is destined by God to enjoy the same rights of humanity as themselves.

The Tartars form seven-eighths of the population of the Crimea, and they are reckoned as constituting a part of the crown serfs. They love their governor, the Emperor's vice-gerent, who steps into their huts like a father, and whose ear is open to all their wants and complaints. The Tartars are happily situated, if we compare their lot with that of the noble's serfs and crown serfs in the interior of Russia. Yet the honest intention of the Governor-general to protect them against their oppressors, the subordinate *employés*, the tax-gatherers and police-inspectors, is insufficient to accomplish its aim. It would be necessary for a Woronzoff to multiply himself a thousandfold, effectually to carry out his wishes.

On the whole, he meets with but little support from his subordinates; yet there are some men who act up to his spirit, and who are upright, and incorruptible. Amongst these is Knäsewitsch, president of the Board of Finances at Simpheropol, a man who has been most useful, and also the present Governor of the Crimea, Pestel, who endeavours to repair the faults of his predecessors in that post. It is a remarkable fact, that in every place where Woronzoff shows

himself, all the *employés* of the country fulfil their duties zealously and conscientiously, *so long as the Governor-general remains on the spot*. On his birthday, which he celebrates regularly, he invites numerous guests to his castle, including even common gardeners and Tartars, together with Russian princes, and the most eminent functionaries. Even the serfs have a holyday along the whole coast. Such a spectacle is almost unique in Russia, and I was delighted to witness it. The musicians at the *château* consisted of gipsies. Waltzes and mazurkas were danced; the wine made this motley society merry and animated. It happened on one occasion that the Count was thrown down by his German gardener, Kabach, whilst dancing; the gipsies, terrified at the accident, ceased to blow, the fiddle-bows remained silent in the hands of the fiddlers, and the guilty gardener wished to cast himself at the feet of his master. But the latter rose up quietly from the ground, and smiling, presented his hand to his servant, with the words: "The blame attaches to me, I ought to have got out of the way of such impetuous dancers. Proceed merrily as before, and take my wife as your

partner, only be careful that the same accident does not occur to her as to me!" The most unembarrassed cheerfulness prevailed in this mixed assembly, consisting of the highest nobility; and lower middle class. The serfs were, meanwhile, carousing jollily outside the château. I was especially interested in observing the bearing of the noble host amidst the joyous tumult, and in seeing what evident delight he took in the pleasure of the people, and how his countenance brightened with a happy gaiety. The looks of most present were perpetually directed to him, and followed him wherever he went. It is a luxury to see a great man!

Those who were acquainted with his character, were not surprised that Count Woronzoff should assume the heavy burthen attaching to the office of Commander-in-chief of the Caucasus. He had always a great partiality for the east in general, and the Caucasus in particular. He had learnt to know the chivalrous sons of the mountains in his youth; it is even related, that he had often fought individually with them, rather to familiarize himself with their skill in managing the sword, than from any sanguinary motive. He had carefully attended to all the

phases of the war in the Caucasus, and he always expressed the greatest sympathy for the events in that quarter. Even during the stay of Marshal Marmont in Southern Russia, the Caucasus had been the subject of daily conversation between them. Those who had the opportunity of closely observing the Count, for years, in his daily duties and avocations at Odessa, were of opinion, that though he took great interest in the *employés*, the cultivation of the land, the commercial relation &c., of his provinces, still his powerful mind found there no adequate field for his activity, and that he aimed at a larger and more important theatre. They were of opinion, that the proper post and suitable sphere for such a man, would be that of Governor-general of Turkey, after the conquest of Constantinople.

. They affirmed that no person was so well adapted as Michael Woronzoff, at once, to impose on the Orientals, and to conciliate their affections, to reconcile the Turks to the Russian yoke, the contradictions between Christendom and Islam, and between the West and the East. I have heard, more than once, Russians who enthusiastically admire him, speak in

this manner of the Count, and whoever has seen what the Count has effected in the Crimea, might be inclined to coincide in these views. But it is not probable that the undertaking of governing Constantinople will fall to the lot of any Russian now living. Russia has still to digest the conquests of Catherine, and, until Poland and the Caucasus are more effectually Russianized, a Russian Emperor will scarcely stretch forth his hand in earnest for a booty, whose maintenance might easily cost him more blood than all the previous conquests of Russia put together.

Meanwhile, the Emperor has allotted to Count Woronzoff an undertaking which is possibly less attractive than the governorship of the Bosphorus, but which is decidedly as comprehensive, and, if successfully carried out, will be no less honourable. Woronzoff was commissioned to avenge the honour of the Russian arms, which had been seriously compromised by Grabbe, Klucke, and Neidhardt; he was to subjugate or pacify the independent and hostile races; he was to confer on the peaceable and oppressed population of Trans-Caucasia the same blessings of an upright, gentle, and honest

administration, as he had previously attempted, and partly succeeded in effecting, in the Tartar countries of Southern Russia. Lastly, he was required to purify the Augean stable of corruption and cheating, which had increased to a fearful extent, to the great injury of the army, of the treasury, and of the community in the Caucasian provinces.

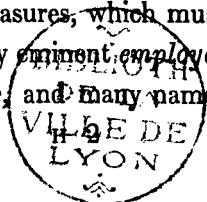
To effect the latter purpose, the Emperor conferred dictatorial powers on his Viceroy. The first aim of Woronzoff, in his new sphere, was to avenge the defeat at Itschkeri, and restore the respect of the natives for the Russian military power, which had been shaken. His well-matured and comprehensive expedition through Andy to the heart of the mountains and forests of Great Tschetschina was bloody, and accomplished with heavy losses; nevertheless, it was crowned with success, for Dargo, the residence and retreat of Schamyl, was captured and destroyed, and the magazines collected at that spot were delivered up to the flames.

Woronzoff was raised to the dignity of Prince, and had an interview with the Emperor Nicholas, at Sevastopol, shortly afterwards. What transpired between them has, of course,

never been disclosed ; but it was affirmed at that time at Tiflis, where certain well-informed circles supposed they had a good knowledge of the Count's views, plans, and wishes, that Woronzoff had become convinced, on a closer examination of the Caucasian relations, and of the seat of war, that it was, humanly speaking, impossible to subdue or tranquillize the Eastern Caucasus speedily, but that it was an affair of time and perseverance. It was added, that he had strongly dissuaded the Emperor from great expeditions, though Nicholas, after the fall of Unzula, and the devastation of Aranda, had suddenly reverted to the pugnacious counsels of some of his generals. Instead of this, Woronzoff proposed another system, combining a line of kreposts, with moveable columns, so as to adopt defensive or offensive measures against the tribes living nearest the forts, according to circumstances.

Still, the Prince thought that the success of even this system was a gradual affair of a consecutive nature, in which no change or alteration must be admitted. He maintained that mighty Russia, by summoning all her strength and resources, was unequal to overcome the Cau-

casus at one stroke, but that it was quite capable of reducing the enemy to obedience by exhaustion. It was farther asserted, at Tiflis, that the Prince had often declared that radical reforms were indispensable in the army and the civil service, and that, in order to give the Emperor a thorough insight into the state of the case, he had disclosed to him all the crying malpractices, the whole history of the incredible system of corruption and thieving among the *employés*, which he had elicited from the reports of conscientious men, commissioned to examine into the affair. The Czar had already detected something similar; for example, by means of the senator Hahn, whom he had sent twice into the Caucasus, to examine into the Trans-Caucasian administration. The Czar had also given two examples of punishment, in the case of Baron Rosen, and General Prince Dadian, who had been degraded to the rank of private soldiers. Yet it required the authority of a man like Woronzoff, and the confidence inspired by his noble character, to move the monarch to adopt radical measures, which must of necessity compromise many eminent *employés* in the army and civil service, and many names



belonging to the high nobility. Nevertheless, the Emperor agreed to all the conditions of the Prince, and gave him unlimited authority to do what he thought necessary.

We have ascertained, through private but trustworthy sources, that an immense change has been wrought, since that time, in the Caucasian provinces. An undertaking, which was by many thought to exceed the power of man, has been partially accomplished; the Augæan stable of corruption and cheating has been partially cleansed. Hundreds of *employés* and officers have been removed from their posts, many were handed over to justice, including two staff-officers of the highest rank, who are to await their verdict and punishment at St. Petersburg. Most district officers and functionaries were driven from their posts, having richly deserved their fate by a shameless fleecing of the natives. Though their successors may not be imbued with better principles, yet the fear which has come over all functionaries in the Caucasus, will deter them from following the same path as their predecessors. Woronzoff has displayed, in his new organization of the country, an energy and a relentless se-

verity against delinquents, of which he had hardly been supposed capable, after his mild rule in Southern Russia ; for, there, he was accused of too much gentleness, too many scruples, and too great magnanimity ; he often hesitated to let culprits endure all the severity of the law. But his new position, and the unbounded confidence shown him by the Emperor in investing him with dictatorial power, appear to have increased the firmness of his character. Woronzoff has attempted a wiser system than all his predecessors in connection with the Circassians, by making large presents and annual donations to the most influential chieftains, by granting considerable commercial advantages to the mountaineers in the Russian markets on the Black Sea and in the Kouban, and by placing no impediments in the way of their slave trade with the coasts of Asiatic Turkey.

A great influence in tranquillising the warlike tribes on the Kouban was effected by his personal appearance at Ekaterinodar, where most of the chiefs from the left bank met him in conference. His lofty and imposing figure, the dignity and amiable majesty of the Russian commander, could not fail to make an impression on those

chivalrous men, who hold external advantages in very high esteem. The great tribe of the Temirgowzi was first won over, and settled down on the Laba, under the guns of the Russian fortresses. Their example was followed by the Beslanejewzi and the Mohoschewzi. At length, even the numerous powerful clan of the Abaseck, reckoning 20,000 warriors, tendered its allegiance. Even the Shapsooks, the chief enemies of the Russians on the Kouban, sent an envoy to Prince Woronzoff, and are at present pouring down in large bodies to the market of Ekaterinodar.

On the Black Sea, the Ubiches and Dschigeths alone appear to retain their old and desperate hatred of the Russians, and to persevere in blockading Gagra, Ardler, and Pitzunda. It must be candidly confessed that the Russian Commander-in-chief purchased the peaceful attitude of the Circassians at the present time, by concessions, which leave a faint hope for the future success of the Russian cause. For these people gain money by the commercial privileges granted them; and an unimpeded intercourse with Samsun and Sinope, secures them a supply of ammunition. Hence the

present tranquillity by no means advances the real subjugation of Circassia ; and the Russians have not advanced a single step in their position on the Euxine and the Kouban. The greatest advantage which they derive from this inactivity of the Circassians, is the prosperity of the Cossack settlements on the right bank of the Kouban, which have severely suffered from the incursions of the mountaineers for half a century. This tranquillity in the Western Caucasus also allows the Russians to concentrate all their military resources in the East. Woronzoff has arrived at the conclusion that negotiations for peace are a loss of time with the fanatical tribes of Daghestan, Lesghistan, and the Tschetschina ; and he has adopted against them a system widely differing from preceding ones. By pushing on the Cossack population from the Terek to the Sundscha, by increasing the stanitzas and outposts there, by endeavouring to thin the woods, and founding a new line of forts and block-houses on the south side of the mountain chain of Andy, and on the banks of the Sulak, he shows distinctly that his plan is evidently to separate the different tribes, to cut off Great Tschetschina to the north from Little

Tschetschina, as well as from Daghestan and Lesghistan to the east and south, and to inclose that focus of the enemy in narrow limits. Schamyl easily detected the danger that threatened him from this system, and his venturesome incursion into Kabardah appears to have been chiefly intended to remove the theatre of war to a more remote district, to occupy the Russians elsewhere, and to give breathing time to the tribes on the right bank of the Sundscha. General Freitag, on whom the Prince has conferred the command of the left wing, operates constantly in the spirit of the system, with circumspection and perseverance. Sudden and splendid results cannot be anticipated from it; but it is probably the most suitable system of operations which can be followed in that region.

The most comprehensive and beneficial measure for which Trans-Caucasia is indebted to Prince Woronzoff, is the suspending of the Russian customs and tolls in favour of all the provinces to the south of the Caucasus. By this act, he has conciliated the friendship of the whole population, and especially the Armenians, through whose hands the whole transit trade

between Persia and Europe used commonly to pass. The rejoicing at Tiflis on account of this measure was boundless. It is reasonably anticipated that this capital of Georgia will now recover a portion of its ancient commercial importance; and that the former prosperity of these impoverished provinces will be in some measure restored. The establishment of a line of steam-boats between Redout-Kaleh and Constantinople, through Trebizond, will be probably the immediate result of the abrogation of this impolitic preventive system; and the wholesale smuggling trade on the Araxes must be shortly put an end to.

PART II.

GEORGIA, MINGRELIA, AND IMERITIA.

CHAPTER I.

From the Crimea to Georgia—The Trans-Caucasian Metropolis
and its Curiosities.

THE passengers of the *Argo*, those adventurous heroes, who, armed with the sword and lyre, steered in the grey dawn of history, over the stormy Pontus, to the magic shores of Trans-Caucasia, can scarcely have felt a more ardent desire to explore the mysteries of Colchis, and the golden shores of the Phasis and Rion, than was experienced in later times, by two travellers by the Russian mail, represented by the Author of this book and his Hungarian companion. Nor was it without considerable self-denial, that they had turned their backs in the winter season, to the shores of the Crimea, endeared to all

acquainted with it by the hospitable character of its natives and residents, and to the scholar and historian, by the touching episodes of two virgins immortalized in the muse of Euripides, Göthe and Puschkin. And though the habits of a wandering life may mitigate the sorrows of separation by frequent repetition, the heart must be cold that can leave unmoved, a land inhabited by noble and generous friends, where you have found the heartiest welcome, and been received, not only as a countryman, but even as a relative. Yet a glowing prospect attracted us across the Euxine, and we left in fond anticipation of scientific conquests, in the paradise of Trans-Caucasia.

Our objects were Grusia! Imeritia! Colchis! —the original home of the vine, the abode of lovely women, the cradle of magic, of disinterested love and of revenge, the wondrous land of the Heliad races, celebrated by the lyre of Grecian bards! It was there that we hoped to find some compensation for the grief we felt at leaving the Crimea. I was already familiar with the features of Trans-Caucasia, through the descriptions of two learned and inquiring

travellers, Nordmann and Stevens, and had received much information from General Rajeroski and other cultivated Russians, whose accounts were more reliable than the gleanings of ephemeral tourists from the west. I had also enjoyed the perusal of the private correspondence of the Russian naturalist, Szowich, whose love for the magic woodland life in Colchis, was stronger than death! When the aged Stevens disclosed to me at Simpheropol, the treasures he had gathered in sturdier years, in the groves and wilds of Georgia, I was seized with, at least, an equal appetite for gain to that which inflamed the Argonauts, whilst braving the terrors of the deep and the charms of the Syrens, in search of the Golden Fleece. At length, unable to resist the roving impulse any longer, we quitted the sweets of repose and the hearth and board of our Crimean friends, and hurried across the straits of Kertch and the Caucasus, with its thousand peaks, in the inclement month of February.

After passing the watershed of the streams, pouring down the southern declivity of the mountains, we descended the course of the

Aragus, and entered the valleys of Georgia. I was impressed with the historic memories of its past, and the radiant beauties which it has retained in all ages. Its lovely landscapes have remained, whilst all human handy-work has well nigh disappeared; the ancient Colchian civilization, the brilliant and flourishing colonies have vanished, with the race of the Heliades, and like the mysterious monarchy of King Aetes, they only glimmer faintly through history, and through the night of ages as a myth.

It was a cloudy day in March, when we first hailed the land of Grusia. At that period, I was not sufficiently familiar with the Caucasian climate, to appreciate the difference of temperature and scenery, under the same degree of latitude, in spots separated from each other by an elevation of 2000 feet. We were approaching the valley of the Kur, which does not properly belong to Colchis, and my young comrade seemed, like myself, surprised and disappointed, looking in vain for the eternal spring, the flowery carpet, the deep azure heavens, celebrated by the Caucasian bards, to the sounds of the Balalaika.* Not a vestige of

* A kind of lute.

these charms was discernible. On the contrary, our eyes were greeted with a dismal, murky sky, whilst an icy blast whistled in our ears, almost more roughly than the Boreas of the Taurian steppes. The scenery presented leafless trees, and flowerless fields, alternately with bald rocky mountains. Such were the first prospects, that we encountered in entering Georgia. But when to the south of Makhetha, the woods gradually disappeared altogether, whilst the mountains became still more bald, and the immediate vicinity of Tiflis, was covered with a comfortless mantle of snow, my young companion lost all patience, and exclaimed in accents of despair, why did we not await the spring at Simpheropol! there we were at all events, warm, dry and comfortable, whilst here we shall be in want of everything, and as regards botany and etymological research, I fear we shall have a long holiday.

The lamentations of my friend waxed fainter, as we reached the suburb of Tiflis by twilight, and after we had experienced a foretaste of that variegated picture, which burst upon us, in all its magnificence and wonder on the morrow. Our chief business, for the moment,

consisted in securing a good shelter, and a dry receptacle for our luggage, a tiresome necessity to all naturalists travelling in the East. My letters of introduction at Tiflis, were directed to distinguished Russian noblemen, whom I could not importune about lodging hunting. The Russian hotel, was full of strangers. Former travellers, including the Swiss Dubois, speak in high terms of their entertainment at the quarters of Herr Salzmann, a rich German settler, who possesses several capacious houses on the Sand, a faubourg of Tiflis. Yet a friend in the Crimea, had cautioned me against him, adding, "Salzmann is an intrigant, a sycophant, a tuft hunter. He would not scruple to serve the secret police, in order to secure a Tschin, the great object of his ambition. He has not a German heart, every drop of his blood is Russified." I was so frequently and strongly warned to beware of this man, that contrary to my usual practice, I was led to view a stranger in an unfavourable light.

Near the Russian hotel, amidst the crowd of ragged but picturesque Georgians, my eye fastened on the goodly, well-fed proportions of a man whose phlegmatic, but good-humoured

face, and negligent attire, bespoke him to be a German and a Suabian. In fact, I discovered that he was a turner, from Wurtemberg, settled twenty years in the East; who being the only man of the trade at Tiflis, had secured a monopoly in his ornamental work; and besides turning sundry other articles, had managed to turn out half-a-dozen flaxen urchins, who were as like their sire, in ruddy cheeks, appetite, and phlegmatic ways, as the suckling pig to its papa pig. I unburdened my sorrows to this worthy man; and as he had a room to spare, notwithstanding his long family, and was in decided want of ready money, he agreed, gladly, and at once, to receive me and the Hungarian under his roof.

We took possession of our new quarters the same evening; and after regaling our postillion with a *douceur* and brandy, and strengthening our own stomachs with pilaf and kewab, we issued forth to inspect the Caucasian capital. A traveller who has lived several years among Orientals, and has visited some hundreds of their cities, cannot feel the same interest in Eastern life, its magic and poetry, the picturesque and variegated costumes, and the beauty

or grace of the natives, as the man fresh from the prose and monotony of the West. Yet there were so many curiosities and novelties in Tiflis, and the half Persian, half Oriental Christian character of the people, in features, dress, and customs, was so eccentric, even to me, that I stared almost as astonished as my predecessors, who had, perhaps, seen less of the East. The approach of night soon put an end to our stroll. Tiflis is as yet unprovided with a gasometer, which might display the majestic spectacle of its rocky panorama, and the theatrical character of its population, in that enchanted light which makes the streets and squares of Paris and Venice still more fairy-like by night than by day. Yet the introduction of these showy effects of civilization may be more speedily anticipated in the Asiatic provinces of Russia, than the establishment of a just, enlightened and incorruptible administration.

To light a town with gas, only requires a round sum in silver roubles, which the gorgeous tastes of the Russian nobles make of small account. But a strong hand, and a stern will from above, even if they existed in a much

greater degree than is usual on the Imperial throne, would not suffice to kindle the light of intelligence, the fire of humanity, of patriotism, and of honour, in the hearts and heads of the Russian Tschinovniks.

The morning after our arrival, though the sky was still partially veiled with its cloudy canopy, the sun favoured us twice with its appearance, shining brilliantly through breaks in the mist, and proclaiming its Orient glories. I climbed up the nearest rocks and knolls, to obtain a general survey of the city. There are several elevations of this nature close to Tiflis; but none of them appeared to me so advantageously situated as the marl-slate hill, on the left bank of the Kur, which rises above the suburb of the Sand. This hill is crowned by some large barracks, painted yellow. From this point, the eye embraces the complete circuit of the capital of Georgia, which is seen in as great perfection as the city of Rome from San Pietro di Montorio, or the majestic Prague from the Hradschin. With its houses grouped like an amphitheatre; its fortresses, churches, chapels, and palaces; and the mighty stream

whose waters, unfortunately, are neither azure blue, nor emerald green, but of a very un-æsthetical and muddy colour, and which sweeps through the city with a rapid current. With these accidents and accompaniments, Tiflis presents a picture that will reward the traveller for a journey of eight hundred miles.

The Georgian metropolis is situated in a basin, inclosed by bald and rather steep mountains, which, being rent asunder to the eastward, by a plutonic eruption, displacing the porphyritic rocks of which they consist, have presented a narrow channel for the waters of the Kur; whereas, to the northward, a wide and distant horizon opens before you, embracing the splendid background of the great Caucasian chain. About the centre of the range, and conspicuous above the other summits, by its towering crags, which assume the form of a camel's hump, the Kasbek stands forth as a Goliath among the icy giants which lift their huge, snow-laden backs above the mists. The amphitheatre of the city ascends at first gradually, and afterwards more abruptly from the north-west to the south-east. In the fore-

ground, extends the suburb of Awlabar, built on the left bank of the river, partly inhabited by German artizans, and crowded with carts, merchandize, and logs of timber, used to construct rafts. On the opposite side of the Kur, the mass of houses constituting the old town, rise in a gentle slope, many of them having grass-grown terraces instead of roofs.

Occasionally you see the solemn form of a Georgian woman, wrapt in a veil, and reminding you of the statues of Roman priestesses, and beside her a goat or sheep cropping the grass, and looking like the victim intended for sacrifice. In the level part of the city, the newly erected public and private buildings, present an imposing appearance. The roofs are often party-coloured, commonly green and red; but straw-colour appears to be the favourite tint of the Russians, and though this dull colour is not very attractive when viewed close at hand, it has a smiling lively look when seen at a distance, especially where these modern Russian buildings are surrounded by dirty brown Armenian and Georgian houses. The barracks are na-

turally the largest and most imposing of the new structures. In a great military empire like Russia, quarters for soldiers are the most essential to secure the prevailing system, and their staring, monotonous walls strike the eye on all sides wherever the Russian eagle has made its nest, even before the green domes of the Greco-Russian churches, whose priests are, next to bayonets and bureaucracy, the most solid supports of the Russian system. The residence of the Russian Governor-general, which stands on the site of the ancient royal palace of Georgia, does not exhibit a degree of splendour proportioned to the dignity of an official, who exercises unlimited authority over a territory larger than Germany and France united. Amongst the more ancient edifices, the churches are only distinguished for their size and their quaint, rather than picturesque forms. Their cupolas, instead of presenting the usual curve, have a pointed and conical shape—a peculiarity of the Armeno-Georgian style of architecture. These domes, rising above the surrounding and humbler edifices, in vast and solid masses, resemble massive spires, and the variegated

colours with which they are painted, contribute not a little in throwing into relief the foreign looking and eccentric stone figures with which the buildings are decorated or disfigured. In proportion as the houses climb the declivity of Mount Solalaki, the scene increases in magnificence, through the diversity of the architecture. The forts and barracks, churches, and chapels, bazaars and caravanserais, gain immensely in picturesque effect, owing to their vast magnitude and exposed position, and owing to the amphitheatrical grouping of a part of the city.

When I compare the principal cities of the old world, renowned for the beauty of their situation, such as Constantinople, Genoa, Naples, Broussa, Prague, Salzburg, Algiers, &c., in all of which I have dwelt some time, with this view of the Georgian capital, I cannot assign the last place to Tiflis. I admit that it wants the diversified scenery of the incomparable panorama of Constantinople, the admirable distribution of its verdant shores, and of its beaming crystal waters, encircling the queen of cities with a sea of gems; nor does it boast the golden and colossal cupolas of the

Stamboul mosques ; the graceful, tapering minarets, and the cypress groves of the cemeteries, with their dim, religious twilight. Nor must we seek at Tiflis for the magic coasts of the Gulf of Naples, with its aged volcano, and the harmonious lines and colouring of Capri and Ischia, dipping into the blue bosom of the waves, and appearing as if made on purpose to delight the artist. But although Tiflis lacks the luxurious vegetation, and the imposing architecture of Broussa, as well as the thousand fountains that make merry music, as they issue from the folds of Mount Olympus ; yet the stern beauty of its rocky environs, the foreign and variegated diversity of its Oriental and European architecture, crowning the lofty banks of a wild mountain torrent, present great and manifold attractions, even surpassing, in grandeur and magnificence, the scenery of Prague, which has some resemblance to that of Tiflis, and is without a rival among the cities of Germany.

Before I pass from the hasty sketches and impressions of my journal, to a minuter description of the localities and people of Tiflis, I pause to remark that I lingered longer at

that city than in any other part of Trans-Caucasia. I made Tiflis my head-quarters, the depôt of my scientific acquisitions, and the centre of my excursions, owing to its convenient position. A few days bring you from Tiflis to Mount Ararat, to the fire-worshippers, and naphtha springs of Baku on the Caspian, to the Ossetian Alps, and the Colchian paradise on the Black Sea. Nor does any other place offer so many conveniences, as regards the facility of posting and carriage, and intercourse with cultivated men.

I determined, therefore, to secure quarters here for the whole summer, and to share the toil of exploring the country, and making collections with my Hungarian friend. The Governor-general, Herr von Neidhardt, received me as amiably as was compatible with the pedantic character of this Russo-German drill-master. He was a worthy, honest man, of unsophisticated character, just and severe; endowed with sound practical sense, but without superior talent, political penetration, or knowledge of mankind—no magnanimous character, such as Yermoloff, yet an improvement on his predecessors, Rosen and Golowin. Herr von

Neidhardt showed, on every occasion, a friendly interest in my undertakings, and acceded to most of my wishes. He gave me farther introductions, and some Cossacks were assigned to me, for escort and service. I have no cause to complain of him, nor do I wish to pass judgment on one no longer living. The Governor-general directed Herr Frederic von Kotzebue, and the Armenian, Abovian, to render me every assistance during my stay. I also made the acquaintance of two agreeable countrymen, Dr. Noth, and Herr Hake, and received all manner of civilities from Generals Kotzebue and Espejo, the General of the Don Cossacks, the Civil Governor, and the French Consul. I made daily walks through the city, sometimes alone, but commonly accompanied by the Armenian, Abovian, who spoke German like his native tongue.

If I enter here somewhat into details respecting Tiflis, I must be excused on the score of its great political and geographical importance. For it is more than probable that it will be called upon to play a greater historical part in the future, than it has ever done in the past, and that from its towers the Russian eagle will

spread its wings, and commence its conquering flight over the broad empires of Persia and Turkey.

Tiflis owes its origin to the celebrated mineral springs, which gush forth in full volume from the bowels of the earth, on the right bank of the torrent, Tsawkissi, which falls into the Kur, within the walls of the city. It is generally known, that Orientals are still more partial than Europeans to mineral waters, and place greater faith in their virtues. The town, which consisted, probably, in the first instance, of mere sheds and bath-houses, took the name of Tbilis from the springs, and the present is a corruption of the ancient appellation. Tiflis remained an insignificant village till the year 380 of our era. At that period, the Persian governor, Varza Bakur, subdued some Georgian tribes, penetrated into the valley of the Kur, and, delighted with the beauty of the spot, built a castle on the site of the baths. Seventy years afterwards, Vakhtang Gurgaslan, a Georgian prince, became the real founder of the city, and divided it into three quarters; Khalissi, the fortress; Tblissi, the town and baths; and Nissani, the present suburb of that name.

Meanwhile, the royal family of Georgia continued to dwell in its ancient residence at Mtskhetha, till A.D. 499, when King Datschi, the son of Vakhtang, removed to Tiflis. During the thirteen centuries that followed, the fate of the city shifted from splendour to misery, from prosperity to devastation. It has been, at sundry times, besieged, pillaged, and destroyed, by Persian, Tartar, and Turkish hosts, or by wild Lesghian hordes. The great conqueror, Timur, delivered it up to the fury of his soldiery; but its fate was almost more severe in the year 1795, when a Persian desperado, named Aga Mahomet Khan, occupied the Georgian city, with his Persians, Koords, and Tartars, and converted the greater part of it into a heap of ashes. Since the enduring occupation of Georgia by the Russians, Tiflis has escaped the scourge of war, and has been externally restored and improved, although the destructive Russian tolls and duties were fatal to the prosperity of the inhabitants, by stifling all commercial life and activity.

We have already observed that the mixture of Oriental and European structures, gives a very peculiar character to the town. It is

well known that eastern nations are partial to narrow, shady streets, whilst the Russians like the contrary. These contrasts are presented in many parts of Tiflis. In all parts where Russian builders have been employed, you find space, air, sun and a free prospect; whilst, wheresoever the old architecture has remained untouched, the streets and squares are narrow and dark, although not to the same extent as in genuine Moslem cities. None of the streets are particularly remarkable; but the squares of Tauris and Erivan, encompassed by modern buildings, are distinguished by their size and fine prospect, commanding the valley of the Kur and the Caucasian highlands.

But the most remarkable spot in the city, is the Market Place, which must be crossed in passing from the old to the new town. Its size is insufficient for the immense crowd of market people, with whom it is encumbered, and who consist of Armenians, Georgians, Tartars, Ossetians, Persians, Lesghians, Russians and German colonists. If you mingle with these various groups of people, you hear a complete Babel of tongues,

including the melodious idiom of Spain, which is spoken by the Oriental Jews. The strangest and most uncouth sounds occur in the dialect of the Kasi-Kumyks, which is pre-eminent, even among the wild and startling tongues of the mountaineers, for its deep gutturals and babbling labials, unattainable by the European organs of speech. Tartar forms the universal medium of intercourse between all the people of Trans-Caucasia. My companion being acquainted with Turkish, was able to communicate with the natives, whilst I was reduced to an imperfect colloquy in Russian which is, however, extensively, though superficially circulated in the country, as even the Lesghians understand the Russian numerals and the names of the Russian coins.

The well-known traveller, Hallberg, of Munich, after he had visited the Market Place with me, and had contemplated, admiringly, the immense crowd of people in every variety of picturesque costume, the camels, the foreign looking merchandize, and the variegated scenery of the place, observed to me, that he had never seen so attractive and mixed a population, either in the East or West, save at the market of Cairo. It

is also remarkable that each race brings its peculiar produce to market. Thus, the Georgians from the vicinity, contribute poultry; the Caucasian mountaineers bring game and peltry; the German colonists, vegetables and potatoes, which were almost unknown in Georgia, before their settlement there; Armenian merchants offer coarse stuffs for sale; Lesghians exhibit their burkas; Tartars deal in horses; and Russian soldiers in old clothes and boots.

One street, called the Great, runs from the Bazaar to the square of Tauris; and constitutes the main street of Tiflis, but it is unworthy, both in breadth and decoration, of a royal residence. The lower story of the houses is occupied by narrow, dirty booths, and a great part of the Georgian and Armenian operatives, may be seen working in these open booths, exposed to the public thoroughfare. Tailors, cobblers, sadlers, barbers, and gunsmiths, are especially numerous among these citizens, and the armourers' booths present the most novel and attractive appearance, exhibiting a rich assortment of kinschals, schaschkas, pistols, and firelocks, both of Georgian and Caucasian manufacture. The swords are little

inferior in temper to the celebrated blades of Schiraz and Damascus, and the sheaths, richly decorated with gold, silver, steel and satin, display more magnificence, than those of the Turks and Persians. Besides this main street, I ought to notice another insignificant lane, radiating from the Market Place, very narrow, and dirty, and adorned with a double row of dingy and smoky cook-shops, where most of the poorer market people obtain their meals.

According to a statistical estimate, the number of houses in Tiflis amounts to 3662, of which 37 belong to the government, 572 to the clergy, and the remainder to private persons. The greater number of native proprietors consist of Armenians. The most remarkable, spacious and profitable of all the buildings, are the Bazaar, and the Caravanserai. I admit, that the former, which is situated in the most animated part of the town, between the Market Place and the main street, cannot be compared with those of Constantinople, for size or diversity of merchandize, nor with that of Tauris, for the lively and entertaining character of the crowd that frequents it, but

the Bazaar of Tiflis, is superior to the former in elegance, an advantage which it owes to Russian rule. Nor has the luxurious nature of the goods exposed for sale, fallen off since the deposition of the royal Georgian dynasty. It is true that the choice of silk stuffs, shawls, carpets, &c. is not so great, as at Stamboul, and Tauris, but it presents quite as select specimens of Perso-Indian manufacture, to which the Russian nobles are just as partial as the native Georgian grandees. If you stroll through the Bazaar, which has a considerable analogy to the Passages of Paris, you are addressed and invited in Russian, in the most pressing terms, to walk in and inspect their goods, by the Armenian tradesmen, standing at the door of their shops. The contrast is indeed striking between the officious, flexible, talkative tradesmen of the Tiflis Bazaar, and the serious, dignified, silent and motionless Turks, lounging and smoking on their pillows, in the Bazaar of Constantinople. It is evident that climate and diet are not the only agents in forming and modifying national temperaments, nor can they account for this striking difference between two races, living under the same latitude.

The Caravanserai at Tiflis, is not much inferior in size, to those of the largest commercial cities of Turkey and Persia, and surpasses them in cleanliness and in a certain architectural splendour, for which we look in vain in any Eastern city. Though the influence of the Russian policy may be very oppressive in sundry matters, it has done more good than the contrary, in establishing, cleaning, and repairing the public buildings in the towns of Trans-Caucasia.

There are no fewer than forty-two churches at Tiflis, an excessive number in proportion to the population. Of these, the Gregorian Armenians possess twenty-three ; the Georgians of the Greek confession, twelve ; the Russians, four ; the Greeks proper, two ; and the Catholic Armenians, only one. The Cathedral, Sion, presenting a specimen of the purest Georgian style, is devoted to the Russian form of worship, and decorated with all the splendour which universally characterizes Russo-Greek temples, even in the steppes of the Cossacks. The foundation of the edifice dates back as far as the sixth century. The dome, which was erected by the Georgian King, Guran, was subsequently destroyed by the Persians, and only restored about

the beginning of the eighteenth century, under Vakhtang V. The church of Metekhi, which was erected as early as 455, under Vakhtang Gurgustan, the founder of Tiflis, exceeds the cathedral in antiquity and interest. This church crowns the hill above the new fortress, in the centre of that quarter of the city, called Nissani. This venerable edifice was converted into a powder magazine, by Shah-Navaz-Khan, a Mohammedan ruler of Georgia, and finally restored to the clergy, at the end of the eighteenth century, by King Heraclius II, who caused the sadly dilapidated building to be repaired. The principal church of the Gregorian Armenians, called Mognini, is inferior to the foregoing churches in antiquity, size, and internal splendour.

A Catholic church, where some Italian capuchins officiated at the time of my residence in Georgia, was distinguished by the taste and elegance of its interior decorations; though the members of the community were few in number. This church was founded by Catholic missionaries, as early as 1661. When the Persian destroyer, Aga-Mahomed-Khan, took possession of the residence of the King of Georgia, this

church shared the fate of the other christian temples ; it was handed over to pillage and only restored after the liberation of Georgia from the Persian yoke. The Catholic priests enjoyed down to 1845, the same protection under the Russian sceptre, as that which had been extended to them by the kings of Georgia, notwithstanding the difference of creed and discipline. But in the spring of 1845, these priests were suddenly directed, by an Imperial decree, to leave the country, and as they hesitated, appealing to their right of settlement in Trans-Caucasia, and to the Pope, they were dragged away in a most brutal manner under an escort of Cossacks, and by the command of the Governor-general were taken to the nearest sea-port, and thrust on board the first vessel bound for Trebizond. Their spiritual brethren at Gori and Kutais experienced the same fate. This harsh and unjust treatment excited the more surprise under a viceroy, like Herr Von Neidhardt, whose love of equity, religious toleration, and humane disposition, had been conspicuous on all other occasions. But well-informed men maintained that peremptory orders had been forwarded by the special direction of the Emperor, through the head of

the secret police, Count Benkendorff, to Herr Von Neidhardt, instructing him to expel the Catholic priests, forthwith. Besides, the previous churches, we must mention the Georgian convent of St. David, which has stood more than half a century, together with the Armenian convent of St. Stephen, almost as old as the former, founded by the family of Prince Bebutoff, and built on the hill of Avalabar. The Mohammedans have a small and elegant mosque at Tifis, belonging to the Shüte sect, and situated in the upper part of the town.

With the exception of Sundays and holidays, when attendance on Divine worship is strictly enjoined, especially on the soldiery, I commonly remarked a greater number of women than men, during service, in the Georgian and Armenian churches that I visited. Both sexes were separated. The men are nearer to the high altar ; the women stand or stoop in the background with unveiled faces, throwing the white tschadra (veil) over the head and part of the bust. A considerable number of the Armenian women have adopted Russian customs and the French costume, in which they look very well, though less imposing than in the native dress. The

only men I saw in attendance on mass during the week, were generally old, infirm and poor. The dogmas and discipline of the Georgian and Russian churches, are precisely identical and the decorations of their temple, as well as the pomp of their ceremonies are much more calculated to impress the senses, than the ornaments and worship of the Armenian Church. The high altar of the Sion cathedral is one blaze of gold, silver and variegated pictures of saints ; and the glare of the tapers dispels the natural twilight of the dome. The choristers, who are concealed behind the high altar, and who accompany the full-toned bass solos of the priest with their lovely voices, consist principally of soldiers and soldiers' children, who are trained at an early age to the duty, if they show the least natural aptitude for it. The chant of these concealed choristers pleased me more than the chorus at St. Peter's, in Rome ; though the soft soprano tones at Tiflis were neither produced by woman's voices, nor by eunuchs.

It must be admitted that the Divine service of the Russo-Greek Church is, on the whole, of a very imposing character, and well adapted

to impress the imagination and the senses, especially of the lower orders. The temple and the service combine a wealth of precious metals, and of pictorial display, united to a blaze of tapers, and the most harmonious strains; whilst the priest, who is attired in gorgeous robes, and adorned with a handsome beard and flowing locks, knows well how to conduct the service in the most striking and picturesque manner. In the Armenian churches, the display is much simpler. The wall in front of the high altar is covered with black cloth drapery, on which a white cross is worked. But here again, worship consists in mere external ceremonies, without the additions of music and ecclesiastical pomp. The snuffling, nasal song of the choristers, has far from a devotional effect. The Armenians appeared to me even greater adepts than the Russians and Georgians in making the sign of the cross. The regular prostrations during prayers, take place according to a certain measure, and, together with the bending of the head before the altar, reminded me forcibly of the Mohammedan form of worship.

Generally speaking, the religion of Eastern Christians, notwithstanding the difference of

dogmas, approaches much more in forms and practice to Islamism, than to the Christianity of the west. In the present day, both religions are a mere tissue of empty forms and ceremonies amongst Orientals, without any application to the life. The essence of religion in the East, consists now in regular visits to the house of God, in a silent or spoken, but purely mechanical mumbling of prescribed forms of prayer, in the imitation of certain attitudes or grimaces during public devotion, and, above all, in the strict observance of fasts. I admit that the votaries of both confessions profess a common belief in one God, and in a beautiful and joyous immortality; but the latter, instead of being regarded as the reward of a virtuous life, as we conceive in the West, as a crown for a noble mind filled with philanthropy, and bearing the trials of life with unshakeable fidelity, is made the requital of a stolid faith, unmoved by any intellectual doubts, of strict observance of the fasts, genuflexions, and postures, prescribed by the priests. To these forms, the Church adds charity to the poor, and, above all liberality to the clergy, as actions especially commendable in the sight of God, and calculated to secure a very choice place

in Paradise. Few traces are to be found in the East of any knowledge of moral teachings of the Gospel or Koran. This was certified to me by close and conscientious observers, who had long held intercourse with all strata of society, and with followers of both religions. It is only among the Turks, Tartars, and Arabs, that you occasionally meet with some aged and devout man, a priest, hermit, or marabout, who, beside knowing and practising the forms of his confession, is acquainted with its moral precepts, and puts them in practice.

Amongst Persians, Koords, and Caucasians, as well as the Eastern Christians, including Armenians, Georgians, Greeks, Nestorians, Ossetians, &c., characters of this kind are very rare. To the common people, the Bible is a closed book, which never engages their attention, curiosity, or affection, and whose comprehension and interpretation they leave entirely to the priests. Hence, the Eastern Christians have no idea of the essence of the religion which they profess, no conception of the dignity and purity of its morality, which they would find much more onerous to practice than the severest regulations of their ceremonial worship.

Thus, they regard a violation of fasting, as a more deadly sin, than hatred and envy, lying and hypocrisy, deception and theft, and they think that the gates of heaven are closed to the most virtuous man, if he has eaten meat on fast days, whilst they are open to robbers and murderers, who have not transgressed against the outward prohibitions of their church. Christianity, as it is now developed as a popular religion in the East, is nothing but a hollow system of forms, which neither elevates nor stimulates, which debases the intellect, and corrupts the heart, and leaves no room for the spirit of love, or that of freedom. Though this judgment may appear severe, every traveller acquainted with the East, will acknowledge that it is just. The very atheists of the French Republic had this in common with the faithful in the East, that they felt the want of flocking together in worship, of elevating their feelings to a vague, mystical mood, in a spacious, dimly lighted hall, and of turning their thoughts to a mysterious Being, when they assembled to worship the busts of Lepelletier and Marat, in the Temple of Reason.

After this digression, we revert to our under-

taking of describing Tiflis, and beg to assure all roving characters who feel an inclination to take up their staff and divert their course to the banks of the Kur, that their fatigues will find an ample compensation in a walk along the roaring torrent of Tsawkissi, up to the new fortress, where they will obtain a marvellous prospect of the panorama of Tiflis, and of its valley, irrigated by the dark waters of the Kur. An eccentric traveller, M. Gamba, formerly French Consul at Tiflis, has presented a sketch of this prospect in his work of travels, but it falls far short of the reality, and gives a very imperfect idea of the diversified scenery, and the indescribably splendid decorations on both banks of the Cyrus, where the city rises up the slopes of the mountains, as a double amphitheatre, and lies spread before the feet of the delighted spectator.

The hill, from which this fine view is obtained, embraces what is called the Government Garden, a public promenade, which rises in the form of a terrace, and being adorned with shrubberies, murmuring streams, and the ruins of ancient buildings, is very inviting for a saunter, notwithstanding the ruggedness of the

paths. Fresh verdure is, moreover, somewhat rare in the vicinity of Tiflis, which is bereft of woods and meadows, and the visitor to this public walk may happen occasionally to be favoured with the song of a nightingale, though singing birds are not so numerous at Tiflis as those grey lizards which threw M. Dubois into ecstasy, but were probably nothing more than the common *stellio Caucasicus*.

We have previously observed that the palace of the Governor-general is built on the site of the royal palace of Georgia. The entrance-hall is surrounded by a long row of arcades. Chardin gives a circumstantial account of the old palace, built by Rostom, as it appeared in the last century. The present structure has undergone a complete metamorphosis at the hands of Russian architects, and exactly resembles the usual stereotyped style of public buildings throughout Russia. At each corner of the edifice are two niches, containing statues of Mars and Minerva, which the natives take to be General Paskiewitsch and his wife. The interior of the palace, which is furnished entirely in the European style, presents nothing remarkable, but behind the building you are ushered

into a garden arranged with taste, carefully kept and adorned with fountains, arbours, summer-houses and hermitages, and offering the grateful shade of plane and fig trees. The inmates of the palace are indebted to the lady of the former Governor, Baron von Rosen, for the elegant arrangement of this garden, which is a real god-send in so dry, and especially in summer, so hot a country as Georgia.

On the left bank of the Kur near the suburb of Awalabar, is situated a tomb adorned with pillars, and supposed to contain the remains of St. Abo, a martyr highly venerated by the people, who suffered death for his faith at the hands of Persian executioners. The bath-house erected on the spot where the hot springs issue from the soil, and frequented by all classes with equal favour, deserves a special notice. The temperature of the water amounts to thirty-six degrees of Reaumur, and the baths are less patronised by men than by the fair Georgian women, who pass half their days in them, hoping to prolong their youth and preserve their beauty, by ablutions. The mode of bathing has much analogy with that practised at Constantinople and Broussa, but

the Georgian bath attendants seem even still more dexterous than their brethren of the craft elsewhere, and a man who has once resisted the shock of the first violent manipulation, will find the Oriental system much more refreshing than that of the West, and will gladly subject himself two hours per week to the rubbing and kneading of the Tifis bath people, who can probably show more numerous and surprising specimens of their healing art, than the whole medical faculty of the Russian empire.

Tifis possesses several good educational establishments. At the time of my visit, the gymnasium had good teachers, but an indifferent director. No fault could be found with the mode of tuition, save that the unfortunate boys were plagued with too many lessons, and that their attention was distracted by too many subjects. No less than seven languages were taught there, including Russian, Latin, Georgian, Armenian, Tartar, German, and French. Notwithstanding any amount of capacity or ardour for study, a certain confusion of ideas is unavoidable under these circumstances. There is also an establishment for young ladies,

founded by Princess Paskiewitsch, and placed under the superintendance of a Russian and an English lady. The daughters of noble families were received in it for two hundred silver roubles per month, they were taught French, besides the Russian and Georgian languages, and I was assured that the system of tuition was sensible, and their progress considerable. I was also informed that the Armenian girls showed much more quickness and aptitude than the Russian and Georgian maidens. An agricultural school was founded under the administration of Baron Rosen, and among the private establishments, the Armenian Abowian, who was afterwards made director of the district school at Erivan, was of infinite service at Tiflis, by his personal kindness and by stimulating the studious ardour of his young pupils. I often visited his school, and was enchanted to hear his young Armenians and Georgians talk and write German and recite passages from Göthe and Schiller, with the greatest accuracy. Unfortunately this excellent institution was closed on the removal of M. Abowian.

CHAPTER II.

Life in Tiflis—The Georgian and Armenian Women—An Armenian Marriage—Easter—Street-singing and Story-tellers—Poverty—Social Entertainments at Tiflis.

ACCORDING to statistical estimates, the population of Tiflis amounted in 1842, to more than twenty-six thousand souls, including the employés and the Russian garrison. Unfortunately, the national elements of this population are incorrectly given in the Russian lists, and I learnt from good authority, that the Armenians are more numerous than all the other races united, and form more than three-fifths of the entire number of residents and natives. The Georgian, is, however, the prevailing language. The nobles constitute a tenth of the whole population, and there are nearly three hundred scions of princely houses in the country.

Although the Armenians and Georgians are not distinguished by any difference of dress, a practised eye detects both nationalities at a glance, by their peculiar carriage and countenance, which is generally handsomer, more decided and manly, in the case of the Georgians. The features of the Armenians are gentler, softer, and more intelligent, and a sly expression can be almost as frequently detected in their physiognomy, as in that of the Persians, amongst whom it is the prevailing expression. The Imeritians, who reside in, or visit Tiflis, in considerable numbers, are a Georgian tribe, and resemble the Georgians; only their complexion is somewhat more swarthy, their attire is less cleanly, and their hair falls in wild and uncombed locks beneath their singular head-dress, consisting of a quaintly shaped cloth rag, forming a striking contrast to the tall, sugar-loaf fur cap of the Persians and Georgians. The Tartars are even more numerous than the Imeritians, though they do not constitute a part of the resident population, but come and go like the Imeritians, and never stay very long, unless detained by commercial transactions. They speak the Turkish-Tartar idiom, which is the prevailing

dialect throughout Western Asia, and is understood by almost all the Caucasian tribes, corresponding to the *lingua franca* of the Levant. Although these Tartars undoubtedly present much similarity in character and customs to the Turks, and belong to the same race and religion, they are inferior to the latter in loyalty, fidelity and magnanimity.

They bear still less affinity to the tame and peaceful character of the Crimean Tartars: and although they have lost the savage shyness of their nomadic character, and are bent under the yoke of Russian military discipline, yet they have retained a more manly and warlike spirit than the Tartar population of Southern Russia. Nor are they so easily broken in to the scourge of the Russian police, and to the vexations of the custom's officers, as the remaining part of the inhabitants.

Tifis commonly contains a considerable number of Persians and Turks, especially at those seasons when the caravan trade is most active. These visitors, who were attracted to Georgia by the love of gain and speculation, were more numerous before the introduction of the

new Russian system of customs, whereas, at present, the stream of the caravan trade follows the road by Trebizond and Erzeroum, to Persia and Central Asia.

Among the more occasional visitors to Tiflis, may be observed specimens of Ossetians, Circassians, Lesghians, Kasi-Kumyks, Lasians, Suanetians and Koords. The Ossetians, with whom the reader has formed acquaintance at a previous page, descend from the Caucasian highlands, to serve for a season, as journeymen in Tiflis, like the Kabyles at Algiers. But the delights of a town life are not able to seduce them from their affection for their mountain homes, and as soon as they have scraped together a few winnings, they hurry back to the wild freedom of their highlands.

The Circassian warrior is seldom seen in the streets of Tiflis, and is immediately distinguished in the crowd by his knightly form, the noble profile of his countenance, whose expression bespeaks manly boldness and energy, rather than a mild and yielding disposition, bears a greater resemblance to the statue of Mars than to that of Apollo. With firm and

haughty step, the Circassian stalks through the crowd, and all, including the drunken Cossack, make way for him, though the warlike highlanders do not always carry arms about them. The majority of the Circassians, whom I saw at Tiflis, consisted of chieftains, or of influential Usdens, of confederate or subdued tribes, who had come down to pay their respects to, and obtain, perhaps, some presents from the commander-in-chief of the Russian army.

We must repeat that the Eastern Caucasians, and the different Lesghian tribes, who speak very various idioms, cannot be compared with the Circassians for harmony of form, imposing carriage, and beauty of features. They are commonly shorter, of less noble bearing, and frequently excessively thin and slight. Their complexion is more swarthy, their eyes are not so large, commanding, and fiery, the celebrated eagle profile is less common among them, and their physiognomy might be more correctly compared to the hawk or the vulture. I grant that the Eastern Caucasians seen at Tiflis, consist chiefly of the poorer classes, especially traders in game, cattle, burkas, &c.

I formed a more intimate acquaintance with one of these burka traders, named Abduraman-Beg, belonging to the tribe of the Kasi-Kumyks. Abouvian, the Armenian, was kind enough to bring him several times to my house, and he gave us much useful and interesting information, relating to the history and manners of his tribe. This man assured us that no such thing as poetry occurs in the language of the Kasi-Kumyks, that music was quite unknown in his tribe, and that his countrymen never sing. If this assertion of Abduraman be correct, the Kasi-Kumyks are the only people in the three hemispheres that I have visited, to whom nature has denied the sense of tune. The very Esquimaux, floating about on their icebergs, among the mists of the Pole, are not without their wild music, which seems a gift of kindly nature to all nations, to prolong youth, mitigate grief, and form a universal language, the vehicle of love and pleasure. This Caucasian tribe would form a single exception. It would still have to take lessons from the birds and winds of Heaven, and would be the dullest of people among the most glorious scenes of nature, and even less imaginative and

inventive than the odious Calmucks of the steppe, or any other Eastern tribe.

The Koords, as well as the Lasians, only appear in Tiflis singly and occasionally, as birds of passage. Sometimes the visitors consist of chieftains, who descend, to make arrangements with the Russian Government, for the settlement of their tribes in the border provinces. Occasionally you meet with adventurers, or ill-starred chieftains, who have lost all influence and power in their clan, and seek to regain their authority, by the assistance of the Russian Government. Not unfrequently, strangers undertake a journey to the capital of Georgia from the borders of Persia and of Turkey to satisfy their curiosity, or with the hope of making their fortune, like other lucky adventurers, who have succeeded in obtaining rich presents, or good appointments from the Russian Government, by their imposing bearing and ready impudence. Mingrelians and Suanetians are also seen at Tiflis. Both tribes are of Georgian origin, but remarkably different in features and character. The Mingrelians are handsome men, with noble features, velvety skins and fair

complexions, rivalling the fairest races of northern Europe; whilst their gentle and peaceable character corresponds to their physical advantages. The Suanetians, who inhabit an elevated table-land to the north of Colchis, cannot boast of the delicate rosy tint that adorns the complexion of the Mingrelians, and the expression of their countenance approximates more closely to the manly and imposing beauty of the Circassians. The Suanetians are the most warlike and courageous of all the Christian populations of the Caucasus.

The fifty years of Russian rule, under which Georgia has now continued, have naturally left considerable traces of their influence, in the manners of the citizens, and especially of the fair sex. Under the sway of their native dynasty, the Georgian women lived in strict seclusion, and never appeared abroad, nor did they even display their unveiled faces at church. At public or domestic festivities, banquets, marriages, &c., both sexes remained strictly separate, and French fashions, as well as the books, newspapers, music and dances of the west, were unknown in Tiflis, at that period.

During the first years of the Russian occupation, the military and civil functionaries had an unenviable position; being entirely debarred from all intercourse with the fair sex. It was only very gradually, that the Georgians became reconciled to their foreign conquerors, though they acknowledged the same faith. This reserve lasted as long as the opinion prevailed, that the Russian rule in Trans-Caucasia was transitory, and that it would give way before the attacks of the great Mohammedan empires in the south, or of the mountain tribes to the north. But when the Georgian population discovered its error, and observed on which side was the strongest arm, in the wars of Muscovy with Persia, Turkey and the Highlanders of the Caucasus, it put off its reserve, and, at length, became reconciled with the conquerors, though it was never entirely forgotten that at one period Georgia was the ruling power in that region. The Georgian nobility form a large body, which had already declined considerably, even previous to the Russian occupation, and having lost a large share of their originally proud spirit, they were very solicitous to obtain Russian decorations and appointments,

and bowed the neck very humbly before the representative of the Russian autocrat, yet without carrying their fawning and cringing propensities to the same extreme as the Armenians. A good many sons of the old noble houses, whose titles and dignities were acknowledged by the Russian government, passed into the imperial service, and several of them, such as Bagration, Dadian and Argutinski, have obtained a just celebrity in many of the battle fields of Europe, as well as in the Caucasus.

Many Russian officers and *employés* have contracted matrimonial alliances with the noble and wealthy families of the country; and this practice has become so frequent within the last ten or twenty years, that there are but few noble houses at Tiflis which are not attached to their conquerors by the ties of wedlock, as well as those of interest.

Even under the administration of Yermoloff, whose commanding genius awed the Georgians into obedience, they were already won over to the side of Russia; but the addition of female influence was wanting to strengthen the bond. It was only after General Paskiewitsch had been

appointed Governor that a few ladies of the higher classes of Georgia appeared in the apartments of the royal palace, attired in the European fashion. The number of the fair frequenters of assemblies and balls augmented under the administration of Baron von Rosen, and still more under that of General Golovin, who had a weakness for splendour, and for the fair sex. At his entertainments, you had the opportunity of seeing most of the beautiful Georgian and Armenian women of princely or gentle blood, unveiled. French costumes found favour with them, and Parisian fashions obtained the exclusive upper hand, especially among the fair Armenians. The native ladies became ultimately so enamoured of western splendour, customs and amusements, that it almost excited scandal among their fathers and husbands. But the apartments of the palace were less frequented under the pedantic administration of Herr von Neidhardt, a hospitable family man, but a foe to all extravagance. The old Georgian nobility, which had not quite lost all its pride, was offended at this neglect; and the fair Georgians resented the affront in various ways.

Though much progress has been made in the

emancipation of women in Georgia, yet the people have retained a shade of eastern seclusion. Save when they visit the church, and the bath, or frequent public festivities, Georgian women of respectability are seldom seen abroad, though it is not necessary to enter the houses, in order to have specimens of Georgian beauty. I admit that most of the women seen in the streets, wrapt in tschadras, are old and ugly persons or domestics; but at church, and on festive occasions, the Georgian princesses appear unveiled, and on foot. Yet their beauty is commonly beneath its reputation. Their nose, which is commonly curved, and of a very peculiar shape that may be styled Georgian, is generally disproportionately large, and destroys the symmetry of the features.

The universal practice of painting and blackening the eyebrows, is another offence against the taste of Europeans. I admit that their black eyes are not deficient in fire, but they lack expression and soul. Almost all Georgian women have luxuriant, glossy black tresses, falling down in tasteful and ornamental plaits beneath their gold embroidered caps. But, if we except their head-dress, their beautifully

braided hair, and the elegant drapery of their veil, which is clean and spotless, even among the poor, the national female costume is fantastic and tasteless. In no country is so much money and ornament lavished on costume, in proportion to the income of the people, as in Georgia. The decorations of ladies of gentle birth, consist of precious stones, pearls, gold, Cashmere shawls, satin and silk ; whilst the poorer women seek to dazzle by their gaudy and showy selection of colours. Many times have I been astonished, whilst strolling through the narrow, dismal lanes of the poorer quarter of Tiflis, to see a beautiful woman, splendidly adorned with a variety of artificial charms and variegated attire, sitting or standing at the gate of a broken down house, or on some ruinous terrace, overgrown with weeds, and covered with dirt. When viewed at a distance, these gaudy and picturesque dames or damsels, with their theatrical costume and attitudes, look like the fairies or princesses of the ruinous palaces from which the present hovels standing in their site have been formed. It is uncommonly interesting to pay a visit to the most deserted and dilapidated parts of the capital, on Sundays or Saints'

days, when the Georgian and Armenian women make a point of displaying all their finery.

It is a notorious feature of the Oriental character, that much greater value is attached by Asiatics, to external show, such as the number of retainers, arms, horses, &c., than to the comforts of a home, social enjoyments, and the indulgence of the table. The taste and disposition of Europeans in general, and of the German colonists in particular, is precisely the reverse. The latter cut a deplorable figure by the side of the natives in their gorgeous apparel; but our Teutonic friends dwell in convenient and substantial houses, forming a great contrast to the native hovels. The fare of the Georgian and Armenian peasants is also very frugal; whilst the Suabians revel in delicacies. Yet the natives readily submit to any privations, provided their women can sport a spotless *tschadra*, clean *nepkavi* (wide drawers), and embroidered slippers; and whilst the men can stalk to church, or lounge about in their elegant *tschoks* (over-coats with loose sleeves), and *gkhaluks* (under-coat), of fine cloth or silk.

Though I did not enjoy very numerous opportunities of meeting Georgian ladies at

Tiflis, yet, on two occasions at Easter, and during the military games in the plain of New Tiflis, in the month of May, I saw the whole fashion and beauty of the capital crowded together, as at Rome, in the Corso, during the Carnival. Nevertheless, I was doomed to disappointment, the effect produced by an assembly of Georgian beauties, not equalling their reputation, or our expectations. The charms of their raven locks, glowing eyes, pearly teeth, splendid attire, and elegant figures, were quite neutralized by the copious use of paint, and by the excessive size of their noses. Nor was any intelligence or feeling to be detected in their unmeaning faces.

I was lucky enough to see a Georgian lady dance on one occasion, at a ball of Herr von Neidhardt. The figurante was a young princess of a charming form, though boasting the usual and disproportionate amount of nose. Her hair, which was unusually beautiful, fell in countless luxuriant tresses beneath her veil, and half covered her bust. Her dress of grayish brown silk only partially revealed her bosom—two pale red silk patches being introduced to correspond to the natural shape of the

breasts. Her slender waist was encircled by a pink girdle: and yet, notwithstanding the superiority of her picturesque costume over the French fashions of the Russian ladies, the eye derived little pleasure from the exhibition, owing to her total want of grace, and the stiff and lifeless expression and attitudes of this Eastern princess.

On another occasion, I encountered a young Armenian lady, of equal beauty, and as splendidly attired, walking with her husband in the immediate vicinity of Tiflis. When I expressed my admiration of her charms to my companion, in rather enthusiastic language, I was surprised to see the pair look back, smiling, and to hear the Prince, who may have learnt the tongue from the Suabian colonists, address me in good German, and in a sarcastic tone, saying: "Do you admire my wife? Oh, how pretty!"

During the administration of Baron Rosen, the salons of Tiflis were graced with the presence of the wife of the legitimate heir to the throne of Georgia, Prince Alexander, son of the last King George. This lady, who was reckoned one of the first beauties in the country, was the daughter of a noble Armenian of Erivan, and fell

into the hands of the Russians in the last Persian war. The Georgian Pretender, who would never consent to resign his right to the throne, and who wandered about from Persia to Turkey, stirring up those states to declare war against Muscovy, claimed his bride, after the conclusion of peace. Field Marshal Paskiewitsch did not oppose the claim, and gave permission to the lady to depart; but she lingered at Erivan, perhaps being loathe to leave her parents, and share the fugitive life of her husband, and relying on the pledged word of the Russian authorities, that she was at liberty to go whenever she pleased.

Meanwhile, Paskiewitsch was succeeded by Baron Rosen, who, on a renewal of the claims on the part of the Prince, applied to St. Petersburg for farther instructions. The Supreme Government, which was not cognizant of her presence in Georgia, did not think itself bound by the word of Prince Paskiewitsch, and ordered the lady to be sent to St. Petersburg. The dismay and indignation of the Princess, on receiving this intelligence, were indescribable. She had hitherto lived a secluded life in the harem; and, supported by the tears and

complaints of her mother, she at first refused to submit. But, when the Russian authorities threatened violence, she yielded, came to Tiflis, and was gradually and gently initiated into European ways by Baroness Rosen. The flatteries and attentions she received were not lost upon her.

By degrees, she became accustomed to European manners, and appeared with unveiled face, in the company of men. Nor was the sacrifice painful, as it soothed her vanity, by securing general admiration. After a prolonged residence at Tiflis, she started for St. Petersburg; and it is reported, that she passes her time so pleasantly at the Imperial Court, that she feels no inclination to return to Trans-caucasia.

The fame of magical beauty ascribed in the East and West, and especially in poetry, to the fair Georgians, has partly arisen from the general, but erroneous notion, that the beautiful odalisks of the Turkish harems, are commonly of Georgian or Circassian origin. All the beautiful slaves brought to the Turkish markets on the Black Sea, are represented as Georgians. But we have ascertained, from the traders themselves, that most of these unfortunate

creatures are brought from Lasistan, Guria, and Mingrelia. I admit that the inhabitants of those districts are of the Georgian stock; but they differ as much from the proper Georgians, as Italians from Spaniards, or Germans from Swedes. It is the blood of these modern populations of ancient Colchis, which has mixed much more freely with the Turkish, than even that of the neighbouring Circassians. And it is well to remember, that these Colchian tribes of Georgian descent, are far handsomer than the genuine Georgians; and that they carry off the palm of beauty from all the Trans-Caucasian families.

The beauty of the women of Georgia, Colchis, and Circassia, would be more appreciated by the sculptor than by the poet; too frequently it is but a lifeless image, lacking even the attractive girdle of Aphrodité. The Graces are foreign deities in the East, and in the regular, but inexpressive features of Oriental women there is usually a total lack of those first and greatest of female charms—sentiment and soul.

No other European nation rivals the Russians in their enthusiasm for contracting foreign alliances. German peasant girls are almost as

much in request as the handsomest, and noblest Georgian and Armenian ladies, and whilst the Russian nobles intermarry with the Trans-Caucasian aristocracy, Muscovite serfs in Southern Russia steal the daughters of Tartars, and the Kouban Cossacks elope with Circassian maids. It is a curious fact, that notwithstanding these numerous intermarriages and alliances, even with German blood, the offspring is always genuine Russian—a fact which testifies to the solid energy of the Slavic race. As Russians look for different qualities in their wives from those in request with the more civilized nations of the West, these alliances are less unhappy than might have been anticipated. Whereas a Frenchman would find the fair Georgians wanting in grace, a Roman in dignity, a Spaniard in glowing enthusiasm, a German in sentiment, the Russian lives in happy contentment with the charms of his consort. But after what I have seen of Oriental women, I would not advise any cultivated Western to go to the East, bent on matrimonial speculations.

Through the kindness of M. Abowian, I was enabled to witness an Armenian wedding. A young man of the Gregorian confession, was

about to marry the daughter of an opulent family, who gave him the preference, because he had just been decorated. We have already remarked that no town, save St. Petersburg, is agitated by such a feverish longing for orders and decorations as Tiflis. Many wealthy Armenians have given ten thousand roubles to wear a Stanislaus order of the fourth class, in their button-hole. The bridegroom, exhibiting his shining coin on his breast, received us at the door, and conducted us to a room containing all the male visitors, who were drinking tea. After this operation was concluded, we ventured to approach the women, who were naturally dressed in all their finery for the occasion. The bride, an insignificant figure, with a pale, insipid face, sat in front of a particular table, surrounded by her girlish friends. The studied indifference of her expression, heightened the effect of her naturally unmeaning features; but I was informed that a frigid expression was regarded as dignified and suitable on such occasions, and that all brides were expected to assume it. The ceremonies began with the presentation of the bridegroom's gifts, consisting of ornaments and splendid

dresses. These articles were placed on the table in front of the bride, besides two immense loaves of sugar, destined for the priests. After a lengthy prayer, the priest blessed the dresses, and then he chanted a prosy hymn, in unison with his ghostly colleagues. Thereupon a part of the ornaments were attached to the bride, by the girls. During this ceremony, a jovial Armenian, in Russian uniform, succeeded in extracting a smile from the bride, by his comic grimaces.

Refreshments were introduced at this time. The company chatted, jested, laughed, and invigorated their stomachs, preparatory to the tedious and drowsy ecclesiastical ceremonies at church.

The marriage service took place at midnight, and lasted one hour, consisting in the mumbling of prayers, monotonous chants, antics and grimaces of all kinds. Among other things, the happy couple were adorned with two gold crowns, by the priest's hands. After the company had been worked up to a most edifying and exhausted condition, they withdrew to the bridegroom's house, headed by a band.

A score or two years ago, before the old

prejudices were shaken, the sexes were kept quite separate at marriage festivals, the women appearing with veiled faces, and none daring to dance before the bridegroom. Now, it is different, and the handsomest and most skilful dancers willingly exhibit before the whole company. But though most of these Armenian women were draped in their floating veils, their solo dances could not be compared with those of Roman and Andalusian females, as regards dexterity, passion and poetry. Even during the exhilaration of this exercise, their movements never lost their usual stiffness, nor were their faces less insipid than on other occasions.

Mademoiselle Kurganoff, the daughter of a wealthy Armenian, in favour with Prince Paskiewitsch, was the only exception. She had a tall and graceful figure, and her very handsome face was often lighted up by a roguish smile, that contrasted admirably with the stony expression of her associates. She was the most accomplished gentlewoman in the room, which could be immediately detected from her manner and looks. An Armenian, who was a staff officer in the Russian army, offered me a seat next to his

wife, who spoke French ; but I was sadly disappointed in my hopes of having some rational intercourse with her. Dull, and unintellectual, like most of her countrywomen, our conversation soon came to an end. The good lady understood nothing, save the commonest and most trivial matters and she could not comprehend the drift of my questions, unless they related to dress, eating, the marriage, or other common-place affairs. I was delighted to hear the signal for supper, in the hopes of being relieved from my *tête-à-tête* with this charming female. During the meal, the sexes were actually separated in different rooms, the bridegroom alone enjoying the privilege or misfortune of eating alone with all the ladies. I understand that during the lively ceremony, he was seen to cast occasional tender glances at his bride, resembling those of a hawk at a turtle dove.

The banquet was sumptuous, and exhausted all the resources of the Armenian and Russian *cuisine*. Even champagne flowed in copious streams, though each bottle costs four silver roubles (about twelve shillings) at Tifis. The gaiety of the evening was promoted by a noisy band of music as well as by the luscious nectar

of Epernay. My neighbour at table happened to be an Armenian, who concealed a heart glowing with patriotism under the Russian uniform, and who indulged in pathetic lamentations about the oppression and crying injustice endured by his countrymen. On rising from table, both sexes met again. All the presents of relatives and friends, consisting chiefly of money, were counted by the priest, and laid on a dish before the bride. Even before the name of the donor, and the nature of the gift were announced, you could guess its value by the expression of the priest's face. If it was gold that was placed in the holy man's palm, his countenance assumed an expression of indescribable beatitude. This operation, which gave no favourable impression of Armenian delicacy, concluded the marriage festival for the guests. Respecting the ensuing mysteries, into which the bridegroom alone was initiated, I received some very comical statements, which I think it most discreet to withhold.

Easter offers the most favourable opportunity for obtaining a good idea not only of the *beau-monde*, but of the whole population of Tiflis, whom you meet in the streets and squares,

during the celebration of this festival, which is regarded by all the Christian communions as the most important in the year, and is frequented even by crowds of Mohammedan Tartars. Independantly of the splendour of the religious services in the different churches, of the military parade, and the various games and amusements, there is another reason which explains the general jubilee excited as soon as the report of the cannon is heard at midnight. This very superstitious race is liberated at Easter from its long and severe fast; and all the friends of good living have abundant occasion to rejoice at their happy release.

The market was literally crammed, the previous evening; thousands of beautiful lambs, with snowy-white fleece, were offered to the poorest even of the crowd, and I saw the very beggars in rags, bargaining with Tartars and Armenians for this delicate morsel. When you behold the innocent and confiding faces of those pretty creatures, you cannot avoid feeling prejudiced against a Christian festival that is initiated by such cruel slaughter. The carnage is generally over when the midnight guns announce the beginning of the festival, and all

the evening is devoted to preparations for the carousal, which commences soon after the signal. Even if the crash of the artillery had not awoke me, I could not have slept during the exclamations of jubilee and rejoicing that greeted the ear on all sides. The whole population, friends and strangers, fell into each others arms, with the words: "Christ is risen!" The General embraces his soldiers, the Prince his porter, the Lord his serf. You are not free for a second from the danger of this fearful kissing infliction. Such is the custom in the Russian, Greek and Georgian churches, and the other confessions have gradually adopted the fashion. Women and girls suffer their cheeks to be pressed by the lips of their acquaintance, and it is only Russian ladies of rank who are privileged to receive the salute on their hands. Even the Great Czar himself, kisses his grenadier sentinel at St. Petersburg. This practice would have something touching in it, if it were not merely mechanical, and if it were accompanied by even a shadow of brotherly love. Unfortunately, it is little more than an empty form, prescribed by the Church.

After the termination of divine service, the

devout population return to a sumptuous meal. The anxiously expected flesh-pots present a choice supply of delicacies, and besides the eternal roast lamb, immense quantities of ham (a favourite Georgian joint,) are consumed. Teeth, lips, gums and tongue are the most active members on Easter Sunday in Georgia. There is no end of kissing, biting and chewing, and the Georgians, who are commonly very sober, commit more offences against diet on this day, than throughout the remainder of the year. There is an indescribable hissing and seething, in dishes and pots, before the huge kitchen fires. The public eating-houses are besieged all day, and present a happy and harmonious conclave of Ossetians, Georgians, Armenians and Cossacks. The savoury messes have great attractions for all save the people of Western Europe, who are used to cleaner dishes. Crowds of Ossetian, Armenian and Georgian beggars, porters and vagabonds, seated in a ring, round a common dish, are not over-scrupulous, if some of their crumbs fall back in the common receptacle. The bazaar, and all the shops are closed. All Tiflis is in holiday attire, and perambulates the streets,

during the interval between the heavy meals. Thousands of Easter egg-breakers collect in the market, and it is probable that in proportion to the population, no town in the world is so passionately addicted to egg-breaking matches. The children have also their separate carousals, but the women are satisfied with less active pastimes, and with the display of their charms and finery. On all sides, you see them seated in groups gazing at the different entertainments which appeared to us wanting in originality and noisy gaiety.

The athletic sports in the month of May are more stirring than the Easter festival, and are frequented by the most skilful horsemen of the neighbouring nations. Tartars, Georgians, Armenians, Don and Line Cossacks, emulate each other, and display a dexterity in the saddle seldom rivalled elsewhere. They throw the lance, fire off their pistols at full gallop, swing their swords, and represent sham fights, all according to the practice of their tribe, and with special shouts or cheers. These displays give the spectator an excellent idea of the nature of cavalry combats in the Caucasus. The usual theatre for these exhibitions is the plain near

the German colony of New Tifis, which is, at such seasons, frequented by thousands of sight-seers in droschkies and carriages, on horseback and on foot. The women are said to be as passionately devoted to witnessing these warlike exercises as the men. Yet they are far from resembling the fair Germans at ancient tournaments, or the ladies of Castille at bull-fights. The gallant horsemen of Trans-Caucasia are not stimulated or rewarded by the approving glance and smile, or the thrilling plaudits of the fair spectators. I saw the Georgian ladies gazing dumb and insipidly at the display ; nor did their unmeaning faces express any enthusiastic sympathy.

Public story-tellers, and bards, called Ki-koakoa in the Caucasus, are not so numerous at Tifis as in Persia, and more among the mountains. They commonly consist of poor Tartar ballad singers, chanting Turkish imitations of Persian poets, or Arabian tales. They appeared very wretched, and excited little notice or charity ; being surrounded by a few young vagabonds, who listened without bestowing a kopeck upon them.

Generally speaking, there appears to be less

benevolence and charity at Tiflis, than in the Mohammedan cities; but more misery and poverty, or, at all events, more appearance of distress.

Save in the States of the Church, and the kingdom of Naples, I never saw such troops of beggars as at Tiflis. The Russian police only allows them one day in the week to ask for alms. But on those days, the eye is distressed with a fearful spectacle of human suffering when hosts of starving, sickly, emaciated cripples, and unfortunates of all sorts, flock through the streets, knocking at the doors, and whilst announcing their misery in a chorus of doleful ejaculations, seek to move the pity, of, and obtain relief from their more fortunate fellow-citizens. So great is the number of the indigent, and so distressing their poverty, that the gentlest heart, and readiest hand, can do little to relieve such a mass of misery. As at Naples, and in Sicily, the mind and eye become gradually hardened, and used to the deplorable deformities of wholesale mendicancy, and look with callous feelings at starving multitudes. It is singular, that the maimed, the aged, and the blind, do not attract so much sympathy as those

shameless women who belong to the lowest class, and who, concealing their faces with the *tschadra*, sit in the middle of the streets, with a wooden plate before them. Men of respectability seldom pass these women, who are ashamed to ask for alms, without dropping a gift into their plate.

Many families, even of noble rank, are reduced to great indigence. I heard of Armenian and Georgian princes, who, but for the appointments or allowance of the Russian Government, would be obliged to resort to mechanical, or still more revolting pursuits, to avoid the pangs of famine. Near Katharinenfeld, I knew a princely peasant; and not far from Elizabeththal, the Armenian prince Gurganoff has become a miller. Some adventures of a tragic-comic nature have occurred between the Russian police and the Georgian nobility, whom the Emperor has allowed to retain their former title and rank. Thus, a coachman was once arrested at the square of Tauris, because he had been uncivil to a Russian *employé*. The police inspector caused the victim to be bastinadoed; and when the latter exclaimed, that

he was a knäs, (prince,) and appealed to the ukase, which prohibits the nobles from corporal punishment, the inspector ordered him to receive fifty additional stripes, for impudent assumption of the princely dignity. Yet the unlucky coachman proved, subsequently, that what he had advanced was correct, but he received no reparation for his stripes.

Living at Tiflis is not dear, if you know how to proceed. Most articles of consumption are reasonable, including cereals, especially rice and vegetables, supplied by the German settlers. Even delicacies, such as poultry, game, and particularly pheasants, are cheaper than in Germany. The Caspian Sea offers an abundance of fish, which are brought to market, fresh in winter, and salted in summer. Caviare is a favourite dish with the natives and Russians. Wine is brought in immense quantities from Cachetia, the best wine growing country in Trans-Caucasia, and known as such to Strabo. A tunga* of red wine in colour resembling claret, costs an abas (sixpence.) Wine of inferior quality is sold ridiculously low, for five or six kopecks the tunga.

* Four bottles.

The wines being conveyed in pig skins, covered inside with naphtha tar, have an unpleasant taste, relished by the natives. *Au reste*, this Cachetian wine is pronounced wholesome, and even curative of the gout. The Mingrelian wine, which is only drunk by the rich, is pleasanter, but not so wholesome. The German colonists also prepare a wine, which being stored in cases, is pleasanter to our notion than the Cachetian. The consumption of wine at Tiflis is enormous, amounting yearly to 7,500,000 bottles, which gives one bottle per head daily.

Tiflis is not attractive as a winter residence. Those who do not relish mazurkas, whist with heavy stakes and cunning hands; and more especially civilians in black coats, who do not display Russian uniforms and decorations, find life tedious there.

Notwithstanding the proverbial hospitality and politeness of the Russian nobility, there is always much restraint in society; nor can their undeniable gifts of conversation atone for the want of freedom, or blind you to the partiality of their descriptions, which are commonly diametrically opposed to the statements of

foreign travellers, and residents independent of the government. It is proper to add, that the amenities of Tiflis depend greatly on the character of the Governor-general.

CHAPTER III.

Nomadic Life of a Naturalist—Journey from Tiflis to Imeritia—Mzketha, the Ancient Residence of the Kings of Georgia—Gori—The ancient Troglodyte City—Kutais—The Convent of the Catholic Missions in Trans-Caucasia.

My wanderings have extended over the space of ten years, and embraced sundry regions and climates ; but none have left a more vivid or pleasing impression than my nomadic life in the ancient forests of Georgia and Colchis, and my walks over the verdant slopes of the Bvthinian Olympus. Very delightful were my strolls in the Alpine regions of the Caucasus, of Aserbeidschan and of Armenia, where I roamed about almost as free as a trapper in the wilds of Canada. Yet I must award the palm to a wandering life in Trans-Caucasia. The stork does not sail more pleasantly through the air,

nor the dolphin play more sportively with the sparkling billows, than I danced and tripped blithesome along the green uplands of the Pambak mountains, in the vast solitudes of the groves of Gambor, in the liana land of Colchis, on the sunny Alpine slopes of Ossetia, roving and bivouacking for weeks far from the haunts of man. At no period was I more bereft of comforts and of society, yet never have I felt freer, more elastic, or happy, than on these adventurous excursions, when we made pilgrimages throughout the land, pitching our tent in the choicest spots, and leading the lives of hunters, explorers, and botanists.

I was accompanied in these expeditions by my old friends, Istvan, the Hungarian, Wassily, the Cossack, and John Saremba, the Pole. I took a horse with me, to convey our baggage, and we were well provided with guns, pistols, and kinschals, of excellent Lesghian steel. Whenever we came to a favoured spot, where the foliage promised good sport, whilst it concealed the smoke of our fire from wandering Tartars, and a crystal stream offered a convenient vicinity, I ordered my people to halt. We unloaded the horse, spread the burkas,

cooking utensils, sugar, rum, tea, &c., on the grass; my naturalist's curiosities were carefully collected; a blazing fire was lighted, and our light, and simple fare refreshed our frame, exhilarated by exercise and pure mountain air, in a manner inconceivable, and most enviable to pampered dyspeptics. A delightful glow spread through our systems, whilst nerves and muscles seemed to acquire new energy and life, through the potent influence of the Chinese elixir, which we praised to the skies. After this refreshment, I went in search of farther curiosities, accompanied by the Hungarian and Pole, whilst the old steppe devil, who could never be broken in to collecting, stayed and tended the horse, whom he loved, as a Don veteran, twenty years old, deserved to be loved by his Centaur.

A man must have experienced, individually, the joys and sorrows of the nomadic life of a naturalist to appreciate it justly. Those who have not had a personal knowledge of it, generally imagine its troubles to be greater, and its pleasures less than the reality. A German reader sitting quietly at home, conceives the Trans-Caucasian forests to be peopled with wild beasts

and robbers ; he fancies that the charms of a bivouac under aged plane trees or laurels, and on a bank of aromatic plants, must be neutralized by thoughts of vipers, tarantulas, and scorpions, stealing among the flowers, and ready to attack the unprotected wanderer. And then he reflects that the wolves and bears must regard the daring stranger as a legitimate victim, and sacrifice to the sylvan deities. And even if these perils were imaginary, the fire-side traveller is disgusted at the prospect of a boundless and inextricable wilderness of wood, without the blessings of milestones and sign posts. I admit the existence of all these inconveniences. But close at hand, and through habit, they lose their terrors like most other things in creation, which are magnified and exaggerated by the imagination. The veteran at the outposts laughs at the bullets singing around him as he eats his ration, and drinks his rum, knowing that a hundred leaden messengers miss where one hits. The same remark applies to the hunter and naturalist, who during his wanderings through brake and glen, becomes familiarized with the perils and accidents of this mode of life, which give it a spice of interest

and tend to ward off *ennui*, the invariable accompaniment of a monotonous style of living.

The encampments that I selected in the Gamborian forests, north west of Tiflis, were commonly situated near brooks, flowing through shady dells, and announcing their presence by their murmuring, bubbling and melodious music, even where their sparkling waters are concealed from view by their overhanging verdure. These rivulets commonly formed the Ariadne thread that led us back from our most distant rambles to our head-quarters again. We generally dispersed in different directions, to collect specimens, and directed our steps to spots favoured by clearances in the wood, by a more genial soil, and copious growth of plants and flowers, where we hoped to gather a rich store of new and rare productions, and of valuable or beautiful insects. If the ardour of research carried us too far from our guiding stream, as we penetrated deeper and deeper in the labyrinth of thicket, with nothing but a canopy of green overhead, through which the deep blue heavens were occasionally visible, we were reduced to use the compass, in order to find our way back, unless the boughs we had

cut off with our kinschal, furnished a clue for our return. Yet, sometimes, in spite of all our precautions, we were unable to recover the track. In such cases, the unhappy vagrant would fire off his rifle at stated intervals, till the report reached his comrades at the encampment, who by responding to the appeal, would guide him home by the sound of the explosions.

It is only the novice who dreads being lost in the woods. The old stager, who is accustomed to roam and go astray through the endless thickets, who has often made his bed on the moss, and to whom the gnarled branches of the primeval oaks have so often answered the purpose of roof or umbrella, is seldom disturbed at the idea of spending weeks alone in the woods, especially if he have a trusty gun and plenty of powder and shot. Nor is even death, itself, so grim a terror in the woods as in the world, to the man who loves the leafy wilderness, like an Indian or a cuckoo. When the mind dwells, as it sometimes must, on the dismal future, nothing reconciles us to it more effectually than a cheerful, tranquil resting place. The forest grave, whilst witnessing the decay of man's noble frame, which cannot subsist without light and

air, is yet the laboratory of new and mighty organisms, providing sap and nourishment for the giants of the grove. And nowhere does this laboratory appear more active or productive than in primeval forests, presenting a glorious crop of diversified vegetation, from the aged oak to the creeping parasite, and the flowery bank fanned by the "sweet south."

Many times have I felt the wish to hop, flutter, and sing through life in the merry woods, as I have stood leaning against the mossy trunk of an oak, and gazing through its labyrinth of branches to the gnarled crown, watching the graceful frolic of the squirrels, the appetite of the 'rapping' wood-pecker, and the nest-building goldfinch chanting its bridal song! Those happy denizens of the woods have no forethought of dismal death, which puzzles our intellect and alarms our imagination. They only feel it when it strikes them, and has lost half its terrors. And how easy is the death of the feathered songster! The moment before, he has, perhaps, opened his beak, and given forth the same anthem as his grandmother, or swallowed more grain than his old stomach could digest. Suddenly, his wing droops; and

leaning with a gently tremulous motion on the mossy bank, his eyes close, and he quietly passes away to eternal rest, without priest, grave-digger or coffin. In the freedom of nature, death generally overtakes its victims with surprising suddenness. Aged larks have been observed to droop and fall dead in the midst of their last flight and carol. These happy songsters are, moreover, granted that natural wish denied to us by the Church and Police, of lying in the deep grass, instead of being hidden in the bowels of the earth.

Our three weeks' residence in the woods gave us excellent opportunities of obtaining pictures of nature. Gladly would I pause and dwell on the sublime and beautiful sights and sounds that I witnessed and enjoyed. I would describe the wondrous meteoric phenomena among the high Ossetian Alps, the ghostly array of misty forms, the terrible majesty of a tempest on Ararat, the glacier scenery of the Kasbek, the sliding scale of vegetation and animal life, from the bearded Gypaetos, sailing in tranquil majesty over the snowy cone of Ararat, and glaring down with piercing eyes as though seeking for the relics of the ark beneath

the ice, to the little tribe of insect life swept hither and thither by the inconstant breezes. Still more charming was the woodland scenery in the bright blush of morn, or by the soft moonlight. After a wholesome meal, we would recline, looking out for game, and watching the symptoms of animal life around us. Our senses were also alive to the world of plants surrounding us, with what has been well styled "*its soul*." What would not the great seer's eyes of Göthe, or the penetrating research of our most eminent naturalists have detected in the shades and glades of those Colchian groves! We cannot hope to have equalled those masterly observers and describers. Yet we have done our best, and have collected much useful information respecting natural science in Trans-Caucasia. I was sometimes so engrossed in my contemplations whilst seated on a mossy divan in the groves of the Pambak mountain, that many a deer has owed its life to my abstraction, as she came crashing through the break, and shot by ere I could level my fowling piece.

Our last excursion in Georgia led us to the woody range of Priutin, where the Governor-

general had a country residence, forming a welcome retreat from the ceremonious life of Tiflis. As the autumn was at hand with its cool nights, and a settler's hut, inhabited by a discharged Russian soldier and his family, offered a convenient shelter, we gave up our bivouacking life at this place; and, after making some additions to my collections, we returned to the capital, and soon after left it for Mingrelia, whither I forwarded my luggage by caravan, escorted by the Hungarian, whilst I made a *détour* to Kutais by Mzketha and Gori.

Dubois, whose descriptions are always correct when he avoids politics, is quite accurate when he affirms that Mzketha, the ancient royal capital of Georgia, 'which was, for ages, so famous, wealthy, and powerful,' is now a miserable, ruinous place. The old Georgian cathedral, Sveti-Tzkhoveli, still soars above the surrounding remains of this residence, and is held to be the most ancient church in Georgia. Its foundation is ascribed to King Mirian, who was converted to Christianity in the year 276. The original edifice was of wood, which was replaced by a handsome stone structure, erected by King Mirdad, in 364. The Georgian

chronicles relate that not one stone was left standing in the metropolitan church of Mzketha, after the terrible Tartar invasion under Timur, King Alexander rebuilt it subsequently on a different plan, but in the year 1656, the cupola fell in, probably in consequence of an earthquake, but it was restored two years after, by the Moslem King Roston. King Wakhtang V., who lived at the beginning of the eighteenth century, embellished the metropolitan church, which is certainly one of the most remarkable Christian temples south of the Caucasus. It is in the form of a cross, with a conical dome rising over the centre of the nave. Its elevation is 111, its length 178, its width 78 feet. The walls of the interior of the church are adorned with frescoes, having Greek and Georgian inscriptions over them. Most of the Georgian Kings and Patriarchs lie buried in the vaults underneath this church.

In 1804, the cathedral is said to have been surrounded by only thirty miserable hovels, but if the statement be correct, the population must have increased since that period, as the number of inhabited cottages mentioned in the statistical work of M. Ewetzki, amounts to

124. The town itself does not appear to have been at any time extensive, but it had suburbs beyond Mount Sarkhinethi, and on the banks of both rivers, whose confluence is at this place. To the northward, the suburb of Samthavro adjoining the royal residence, comprised a handsome church, resembling the cathedral in architecture and decorations, and whose foundation was attributed to King Mirdat, in the latter half of the 4th century. Some antiquaries have regarded it as even more ancient than the cathedral. Many ruins are still visible on the left bank of the Aragui, and they appear also to have belonged to the ancient city. The summit of the mountain which affords a magnificent prospect over the valleys of the Kur and the Aragui, is crowned by another ancient and half ruinous church, in which Divine service was celebrated at the beginning of the present century. The name of this church was Stepan-Tzminda. A traveller who visited and described it at the commencement of the present century, was surprised to find, contrary to the Greek custom, a great altar in its centre, in whose niche, St. John was painted, with the Greek inscription, 'O Theologos.' No

other inscriptions were detected at that time by Herr Steven, the only traveller who has visited the church.

My diary does not notice anything particular on the road from Mzketha to Gori. The latter town stands on the left bank of the Kur, in a cheerful and healthy situation, and its houses built of boulders, rise on the declivity of the hill in the form of an amphitheatre. The rocks above the town are crowned by the ancient fortress, which is no longer used, and whose builder is unknown. An ancient church in the town has been converted into a powder magazine.

In the immediate vicinity of Gori, the two large streams, the Lakwa and the Matschuda, flow into the Kur. It has been sometimes regretted that after the Russian occupation, Gori was not selected as the capital, instead of Tiflis, over which it has many advantages; Gori being half a day nearer to the Euxine, and to the glorious district of Imeritia. Nevertheless, the country immediately surrounding Gori is not so picturesque, though it is more fertile and healthy than the vicinity of Tiflis. The population of Gori consists of only 3400 souls, of whom

the majority are Armenians. The Roman Catholic as well as the Georgian Armenians have many adherents here.

During my stay at Gori, some Italian Capuchins were still residing there, though a few months later they shared the fate of their spiritual colleagues at Tiflis and Kutais, being violently removed under an escort of Cossacks. These monks exerted a considerable influence on the Catholic population, not only through their piety and the peculiar cordiality with which Italian Capuchins treat the lower orders, but more especially by the charity which they distributed on the most liberal scale, owing to the munificence of the Propaganda, and of the French Missionary Association. I am not aware that they ever used this religious influence for political purposes, or that they abused it in any way. Nor has the Russian Government judged it expedient to justify or apologize for the disgraceful severity which it employed against these foreign priests, to whose persons and presence the Catholic population had become accustomed for many years. Besides the erection of the Catholic Church, the population of Gori were indebted to these monks for

the establishment of a hospital, and of a school, in which the children were taught a little Italian, as well as their native tongue.

This town, which, in all probability, never attained a very high degree of prosperity, began to decay a long time before the Russian conquest; and though Gori has not profited much by the Muscovite occupation, it is indebted to it for the security of the vicinity. In times past, the Lesghians made continual forays into the surrounding country, and even ventured sometimes, into the town to pillage. They were especially addicted to steal women and children, whom they sold to the Turkish slave traders.

I devoted the brief period of my stay at Gori, to visit the neighbouring troglodyte city of Uplotichos, which has received its appellation from a Georgian village situated at the foot of the rocks, which contain a greater number of well preserved antiquities, than any ruinous city in Egypt or in Greece.

The remains of this Colchian town are so peculiar, that even the traveller who has viewed, with wonder, the ruins of Rome, Thebes, Heliopolis, and Palmyra, finds still much to excite

his admiration. There is no doubt that analogous remains are to be found near Lake Van, dating as far back as the reign of Semiramis. The Crimea, also, furnishes a similar excavated city, on Mount Tepeberman ; but its architecture, or rather, handywork, cannot bear comparison with the city on the Kur, as regards beauty of design and execution. As it is our purpose to avoid the repetition of descriptions, we shall abstain from entering into details, referring the reader to the minute account of the city given by Dubois.

This ancient excavated town stands on the summit of a sandstone rock, and is reached by a well-made road cut through the strata. Many of the excavations present no remarkable features, and were probably tenanted by the lower orders. In the handsomer caverns, which belonged to the wealthier classes, you cannot detect a vestige of hammers, or the pick, the walls being as clean and smooth as in the excavations at Van. Many of the excavations present vaulted roofs, like churches or chapels ; and the sides consist of elegant pillars cut out of the rock. Unfortunately, only one inscription remains, which Dubois affirms to be half Ar-

menian, and half Arabic; a singular circumstance, that requires explanation. The decorations of the walls and ceilings in some of these chambers are very beautiful; nor can it be reasonably doubted, that the people which made these excavations must have possessed a certain amount of cultivation. Dubois fancied that he detected the influence of the ancient Persian style in these ruins, and imagined that the founder of the city was Uplos, the son of King Mzkethos, at a time when the Georgians were still worshippers of the sun and stars. On the highest summit of the mountain, stands a church, the only building that has not been excavated, and probably of a much more recent date than the city. The Georgian chronicles throw no light on the annals of this mysterious city. The existing population of the village situated at the foot of the rock, consists principally of Armenians, the Georgian families being few in number.

After a short stay at Uplotichos and Gori, we pursued our journey to Suram. The country is monotonous. The road leads through the valley of the Kur, which was filled with inland lakes, before the river had found a regular

channel by breaking through the porphyritic rocks which bound the basin of Tifis to the west. We did not enter the woody region till we reached Suram. The mountains covered with thickets, consist principally of limestone, and the forests are composed of beech, oaks, ash, elm, aspen, and the usual timber of Germany. Birch is entirely wanting, there is only a sprinkling of firs, and the larger timber disappeared as we approached Kutais. Wild pigeons occurred in such immense flights in this district, that even a random shot was certain to bring down one or two of them.

Kutais, (the ancient Kutatissium,) is delightfully situated on the left bank of the Phasis, in a green valley encompassed by woody mountains, of considerable elevation. This classical stream, issuing from the neighbouring uplands, rushes past the town with rapid and noisy current, raging and roaring among the porphyritic rocks, and rolling along heavy boulders in its bed. The modern part of the town, which has been built chiefly since the Russian occupation has an inviting and cheerful appearance, with its wide streets, and elegant white houses, half concealed by the foliage. The upper

part of the town, consisting of the ancient fortified Uchimerion, contains some remarkable ruins, including the remains of the Acropolis, which was partially destroyed by Russian vandalism, in 1769. The Muscovite, General Todleben, who had marched at that period to the assistance of King Solomon, of Imeritia, supporting him with Russian bayonets, against the insurrection of his subjects, was opposed by the Turks, whom the Imeritians, had called to their aid. Todleben advancing from Ossetia, planted his cannon on the heights, and thundered against the Uchimerion. When the Turks discovered that the walls of the old fortress gave them no protection against the Russian guns, they evacuated Kutais and Imeritia, leaving their protégés in the lurch. To prevent their return, Todleben proposed to Solomon, to blow up the fort, and the weak, dependant Prince, did not dare to oppose the proposition of the Russian. Accordingly, the ancient castle was destroyed, and most of the antiquities of Kutais with it. But the huge, shattered fragments that lie scattered around, and the remains of a church, give a fair notion of the ancient Georgian architecture. At the highest spot of

the ruined citadel commanding a magnificent view of the surrounding country, stand the ruins of a palace of the ancient Lasian Kings, and the citadel itself is surrounded by numerous ruins of gates, aqueducts and cisterns. Finally, in the centre of the upper town, the eye is greeted with a view of the old Cathedral, a fine building, with numerous sculptures, whose melancholy dilapidated and ivy grown walls, inclose a tranquil and charming Imeritian and Russian cemetery.

After an interval of cloudy days, the sky had recovered its serenity, and I hailed with delight the return of fine weather, as I wandered by moonlight, among the ruins and graves, with a bearded Imeritian priest by my side. If we had been disposed to indulge in a contemplative mood amidst these scenes of decay and dissolution, our meditations would have been effectually interrupted by the Russian drum-major, who, to do proper honour to the Emperor's Coronation day, roused the echoes of the rocks and ruins, by the crash of merry waltzes, mazurkas and operas ascending from the banks of the Phasis, through the still evening air.

It is generally known, that the Imeritians are connected in type and tongue with the Georgians. Yet my German dragoman, who was familiar with the Tiflis dialect, found it difficult to make himself understood at Kutais. The remaining inhabitants of the latter town, are Armenians, Jews and Russians. There are also small colonies of Turkish, Greek and Lasian artizans at Kutais, and besides the above enumerated specimens of human varieties, you occasionally detect among the purchasers in the bazaars, some of the wild sons of the mountains, especially Ossetians and Suanetians, in their well known costume, who come down to sell horse cloths, burkas, fox, martin and bear skins, wax and honey.

The celebration of the Coronation day, had attracted a crowd of these various nationalities in the great square of Kutais, whither they flocked to witness the illumination, to listen to the military band, and to see the Imeritian youth play at ball. The Imeritian costume is almost identical with the Georgian, save that instead of the high lamb-skin caps of the latter, they wear a square piece of brown cloth neatly

edged and fastened under the chin with a black string.

The predominant character of the Georgian type may be detected in the Imeritian population, but it has a nobler and more expressive development in the case of the latter. The beauty of the men and women of Imeritia is universally known and celebrated. Their singularly symmetrical, noble, and delicate forms, are perfect models of physical beauty, and would seem to have floated before the imagination, or memory of Grecian sculptors, when they wrought Antinous and Apollo.

Nor can many races rival the inhabitants of Imeritia, Mingrelia, Guria, and Adschara (formerly Colchis) in harmony of features. Even the haughty hero forms of the Circassians must yield to them. The traveller encounters occasionally in the most secluded woods of this region, women clad in many coloured rags, and inhabiting the most wretched hovels, whose lovely features and forms, converted into marble, would be worthy of a place beside the Venus of Canova in the Vatican.

As a special feature of the district near Kutais, I cannot avoid noticing the Russian

eunuch colony at Marran. There is in Russia a sect of seceders, called *Astarewerzi*, *i. e.*, Old Believers, whose adherents have misconstrued the sense of a passage of Scripture, and Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Riga, are inhabited by a considerable number of these singular fanatics, who think to gain an entrance into heaven by self-mutilation. The Russian Government has attempted, with its usual severity, to suppress this fanatical sect, but it has not been so successful in their case as with political exaltados. Many of these eunuchs were forced to serve in the army, as a punishment; others were transported to Trans-Caucasia, where they form military colonies at Marran and Nassaran, twenty versts from Vladikaukas. I saw several of these people, and was informed by a German physician, that they fall more speedy victims to endemic diseases, than the other inhabitants.

They are discovered at a glance among the other inhabitants, by their sallow, earthy complexion, their emaciation, and the revoltingly effeminate expression of their beardless faces. Nor can a more terrible contrast be conceived than that between the disgusting features of these Russian fanatics, and the glorious men of Imeritia, who

must occasionally fret in secret at the thought of having lost their freedom, and national independence, to a people physically and mentally so inferior to them as their conquerors.

I took up my quarters at Kutais, in a small inn, kept by a conceited fellow, who wished to pass for a Polish noble, but I put up with his pretensions, in consideration of the shelter. Travelling in Asia is always more convenient in the Russian than in Mohammedan districts, where you must commonly dispense with roads and all accommodation, whilst in Persia and Koordistan, you are devoured with vermin.

The Italian Capuchins of Kutais made a more agreeable impression on me than they did on Dubois de Montpereux. This may have resulted from the absence of the convent Doctor Campocastro, whom Dubois styles, "Le plus ignore, le plus gredin des charlatans, qui se disent, médecins," or from the presence of Abbé Vidal, and some French officers fresh from Persia, or finally, the letter I brought from Pater Benedetto, at Tiflis, may have worked wonders. At all events, Pater Don Antonio was all civility.

The convent is charmingly situated on the Phasis, and surrounded by umbrageous groves. The waters of the classical stream made pleasant music, as they dashed and danced below our windows, and added to the zest of the good father's entertainment, and the fiery Imeritian wine. The convent of Kutais is generally occupied by only two friars, but a third, Pater Benedetto, happened to be present at this time. The latter, after having experienced many contrarities at Tiflis, had retired to Kutais, where he was preparing to return to his home in Sicily, when our arrival gave him a welcome opportunity of travelling to Constantinople under our escort. The Superior of the convent was an Italian, and the other friar was a native of Kutais, and a pupil of the Propaganda ; but although he greatly surpassed his colleague in scientific instruction, which he had acquired at Rome, yet the Italian had obtained more respect and esteem in the town and country, by his good-humour, which he had in common with most Italian Capuchins. I frequently witnessed the child-like veneration in which he was held by the Armenian boys, to whom he dis-

tributed a few copper pieces when they acquitted themselves satisfactorily at school.

On the other hand, Don Antonio was more spiritual and erudite, and favoured by a refined exterior, having the distinguished physiognomy of his compatriots, with their delicately chiselled aquiline nose, and a splendid, raven black beard. This well educated propagandist showed me, with an honest pride, his tolerably copious library, consisting principally of Italian and Armenian books, besides a few French works, including Massillon, Bossuet, &c. Unfortunately, these monks had been latterly deprived of the privilege of obtaining books from Italy.

A handsome present of books had recently arrived in the country, from Rome, destined for the convent, and containing only theological and perfectly unobjectionable works. But the Russian *douaniers* refused to let the books pass, under various pretexts, whilst they secretly intimated to the fathers, that the books were at their disposal, if they paid a silver rouble (3s.) per volume. As the means of the convent were not adequate to meet this bribe, the books

remained in the hands of the Russian Custom-house officers.

Eight hundred Catholics, chiefly Armenians, live at or near Kutais, speaking nothing but the Imeritian tongue; whilst a few genuine Imeritians are reckoned among the Catholic population. Their conversion to Catholicism took place at the same time that such a multitude of Armenian, Greek, and Nestorian Christians passed into the Latin Church, in Turkey and Persia. At the present time, the Catholic priests in Trans-Caucasia are strictly forbidden to make any proselytes. One of the Capuchins informed me, that if they were allowed free scope, they could convert many hundreds of the Pagan and Mohammedan mountaineers. He added, that multitudes of Suanetians and Abchasians, most of whom were genuine heathens, had announced their wish to receive baptism, in the convent of Kutais, but they were ordered away; for every priest who attempts to convert an idolator into a Roman Catholic, is threatened with transportation to Siberia. There might be an appearance of reason, if not of justice, if this prohibition to

enter the Catholic and Protestant churches were limited to members of the Russo-Greek faith, or to the Christian confessions generally. But to forbid even Mohammedans, Jews and Pagans, to seek their salvation in any other, save the orthodox Russian church, is a specimen of oppression and compulsion that has never been devised by any Potentate before, as far as I know. The unavoidable conclusion drawn from this prohibition, emanating from a Christian state in the nineteenth century, is, that it prefers Jewish and Heathen to Catholic subjects.

I saw amongst the pupils at the convent, a young Armenian, who showed considerable natural abilities, and who was destined to receive his finishing education as missionary, in the school of the Propaganda at Rome. He was attached with enthusiastic ardour to his calling; but the Government refused to allow him to travel to the Eternal City. The severity and persecution which prevailed at Colchis, even at the time of my visit, showed clearly that the Catholic missions would soon experience the fate of the Protestant missionaries from Bâle,

who, after enduring many vexations, were finally driven out of Georgia and Russia, by Baron Rosen.

The good fathers showed me every part of the convent, and let me attend the noisy school, where thirty or forty boys were shouting or singing all together. They could read and write Georgian, and they read Italian with tolerable facility. The remainder of their lessons consisted in learning prayers by heart; nor did the friars spare little *douceurs* in money to stimulate the industry of their pupils. A handsome and spacious church was being erected close to the convent, at the cost of 7000 roubles, paid by the Propaganda of Rome. A large and well-designed altar-piece had arrived from the Eternal City, and was shown to me with much satisfaction by Don Antonio. Many Mohammedans were engaged in erecting the edifice; but they did not scruple to assist in the erection of a Christian temple; whilst another sect of Christians placed all kinds of impediments in the way of the work. Meanwhile, the time of our departure drew nigh, and Pater Benedetto had tied up his bundle. We paid a last

visit to the hospitable refectory, tasted the excellent convent cake for the last time, and drank the parting toast "To better times," in the ruby Imeritian wine.

CHAPTER IV.

The Life of a Naturalist—An Episode.

FALLERMAYER has written, that "The ever-green glades and groves of Colchis appear to realize 'Paradise Lost,' the land of waking dreams in early youth, whose balmy breezes I was destined to breathe."

When I read this passage in the Colchian fragments of the Professor, I was reminded of another man who loved the sunny banks of the Phasis as dearly, but to whom fate was less propitious, than to the academician of the Isar. I allude to a young Russian naturalist, who was not fortunate enough to return from his pilgrimage to his domestic hearth, like Fallermayer, who had the satisfaction to print his diary, and to relate his adventures in Colchis, whilst

smoking his cigar, and sipping his famous Bavarian beer in a Munich restaurant.

I admit that life is at best a chequered scene. Joys and sorrows, prize essays and biting criticisms, Turkish nischan and Bavarian beer form a strange but certain succession. If every wanderer had found a poetical grave amidst the shades of Colchis, he would have escaped the infliction of bad portraits, and the charges of flattery, meanness, or stupidity.

Szowitsch, our hero, was a Slavic naturalist, who led a roving life amidst the primeval woods of Imeritia, and described his experiences in letters to a Crimean friend, who showed them to me. I read them with sympathy and pleasure, and was surprised to find the similarity in sentiment and expression between Szowitsch and Fallermayer, the son of the Alps, and the child of the steppe.

The last letter of Szowitsch dated Kutais, was written shortly before his death. "I am impressed with feelings," thus he writes, "which have long been strangers to my breast. The people here think that I look dreamy and melancholy, and they often ask me what afflicts me. Yet my heart beats as light as in child-

hood, and I could sing all day. I wish you could see the hut I have built in the woods: box and laurel, form its walls and roof, flowers and wild plants its floor. A blue-throated warbler and a starling share it with me, and I shall set them free when I leave, out of gratitude for their carols, with which they wake me in the morning. Then I throw on my burka, and run out to see the glorious dawn. It is a sublime moment, and a great compensation for much suffering; around and above me an ocean of deep verdure, in one place fabulous ruins of unknown origin; at my feet the sparkling Rion, with its azure zone belting the forest. The sun arises over the forest world, and I and my birds salute it, I with silent admiration, and my songsters with their anthems. My thoughts take no definite shape, but I hope that God will accept them as a prayer. Then I jump up from my morning dream, take my gun and botanical case, and rush into the thicket! how happy I am there. I love the woods and the chace, and like the Indian I cannot fancy a happy home, without hunting grounds. You in your dismal steppe cannot conceive the glories of these old woods of Colchis, you have

no idea of these mighty trees with their creepers, of this ground with its carpet of flowers, of the twittering birds on every branch. I seldom come back without a rich harvest, which I send to Kutais, where I dine with the Capuchins, who are friendly, hospitable people. But I return ere twilight to my hut, view the sunset, and rejoice that the morning will soon return. How the mountains glow! how sweetly the evening bells from the convent swell on the night air. How solemn sound the waters of the Rion, through the forest, whilst my neighbour the cuckoo wishes me good night with melancholy tone. Good night my friend, I cannot tell you how happy I am here, and I am sadly pained to think that I must ever leave it!"

And poor Szowitsch did leave it. But his mortal part remained behind in the Colchian woods. A few weeks after the date of this letter, he was no more. The exhilaration he speaks of, was the commencement of a fever that carried him off after some exhausting expeditions among the hills and woods of glorious Guria, and his mortal remains repose beside the Rion, the rush of whose waters used to gladden him at night.

When I was conducted, a few years ago, to the spot, I found the hut fallen in, and the birds escaped to the woods, where they now warble over the grave of poor Szowitsch.

This young naturalist was one of those wonderful men who cannot be happy in the monotony of home life, and are driven abroad by an irresistible impulse. After roaming through the Caucasus, Cachetia, Georgia, Armenia and Western Persia, he lingered a while at the German colony of Katharinenfeld, detained by the blue eyes and charms of a Suabian maid, who caused him to forget his zoology and botany for a season. But a stout and comely lad, Tobias Haubensack, found greater favour than the poor naturalist, in the sight of Klärchen, and when the Suabian yeoman appeared one day in his best buckskin breeches, new hose and bridegroom's coat, with huge buttons, Szowitsch saw that the case was hopeless, as the round and ruddy face of the German belle beamed brighter on viewing the irresistible attractions of the favoured swain, who pressed her in his stalwart arms, exclaiming, "Klärchen—this is thy own Haubensack!" To cure his spleen,

the naturalist took up his staff again, and succeeded, at length, in finding comfort amidst the groves of Colchis.

A few years later, I came to Imeritia, and as I was one day wandering along the Phasis, near Kutais, thinking of Jason and the Golden Fleece, and admiring the blue waters, and the verdant foliage, I found the willow, underneath which poor Szowitsch slumbers.

CHAPTER V.

French Travellers from Persia—Journey through Imeritia and Mingrelia—Natural Scenery—Beauty of the Colchian Landscapes—Soil on the Phasis—Mingrelian Family Life—Aged Forests of Colchis.

OUR party had been joined at Kutais by some French travellers, who wished to accompany us on our return to Europe. They were officers coming from Teheran, discharged military instructors, lately in the service of the Shah, besides Abbé Vidal, a witty, clever man, who had made the unsuccessful attempt to teach that prince the French language. All three were amiable and cheerful companions, genuine Frenchmen, always gay, contented and chatty, full of witty sallies, never depressed by obstacles,

and never tormented with German spleen and ill-humour. There were, moreover, two French ladies, whereof one was married, young and amiable, whilst the other was single, old and querulous. The latter was also accompanied by a parrot, a black pug and three greyhounds, from Persia, an heirloom from her sister, the late Countess of Damas, at Teheran, and which, she would not suffer to be strangled, either from affection or wilfulness, although their transport gave not a little trouble. The aged Mamselle had obtained a great knowledge of life during her travels, and the many years that she had witnessed, but, unfortunately, she saw the night side of everything, and the same remark might be applied to her as to Madam Pieper: her mouth was a guillotine for every fair fame from Paris to Teheran.

It was not admissible that such a party should start from Kutais without a scene. The Polish host was addicted to double charges, and he had, moreover, such a surly *naturel*, that Dickens might have said of him that "a porcupine would be a feather-bed by his side." Of his German-Polish wife, my Diary only re-

marks, that her person seemed to have a strong antipathy to soap and water, and that she could never have passed an examination in politeness. This amiable pair made our departure from Kutais a scene of strife and confusion. Expressions were bandied about, on both sides, that did not savour of the essence of roses of Teheran, and the interference of the Pater Benedetto, of Catania, alone prevented an application of fistycuffs. This worthy Capuchin had joined our party, now amounting to seven, and acted suitably to his cloth, as peacemaker on the present occasion.

Over the bridge of Kutais we went in single file, at a solemn pace, forming a somewhat picturesque caravan. In front rode the son of Jean Paul, a veteran of la Grande Armée, captured in 1812, and settled in the colony of New Tiflis. The youth acted the part of guide, and was followed by the French officers, the Abbé, and myself, whilst the aged and youthful ladies, poodle, parrot, and greyhounds, came next, and the main body was closed by fourteen pack-horses, with their drivers, in the picturesque Imeritian costume. The rear-guard consisted of the Capuchin, with his rosary over

his white dress, and a great wooden missionary cross on his breast, intended to secure us against accidents and mishaps. Pater Benedetto was a good-humoured, jovial man, a general favourite with us all, always of a sociable mood, and ready for humorous converse. Nor did he resent it, if we bantered him sometimes. He seemed far from distressed at the idea of returning to his convent, and spoke occasionally with patriotic enthusiasm of the beauties of his home, of the pure air of Catania, of its pious citizens, and delicious macaroni, which the unhappy man had not tasted for years.

The country through which we passed, to the west of Kutais, is surprisingly beautiful, resembling a vast English park, with meadows, rushing streams, mighty groups of timber-trees, heavy with leafy honours and fruit; it is a fairy garden, like the Park of Titania, embellished by the gorgeous vegetation, sunshine, and azure skies of Colchis. The character of Imeritian landscape is gay, lovely, and simple, without monotony. The eye is never wearied with looking at these fresh, verdant, and variegated glades, carpeted with flowers and plants, or of gazing up at the light green shrubberies of the

hazel and ash-trees, of the willows and silver poplars, of the pear, cherry, apple, and apricot-trees ; whilst, at other times, your path carries you past the primeval giants of the forest. These aged woods consist of beech, lime, oak, and elm, ash and walnut-trees alternating in endless succession with planes and silver poplars, and though the timber-trees may not exceed in size those of our German forests, they are much more luxuriantly decorated with creepers. But trees of more southern climes thrive amongst the former, including the evergreen box, the fig-tree, the laurel, the chestnut, and the arbutus tree, with a fiery red bark, and all these are overgrown and almost concealed by a prodigious underwood of dwarf palms, rose-laurels, myrtle, and rhododendrons. Yet the vine presents the most graceful ornament of these Colchian groves. This is its original cradle ; it was here that it yielded its purple grape and fiery wine to the earliest races, and hence it spread into all lands of Europe and Asia, to strengthen and rejoice the heart of man. The Colchian vine presents a splendour, luxury, and size, exceeding the conceptions of Europeans.

It is an additional charm of the Imeritian

landscapes, that the whole scenery is not engrossed by the majestic forest, which would necessarily create a certain monotony. In Imeritia, the woods have many sunny breaks and clearances, occupied by meadows and fields of maize. Yet these clearances are of limited dimensions, and adorned by groups of trees, lifting a dome of vine and ivy creepers to their highest branches. Not a rock, stone, or naked piece of ground can be discovered near the lower course of the Phasis. Every spot that is not occupied by perennial plants, presents one tangled growth of grasses, flowers, annuals, and every variety of creeper. Higher up, among the trees, the eye is soothed by the numerous shades of green, from the sombre verdure of the fir, tamarisk, and cypress, to the lustrous foliage of the laurel, and to the silver green of the Colchian poplar, whilst the purple clusters of the grapes peep out beneath every branch.

“Why, this is like Paradise!” exclaimed my companions in one breath, at the sight of such glorious profusion. Nor is the comparison unnatural, so admirably does this region correspond to the Eden of Genesis, where we read: “That the Lord God caused all kind of trees to grow

in the earth, pleasant to look at, and good to eat." Many travellers in the Old and New Worlds have compared their scenery to Paradise, and some have gone farther. Thus, Tournefort describes the arid plain of Etchmiadsin in Armenia, Joseph Wolff the treeless and marshy vale of the Euphrates in Mesopotamia, and Daniel Schlatter, the scorched south coast of the Crimea, as resembling the Garden of Eden. But, on viewing nature in Colchis, the dullest observer is reminded of the picture of Paradise in the Mosaic tradition. Though I have seen many enchanting spots during ten years of travel, I do not recollect any scenery to compare with the banks of the Phasis, in tranquil beauty, splendour of vegetation, and the harmonious distribution of hills, woods, and streams. Even the Anatolian Olympus, the abode of the Gods, with its emerald uplands, its crown of foliage, and its musical streams, does not equal Colchis, nor can the Hesperian gardens of Blidah, with their orange forests, or even Italy, with its Lake of Como, Genoese Riviera, and Bay of Naples, enter the lists with this part of Trans-Caucasia. Guria, Mingrelia, and the western part of

Imeritia, are the most beautiful portions of ancient Colchis, and much more glorious than the district of Trebizond, which I visited subsequently. The basin of the Phasis between Poti and Marran, may be regarded as the focus of attraction.

We experienced on the evening of September the 7th, at Marran, the luxury of repose, after riding hard all day, and feasting our eyes on so many beauties, till they were quite exhausted. The remark applied especially to Pater Benedetto, who, after being half-flayed by his ride, threw himself in transports on a downy Circassian burka. Three fourths of our party were already settled in, whilst the water bubbled cheerfully in our tea-kettle. Too excited to sleep, and leaning against a tree, I enjoyed the scene, lighted up by our camp-fire.

The French officers dressed, half in Parisian, and half in Persian fashion, looked rather like comedians. The energetic Abbé Vidal in his hunting dress, resembled much more a *vieux de la vieille garde* than a priest, for he had a substantial moustache, and decided, martial features. The young French lady looked pale, suffering, and interesting, and retained, even in

her slumber, the graces of a Parisienne. The aged Mamselle lay upon a burka, surrounded by the pug, the parrot, and the greyhounds. It could never enter the most extravagant imagination, that she had barricaded herself by these means to protect her virtue, for she possessed more effectual and vigilant defenders in her ugly features. Our Imeritian guides and drivers, handsome men with placid countenances, were lying by the luggage, under the neighbouring trees, and they slept as sweetly and looked as contented as the remainder of the party, though they had made all the journey on foot, and had fared on nothing better than pea-gruel. "In sleep," says Cervantes, "all men, the great and the little, rich and poor, are equal."

The following day we pursued our journey, descending the river, from Marran in flat-bottomed boats. From this place to its mouth, the Phasis flows in a fine broad and deep channel, without islands, and unobstructed with rapids. Between Kutais and Marran, where you enter Mingrelia, the character of the river undergoes a complete change. At Kutais, the current is rapid and noisy, foaming and roaring

between its rocky banks, as it rolls mighty boulders in its channel. But below Marran, the Phasis is a languid, gentle stream, and after a short and impetuous youth, it moves on in steady majesty, like a noble old man. Scarcely can you trace a ripple in the water, so trifling is the fall; nor do boats find any difficulty in breasting the stream. The rocks on either bank now disappear, and are replaced by gentle slopes covered with forest and thickets. Nor is it an easy matter to effect a landing everywhere, for the damp soil on the banks yields under the pressure of the foot, and the net-work of exuberant vegetation presents another almost insuperable barrier. The Phasis would be admirably adapted for steam navigation from Poti to the borders of Imeritia, the fall being very trifling, and the bed of the river free from shallows and reefs. Below Marran, the current is so insignificant, that it cannot move even the smallest boulders.

Of all ancient writers, Arrian gives the fullest, but a very erroneous account of the Phasis. He maintains, that though the water is sweet on the surface, it is salt underneath, and that it can be kept pure for ten years. All this sounds

fabulous. We drew up water from some depth, and found it quite sweet, at Kutais, but below Marran, it is quite impregnated with vegetable mould, and unfit for drinking. Arrian states that a stone anchor existed at that time, at the mouth of the Phasis, and was attributed to the Argo. Æschylus mentions this river, in his Prometheus, and calls it the boundary of Europe and Asia.

Our boats dropped gently down the current amidst landscapes of an American character, resembling the scenes described by Châteaubriand, on the Mississippi and Ohio. The only feature wanting, was the exuberance of animal life in the woods and prairies of the New World. Mingrelia is the only region of the Old World that reminded me of the landscapes of America. Though the forests of the Caucasus are very old, they are wanting in the luxury, exuberance, and underwood of the forest scenery of the Far West. But the vegetation on the lower Phasis, does not fall short of the vigorous and virgin beauty of the woods on the Mississippi and Amazon. Nor do the American streams equal the rivers of Western Asia in historical interest.

Whereas the waters of the Far West have

only witnessed Red-skin tragedies and buffalo hunts, the magic and mysterious coasts of Colchis have been visited by Grecian heroes, its woods have re-echoed the harp of Orpheus, and critics have thought to trace the wanderings of Ulysses in the Odyssey along the Euxine shores. One thing is certain, *i. e.*, that the banks of the Rion were the seat of very ancient culture, of which all traces have now vanished. Musing on these great memories, we floated silently down the current, the very Frenchmen being, for once, checked in their colloquial propensities by the *genius loci*. Nor were our thoughts engrossed by recollections of the past, for we could not help comparing Colchis with our country, and anticipating its future.

Two thousand five hundred years ago, a mysterious civilization hovered over the Phasis. Strabo relates, that in his day, more than a hundred and forty bridges spanned its current. Rich, mighty, and comely nations dwelt on its banks, but tradition is silent as to their fate. An industrious and commercial city then stood at the mouth of the Phasis, whilst the banks of the Rhine were a wilderness of bog and forest, through which our blue-eyed, flaxen-

headed sires roamed almost as wild as the red men of the West. Now, both streams have changed character. The bridges, colonies, and culture of the Phasis, have disappeared, whilst the banks of the Rhine are adorned with stately cities, and on its waters float the riches of a cultivated and philosophic people, the descendants of blond, bearish savages. What will appear on the Phasis and the Rhine, two thousand years hence?

Towards evening, we landed on the left bank of the Rion. Our boatmen cleared a way for us through the thicket; and we found in the wood some Mingrelian huts, whose poor inmates had nothing to offer but gruel, grapes, nuts, and wine. The Mingrelians who live scattered in these woods, are very handsome people, but have pale complexions. They suffer from the same malignant fevers which sweep away the Russian soldiers by hundreds. Their disposition appears gentle, peaceable, harmless, and idle; but they are reckoned honourable and loyal—a rare quality in Asia. The population is thinly scattered, and not inclined to congregate together. The time must also come when the natives on the Phasis will disappear, and

make way for Sclavic settlers ; and when the Mingrelian race and tongue will be only matters of history. Nor can they escape the fate of some Indian tribes of the Mississippi, of whom a traveller relates, that only one individual survived to speak their tongue—an aged parrot, fluttering about the woods, and uttering at times strange human-like tones. On the Phasis, the cuckoo takes the place of the parrot, and will always find it as difficult as the Russian soldier to learn Mingrelian.

It is no easy matter to make excursions among the ancient woods of Colchis. The tangled thickets are often almost impenetrable, even to birds ; and we found the Circassian kinschal very useful, in cutting our way through the brushwood. After making a meagre collection of plants and insects, we began to press and preserve them, much to the amusement of the Capuchin. He begged for an explanation of the mystery ; and when informed that it was the chief object of my travels, he raised his hands above his head, and broke out into a peal of laughter. The good pater reminded me of the corpulent Arragonese missionary, whom Humboldt met at San Francisco, in

South America, who received him and Bonpland very hospitably, but could not conceive how a man with plenty of beef, and a respectable income at home, could prefer to wander over the wilderness in distant hemispheres, in order to pick a few plants, and find the degree of heat in running streams.

When dawn appeared, I roamed into the woods, leaving my friends asleep; and on my return, after a somewhat lengthy stroll, I was amused to find the party still locked in the embrace of Morpheus. Yet the Colchian Aurora glanced through the branches of the hazel trees, and played with her rosy fingers over the nose of the old French lady, without rousing her. Pater Benedetto lay still extended, with fast closed eyelids, whilst his peach-coloured cheeks were swelled out, as if in the act of blowing an angelic trump, and his expression was that of beatitude. But our Imeritian boatmen became impatient at the delay. Meanwhile the party awoke, and were agitated with a longing for coffee. But no milk was forthcoming; and the old French lady broke forth into bitter lamentations, when she discovered that the impatience of the Imeritian boatmen

was the only impediment in the way of our obtaining some. She poured forth a torrent of reproaches on their heads, and shook her clenched hand at them in such a threatening manner, that although they did not understand a word she said, they shrunk back quite alarmed and brow-beaten. Not knowing the idiom of the country, we could not discover what the Imeritians thought of the old lady, whose attire was a medley of the Amazonic, French, and Oriental costume. All that our dragoman could detect from their observations, was, that they thought the French officers to have been in the East Indian service; whilst they had strong suspicions of the aged Mamselle having been fencing-master of the Great Mogul.

There is an old channel uniting the Phasis and the Chopi, which flows into the sea at Redut-Kaleh. It bears the name of the Tsiwa Canal, and it is uncertain if it is a work of art or nature. When our boats approached this canal, the landscape on both sides presented the most magnificent scene of vegetation, that I or my companions had ever beheld. The French travellers, who had just left the arid, leafless plains of Persia, and the naked plateaux of

Armenia, could not restrain their delight at the sight of this magic scenery. All the most luxurious landscapes, that my memory recalls in Italy, Anatolia, Africa, Rhodes, Samos, and the Balearic islands, cannot enter into competition with the banks of the Phasis. You must go to the New World to find their equal. I admit that the trees and creepers of Colchis partake rather of a south of Europe than a tropical character. Most of the sylvan productions, the vine, the beech, oak, and chesnut, occur in Germany, and it is only as you approach the shores of the Euxine, that you find evergreens of majestic size, including the box, stately bay trees, and common laurels, with leaves so lustrous that they appear dipped in gum arabic, myrtles, and the splendid *dshelkwa* tree, with a trunk three feet in diameter.

But the distinguishing features of the Colchian sylvan landscapes, consists in the double vesture presented by the parasitical plants, and in the extreme exuberance of all kinds of creepers. The prodigious growth of this description of plant, prevents the timber trees from attaining that great age which might be anticipated in a country where the woodman's axe is scarcely ever

heard. The same result attends this phenomenon in Colchis as that recorded in Brazil, by Martins. So great is the exuberance and conflict of vegetable life, that the remarkable fertility of the soil is inadequate to support it. All the plants are engaged in a perpetual contest for self-preservation, and injure each other much more than the thinner growth of our forests. Even the most lofty stems and branches are impeded and distressed by collision with their neighbours, and suffer a premature decay. Nor is it till long after they are dead, that you discover the fact; the dissolution of the giant being effectually concealed by a canopy of ivy, briars, hops, vines, and other creepers, veiling the sapless trunk, and forming festoons and garlands between the branches. So exuberant is the growth of these creepers, that they commonly form a beautiful dome of verdure covering the decay beneath, and swaying to and fro with every breeze. The traveller reposing beneath their grateful shade, looks up to discover the kind of tree that answers as a roof and umbrella against sunshine and rain, and he is surprised to find that he is resting beneath the withered arm of an aged oak, long since dead, but so embowered with parasitical

plants, that it looks as though it were still adorned with the bloom of youth.

Plants that creep humbly on the ground in Europe, proudly crown the tallest trees in Colchis. No plant differs so widely in this respect from the European, as the wild vine. Even the picturesque Italian festoons, so different from the stiff stakes and dwarf vines of Germany, give a very faint idea of the extraordinary development of the plant in Mingrelia, owing to the neglect of the inhabitants.

Parrot calls the vine "the queen of the forests of Imeritia and Mingrelia." It clasps the largest timber trees like a colossal snake, and fastens round them so closely that it seems bent on squeezing them to death. The vine shoots from tree to tree, embracing trunk and branches, and forming vast Laocoon groups. Even the crown of the highest oaks and beech trees, is not safe from the attacks of this vegetable boaconstrictor. The Colchian vine floats triumphant over many of these forests, presenting sometimes the appearance of a splendid streamer, at others, the canopy of a throne, and stretching out its waving shoots and elegant leaves in superb garlands. It abandons its purple

fruit above to the birds, for man on the Phasis only picks what he finds within his reach, and this greatly exceeds his wants.

On entering the Tsiwa canal, we found the forest flora so exuberant, that it impeded our progress. Bending or prostrate trees, covered with a web of creepers stretch far across the waters, and bathe their branches in the current. Floating trees are swept from above against these dams, are stopped in the course, increased by additions, and ultimately borne along by the tide, forming floating islands, as on the Mississippi and Amazon, though on a smaller scale. Animal life alone forms a great contrast between the Colchian and American forests.

Naturalists have drawn gorgeous pictures of the *fauna* of the New World, of the diamond blaze of its humming-birds, of the illumination of its beetles and butterflies, of the concerts of its apes, the chatter of its parrots, and the bass tones of its giant frogs. Nothing of the kind presents itself in Colchis. By day, the silence in these vast solitudes is almost oppressive, the only specimens of animal life consisting in a few wild ducks swimming up the stream, a few bee-eaters and starlings hunting for insects, a

deer slaking its thirst in the current, and a few cuckoos. At night, there is a little more life in the woods, and you may hear the growl of a bear, or the howl of a jackal. Szowitsch informs us that the migratory season is the only one when these regions appear animated. Then you hear the cooing of the wild doves, whilst the pelicans sail up the stream, the flamingoes keep watch on the shore, the splendid virgin crane (*grus virgo*) reposes on the river bank, gathering strength for her journey; and the woods are alive with quails and birds of prey. But this state of things does not last long. The wanderers wing their flight to the Don, the Danube, and Southern Russia, where the steppes offer greater attraction to the crane than the verdure of Colchis.

A few Europeans have taken a more lasting affection for nature in Colchis, than those wandering birds. An Englishman, in particular, a mind of enterprising character, and cultivated mind, settled down in the wood, at a day's journey from Kutais, and lived like a hermit in the solitude. He rejects all connection with civilization, sweeps through the forest, gathers wild grapes, and chases the bears and red

deer. When I considered the repose, freedom, and ease of such a life, I sometimes fancied that it might be pleasant to pass a life-time in this wilderness. The idea had a certain fascination, but it had also its terrors; and I thought of the poet who, after climbing the giddy precipices of the Alps, felt a longing for society, for the haunts of men, and the dust of crowded streets. Those singular individuals who have readily broken off all connection with society, and retired to the wilds and woods for the remainder of their days are made of different stuff from ourselves, who cannot so easily dispense with the amenities of culture and civilization. "L'homme n'est pas fait pour vivre avec les arbres, avec le ciel pur, avec les fleurs et les montagnes, mais bien avec les hommes ses semblables." I adhere to these sentiments of George Sand, notwithstanding all the charms of Colchian scenery.

CHAPTER VII.

Redut-Kaleh—Visit to the Convent of Lugdidi Chopi—Sugdidi, the Residence of the Dadians—The Convent of Martwili—Beauty of the River Landscapes in Colchis—Funereal Grove—Mouth of the Phasis—Homeric Vestiges—Poti.

THE blue sky and splendid sunshine, the gay livery of the woods, and the mild and bright moonlight nights which had favoured us during our aquatic excursion, abandoned us on our arrival at Redut-Kaleh. We landed at this principal port of Mingrelia, amidst tempest, thunder and rain.

The town resembles a German fair, consisting of two interminable rows of wooden barracks, not much larger or convenient than the Frankfort fair-booths built on piles, raised a foot above the ground. Even

the public buildings and official residences are of wood. Notwithstanding the dampness of the climate and the multitude of wood-worms, which destroy a wooden house in a few years, this material has the preference. This results from the great abundance of timber in the immediate vicinity, whereas not a rock is to be seen throughout the fertile, but humid, soil of Mingrelia.

The erection of the houses on piles is a necessary precaution in this extremely damp region. In all the level parts of the Colchian coast, the raging billows have choked up the mouths of the rivers with sand-bars or shingle, and created extensive tracts of marsh. Nor has any part of the coast been more exposed to this accident than Mingrelia, which is watered by abundant streams, and being completely overgrown with an exuberant vegetation, is proportionally unhealthy. So damp and insecure is the foundation of the wooden barracks, comprising Redut-Kaleh, that after a few days rain, the passenger would be exposed to stick fast in the streets, were they not strewn with a deep bed of shingles.

It is well known that the Colchian coast has only one harbour, and the roadstead of Redut-Kaleh, which does not deserve the name, is one of the worst along the Caucasian shore, being exposed to the full force of the west and southerly gales, whilst the anchoring ground is unsafe for shipping, even in a slight storm.

The river Chopi which bisects Redut-Kaleh, and flows into the Euxine close by, has a tolerable depth of water, and would be navigable for vessels of considerable tonnage, if it were not choked with a sand-bar, like all Colchian streams. The expense of its removal would be somewhat heavy, and as the bar can only be passed by boats drawing three feet of water, all vessels that put in at this port, make all haste to land their cargo and escape into the offing. Nor do the anchorages of Poti at the mouth of the Rion, or of Anaklia, on the northern border of Mingrelia, offer greater security. It is only the small Turkish slave traders, with slight draught of water, that can frequent the coast with impunity, as regards tempests and gales.

Redut-Kaleh has never been a town according to European ideas. Nevertheless, it enjoyed considerable prosperity after the Russian occupation, during the space of ten years, owing to a ukase, which secured free-trade to the Trans-Caucasian provinces, during that interval. This stimulated the exertions of the Armenian merchants, and secured a considerable transit trade from Leipzig, through Georgia to Erivan, Tabris and Persia.

Hence, Redut-Kaleh became suddenly the greatest emporium on the east coast of the Black Sea. Speculators, ship-owners, and trading adventurers of all races and classes flocked into the place, which grew as though by magic, and the value of the imports, amounted at length to two million silver roubles annually. The returns consisted chiefly of home produce, maize, dried fruits, tobacco, skins, wax, fruit, and excellent timber, which found a ready market at Odessa. In fact, the whole country was enlivened and improved by the passage of the numerous caravans.

Unhappily this state of things ceased in 1831, notwithstanding the protests of the interested and the provident. The Moscow

merchants, and other short-sighted persons, thought to secure a fortune by monopoly and protection of Russian goods, and that trade could be forced to follow any course that might be chosen. Hence in 1832, free-trade was abolished, the Persian traffic passed to Erzeroum and Trebizond, enriching the Greek speculators of Stamboul, and the English manufacturers; Redut-Kaleh became deserted, and the Moscow traders were disappointed. At a more recent date, Prince Woronzoff raised his powerful voice in favour of a removal of the prohibition system, but it is probably too late. Moreover, the road through Turkish Armenia, is safer for caravans, than the thievish Koord territory, between Toprakaleh and Bajasid, which is the route for caravans from Georgia to Persia.

We could find no vessel at Redut-Kaleh, bound for Trebizond: nor was the prospect of a sail very inviting, as a furious south-west wind lashed the waves into fury, dashing their foam over the mohills, whilst the war of the breakers, and the whistling of the gale, sounded dismally through the chinks of our wooden barracks. The gale and its accompaniments sounded still more awful in

the night, resembling the wailing and shrieks of the drowned, swallowed up on that inclement coast. Not a spot of the Russian empire is more destructive to new arrivals, than the coast near the mouths of the Chopi and Phasis. One fourth of the Russian garrison, which is always limited in number, dies during the months of July, August and September. The survivors look more like spectres than men, all their northern energy having deserted their nerveless limbs, and they crawl about dragging their muskets painfully along the strand, which they protect against the approach of smugglers and slave traders. The civilian population does not suffer so severely as the garrison, because they are less exposed to the deleterious nuisances, and they live better. Yet all classes have contributed an abundant supply to the cemetery, situated twelve versts south of Redut-Kaleh.

It is impossible to conceive a more enchanting spot, than this burial ground. The graves lie scattered in a charming wood, under the shade of splendid trees, near the sea shore, whose everlasting music sounds like the wail of the departed, as it swells on the breeze

which makes a mournful sound in sweeping through the grove. The road leading to the cemetery is indescribably beautiful, being surrounded and surmounted by the prodigies of the most exuberant vegetation. The wood containing the burial ground consists of fruit trees of every variety, especially figs, cherries, plums, apples, and colossal nut trees, which scatter showers of fruit at every breeze, though no greedy hands are there to pick them. Intermingled with these are larger timber trees, including oak, lime, ash and beech, whilst the slender laurel, myrtle, and wild rose, crown and creep over the grave, and wild vines, ivy, and a hundred creepers hang round the crosses as natural garlands—presenting such a decoration as no European grave-yard can exhibit.

Whilst my companions seldom left the warm barrack of our Greek host, on account of the cold, damp weather, I made excursions into the neighbourhood, on foot or on horseback, accompanied by a Mingrelian lad, whose regular beauty was not inferior to the Paris of Canova. Though he had resided for some years at Redut-Kaleh, he had been spared by the fever. The

poisonous miasmas, which are so fatal to Russians, and all foreigners, which gradually undermine the health of the natives, and occasion premature decay, much sooner than the air of the uplands, had not yet expelled the roses from the cheeks of my guide, or enervated his elastic limbs.

The energy of early youth had bid defiance to the enemy. Nor are such instances uncommon in Mingrelia, even in the most insalubrious localities, but the influence of the climate is generally discernible in men of twenty years of age.

Our first visit was to the strand, where I enjoyed, once more the majestic spectacle of a storm on the Euxine. So soon as the rain had ceased, and the black tempest had made way for a white squall—the name given to cloudless hurricanes on the Black Sea, I made excursions to the Convent of Chopi, at the mouth of the Phasis to Sugdidi, the residence of the Dadian family, and to the Monastery of Martwili. My description of these places shall be brief, as they have been frequently visited, and well illustrated.

No such things as villages exist in Mingrelia. The houses lie scattered in the breaks and

openings of the woods, and even those of Chopi are dispersed over a great surface. The convent of that name, situated near the village, crowns the summit of a woody hill, overhanging the river. The eye is here greeted on all hands with the same luxurious vegetation, lending a picturesque charm to every part of the landscape.

The familiar trees of German forest scenery are seen intermingled on the uplands with wild arbutus with bright red bark, and above all, with Spanish chesnut trees, which shoot up to a great height in sunny spots, and spread out a canopy of branches and verdure equalling those of the plane and oak in dimensions, and exceeding them in splendour.

The vigorous trunks of the living trees are tightly embraced by a trellice work of various creepers, which cover the dead timber with festoons and garlands. Infinite is the diversity and the exquisite beauty of these brilliant parasites, which aspire to the highest twigs of the forest giants. Vegetation on the Chopi and Tschorokh, is as luxuriant as on the Phasis. The beauty of these landscapes was celebrated by the pen of Strabo and Xenophon, who, after his march

through the arid wastes of Persia and Armenia, seems to have been equally delighted with my French companions, at the contrast afforded by the sylvan splendour of Colchis.

The Convent of Chopi is inhabited by a few Georgian monks of the order of St. Basil, placed under an archimandrite. It was formerly one of the six bishoprics of Mingrelia, which were subsequently changed into abbeys. The edifice, like almost all Trans-Caucasian cloisters, is surrounded by a high wall. The convent church does not offer much worthy of note; the marble capitals of the columns showing a medley of the most opposite styles, and the clumsiest execution. The Monastery of Chopi is the St. Denis of the Mingrelian rulers. Since the time of Waweck Dadian, the earthly remains of all the princes of the Dadian family are deposited here.

After a short stay, we rode hence to Sugdidi, the ancient capital of Mingrelia, and residence of the Dadian family. It stands in a lovely and fertile situation, and having been amply described by other travellers, I shall pass to other matters, simply remarking that the surrounding district of Odischi, is the richest in Trans-

Caucasia, save Guria, and that it contains the remains of an ancient city, whose history is quite unknown.

The situation of the convent at Martwili is almost more enchanting even than that of Sugdidi.

As Dubois de Montpereaux has presented a minute description of this convent, we shall omit all notice of the edifice, and content ourselves with observing, that the finest view imaginable is descried from the top of its walls. The entire district of Colchis, with its magic sylvan scenery, lay extended before us. The sky had become clear again, and was purer and more transparent than in Midsummer. The whole of Mingrelia and Imeritia, lay like a picture straight before us, cased in by a gilded frame-work of mountain slopes. The eye embraced the entire course of the Phasis, Chopi, Engur, and Tschenitskali, whose waters are fed by the glaciers and snows of the Passenta—the highest peak of the Caucasus, after the Elbrous and Kasbeck. This majestic snowy pile, with its two silver peaks towering above the great chain of the Caucasian Alps, presenting a long row of snowy horns, pyramids, and domes, forms the background of the Colchian

paradise on one side, and on comparing its cloud capped summit with the silver pyramid of the Elbrous, the spectator feels doubtful to which should be assigned the pre-eminence. To the south and eastward, the eye strays and dwells among the plains and valleys of Mingrelia, Imeritia, and Guria, which are slightly broken by gentle undulations. The white summits of the mountain chain of Adschara and Akhalzik, were quite perceptible to the southward, whilst to the west, the blue mist hanging over the mouths of the Phasis and Ingur, showed the watery expanse of the Euxine. The soft beauty of the Colchian scenery, near the convent, is only equalled by the sublimity of the background of mountains to the southward.

A sharp ride on our sturdy Mingrelian steeds brought us back the same day to Redut-Kaleh, where I found the three Frenchmen negotiating a passage to Trebizond, with a Turkish skipper. The latter was desirous of starting forthwith; for he well knew the dangers of the Euxine during the Equinox. His charges were moderate; but our Greek host grudged even this unexpected advantage to the poor infidel. To prevent the en-

gagement, the worthy son of Hellas indulged in every imaginable falsehood, portraying the perils of the passage in pitch black colours, dwelling especially on the insecurity of a crazy Turkish bark, with clumsy mariners, under the command of an ignorant captain, and even venturing a hint that the Turk would not scruple to give us up to the thievish natives, in some secluded part of the coast. My travelling companions, as well as myself, were too accustomed to Greek lies, to be moved by these representations. They made, however, a deep impression on Pater Benedetto. The Capuchin was not well-versed in human character; and his weakness and timidity were easily deceived. Some Mingrelians, whom the Greek had gained over to the plot, confirmed his statements, and made use of the monk to work on the fears of the ladies. All sorts of difficulties were also placed in our way by the Russian authorities. Our luggage was threatened with a rigid scrutiny, and we could only avert the infliction by a shower of silver roubles.

While my companions were wrangling and swearing, I made an excursion to Poti and to

the mouth of the Phasis. The road leads partly through the magic sylvan scenery of Colchis, which, in every spot that is not invaded by water and marsh, offers a profusion and luxury inconceivable to the untravelled European. The three most genial seasons of the year appear blended into one, in this sunny climate. Thus, whilst those plants which Colchis shares with Germany were already tinged with autumnal hues, the half-ripe grapes, which are later in coming to maturity in Mingrelia than on the Rhine, reminded you of summer; whereas the profusion of evergreens, of wild flowers, and of vernal plants, together with the soft, voluptuous atmosphere, cheated the imagination with thoughts of spring. The nearer I approached the mouth of the Phasis, the mightier waxed the timber-trees, whilst the exuberance and dimensions of the creepers seemed to rival the vegetation of the Mississippi and Orinoco. Nor was this profusion confined to the land; for the waters were covered with innumerable *nymphææ*, exhibiting their splendid white and yellow clusters, reflected in the crystal mirror.

After a ride of three hours, I arrived at the

Poti and the mouth of the Phasis. A blue mist hovered around the vast garden of Guria, the most splendid part of Colchis. Unfortunately, I was obliged to rest satisfied with a distant view of this paradise. After a short stay at Poti, I walked a few miles up the Phasis, and was ferried across the stream a few miles below Korki.

A mild and tranquil day, the gentle whispering of the breeze in the wood, and the melancholy notes of the cuckoo encouraged a meditative mood; and I indulged in lucubrations about the Homeric Odysseus, whom some scholars would have traced in his wanderings to the coast of Colchis.

I was interrupted by my guide saying: "It will be dark, Sir, before we reach the krepost; and we have eaten nothing to-day." The youth had followed and watched me anxiously as I strolled among the thickets, and put an end to my Homeric speculations by a very prosaic appeal to our appetite. Yet I was greeted that same evening by a nymph, "tall, slender, and lovely," at Kirke, after we landed at a hut near Poti. She was the daughter of a Gurian fisherman who had built his hovel there. The

Gurian maid was not attired in a silver-white garment, with gold-glittering girdle ; but was arrayed, on the contrary, in gaudy-coloured rags, only half concealing her beautiful young limbs. Her face was unveiled ; nor have I ever seen more delicate features, or a more charming figure, even in Mingrelia. I caused my guide to ask the fisherman, if he would give me shelter for the night. A courteous word and the chink of roubles removed all difficulties—the fisherman made me welcome. The lovely daughter was not at all intimidated by the strangers ; and one of our sailors told me afterwards that the father would gladly have sold her to the Turks ; but the girl preferred her wretched home on the Phasis, to the most brilliant descriptions of the Stamboul harems. A few years ago, the father would not have much heeded her reluctance ; but since the Russian occupation, matters have somewhat changed ; and the most greedy parent cannot dispose of his daughter against her will. The Gurian maid handed me dried fruit, gruel, and maize bread, with sparkling wine (here the portion of beggars), though not in silver pitchers and golden goblets, as at the time of Kirke, but in an earthen jug and wooden cup.

Luxury has long deserted the land, nor has the Golden Fleece been recovered, even under Russian rule. Nature, indeed, is as bountiful as ever, the flora as exuberant as of yore; and classic beauty is still stamped on man's features in Colchis. But though flowers, butterflies and birds are happy and free in the Colchian Paradise, the people are enslaved, unhappy, and wretched in the finest of countries.

Night had descended on the Phasis. The fisher's maid prepared my bed, which consisted not of "gorgeous pillows, purple covers, and downy sheets," but of bare straw, hard maize-leaves, and rushes. Thinking of the changes wrought by time, I kept out the cold with my burka, and slept, whilst the old fisherman and my guide lay by the fire, and the maid disappeared. Nor did I see her again.

The Russian fortress of Poti, which was built by the Turks, on the left bank of the Phasis, contains nothing remarkable. Near it are situated the remains of a Roman castle. Not a trace, however, remains of the Colchian Emporium of Phasis, so great has been the alteration wrought in the Delta, by the deposits of the river.

An island opposite the Roman castle contained the ruins of a temple of Cybele, seen by Chardin, and it is probable, that this district embraces other antiquities, but few would venture to explore them, in these unhealthy and impenetrable morasses and thickets.

The sea has retired from the walls of Poti, within the last hundred-and-fifty years, and the place is, if possible, more unhealthy than Redut-Kaleh. When occupied by the Turks, the garrison used to retire in summer to the uplands, to escape the malaria. The Russians who attach less value to human life, leave their garrison, and military colony at Poti, throughout the year, and find it accordingly necessary to supply it entirely anew every ten years. The Muscovite government has often thought of founding an important fortress and port at Poti, but has been deterred by the fatal nature of the climate. Paskiewitsch, Rosen, and others, have tried to make it more salubrious, by thinning the woods; but all efforts were vain. Poti still remains a nest of fever. Dubois proposed to Rosen, to change the bed of the Phasis, drain the marshes, and secure a good harbour and island navigation, by important

works. But such a gigantic undertaking would require an immense outlay, and though Prince Woronzoff is reported to have made similar proposals, the Emperor Nicholas did not adopt them, preferring to build splendid barracks, and have a brilliant guard protecting Russia from the invasion of Occidental and democratic ideas.

CHAPTER VIII.

Reflections on Colchis—Present State of Mingrelia—Sail to Lasistan—Stay at Batoum—The Lasian People.

THE history of Colchis having been frequently and amply illustrated, we shall not dwell on its annals, simply remarking that the existence of an ancient and high degree of culture on the banks of the Phasis, is a mysterious, but well attested fact. Passing to the present time, we regret to be obliged to admit that Mingrelia, with its gorgeous vegetation, lovely sky, and handsome population: a land apparently blessed by Heaven with every advantage—is not a happy country. If we analyze its history, its government, and the social condition of the people, we turn away with disgust and horror from this Colchian Eden.

The stupid tyranny of its ruler, is a greater scourge than the pestilential miasmas. The feudal system is still in force there, with its most odious features, and the little that escapes the rapacity of the Lord, is eaten up by Cossacks, *employés*, and a host of Russian locusts. There exists four classes in the population, as in Circassia. First, the Dadian, or king, who acknowledged the Russian supremacy in 1804, and who enjoys absolute power save in matters of life and death. Next come the princes, who have considerable landed property, and are occasionally refractory. The remainder of the land belongs to the petty nobility, who can grind the peasant with impunity. The only difference between the condition of Mingrelian and Russian serfs, is, that the former has more method, and a traditional system of much older date. This system is some security, as no Colchian dreams of violating conservative usage. Thus a peasant who is required to plough for his lord would refuse to thrash or make hay for him. But they accomplish their traditional duties without a murmur. On the other hand, it would be imprudent to impose new services, as the mountains and frontiers are at hand for a

refuge. If the tyranny of a Prince become intolerable, his peasant commonly flies over the Turkish border, and accepts Islam. Yet such cases are rare, as the Mingrelian, like all uncultivated people, is intensely patriotic.

The worst kind of oppression to which the people are exposed, is the great hunts of the Dadians. The ruler of Mingrelia, like his subjects, is the slave of custom. His ancestors were fond of the chase, and accordingly David Dadian has become a zealous Nimrod, and sweeps over every part of the kingdom, hunting deer, bears, and hyenas, through brake and thicket. The impenetrable forests will secure plenty of game to Colchis for centuries. David Dadian has plenty of country residences, but he prefers to take up his quarters at his nobles and peasants, because his sire and grandsire did so before him. Nor does he leave the farm before his retainers have eaten the last chicken and loaf. Then the hunt sweeps onward and settles on another victim. This is the worst kind of oppression, yet no subject complains, because it is a traditional custom. I have never met with so conservative or stereotyped a

race as the Mingrelians, and many of their institutions remind me of the castes of India.

The Russian rule has occasioned considerable modifications in Imeritia. The serfs of the native kings have been changed into crown peasants, and have only to pay a very small tax in kind. Whilst a just and firm Governor-general holds the reins in Trans-Caucasia, they have not much to fear from the *employés*, and their lot is enviable, compared with that of the Mingrelians. Yet, even in Imeritia, this transformation has been very imperfect. The feudal immunities of the Imeritian nobles have been left untouched. The Russian government has certainly had the power, but not the inclination, to interfere with the traditional relations of princes, nobles, and serfs in Trans-Caucasia, nor has it reformed the iron feudal system which still holds sway there. In this respect, the imperial administration has effected much less in Trans-Caucasia than in Poland, having always sought for support in the Caucasus, rather among the nobles than the people. General Rajewski, a man of great intelligence, was of opinion, that the only way to break the resis-

tance of the Circassians, was to side with the people, against the nobles.

On my return to Redut-Kaleh from Poti, I found my French companions prepared to start. The bargain had been concluded with the Turkish captain, and the greediness of the Russian *employés* had been satisfied. We put out into the Black Sea in a bark, manned by five Turks and one Armenian. The sun shone clear and bright in the cloudless sky, and as there was a complete calm, our crew were obliged to take to the oars. Our gallant bark swept over the dark green mirror of the Euxine, and before us were spread the lustrous mountains of Lasistan, to the south-east of the Russian border-fortress of St. Nicholas, a range of hills which, though inferior to the Caucasus in majesty, presents a more ornamental background than any that the shores of the Mediterranean can offer.

The first Lasian village beyond the border is styled Tschoruk-su, from the name of a small stream in its vicinity. The place belongs to the old Pashalik of Akhalzik, and consists of a few houses. Our bark cast anchor several fathoms from the shore, and the Turkish sailors carried

us on their shoulders to the beach. A curious crowd of Turks and Lasians was assembled on the strand, and greeted the arrival of Pater Benedetto with an explosion of laughter, when he appeared, trembling with fear, and hurried through the water, borne on the brawny shoulders of a Turk, whilst his naked legs hung sprawling beneath his brown tunic. Our companion, Abbé Vidal, who was a jovial fellow, and a good draughtsman, immediately drew a sketch of the group, and showed it to the Capuchin, who laughed good-humouredly at the joke. We only stayed a short time at Tschoruk-su, and I employed the interval to explore the vicinity. The captain added to our stock of provisions here, and then we started for Batoum. The presence of the seven greyhounds, and of the black pug, which the old French lady fondled like a baby, was a great cause of grumbling to the Turkish crew, as Osmanlis are well known to regard the canine species as unclean. Their mutinous disposition was, however, overruled by the captain.

A languid west wind brought us to Batoum, the most important trading town on the Lasian coast. Our little vessel was there drawn up on

shore, as there were many symptoms of an approaching tempest. We were hospitably entertained at the house of the British Consul, and of an Italian merchant, who was shipping a cargo on board a fine three-master in the port. We did not resist his pressing invitation to share his board, and did full justice to his caviare, venison, and fresh fish. A couple of bottles of Gurian wine added to the cheer, and increased the inexhaustible eloquence of the Frenchmen and of Pater Benedetto, who was delighted to find a countryman here.

The Italian merchant was very familiar with the Lasian land and people, describing the former as inexhaustible in fertility. Even the prolific plains of Lombardy do not yield more numerous or more copious crops. The principal diet of the natives consists, as in Mingrelia, of maize, gomi, and wild fruit. There is abundance of flocks and herds in the uplands. The exports of Batoum consist chiefly of skins, wax, honey, and, above all, timber for ship-building, of which an unlimited supply is obtained from the oak forests on the slopes, and at the foot of the mountains. The inhabitants of Batoum are mostly Turks and Lasians, with whom commer-

cial dealings are much more agreeable than with Greeks and Armenians. Before the humiliation of Osmanli pride, in the last Russian war of 1829, it was quite intolerable; but now, the Turks have become friendly and tractable people, and every connoisseur of the East places their private virtues much higher than those of all Oriental Christians put together. The Italian merchant pronounced a high encomium on the honesty of the Turks, in trade and in private life. The population of Batoum speak the Gurian-Lasian idiom—a branch of the Georgian tongue. They are partly sprung from Gurian renegades, whose blood has mingled with the Lasian Moslems.

The roadstead of Batoum, is, perhaps, the best and safest on the East coast of the Euxine, I admit that the anchorage is small, but the vessels moored there were perfectly sheltered from the storm, that soon after swept over us. During our three days' residence at Batoum, we saw many armed mountaineers of the Adschar tribe—distinct in type, and tongue, from the other Lasian clans. I often met them, also, in my excursions in the woods. They were handsome men, and saluted me gravely as they passed. Their behaviour to Europeans is

free from hostile superciliousness, or cringing cowardice. So secure is the traveller in their district, that the Italian merchant once made the journey to Trebizond without any escort, save his Polish servant. These people do not carry arms to protect themselves from thieves, but because of blood feuds which are deeper rooted among them than any other Caucasian tribe. Fearful tales were related to me of the consequences of this unrelenting practice, which has extinguished whole classes, including infants at the breast, nor have all the efforts of the Turkish Government succeeded in extirpating it.

The Lasian tribes have certainly been long nominally subject to the Turkish Padishah, but they have in reality enjoyed almost complete independance under native chieftains, called Derebeys, or Lords of the Valley. The Pashas of Trebizond and Kars, were till lately, native Lasians, and the Pashas of Bajasid Musch and Wan, native Koords. The Porte used to rest satisfied with a small tribute, and leave the tribes to themselves. Latterly, however, the Sultan and his advisers, have striven to confirm their authority in Lasistan, by introducing the

Nizam, and confirming the Lords of the Valley under the title of Ajan. There are fifteen of these Ajans in Lasistan, but we have not space to enumerate their names and possessions.

During our stay at Batoum, I made an excursion to the mouth of the Tschoruk, which is as broad and deep a stream as the Rion, with a bar of sand, preventing navigation to ships of large tonnage. The forests surrounding Batoum, have larger timber than those of Mingrelia, but there is a less exuberant growth of creepers, and my crop of natural curiosities was not so abundant as in Colchis. The character of the Flora is also different here, and at Trebizond, and though the scenery in Turkish Colchis, is very picturesque, it does not equal Mingrelia in beauty. Nevertheless, the basin of Risa is the only spot on the Euxine that yields a growth of orange trees.

After taking leave of the Italian merchant, we put to sea before dawn, and our little bark darted like a coquettish swan over the Pontian waves to Trebizond. The first flush of dawn, tinged the Lasian uplands, and once more our eyes were greeted with the magic spectacle of the Caucasian Alps. In mighty chains, they

raised their icy monuments, and giant citadels above the verdant plains of Colchis, into the blue ether, and soon their rugged peaks were converted into glowing volcanoes, by the rays of the rising sun. This was our last salutation to these noble mountains, the home of the most gallant of men.

PART III.

PERSIA AND THE KOORDS.

CHAPTER I.

Steam to Trebizond—Colchian Coast—The Circassian Slave Trade—Arrival at Trebizond—Abdullah Pacha.

IT was on a fine spring morning, that I steamed out of the Bosphorus into the Black Sea, *en route* for Trebizond, having secured a place on the packet 'Stamboul,' belonging to the Austrian Steam-Navigation Company. The sea was calm; and though, perhaps, not equalling the polished mirror of a Swiss lake, on a summer's day, our sail was so agreeable and tranquil, that for the first time, I made a voyage on the Pontos Axeinos, without suffering from sea-sickness.

The vessel steered so near the shore, that we could plainly distinguish the outline of every

hill, and all the sinuosities of the coast, which consists of a low range of hills, covered with grass and brushwood. The 'Stamboul,' a steamer of 120-horse power, proceeds every ten days along the Anatolian coast, calling regularly at Samsoun, but passing by many picturesque and attractive spots on the way, calculated to induce a traveller to linger there. Two Turkish steamers also described the same voyage at that time, every ten days, contending in fierce and angry opposition, with the Austrian boat.

This time, the number of deck passengers amounted to three hundred. Greeks, Turks, and Armenians, had the greatest number of representatives in the motley crowd. Besides these, were several Persians, Tartars, and four Circassians. The first and second places were very scantily filled; for Europeans do not often visit the southern shores of the Black Sea. The tourist generally retraces his steps westward, as soon as he has satisfied his curiosity with the picturesque wonders of the seven-hilled city of the East. There was a young Englishman in the best cabin, a Mr. Ross, a native of Malta, and attached to the English Consulate at Mossul, to which place he was returning,

by Samsoun and Tokat. He had already been that way, and complained of the insecurity, the heat, and the tediousness of travelling in Mesopotamia. Botta has, however, thrown a charm over the hitherto monotonous life of the Europeans at Mossul, by his magnificent antiquarian discoveries; and both English and French now emulate each other in exploring the mythical ruins of Nineveh, and the antiquities of Babylon.

On a former occasion, when returning from the Caucasus, by Trebizond to Constantinople, the number of passengers was much more considerable, and must have amounted to nearly a thousand, who were pressed together on the deck, like herrings. Amongst them were thirty slaves, closely veiled; they were from Colchis and Circassia, and were en route for Constantinople. The nefarious trade of the slave-dealer in charge of them, was visible in his countenance. I have seen uglier men in the East, but seldom one with so repulsive an expression of face. This man's physiognomy bore no resemblance to that good-natured slave-dealer described by Eugène Sue, in his 'Atar-Gul.' This fellow was rather thin than fat, and wore

a caftan of rich stuff, bordered with fur. His countenance expressed neither shame, nor consciousness of the disgraceful nature of his calling; the love of gain predominated; and his self-satisfied bearing was indicative of the value he placed on his wealth. He considered his slaves as so much merchandise; and for that reason, bestowed some greater share of attention on the best looking, as being of more value to him. They were dressed in better stuffs, were allowed more delicate food, and even coffee. These he valued at from twenty-five to thirty thousand piastres. Girls of less personal attractions, from twelve to sixteen years old, at from two to three thousand piastres. The latter came principally from the mountainous parts of Circassia; and being daughters of poor (Pschilt) serfs, had been sold by their parents, from poverty, or by the (Work) noblemen to whom they belonged, for gain. The most beautiful and gracefully formed of them, came from Guria and Adschara.

The captain of the 'Stamboul' steamer was a Dalmatian by birth, but of Italian origin; he spoke Turkish fluently. He told me that, notwithstanding the strict blockade of the

Circassian coast, and the constant watchfulness of the Cossack boats, which ply to and fro the different Russian kreposts (forts), in order to detect any concealed slave ships; yet, in spite of every obstacle, the slave trade flourished. The only result of this strict surveillance has been to enhance the value of the merchandize, and to heighten the eagerness of both trader and purchaser. The slave ships take advantage of winter, when the Russian blockade squadron seek shelter at Sevastopol. At that season, even the Cossack boats rarely brave the stormy waters of the Euxine, which, since the time the Grecian Argus steered across them, in search of the Golden Fleece, have engulfed so many vessels, and devoured so many victims. The fury of the tempests, so frequent during winter, and which scare the light Russian cruisers, and even steamers, are braved by the slave ships; these sail at every season, and in all weather—thirst of gain proving more powerful than even the terrors of the Euxine.

The coast of Paphlagonia is higher and more mountainous than that of Bithynia, near the Thracian Bosphorus. Although we were at a considerable distance from the shore, two chains of

hills running parallel with the coast, were clearly visible ; that to the south being the higher of the two, and their peaks more boldly defined, pointed, and picturesque, than the mountains on the Bithynian side. The loftiest is named on the map, "Monte Sacro." The Turks call it "Gelembe-Burunnu." The mountain rises not far from the promontory of Septe, to the west of Sinope. They predict that it will be destroyed in the course of about twenty years by an earthquake—that it is much altered in shape, and decreased in height, and that formerly, ships sailing midway between the coast of Asia, and of the Crimea, could see, at the same time, the tent-shaped peak of the Taurian, Tschadir-Dagh, and the loftiest summit of the Paphlagonian ridge. This savours of the fabulous. It seemed to me that its peak has the unbroken form of a lengthened cone, usual in rocks of trachyte-porphyrific formation, also, that the vast bulk of the mountain would scarcely admit of a landslip, affecting any considerable fall or settlement of its peak, or any material change of its shape.

The remarkably rapid descent towards the east is very striking, it resembles the ruins of

some giant castle, towering far above the adjoining mountains, although those to the west approach it in height. This southern chain of mountains attains one half the elevation of that to the north, which runs parallel with the sea coast, and is partially covered with copse and brushwood. The highest peaks were already free from snow, though it still lay in a few isolated nooks and fissures. A long stratum of clouds rested motionless about half-way up the mountains, whilst their cloudless summits were bathed in the deep blue ether. As far as I could judge by the eye, I should imagine these mountains to be considerably higher than the Zaila, on the opposite coast of the Crimea. Their shapes are finer and more picturesque, and their slopes richer in wood and pasture, interspersed with patches of arable land.

The third morning of our voyage, both sea and land were enshrouded in a mist so thick, that we were obliged to remain stationary at some distance from the shore. These dense morning fogs are very frequent in the months of April and May, on the south side of the Euxine.

Between Sinope and Samsoun, the Kisil-

Irmak flows into the sea ; its fresh waters tinging the sea for more than a couple of miles of a dingy yellow colour. During summer, it dwindles into an inconsiderable stream, its shores are low, marshy, and unhealthy, clothed with wood, and a thick under growth of bushes.

The mountains here recede several miles inland, but their beautiful peaks remain visible. Our vessel was, this day, frequently visited by swallows, turtle doves, hedge sparrows, snipes, and pelicans, which flew towards us sometimes singly, sometimes together. I could not tell whether they were migrating, or merely roving. Two dolphins, smaller and more beautiful than those of the Bosphorus, followed our vessel, and gave wonderful evidence of their powers of swimming.

Towards mid-day, we anchored in the harbour of Samsoun, and discharged both passengers and goods. The town lies at the extremity of a bay, opening towards the east, and north-east, and concealed behind very strongly-fortified walls, the construction of which is ascribed by Turkish tradition to the Genoese. The roadstead is bad and unsafe ; large ships are obliged to anchor at some considerable distance from the town.

There were eight merchantmen of medium tonnage in the harbour. The Turkish population of Samsoun is said to be one of the most fanatical of Anatolia. Rajas (heretics) are not permitted to live within the town. They inhabit the neighbouring villages, which are picturesquely grouped upon the mountain slopes, surrounded by meadows, fruit gardens, and olive plantations. The largest of the villages is called, Jeni-Koi, it stands immediately above Samsoun, and is exclusively inhabited by Greeks. The other Raja communities are divided almost equally into Greek and Armenian villages.

Besides fruit and olives, the neighbourhood of Samsoun produces quantities of Indian corn, tobacco, millet and rice. There is also shooting and fishing in abundance. The marshy thickets of brushwood are filled with numbers of pheasants, woodcocks, and snipes, which are to be bought for a mere nothing.

The little towns of Unieh Kerasunt and Tereboli, are charmingly situated on the sea coast. The country here increases in magnificence, and the far-famed loveliness of Colchis, begins in all its variety of form. At Cape Hieron-Oros, at about six hours

west of Trebizond, we were so close on shore, that we were able to enjoy all the beauty of the landscape; it was impossible not to regret the indefatigable whirl of our paddle wheels, which permitted only too fleeting an enjoyment of this charming spot, where it would have been so delightful to remain stationary, in order to contemplate its beauties, somewhat more at our leisure, instead of hastening by with all the unsympathizing speed of steam. Luxuriant green hills, of softly rounded form, rise here from the sea. To their very summits, these foam besprinkled elevations are covered with a fertile soil, and clothed in a rich vegetation of every shade of green. Groves of trees are gracefully grouped about, interspersed with gardens, pastures and fields of Indian corn. Amongst the trees were many kinds of evergreen. Olive, oak, box and chesnut trees seemed to predominate, whilst bushes, mountain herbs, blossoming shrubs and wild flowers, decked the edges of the groves with a circlet of variegated splendour. Here and there only was a point of naked rock visible, showing the formation of this magnificent chain of hills, the surface

of which gave birth to such a fulness of vegetable life. Numerous valleys and ravines crossing the chain in different directions, opened a charming perspective into the fertile interior, whilst the radiance of spring smiled forth from every cleft, valley and ravine. Whatever may be written about the natural beauties of Colchis, can only convey a very imperfect conception of the reality. Turkey does not possess the most lovely portion of this classic land, where, in ancient times, the worship of Apollo flourished, the God of day, whose fertilizing beams gave birth to the prolific nature of its soil. Guria and Mingrelia are still more paradisiacal, than the district of Trabisan, and the banks of Phasis surpass in loveliness, the lofty green valleys of Jeschil-Irmak and of Tschorokh.

We landed at Trebizond before noon. This celebrated place, was long the residence of an independant sovereign. It has been described of late, by more than one writer of eminence, Fallermayer's brilliant descriptions have had so great and deserved approbation, that I dare not venture on the same ground, and will, therefore, spare my reader any

detailed account of the picturesque beauty of the town, and the enchantment of the ever verdant groves and glades of Colchis.

A letter of introduction from Sir Stratford Canning, to the English Vice-Consul Mr. Stevens, procured for me a polite reception and comfortable quarters, in the house of a Greek merchant, a *protégé* of the English Consulate. At Trebizond there is a very general and lively interest taken in passing events in the Caucasus, and on the frontiers of Russia.

This town is the rendezvous of all Circassians and Abschasians, who maintain a connexion, for political ends, with Turkey; of all the slave-dealers, who obtain from Circassia a constant supply for the harems of rich Turks; of European adventurers, who, after trying their fortunes at Cairo and Constantinople as military instructors, turn towards Circassia as a new field for adventure; and, lastly, of all refugees from Russia, and deserters from the army. Trebizond is in a measure the only town beyond Russian jurisdiction, in which it is possible to get correct intelligence of the military movements, and doings in the Caucasus. All the

foreign Consuls, principally devote themselves to gain such information for their respective governments, particularly the English. England, as is known, has no Consul in any part of Circassia, not even at Tiflis, the government of Russia having expressly deprecated the presence of any British representative throughout the Caucasus. Since Mr. Urquhart's visit to the Caucasian shores—since the seizure of the *Vixen*, and the adventures of Messrs. Bell, Longworth, and Neith amongst the Circassians, the mistrust of the Russian government has redoubled towards all the English travelling there. In some measure, England is esteemed by both Turks and mountaineers, as the protecting power, of all anti-Russian elements; and France though a rival, was seldom, and Austria never, the subject of conversation. The French Consul, M. de Clairembault, has shown his benevolence in secretly sending Polish deserters, from the Russian army to Constantinople, where they form quite a little colony, and are assisted in gaining a livelihood by Count Zamoyiski, and Prince Czartoryski.

The Russian Consul, M. de Gherzi, a Genoese by birth, held at this time the most prominent

position in the town; well bred and agreeable, he knew how to secure the respect of the Turks, and his own authority, by his almost princely munificence. He never visited the Pasha without expending at least a thousand piastres. Each cawass, secretary, and hanger-on of every kind, expected nothing less than a golden backshish from the representative of Moscow's mighty Padischa, and M. de Ghersi, did his utmost to gratify them. The most popular virtue with the Orientals is liberality, and the unusual generosity of the Russian Consul suppressed even the whispers of detraction, which his somewhat warm admiration for the fair Orientals might have given rise to. The influence of M. de Ghersi, with the crowd surrounding the Pacha, was undisputed. Even the cruel and tyrannical Abdullah Pacha—who, backed by the powerful protection of Riza Pacha in the Divan, ventured to oppress with impunity—condescended to show the most fawning servility to M. de Ghersi, as he well knew that the Russian Consul was the only man capable of ruining him by an official collision.

Abdullah Pacha was the last Dere-Bey of

Lasistan, invested with the dignity of Pacha of Trebizond, which had become hereditary in his family—the Porte having imagined that the wild mountain tribes of Lasistan and Koordistan were more likely to yield obedience to a native and hereditary chief. After the removal of Abdullah from the Pachalic, the Porte thought it expedient to try a genuine Turk in his place—and Halil Pacha, brother-in-law of the Sultan, succeeded the last of the Dere-Beys.

Abdullah Pacha's administration forms, in the modern history of the Osmanli, an episode similar to that of the Turkish Nero, Amurath IV., and furnishes a remarkable proof that the attempt, rather than the carrying out of reform, proposed in the Hatti-Scheriff of Gulhaneh, has not put an end to the possibility of abuse of power in Turkey—as ignorant or dreamy Europeans believe, who already have faith in an Ottoman constitution.

Abdullah was a man worn out by former excesses, and broken in health: his sallow countenance and drooping eyelids were very repulsive. His infirmities and sufferings made him splenetic and cruel. Fortunately Con-

stantinople was not too far from Trebizond for him to set at defiance the wholesome restraint of the European Embassies and Consulates. These served as a check upon him, and obliged him to observe some discretion, even in his cruelties. After the accomplishment of some misdeed, which even in a Turkish Pachalic, would excite murmurs, or be likely to figure in the consular reports ; it was usual for several hundred purses to find their way from Abdullah's treasury to the Golden Horn, with the worthy intention of securing the intercession of Riza Pacha and his partizans.

I pass over numerous instances of this Turkish satraps' misdeeds, to choose one of recent occurrence, which I had from a reliable source, and which took place under the mild rule of Abdul Medjid, and of a ministry, for the most part, favourable to reform, and at no very great distance from the capital.

Some Turks and Rajas, who came with a caravan from Erzeroum to Trebizond, had been apprehended under suspicion of murdering a Levantine merchant under Russian protection. There was no conclusive evidence of their guilt, only amongst their baggage, effects, supposed

to have belonged to the murdered man, were found. The accused protested they had bought them at the bazaar at Erzeroum, of a Jew pedlar—a statement in which there was nothing improbable. Abdullah Pacha seized upon this affair as a welcome opportunity of showing his zeal for the protection of Russian subjects, and his esteem for M. de Ghersi, as well as to gratify his own diabolical nature. He ordered, in detail, the tortures to be used, in order to extort a confession from the prisoners. The Christians were to have their head encircled by an iron hoop, to be compressed tightly round ; if this did not succeed, it was to be applied red hot. Some of them had a heated wire thrust through the most sensitive parts of the body. The night after these tortures, one of the Rajas died.

Mr. Stevens reported these horrible doings to Sir Stratford Canning, who, from common feelings of humanity, sent a dragoman from the embassy to the Grand Vizir and to Riza Pacha, to inform them of the whole circumstances of the affair ; he, as a foreign diplomatist, having no official right to interfere in the matter. Both Pachas replied that the Porte

would take special cognizance of the affair. They added, that no doubt the praiseworthy zeal of Abdullah Pacha to punish the murderers of a man under the protection of one of the greatest of the European powers, had led him further than was quite justifiable. However, the affair blew over like many others, without the Pacha being called upon to render any account of such proceedings.

A few weeks later, in one of his customary paroxysms of splenetic rage, he ordered a Greek, not a subject of Turkey, but of the Hellenic kingdom, to be flogged to death, and nothing but the energetic intervention of Mr. Stevens, who received him into his house, could have saved him.

It is a fact worthy of notice, that the Russian Consul, M. de Ghersi, whose amiability and hospitality have been extolled by all European travellers, and especially by the talented Fallermayer, never, by any chance, made an effort to prevent these horrible tragedies. When his intercession in favour of this Greek was solicited, this amiable gentleman coldly replied, that being the Russian and not the Greek Consul, he could not interfere, yet

if anything happened in the least prejudicial to the Persian transfer business, if through the carelessness of the baschi of a caravan, goods were lost, or otherwise stolen by thievish Koords or Lesghians, thereby diminishing the dues of the rich consignees of Trebizond, then, M. de Ghersi, as Consul and merchant, was never backwards in seeking redress at the hands of the Pacha.

CHAPTER II.

Journey from Trebizond to Gumysch-Haneh — Colchian Mountain Landscapes — Dangerous Pass—A sagacious Horse—Comparison of the Scenery with Switzerland—Gumysch-Haneh—Adventures of a Polish Deserter from the Caucasus.

MR. STEVENS, the British Consul at Trebizond, who was familiar with the country, advised me to travel post as far as Erzeroum, and to proceed thence by caravan. Accordingly, I left Trebizond on the afternoon of the 26th of May, accompanied by the Pole, John Saremba, and by a Turkish guide. I had three saddle horses, and two pack horses, which were exchanged for fresh animals, at every post station. My Turkish postillions were also renewed at every relay, and I was thus presented with specimens of the most

various nationalities and manners, from Osmanli grandezza, indolence and loyalty, (well known Turkish qualities), to half savage Lasians, and wily Armenians.

The country rises suddenly and precipitously to the south of Trebizond, and after a ride of half an hour, we halted to breathe the horses. We stopped on the smooth turf, covering a mountain slope, from whence we obtained a last and magnificent view of the Colchian coast. The fissures and declivities of the mountains, the glens and the highland terraces were resplendent in the gorgeous livery of a Colchian spring. Both sides of our path were adorned with the exuberant foliage and gay blossoms of the Colchian flora, with their variegated festoons and garlands. The barometer showed the elevation of this spot above the sea, to be 1170 French feet.

Haschiolan is the name of the first little river which comes tumbling down the mountain depth, close to the caravan road, to the south of Trebizond. The next stream is the Tschebislik, in spring a copious muddy stream, swelled by the melting snow, whose course we followed for a long distance. On all hands, there was

abundance of short brushwood, but no timber trees. The number of mineral springs in this district is quite surprising, and it is probable that the Colchian-Armenian highlands embrace a greater amount of them than any mountainous region in Europe.

I passed the night in a village, the name of which I have forgotten. The weather was tolerably genial in the afternoon, but towards evening the rain began to descend, and I crept into the wretched khan, in which several Turks and Armenians, accompanying a caravan from Erzeroum, passed the night with me. The following morning, as I was causing my luggage to be strapped on the horses, my umbrella was missing. I entertained, perhaps, an unjust suspicion of the Turkish caravanschik, although he protested his innocence by the beard of the Prophet.

It is only fair to add that, during my protracted residence in the East, this was the only occasion that I had to complain of a theft in a Turkish house. Occurrences of this nature were frequent subsequently among the Koords and Persians, but it never happened again in Turkish quarters.

We proceeded at daybreak, with fresh horses, and after a ride of three hours, we attained the highest ridge of the mountain chain. The brushwood and fir-trees, which had richly clothed the lower slopes of the ridge, disappeared near the summit. The sombre pines, that reach the extreme limit of vegetation, are covered with long lichens, forming a cryptogamic vesture, protecting them like the winter clothing of certain animals, against the temperature. I have observed the same phenomenon among the High Alps of the Upper Engadin and St. Gothard. The elevation where the woods ceased was called, Sehana, by my Turkish guide. It is a singular fact, that a thousand feet above the sub-alpine region, and the limit of forest growth, single fir-trees of proud and taper forms, are scattered in different directions, and attain a height of twenty feet. A similar feature may be sometimes perceived in Switzerland, but I never saw single trees in the Alps, so high above the usual limit of vegetation.

Sehana has a striking resemblance to the country about Dilischan, in Russian Armenia, but the mountains have nobler and more picturesque forms in this district of Colchis,

there is a greater abundance of Alpine torrents, and the voice of many waters is more sonorous and melodious. Cascades were numerous, though not of remarkable beauty, nor to be compared with the waterfalls of the Hasli and other Swiss valleys.

Kiostera-sou was the name of the turbulent mountain stream which thunders down the narrow pass of Sehana. We crossed, during our ride this day, three solidly-constructed bridges, each consisting of a single lofty arch. The green mountain slopes over which we passed, and which were decorated with a rich and splendid growth of Alpine flowers, afforded beautiful perspectives of glens, plateaux, and terraces, mingled in picturesque profusion, whilst the eye plunged into the woody ravines at our feet.

We frequently met small caravans, consisting of horses and mules, returning from Tabris to Erzeroum. Most of the animals were slightly laden, and some had no burthen whatever. The importation of European goods into Persia is much more profitable than the returns yielded by that country. Most of the caravans were Armenian, and the largest did not reckon more

than a hundred horses. When I expressed my surprise at their venturing in such small bodies, and with such costly merchandize, in this wild district, I was informed that there is no danger between Trebizond and Erzeroum. The Turks and Armenians of this district are of a peaceful disposition, and the Lasians are only formidable in their own territory. Nor are Koordish robbers encountered on this side of the table-land of Erzeroum, and frequent attacks of Koordish banditti are confined to the road between Hassan-Kaleh and the Persian frontier. Hence, the small caravans make a practice of assembling at Erzeroum, where they unite in larger bodies, generally comprising three or four hundred horses, and prosecute their journey to Tabris under the protection of a Turkish cawass. My informants added that, since the Pachas had put in force a more vigorous repressive system, plundering expeditions on a large scale had become much less frequent, and there was greater risk from the nocturnal pilfering and thefts of solitary Koords, than from the attacks of large hordes.

The weather was unpropitious, and the rain descended in torrents, and almost without

intermission. The ground was completely sodden, and our narrow mountain path was slippery and dangerous. I have never passed such awkward places in the Alps, without excepting the Meyenwand, in the Canton of Valais, and other giddy precipices, requiring a very steady head. Nevertheless, Eastern travellers do not quit the saddle, even at the most dangerous places, when the path is only two feet in width, leading over a smooth, slippery surface of rock, inclining towards the dizzy precipice under your very feet. They confide in the sturdy legs, as well as in the experience and sagacity of their horses. Indeed, accidents are said to occur much less frequently than might have been anticipated, from the dangerous character of these caravan roads. The worse season for travelling, is during the thaw, which occurs in April and May.

I myself made and witnessed some personal experiences on this and the following day, which did not completely harmonize with the tranquillizing assertions of my Turkish guide. Before we reached Sehana, I saw a mule roll down the declivity, with its load, making a terrific clatter. Fortunately, the poor beast

escaped with a few bruises. A more serious accident befel a Turkish *employé*, who had associated himself with our party. His horse slid over a slippery rock, fell, and remained lying on the spot. Half the body of the Turk was imprisoned under the horse, and the remaining portion of his person was hanging suspended over the precipice, whose fearful abyss yawned ready to receive him. I had myself passed this dangerous spot only a minute before I heard the noise of the fall, and saw the Turk beneath me, in this awful situation. The horse lay with the saddle turned towards the precipice, and I could not avoid the anticipation that at the first attempt which it made to stand up, both the steed and its rider would roll into the abyss. But the instinct of the beast saved them both. The sagacious horse remained motionless, staring down the precipice, with foaming nostrils and flapping ears. The Turk was equally immovable; he saw his danger, and did not even dare to cry out, for fear of alarming the horse. Nor could we venture to approach him, without taking the greatest precaution. Whilst the Pole and myself alighted and approached him from above, the

Turk's companions had already seized the bridle, and the coat-tails of the rider; and man and beast were presently safely raised on their six legs again.

We passed the second night in the village of Sehana. Soaked to the skin, I was not in the most amiable of tempers. Happily a cheerful fire was awaiting the arrival of guests in the little Turkish coffee-house. The best place was immediately assigned to me, my clothes were dried, and I was handed an excellent cup of coffee, equalling the most fragrant produce of a Stamboul café. The exhilarating effect of this grateful beverage, coupled with the rays of the sun, which broke through the clouds, soon restored my spirits, and made way for a most agreeable mood, which was heightened by the melodious music of a mountain torrent that dashed down the rocks, close to our quarters.

From Trebizond to Sehana, the scenery is among the most magnificent that I have ever beheld. The landscapes are, perhaps, less majestic than the view of the silvery peaks of the Caucasus, from the Terek steppe, possibly also less wildly romantic, and less exuberant in sublime glaciers and foaming cascades, than

some parts of the Swiss and Savoy Alps, yet they are almost more picturesque and enchanting than these favoured spots. Amongst the Swiss landscapes, the Bödéli, near Interlaken and the north side of the Lake of Lucerne, are the only scenes that have a decided superiority over the Colchian uplands. The Trebizond road, as far as this point, leads you almost incessantly through passes of varying width. The slopes on either hand were decorated with forests, groups of trees, a splendid carpet of Alpine flowers, as you ascended higher, scattered cottages and Alpine huts, and, in short, all the charming accompaniments of spring in Colchis. The Tschebislik, which flows through these passes, is at this season a furious foaming torrent, rushing over the rocks in numerous cascades.

The following day, I rested some hours at the village of Actasö, on the banks of the Gumysch-Haneh-sou, a fine broad stream. The houses in this part of the country, are crowned with terraces of stone and mortar, instead of having the steep slated roofs of the Colchian villages. A few ruins which were visible on the right bank, were ascribed by our Turkish cawass, to the Genoese, but the remains

appeared too dilapidated to admit of our distinguishing architectural details. The banks of the stream are clothed in many places with beautiful groups of elm trees, willows, silver poplars, walnut, and mulberry trees, as well as gardens. Every patch of ground that admits of culture, even in the steepest declivities, is ingeniously used in this highland district. The meadows and pastures are not so rich as those in the Alpine valleys of Switzerland, but the corn-fields and gardens are more productive.

The town of Gumysch-Haneh, which we reached at an early hour, is singularly situated, being inclosed in a basin by bare granite rocks. The houses are grouped in the form of an amphitheatre, on the declivity of the mountain, which is so steep, that we were not able to reach the higher streets without dismounting, and leading our steeds up by the bridle. Even under these circumstances, the poor beasts found it very difficult to reach our night-quarters. The houses of the town are built of stone and mud, and present a dirty and miserable appearance. I sent my Firman to the Turkish commandant, who assigned me quarters in the house of a Greek, in tolerably

easy circumstances. Being considerably fatigued, I deferred my inspection of the town, which appears to contain nothing worthy of note. The silver and lead mines situated three miles from Gumysch-Haneh, are however, of some celebrity. The working of these mines, is said to be rather profitable to the Turkish government, though they are badly managed. The more opulent inhabitants of Gumysch-Haneh have beautiful fruit gardens, which are situated near the banks of the river.

Whilst my Pole was preparing the pilaff, my Greek host brought me a tschibouk and coffee. After indulging in my frugal repast, and as we lay stretched on the divan, smoking and comfortably fatigued, I begged the Pole to relate to us the history of his escape from Georgia, and his captivity among the Lasians. He made no difficulties, and began by describing his adventures during the Polish revolution. John Saremba differed from his countrymen, by a greater straightforwardness of character and freedom from all ostentation and bombast. He spoke Turkish fluently, and conversed with me generally in Italian. The following narrative embodies the substance of his adventures :

“ I am neither a nobleman nor a peasant, but I belong to the burgher class, which is not very numerous in Poland. My father was a glazier of Warsaw, and I learned his trade, but on the outbreak of the Polish revolution in 1830, I entered the army as volunteer, was present at the battles of Grochow, Praga, Iganie, and Ostrolenka, and escaped without a wound or promotion. Most Poles will inform you that they were officers at that time. This is the practice with my countrymen; but I admit candidly, that I never became even a non-commissioned officer. These appointments were commonly bestowed on old soldiers, and it was indispensable to be either a nobleman or a foreigner, in order to obtain a commission. After the fall of Warsaw, my regiment fell back on the Prussian territory, but our hopes that the King of Prussia would grant us a passage to France or America, were disappointed. After being disarmed and retained for a few weeks, we were forced to return to Poland, and on our arrival there, we were distributed amongst a number of Russian regiments, some of us being sent into the heart of Muscovy, and others draughted to the Caucasus. The latter destina-

tion fell to my lot, I was placed in a Russian regiment on the Caucasian line, which after many changes, was ultimately quartered at the camp of Manglis, in the vicinity of Tiflis.

“There were sixteen Poles, besides myself, in my company, of whom seven had taken part in the revolutionary war. The remainder were conscripts, one of whom was married. All Poles must admit that the Russian officers, treat them rather less harshly than the genuine Russians. This does not result from any peculiar sympathy for Poland, but from a certain compassion for people who are more cultivated than Russian peasants, and especially for those who have been condemned to the dreadful lot of military service in Russia, on account of political offences. The Russian officers, do not share the unrelenting hatred of the Czar, in this matter. Most of the Poles are moreover, more dexterous, than the great Russians, many of them being natives of towns, and as they learn tactics much quicker than the Muscovites, they would probably soon engross all the non-commissioned officers' posts, if the Russian colonels were not interfered with by the Emperor. Still our mode of life was hard

enough, and though we had a tolerably easy commandant, he could not always prevent the severity and arrogance of his subordinates. Even when a Russian private does not regret his home, the bad fare, barbarous flogging, and vexatious discipline must always make the service irksome. During our intervals of leisure, we Poles used often to sit down in the thickets behind the camp of Manglis, and sing our national songs, or talk of our homes, of the past, and of our prospects, and how often did we all weep aloud as we thought of our bitter exile, in this wild country; I admit that such exhibitions would have been very prejudicial to us, but we concealed them carefully from our officers.

“ We devised many plans of flight to Turkey, but we were deterred from taking any resolution, owing to our ignorance of the country. Meanwhile, we spared no pains to learn the Tartar idiom, and to acquire a knowledge of the road to Turkey and Persia, from the natives. One of our comrades assisted a neighbouring Tartar, gratis, in his agricultural pursuits, to win his friendship, and obtain from him, information respecting the country. The Tartar soon

detected his plan, and offered to assist us in effecting our escape. Flight to Persia would have been easier, but the Tartar being a zealous Sunnite would not hear of our seeking refuge among the heretical adherents of Ali. He advised us to escape to Lasistan, which would be more feasible than flight to Turkish Armenia. But the Pole was obliged to promise our conversion to Islam, as soon as we had crossed the Russian border. The Tartar, thereupon showed him the exact direction to follow, imparted to him the names of all the mountains and rivers that we should be obliged to cross, and those of all villages, which we should have to creep by. In cases of the most urgent perplexity, he recommended us to invoke the hospitality of the nearest Mollah, to confide our secret to him, and never to forget that we should become good Moslems, over the border.

“After we had finally resolved to desert, we passed three months in preparing for the attempt. Notwithstanding the scarcity of our pay, and the inferior quality of our rations, we laid by a store for future exigences, and tried to inure ourselves to hunger. Some of us had been mechanics, and gained a few kopecks daily,

by doing some work ; I, for instance, worked for some Russian officers, as glazier. Our savings were thrown into a common stock. The summer passed away, the birds of passage assembled, and swept away in large flights over the hills of Manglis, and as they sailed through the air, we looked enviously after them, for we lacked their wings, and their knowledge of the way.

“ We were, several times, undecided whether we should adhere to our plan. Some Malo-Russian deserters, sick of the service, and of barrack life, had been caught in the attempt to escape to the Lesghians, and brought back to the camp by the Cossacks. Each deserter was condemned to run the gauntlet three times, between a row of a thousand men, and we ourselves were ordered to join in thrashing these poor fellows to death. But though the sight of this punishment was enough to shake our resolution, hope and the instinct of freedom prevailed. We fixed the day of our flight. Only one Pole of our company, who had married the widow of a Cossack, and had a child by her, abstained from our plan, and remained behind. We mustered at dusk, with knapsack and loaded firelocks, in an appointed part of

the wood. There, we all fell on our knees, and prayed God and the Virgin Mary, that they would bless our enterprise, and grant us their protection and favour. After this, we shook hands, and swore to defend ourselves to the last extremity, and rather to kill ourselves than to suffer the Russians to kidnap us, and flog us to death.

“ Our party consisted of fourteen men, some of whom had suffered from fever, whilst others had been reduced by the wretched barrack fare. But the burning love of freedom, and fear of the fate that awaited us, in the event of our failure, gave wings and vigour to our legs. We marched on for thirteen consecutive nights. During the day, we concealed ourselves in the woods, but in the evening we ventured out of cover, and even in the vicinity of the roads. When we had consumed the provisions that we had stored in our knapsacks, we were reduced to wild berries and half-raw game. Happily there was no lack of deer in the woods. In the evening we dispersed in chase of them, but we only ventured to fire close at hand, in order not to waste our ammunition, or betray our

hiding place to the kreposts. For the same reason, we did not venture to kindle a fire at night, and we preferred to freeze and eat our game raw, rather than run the risk of discovery.

“After wandering thirteen nights through the woods, we had arrived near the river Arpatschai, without clearly knowing where we were. From the bare and lofty summits where we were encamped, we beheld the houses of a large town, at a great distance. Ignorant of the topography, unprovided with a compass, avoiding all intercourse with the natives, we wandered at random over these mountains, without knowing clearly what road to take in order to reach the border.

“The chase had been unprofitable during the last few days. The torment of hunger added to our exhaustion and to our exposure to the cold. We saw a herd of wild goats browsing on the cliffs, but our attempts to secure any of them were fruitless. They skipped over the snow fields with indescribable agility, and we wasted a whole day in our unprofitable endeavour to catch some of them. The last morsel of venison, and the last bit

of hard ration bread was devoured. The sharp mountain air and our exhausting marches increased the keenness of our hunger. We were almost reduced to despair, and resolved at length, to try our luck, and approach the first village. We remembered our oath, to die rather than surrender to the Russians, return to Manglis, and get flogged to death by our comrades.

“The minaret of a Tartar mosque appeared tapering over the highest verge of the woody region. We approached it cautiously in the evening twilight, and met two Tartars, who were cutting brushwood. These people informed us that we were 30 versts (20 miles) from the town of Gumri, where the Russians were building a large fortress. They added, that the frontier was only distant a short day’s journey from us, and that the blue river which we had seen from the mountain top, was actually the Arpatschai, forming the boundary of Turkey. We disclosed our project without disguise to the Tartars, because they could scarcely mistake us for Russian soldiers, with our tattered clothes, and wild and hungry looks ; indeed they had already detected

who we were. Recollecting the exhortation of the old Tartar at Manglis, we told these people that it was our firm determination to become good Moslems, when we reached Turkish ground. We conjured them by Allah and the Prophet, to send us some provisions from the village, as they advised us, by their own accord, not to enter the place. According to their statement, a Cossack post was close at hand, and they assured us that the banks of the Arpatschai were so carefully guarded by Russian pickets, that we had a poor chance of getting across.

“The Tartars departed, walking with hasty steps to the village, but one of our party, who knew the Tartar idiom familiarly, crept through the bushes to discover if they were honest people, and if we could trust them. The Tartars, however, observed the strictest silence on their way home, and returned in an hour, with three other men, one of whom wore a white turban. As they passed close to the bush where our comrade lay concealed, he heard them engaged in animated conversation. He crawled after them cau-

tiously, and gathered enough from their colloquy, to discover that they were divided in opinion respecting what they should do with us. One of them, whom we afterwards ascertained to have served in the Oriental Life-Guards of Prince Paskiewitsch at Warsaw, voted that they should inform the Cossacks forthwith of our hiding place. But the man, in the white turban, strove to tranquillize him, and wished first to speak to us.

“The Tartars met us at the appointed place. The man with the white turban was a Mollah, and a fine old man with an honest countenance. After we had communicated our sorrows and projects openly to him, he fell into a long and deep reverie. Meanwhile one of the others, to our great surprize, addressed us in broken Polish, and informed us that he had been in Warsaw. We were so delighted at this, that we were ready to embrace the Mohammedan, but our comrade who had acted as scout, had meanwhile come up, and seized the Tartar who spoke Polish, furiously by the beard, reproaching him for his treachery, and threatening to kill him. The old Mollah now interfered, and promised us aid and protection

if we were seriously disposed to fly to Turkey, and accept Islam. We vowed that such was our intention, though we secretly prayed to our God and to the Virgin, that they would pardon us this necessary equivocation, for we wished to escape from the infernal service of Russia, without proving unfaithful to our religion.

“Before the Mollah left us, we required him to swear by his beard, and by the prophet, that he would not betray us, and we required the other Tartars to take the same oath. We wished to retain the former Guards’ man as a hostage, but the Mollah begged us not to do this, and to trust to his word, adding that he would answer for the man’s silence. Our most pressing want was for provisions, unfortunately the Tartars had come empty handed, and the pangs of hunger almost drove us to go with them into the village. But the Mollah cautioned us against this, by remarking that some Armenian families dwelt there, who would certainly betray us to the Russians. We suffered them to depart, and remained in suspense between fear and hope. The Mollah

had given us the parting advice, to watch during the night, as it was possible that we might have been discovered by others who would betray us to the Muscovites.

“We passed two anxious hours. Night had closed in, and the silence was only occasionally broken by the barking of the village dogs. As the village was not far distant, and the Mollah had distinctly promised to send us provisions immediately, our suspicions returned, and we began to upbraid each other for having confided in the oaths of the Tartars, without retaining the Mollah and Guardsman, as hostages.

“We seized our firelocks, and stood prepared for action, nor was our anxiety unfounded. We shortly heard the neighing of horses and distant voices. Those of our comrades, whose limbs had retained the greatest vigour, crept into the bush as scouts, and returned with the alarming intelligence, that they had distinctly heard Russian pieces. Meanwhile, the noise died away, and all became as still as the grave, the very watch dogs appearing buried in sleep.

“Even before it was dawn, one of our old

friends the Tartars came, accompanied by some strange faces. They brought us a large dish with rice, and a roasted lamb, besides bread and fruit. He informed us that our position had been betrayed to the Russians by an Armenian. The Cossack captain had summoned the Mollah to appear, and threatened him, but obtained no disclosures from him. As the Cossacks were not accurately informed respecting our lurking place, one of the Tartars had led them on a wrong scent, in order to secure our safety. He added, that as the Tartars looked upon us as fellow-believers, not one of those would betray us, unless it were perhaps the Guardsman, who was a sot, a spendthrift and an object of general contempt in the village.

“When we had appeased our hunger, our courage rose with the recruit of our strength, and we determined to march on at once. The Tartars advised us not to cross over the Arpa-tschai, because it was too carefully guarded by the Russians, suggesting that we should proceed more to the northward, passing over the mountains by Akhalzik, where it would be easier for

us to reach the Turkish border. We then expressed our thanks, and took leave of these people, but scarcely had the first rays of the rising sun appeared, ere we heard the distant hurrah of the Cossacks, who, accompanied by a large body of Tartars, were intercepting our road to the valley. We fell back into the bush, and fired at the first group of troopers who attempted to charge into the thicket. Two Cossacks and one Tartar emptied their saddles, and the remainder took flight. After this successful encounter, we retired to the highest ridge again, from which we had descended, nor did we linger to examine the fallen. But a single rider soon appeared, waving a green bough, and beckoning to us to come down, and we recognized that he was one of the Tartars, who had furnished us with provisions. He informed us that the Mollah was again at the old place in the wood, and that he wished to speak to us. He added, that we need be under no farther apprehension with regard to the Cossacks, for as they considered that we mustered twice as strong as the reality, they had fallen back to their post and sent to Gumri for reinforcements, which would arrive by the evening.

“ As we expressed some suspicions, the Tartar offered to remain as hostage, and I went with three of my comrades to the appointed place. The remainder stayed behind and kept the Tartar in custody. We found that the Mollah was at the place with two of the people, who had accompanied him the previous evening, and we now learned to our astonishment, that the Tartar whom we had shot, was the old Guardsman of Paskiewitsch, who had addressed us in Polish. Such a coincidence appeared to us the judgment of God, for the man, notwithstanding his oath, had betrayed our hiding-place to the Russians, who were already aware of our being in the vicinity. The remaining male inhabitants of the village had been forcibly levied, and hurried off to strengthen the Cossacks, but they had all gladly taken advantage of our volley, to run away. We owed our safety to a stratagem of the Mollah, who persuaded the captain of the Cossacks to divide his detachment into two bodies, of which, one was led astray designedly. Our confidence in the old priest had not been misplaced. He reminded us of our promise to pass over to Islam, on Turkish ground, he gave us likewise, the advice to proceed by the

mountains of Akhalzik, and he dismissed us with his blessing, after giving us minute directions respecting the road, and our behaviour in case we fell into the hands of the Pacha of Kars, who was in the Russian interest, and might hand us over to the Muscovites. We hastened back to our party, related what the old man had told us, released the Tartar, and wandered the whole day over the rugged ridge. The following morning we succeeded in shooting a goat, but as there was not a stick of fuel on these bare mountains, we were obliged to eat it raw.

“ After reposing for a few hours, we continued our wanderings in the direction that had been pointed out to us. It was bitterly cold, the snow fell in large flakes, and a cutting wind blew in our faces. Towards evening, we perceived a small fire, and guided by its glare, we arrived at some huts inhabited by poor Russian settlers, consisting of heretical Duchoborzi, who had been condemned to exile in this rugged district. They appeared honest and kind-hearted people, who used cow's dung for fuel, and who gave us the best that they had. With tears in their eyes, they related the sufferings and oppression they

endured at the hand of the Russians, and how they had been robbed of their property, and driven from their homes. The majority of them had fallen victims to the hardships of the journey and the privations of a first settlement. Their different colonies were scattered over the mountains, and they added that German settlements were near, but warned us against them, and we determined to make a circuit round the German village. On the following night, when we proposed to cross the border, we gave our last kopecks to these Duchoborzi, as we were perfectly aware that Russian coin would not pass in Turkey. The good people filled our flasks with vodka, and took leave of us with the kindest wishes.

“The following day, the mountain summits were veiled with a thick mist, we could hardly see ten paces before us, and it was very dangerous to descend the precipitous declivities, and ravines, through which the rain-water poured in large streams. On the other hand, we hoped to pass the Russian border, here, undetected, because it had no defined boundary, being formed by the mountain chain. But the frontier posts had received latterly considerable reinforcements,

not only to repress the plague and smuggling, but also to prevent desertion. We had been informed that we should be out of all danger on the opposite slope of the mountains, because no Cossack posts extend over the ridge, and the Turkish border began on the other side. We were already indulging in unrestrained delight at having left the Russian territory, turned our backs on captivity, and evaded all dangers.

“ But who can express our terror, when the mist cleared up, as we were in the middle of the valley, and we saw before us a Cossack post, close at hand. It was too late to fall back, so marching up in rank and file, we approached the station with measured tread. This stratagem succeeded. The Cossack sentry mistook us for a Russian patrol. We surrounded the house, took prisoners the sentinel and seven half-drunk Cossacks, and learnt from them that we had not missed our way to the border, notwithstanding the fog. The detachment occupying this post, consisted of thirty men ; but this very day, twenty-two had started under a sub-officer, to patrol the road as far as a neighbouring post. Intelligence of our desertion

had arrived from Gumri, with directions that the Cossacks of the frontier posts, should be strengthened with a detachment of infantry. The sentry had taken us for one of these expected detachments. We had good cause to congratulate ourselves on the result of our adventures. We found refreshments in the kitchen of the Cossacks, and filled our knapsacks with the residue, we also took their horses with us, and at their own request tied the hands and feet of the men, for as they had now become sober, they were terrified at their responsibility in having suffered us to secure the post, unresisted. Their minds were filled with alarm at the terrible punishment which probably awaited them, for although the fog, and our superiority in number were some excuse, they were certain to receive a severe flogging. At their request, we closed the door of the station, and hurried to the mountains with our booty, hoping to reach our destination, without farther accidents.

“At the first Turkish post, we halted, related our story and expressed our wish to be transported to Constantinople. We were obliged to give up our arms, and our arrival was

announced the same day, to the Pacha of Kars. The Turkish commandant of the post, was the son of a Lasian Derebey, who tried to prevail on us to fly into the mountains, and invoke the protection of one of the chieftains, dependant on the Pacha of Trebizond. But we did not confide in his statements, and wished to be removed to Kars. Meanwhile, we discovered that the Russian commandant of Gumri, had sent a threatening message to the Pacha of Kars, demanding our extradition. Four days passed in anxious suspense. Couriers were flying backwards and forwards, between Kars and Gumri. At length, we were informed that we must become Moslems, to avoid extradition. The Lasian Derebey, now renewed his proposal, which we accepted, and we were forwarded by night, under escort, into the mountains.

“As we advanced, my companions were gradually separated from each other, and from me, and when we remonstrated, we were informed that it was essential for our security. On the third morning all my comrades had vanished, I, at length, lost all courage and sobbing aloud, cursed my unhappy lot.

“I soon discovered that the treacherous Beg,

had sold us to some Lasian slave-traders, and I was taken by them to a valley in the district of of Adschara. Here I became the slave of a hard master, and my privations and sufferings brought on a fever, which endangered my life. Ali Beg, my master, was afraid of losing me, and consented to sell me to a Turkish slave-dealer, my request being supported by his young wife, who seemed to pity me. After enduring many hardships in Adschara, I was forwarded to Riseh, and thence to Trebizond. But here I was exposed to the risk of a still greater misfortune, because the slave-dealer, intentionally or ignorantly, brought me to the house of the Russian instead of the French Consul.

“Happily, I escaped to the latter, who was at that time, a most kind-hearted man, and he took me under the protection of France, sent me to Galatz, where I laboured at my trade, married a Greek woman, and became the father of two children, who will be delighted if I save up some money, and bring them some pretty things from Persia. My trade is not very profitable, but I have received pecuniary aid from Count Zamoyski and Prince Czartoryski, notwithstanding the large colony of Poles

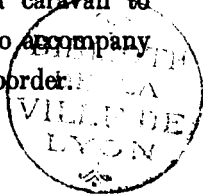
claiming charity. It is singular that I have never heard anything of my fourteen comrades, and you may infer the probable fate of most deserters in the Caucasus. For my part, I would gladly give the last morsel of bread to secure their freedom, or learn their fate."

Such was the unvarnished tale of John Saremba, and at its conclusion, a deep shade of melancholy settled on his features, as he reflected on the dismal fate of his scattered countrymen, whilst large tears fell fast on his bushy moustaches, as he wished me good-night, after filling and handing me my tschibouk and my last cup of coffee.

We continued our journey on the 29th of May, and passing through Barbart, reached Erzeroum on the 1st of June. As this road has been so frequently traversed and described by recent travellers, we shall avoid the repetition of details which may be found elsewhere, especially as this part of our journey was not marked by any unusual adventure, though I encountered an accident that might have proved serious, by the fall of my horse, the day before our arrival at Erzeroum. Happily my injuries were confined to a few bruises, and we reached in safety

the capital of Armenia, where I met with a hospitable and friendly reception at the different European Consulates, and at the residence of Colonel (now General) Williams, who was at that time appointed Commissioner, to determine the Turco-Persian border, with joint Commissioners appointed by Russia, Persia and Turkey.

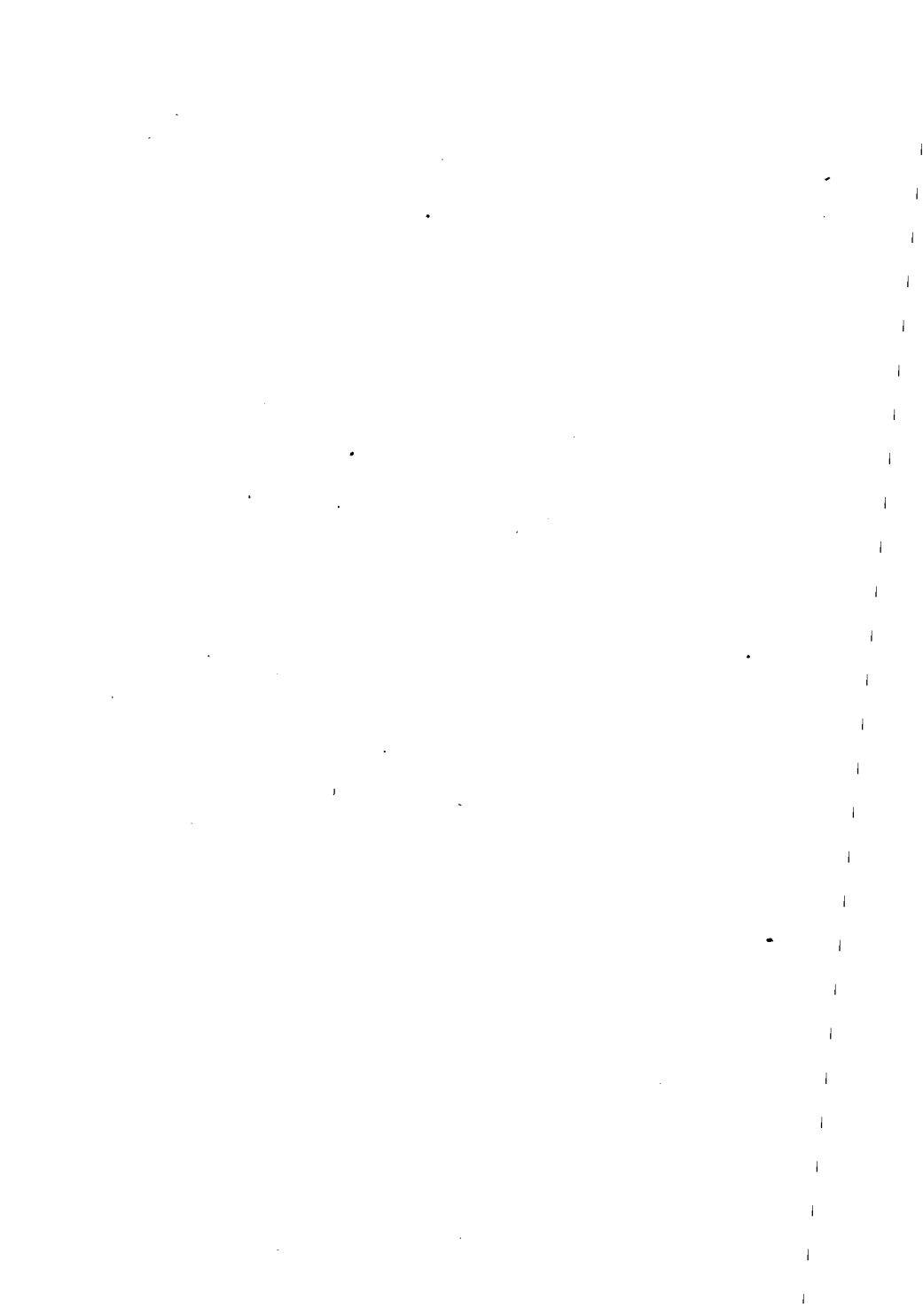
I shall avoid all farther notice of this boundary question, and of Erzeroum and its precincts, these matters having been ably dealt with in Mr. Curzon's "Armenia," and having formed my arrangements to accompany a caravan to Tabris, I shall request the reader to accompany me to Koordistan and the Persian border.



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