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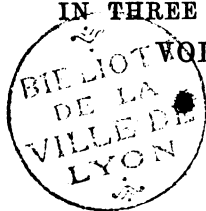
WITH

SKETCHES OF THE COSSACKS AND THE CAUCASUS.

FROM THE GERMAN OF

DR. MORITZ WAGNER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.



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1950



THE COSSACKS

AND

THE CAUCASUS.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

Stay at Kertch—General Anrep—The Ubiches—Captivity of Baron Turnau among Them—Storming of the Russian Fortress Michailoff—Anrep's Expedition against the Ubiches—The Death of Ali Oku—Life at the Outposts—Circassian Slave Trade.

AT the end of February, 1843, I was staying in the Crimean town of Kertch, situated on the straits, uniting the Black Sea and the Sea of Azof. It is a new, regularly built, airy, and pleasant town, containing more than ten thousand inhabitants, enlivened by trade and shipping, and especially interesting on account of the remarkable antiquities that have been

discovered in its immediate neighbourhood. Archæologists are of opinion that this place was the residence of the Pontian King, Mithridates; and though not a stone of the old city has been left standing, or even lying on the surface of the ground, their opinion is strongly confirmed by the number of splendid antiquities that have been discovered in various mounds in the neighbourhood of Kertch, containing coffins, ornaments, coins, and arms.

The territory of the Tchernomorski, or Black Sea Cossacks, is only separated from Kertch by a narrow strait, which a vessel can cross with a favourable wind, in an hour. Although the weather was very unpropitious on my arrival at Kertch, and violent storms were sweeping over the Black Sea, whilst heavy clouds were obscuring the horizon, I was able to distinguish from the coast by the roads, the hills that surround the Cossack town of Taman on the opposite shore. But the passage was rendered dangerous on account of the heavy sea; and no mariner could be found who would undertake to transport my carriage across the straits to Taman. I was, however, in some degree

reconciled to this detention, by the kindness and civility that I experienced at the hands of General Anrep, and of the Governor of Kertch, Prince Kergeolizeff.

General Anrep,* Commander-in-chief of the Russian forces on the Circassian coast, is a man of German descent, about forty years old, with a noble and intellectual countenance. He has inhabited the territory of the Caucasus for several years, has shared in most of the expeditions against the mountaineers during that time; knows the country and the customs of its inhabitants; and was, consequently, in a position to give me much useful counsel relating to the best mode of travelling in the dangerous countries on the Kouban and Terek. The General politely offered me a place on his war steamer, in which, on the return of fine weather, he was about to make a journey of inspection along the whole Circassian coast, from Anapa to Suchum-Kaleh. I was for some time doubtful if I should accept the kind offer of General

* General Anrep served in the campaign of Hungary, 1849, and was defeated by Omar Pacha, at Citate, January, 1854.—*Tr.*

Anrep, but I was ultimately induced to decline it, from my strong desire to become acquainted with the district of the Kouban, where the war continued to rage with undiminished fury between the Circassians and the Cossacks, whilst along the coast of the Black Sea, for some years past, the attacks of the Circassians on the fortresses, and the expeditions of the Russians into the mountains, have almost ceased. Meanwhile, the tempest continued to roar unceasingly, the heavens were as dark as ever, and the angry surges of the Euxine lashed the rocks of the coast with their breakers, the steppes were all under water, and resembled a wide lake, and on all hands, intelligence reached us of numerous shipwrecks.

We spent the inhospitable evening, most comfortably by the tea-kettle. General Anrep listened with interest to my descriptions of military life in Algeria, and to my account of the storming of Constantina, which I witnessed in 1837. After the conclusion of my story, he proceeded in his turn to narrate some of the most stirring episodes of the war in the Caucasus, especially the recent severe conflicts between the Russian

Expeditionary Corps, commanded by the General in person, and the mountaineers of the neighbourhood of Sotsch and Ardler, or Ardiller.

Bodenstedt, who passed only a few hours at the Fort of Sotscha, in 1845, describes it as situated on the coast of the Ubich territory, and generally mentioned by the name of Nawaginskoje, in the Russian maps. But the German poet was obliged by circumstances to reside at the neighbouring port of Ardiller, (called in Russian: Krepost Sviatago Ducha—the Fort of the Holy Ghost) for more than a week. He says that nothing contributed so much as this visit to open his eyes to the real condition of the Circassians. The commandant of the fortress, Swan Bey, though a Dschigeth by birth, was a major in the Russian service. Having been cast by strange accidents, in his youth, into the Russian service, he had enjoyed the advantages and privileges of a military education at St. Petersburg, had passed his examination as an officer, and had been sent to the Caucasus, where, after some years, he had been promoted to the rank of major. He had fought with distinction against the Tschetschensians, and the people of Daghestan, but nothing could

ever induce him to fight against his own country. He had so completely gained the confidence of the Russians, that they had appointed him Governor of the Fort of Ardiller, on the Dschigeth coast. It was his chief aim in this position, to maintain a good understanding between the Russians and the Dschigeths, and he seems to have been held in equal esteem by both people.

It is partly excusable that Swan Bey regarded the Russians as the greatest, the most powerful and enlightened people in the world, as he knew nothing of the Western Powers, and with this conviction, he strove honestly to impart to his countrymen the blessings of Muscovite civilization. From this man, Bodenstedt learnt many particulars relating to the tribes. He also met there a Polish engineer officer, a man who, like Ulysses, had seen many lands and people, and who had a highly-cultivated mind. This gentleman had been exiled for twelve years to the Abchasian and Adighè territory, and had collected much useful information relating to the mountaineers, whose language, according to Swan Bey, he spoke with astonishing correctness.

Captain X—— was neither the first nor the last of his people whom Bodenstedt met in Promethean exile, in the Caucasus; by avoiding all political allusions, the German poet soon won the esteem, confidence, and gratitude of the unhappy man. His dark, heavy eye, and furrowed brow told more than words could have done. Their conversation revolved exclusively on the Circassians.

The inhabitants of Abchasia and Dschigeth call themselves, in their own language, *Apsua*, and the territory along the coast, *Apsne*. They are classed into princes, noblemen, and peasants. The princes have been called, since the sway of the Georgians, *Thawadi*; the noblemen, *Amystha*. From Gagra to Sotscha the inhabitants call their country *Chalcis*, *i. e.* “this side the mountains,” in contrast with *Alan*, or “the other side the mountains.”

The name *Dschigeth* is a corruption of the word *Dschigith*, which, according to Swan Bey's explanation, means, in their language, a dexterous cavalier or knight. The Russians have formed two other names out of this—*Джурумовамъ* (*Dschighitovatj*), and *Джурумовка* (*Dschigitovka*). The Line Cossacks use the

first word to signify a man skilled in military horsemanship, whilst the last is a word of command in pursuing the enemy.

Ardiller has derived its name from the princely race of Ardil, which once resided in this district, but has lived scattered in the interior since the occupation by the Russians. The old name was applied to the new fort by the mountaineers, whilst the Russians, with customary devotion, gave it the appellation of Fort of the Holy Ghost, reminding us of the Spaniards subjugating the Indians in the name of the ever-blessed Trinity. The river which flows into the sea at Ardiller, is called by the natives Mdsym. The term Mdsymtha, with which it is erroneously designated in maps, signifies originally the territory lying on the Mdsym.

The more eminent of the Dschigeths, or Tschigetiens, acknowledge Islam, whilst the majority of the inhabitants profess a Paganism, retaining, apparently, many traces of primeval truth, and preferable to caricatures or mutilations of Christianity and Mohammedanism.

The Western Caucasus and the Pontian coast, from the mouth of the Kouban to that

of the Rion, is inhabited by highland tribes, which are generally known by the common name of Circassians, but which present marked differences as regards language. The Adighè are the most numerous of these tribes, residing on the left bank of the Kouban, as far as the district where the Russians have built the Fort Golovinski. These are the people who are especially distinguished among the Russians, as well as the Turks, by the name of Circassians, a term of Turkish origin, unknown to the inhabitants themselves. According to Klaproth, the word means highwayman, or robber. More to the south-west, the coast chain of the Caucasus is inhabited by two tribes, which are almost entirely unknown to us—the Ubiches and the Tschigetians. Though the dialects spoken by the two latter tribes differ from those of their neighbours, the Circassians and the Abchasians, they still appear to belong to the same stock of languages. The Caucasian tribes use mutually, as a common vehicle of their ideas, the Tartaro-Turkish dialect, which is understood by most of the inhabitants along the coast of the Caspian and Black Seas, and has answered the purpose of a commercial

medium, among these bordering races, since time immemorial. South of the Tschigetiens, dwell the Abchasians, a numerous tribe, inferior to the northern and eastern Caucasians in patriotic and warlike spirit. Then follow the Mingrelians and Gurians, handsome people, of peaceful disposition, whose language is related to the Georgian, and who, for the most part, consist of Christians. The Ubiches excel all the tribes now specified, in daring and bravery. They possess, in the highest degree, all the heroic qualities, and all the defects that characterize the population of the Caucasus—love of freedom, a fiery spirit, a chivalrous passion for adventures, for the clash of arms, and for glory, which their bards celebrate on their two-stringed lyres, and immortalize through tradition.

They are, however, at the same time, as severe to their prisoners, as rapacious, as revengeful and treacherous as the Circassians. The interior of the territory of the Ubiches is still a real *terra incognita*. The large map of the Russian General Staff leaves a complete blank space between the mountains from which the river Mazumta descends to the Black Sea,

and the district of the Circassian tribe of the Shapsooks. Even the direction followed by the central chain of the Caucasus in this territory, which has never been penetrated by a Russian column, is perfectly unknown.

Only two Europeans have remained for any space of time in the territory of this singular people. The well-known Englishman, Bell, the proprietor of the 'Vixen,' spent some time among the Ubiches in the neighbourhood of the coast. Only one European, Baron von Turnau, Adjutant of General Gurko, succeeded in penetrating into the interior of the Ubich territory, though under very distressing circumstances. Russian officers, who have learnt the dialects, are occasionally ordered by the Emperor to reconnoitre those regions as scouts, partly in order to undertake the topographical survey of a district still entirely unknown to the Russians, partly to examine the strength, institutions, mode of life, and temperament of those tribes which have no intercourse with the Russians. These are very dangerous missions which seldom succeed.

A short time before my arrival on the Terek, four Russian officers of the General Staff had

been dispatched as explorers, into different districts of Lesghistan. They had adopted the Circassian costume, and were accompanied by natives in Russian pay. Only one of these Russian officers ever returned; the three others had been recognized and put to death. Baron Turnau was a long time preparing for his dangerous mission. He gave a brown tint to his face, and transformed his beard to the shape usual with the natives. He also endeavoured to learn the language of the Ubiches. But as the rough pronunciation of several of its words is quite unattainable, Baron Turnau agreed with his guide that the latter should lead him about the country as a deaf mute.

After these arrangements, the Russian officer started on his perilous journey, and wandered many days from tribe to tribe without being discovered. But one of the *works* (noblemen) at whose house he slept, was initiated, for some reason, in the secret, and threatening the guide, the latter betrayed Turnau, who was immediately detained as a captive by the chief. The Ubiches demanded a cap full of silver roubles as his ransom, from the Russian commandant of the fortress of Ardler, and when the latter declared

that he was ready to pay the amount, they raised their demand, and only consented to liberate their captive for a bucket-full of roubles. On hearing this, the Commandant thought it expedient to refer the matter to Baron Rosen, who was then Commander-in-chief of the army of the Caucasus, the matter was laid before the authorities at St. Petersburg, and the Emperor consented that the extraordinary ransom should be paid, and the Baron liberated. But General Rosen represented to Nicholas that it would be favourable to the Russian interest to suffer Turnau to remain some time as a prisoner in the Ubich territory ; for, in the first place, their willingness to pay such an extravagant ransom would be a bad example, and the highlanders would henceforth ask the same sum for all officers who fell into their hands, instead of resting satisfied with some hundred roubles as before ; and secondly, Baron Turnau might have many opportunities as prisoner, of making useful observations on a country which had hitherto remained almost unknown, and thus his captivity would greatly enrich the meagre store of knowledge they possessed of that Circassian tribe.

The young officer was actually sacrificed to this object with incredible heartlessness. He passed a melancholy winter in a painful state of captivity, tortured by cold and hunger, and condemned to the hardest labour as a slave. He made several unsuccessful attempts to escape. The chieftain, who had him in his keeping, to render every attempt at escape impossible, shut him up in a cage which was partially sunk below the surface of the ground, and was moreover so narrow that the prisoner could neither stand up right, nor lie extended in it.

Baron von Turnau lingered on in this distressing captivity, and at length fell dangerously ill, and suffered the most excruciating pains without the hard hearts of his jailors being touched with pity at the sight of his sufferings. His sleepless nights in his cage were not solaced by the visit of a ministering angel, such as is described by Poushkin in his celebrated poem where he represents a Circassian maiden breaking the fetters of her hero whom she restores to liberty. Many Russian prisoners have, however, had the good fortune to meet with female devotion and love in the Circassian uplands, and have ultimately eloped with their

angels to the Russian lines. Poor Baron Turnau, who resembled a mole driven back and blockaded in its hole, where the very clothes on his back rotted and fell off, was not fortunate enough to excite any tender passion in an Ubich maid, and he would probably have ended his life in prison, without the compensation of a romantic adventure, had not a lucky accident rescued him from his bondage. The chieftain into whose hands he had fallen, having deeply aggrieved one of his retainers, the latter resolved to have his revenge. One day, when all the household were engaged out of doors, this man murdered his master, liberated the prisoner from his cage, fastened him on his saddle with ropes, because the invalid, who was covered with sores, could not sit upright from weakness, and dashed away with him full gallop from the spot. In one day, they accomplished eighty versts. They happily escaped their pursuers, and reached the fortress of Ardlar.

Baron Turnau, who only saw a very small portion of the district, describes Ubichia as one mass of steep mountains, presenting the wildest features of the Caucasian region. Immense primeval forests clothe the slopes of the mountains on the side of the Euxine. The Alpine

torrents rush down the deep ravines and chasms, and sweep mighty blocks of rock along with them, and soaring above the woody zone, the summits of the highest chain tower aloft, covered with eternal snows. He represents the situation of the native villages as inaccessible, most of them being either hidden in the bosom of the thickest forests, or perched like eagle's nests on the rocky declivities at the edge of the chasms.

Four Russian fortresses were stormed in 1840, by the united Circassians, Ubiches and Tschigetians. This was one of the most brilliant triumphs ever achieved by the mountaineers over their foes. Nevertheless, the Circassians themselves admit that the defence was desperate. The victors paid so dearly for their conquest, that for several years they lost all appetite for renewing their attacks on the Russian forts. Nor would their assaults have probably succeeded, had not severe disease raged among the garrisons, and sorely reduced them in 1839-1840. As no transports venture to navigate the Black Sea during the winter season, the Russian forts are obliged to dispense with fresh provisions, and to rest satisfied with salt meat during five months. Besides intermittent fever,

these garrisons are frequently visited with a cutaneous disorder, resembling the scurvy, and even if the mortality should not be very great, the body is so debilitated by this malady, that during a convalescence of many months, the invalid is scarcely able to lift his arms. The Circassians had obtained intelligence of the wretched state of these garrisons, through some Polish deserters. A great meeting was held in the mountains, and was attended by several of the most eminent chieftains of the Ubiches and Tschigetians. It was resolved by a majority of votes, to attack the four Russian forts, and they were only to use the schaschka (long sword) without firing a shot. It is a usual practice with the Caucasian tribes on similar occasions, for a picked body of enthusiastic warriors, to devote themselves to death, with the most solemn oath, and to vow that they will never show their back to the enemy. These daring champions always range themselves at the head of the troop, in order that their heroic example may excite the emulation of even the most sluggish, and that their death may entail on their relatives and friends the duty of revenge. Fanatical warriors of this description have been the ready

instruments with which Guz Beg, Mansur Bey, and Dschimbulat among the Circassians, Hadschi-Dokum-Oku among the Ubiches, Chasi-Mollah and Schamyl, in the Eastern Caucasus, among the Tschetschensians, have achieved their most splendid victories over the Russians.

On the occasion of the meeting to which we have previously adverted, and which was held in the Schapsook territory, a hundred of these Caucasian knights, including boys and grey-beards, swore to take the fortresses, or to fall sword in hand on their walls, and they kept their word. Fort Michailoff made the most determined resistance of all. Out of five hundred men composing its garrison, only about one third had retained their health and vigour; the remainder were on the sick list, or convalescents. But when the wild war cry of thousands of foes rang through the hills and woods, and announced its imminent danger to the garrison, the very soldiers who were prostrate in the hospital, from an attack of fever, jumped up, and crawled as well as they could, gun in hand, to the walls. Whilst the commandant called upon the soldiers to offer up the last drop

of their blood to the Emperor, in the defence of the fort, the old Pope incited them to fight till they fell in the contest against infidels. He administered the sacrament to them, stood in the midst of them holding the crucifix, and was one of the first to fall from the rampart, mortally wounded by a Circassian bullet.

The devoted band of highlanders, who had sworn to conquer or die, had already clambered up the walls, but most of them were tumbled back again into the ditch, struck with bullets, or bayonet thrusts, though they always sold their life very dear. Their corpses formed a bridge for their comrades, and the walls were carried after a fearful slaughter, whereupon the Russians retired, fighting, into the block-house, or inmost defence. Here the commandant collected his men, and requested one of them to volunteer to blow up the fort, if the most determined resistance should be of no avail. A soldier named Archipp-Ossipoff pronounced himself ready to do the work, and was sent to the powder-magazine with a burning match. After the last defences had been stormed, and whilst the Circassians were celebrating their victory, and conveying off captives and plunder,

the explosion took place. Most of the building flew into the air, and many hundred mutilated corpses were scattered in all directions—Russians and Circassians finding a common grave among the smoking ruins of the captured fort. Only eleven Russians survived out of the whole five hundred; and after being dragged into captivity in the mountains, they were eventually ransomed. On their return, they related the dreadful particulars of the assault, and of the catastrophe, which was a commentary on the burning of Moscow.

The intelligence of the loss of these four outposts excited much surprise and discouragement in the Russian army, which had suffered unusual losses, in the same year, from sickness. The Emperor Nicholas was exceedingly enraged at their loss, and as, in such cases, a victim is always required to expiate the misfortune wrought by the enemy's bravery, by the inroads of fever, or by the storms of the Black Sea, Lieutenant-General Rajewski, who then commanded the Circassian coast, was removed from his post, and was succeeded by General Anrep, who had remained in command of this district up to the time of my visit, though the

Commander-in-chief of the Caucasus had been twice changed in the interim. An expedition was undertaken by him, in 1841, against the Ubiches, who had advanced to the shores of the Euxine.

In October, 1841, a column of six hundred Russians assembled at the fortress of Ardler, accompanied by two thousand native auxiliaries, and subject tribes of Abchasians, Imeritians, and Suanetians. The latter are especially distinguished, among all the Caucasian irregular auxiliaries, by the extreme beauty of their physical organization, and by their dexterity and bravery. The Suanetians are nominally Christians, their numbers amount to twenty thousand at most, and their language is reported to be connected with the Georgian. They inhabit the highest Alps of the Caucasus, on the southern side of the Elbruz, and border on the Tartar tribe of Karatschais. Many expeditions of Russian columns against the hostile mountaineers have been escorted by three thousand to four thousand of these native auxiliaries, who are of immeasurable service, from their experience of mountain warfare, from their hardiness, bravery, endurance, and familiarity with

the country. The maintenance of these corps is, however, very expensive to the Russians, because they only keep together during the expedition, and nothing but a handsome pecuniary offer can induce these poor mountaineers to leave their homes to join the Russian army. Each of these natives receives a silver rouble and capital white bread daily, whilst he remains under the Russian colours; whereas the poor Russian soldier, who undergoes the same hardships, and is equally exposed to Circassian bullets, must rest satisfied with a copper kopeck, and bread as black as a coal, as his daily pay and ration.

General Anrep wished in the first instance to reconnoitre the road between Ardler and Sotsch (Sutscha) along the coast, without penetrating into the interior of Ubichia. The Ubichians and Tschigetians had collected an army of about 10,000 warriors, and were expecting the Russian advance on their rocky fastnesses. After the skirmishers of the Abchasians, Suanetians, and Imeritians, who formed the Russian outposts had driven in the enemy from the nearest eminences, the Russian column, which consisted almost entirely of infantry, began its march. There

are no corps of Cossack cavalry in the forts on the Black Sea, because the transport of horses is troublesome; and the Cossacks, moreover, accomplish little in mountain warfare.

On the other hand, the column was escorted by some hundreds of Suanetians mounted on excellent horses accustomed to mountain travelling. A strong Russian squadron flanked the march of the column along the sea-shore. The ships of the line were taken in tow by the steamers, and were all to approach within half a cannon shot of the shore, because the expedition was favoured by the finest weather. On the second day's march, more energy was shown by the enemy, who evidently wished to entice the Russians into the interior. The Russian *tirailleurs* were driven in, and some thousands of Ubiches dashed into the Russian column, sword in hand, and uttering fearful cries. This impetuous but disorderly onslaught was naturally broken by the strong line of bayonets that continued to advance in perfect order. Many Ubiches bit the dust from the continual rolling fire of the Russian muskets; but many of the broad-shouldered Muscovites in their grey surtouts were also laid low by the schaschka (sabre)

of the furious mountaineers. The contest was especially desperate wherever the hostile forces came to blows to save a wounded chieftain or carry off their dead.

It is a remarkable fact, that almost all savage tribes have a greater respect for their dead than civilized nations ; that the thought of mutilation or a grave in enemy's ground fills these barbarians with horror ; whilst we view with comparative indifference the desecration of resurrection-men, and the levity of the dissecting room. The Arabs and Kabyles in Algeria are known to encounter the greatest risks, and to make the greatest exertions to carry off their dead in battle ; and in like manner the Caucasian tribes, both Mohammedan and Christian, and even those who have only a faint gleam of religion, exhibit this disposition in a still stronger light. Even a dead slave is unwillingly abandoned to the enemy by the Circassians and Ubiches ; and if they are unable to rescue the corpse, they generally ransom it from the Russians. If we bear in mind the extreme penury of these mountaineers, this sacrifice for the honourable treatment of their dead becomes quite affecting. If a Work (nobleman) or one

of their celebrated champions, or especially a Pschi (prince) falls in action, these highlanders fight like men possessed, in order to save the body, without heeding the explosion of hand-grenades and shells which commonly cause them such terror. Numerous cases are on record, where hundreds of warriors have offered themselves up in such cases to save a single corpse.

One of the most renowned chiefs of the Ubiches is an old Pschi, named Hadschi-Dokhum-Oku, formerly a matchless hero in the handling of cold steel, but now bent with the hardships of war, and the weight of years. This old champion, who is never weary of preaching hatred and revenge against the Russians in the Caucasus, fought, in the days of his prime, at the head of thousands who obeyed his word, while he himself achieved miracles of bravery with his ponderous sword. He often accompanied the forays over the Kouban, with a picked body of men, and was commonly one of the first to plunge with desperate fool-hardiness, into the thickest squadrons of the Tchernomorski Cossacks, and to measure the weight of his schaschka against the red lances of his opponents. He slew many foes with his own

hand ; and his name is coupled with those of Guz-Beg, and Deschimbulat, among the first heroes of the mountains, in the lays of the Kikoakoa,* who celebrate the gallant forays across the Kouban.

The physical strength of the old hero is now broken ; but when he heard of the expedition of the Russians against his native district, he assembled his relations, his friends and retainers, and went forth once more to battle, his body cicatrized with the scars of a hundred wounds. The Russian tirailleurs beheld the venerable form of the old chieftain on a precipitous rock, whence he surveyed the action, issued his orders, and feasted his eyes once more on the gallant actions of his sons and grandchildren, who assisted in this contest, with all their slaves and vassals. The declivities of the Ubich mountains, facing the west, are partly clothed with magnificent forests. Ancient oaks and beech trees tower aloft above the pinnacles and buttresses of the grey rocks which they decorate with their verdure.

Decayed wooden crosses are seen let into

* The name of the Circassian bards.

some of the oldest stems, the relics of an immemorial age, or possibly the pious labour of the Georgian Queen, Tamar, who is reported to have disseminated Christianity throughout the Caucasus, with her victorious arms. The English traveller, Bell, saw in the course of his adventurous excursions in Circassia, several of these crosses on the trunks of the oldest trees, and relates that some fanatical mollahs had once advised that these relics, the symbols of the errors and superstition of their forefathers, should be destroyed; but that the majority of the mountaineers, who reverence these crosses as holy mementoes of their ancestors, had vehemently resisted this suggestion. Ali Oku a grandson of the old chief, Hadschi-Dokhum-Oku, had posted himself, with his warriors, by one of these oaks bearing the symbol of Christianity, and defended the ground step by step against the Russians.

The position was favourable; on one hand woody ground, on the other a precipice. The Russian commandant of the hill artillery, who accompanied the light infantry, caused two howitzers to play upon the spot where the Ubiches were congregated in dense masses. A

ball passed through the hollow stem of the old tree, the splinters flew about, but no person was wounded, and the old cross remained uninjured. A yell of triumph was raised by the Ubiches, and rang clear and merry through the welkin. The cavalry of the Suanetians attempted an attack on the same spot, but the ground was too impracticable; the horse of the foremost trooper fell, and bore down two others in its fall, horses and riders both rolling into the abyss below. Even the Imeritian and Abchasian irregulars fell back from this spot, which the enemy defended with incredible rage. At length, a young Russian officer, in command of a company of tirailleurs, rushed forward impetuously, followed by his men, with levelled bayonets. They were received with a volley; the officer fell wounded; the soldiers halted, loaded their arms, and replied to the enemy's volley by another. The contest now raged furiously from rock to rock, from thicket to thicket, and was often settled by cold steel, while a perpetual dropping fire of musketry was kept up on all sides. The Russian skirmishers received reinforcements, and continued to advance steadily; but Ali Oku still held his

ground tenaciously in front of the old oak. Grasping with his left hand the bark of the tree, and swinging his schaschka with his right, he cheered on his men by his words and his gallant example. A Russian bullet passed through the heart of the young hero, who, in death, remained still standing, leaning against the oak, his corpse protecting the sacred tree, whilst its roots were sprinkled by his warm young blood. And then the lament of the Ubiches rose and resounded above the storm of battle, till it reached the ear of the grandfather, who, wearied by the fatigues of the march, was reposing on a rock. When the melancholy news reached the aged chieftain, grief mastered the infirmities of years. Hadschi-Dokhum-Oku gathered up his last remnant of strength, and hastened, with his attendants, to the assistance of the warriors, who were fighting with the Russians for the possession of the body. The old man rushed into the thickest of the fight, like an old lion. The example of the venerable hero inflamed the courage of the Ubiches. Hand to hand, and man to man, the mountaineers and the Russians contended in mortal affray under the shade of that hoary

oak ; the bayonet pierced the breasts of the chivalrous Circassians, and the keen and heavy schaschka splintered the thick skulls of the Muscovites ; at length, the dearly-purchased victory remained with the Ubiches, and the corpse of the young chieftain was saved.

Ali-Oku was only eighteen years old, and had a slight but heroic form. He left behind him a bride of fourteen years, the daughter of a Circassian Prince, who had come to the help of the Ubich, with all his people. The young bride awaited the return of her father in a neighbouring *aoul* (village), with her female relatives, expecting that he would bring back her young bridegroom with him, instead of which, she received the harrowing intelligence of his death.

One week later, the Russian squadron, on its return from Sotsch to Ardler, was sailing again along this part of the coast. A numerous meeting of natives was seen on the declivity of the mountain, where this severe contest had occurred, eight days before. All the chiefs of the Ubiches, Circassians, and Tschigetians who had shared in that action, had assembled to testify their respect for the prince's nephew ; the old grandfather was standing in their midst.

The solemn oath by which they bound themselves to take a bloody revenge was renewed by these brave men in the sight of the Russian fleet. The lamentations and tears of the mother and bride of the departed were mingled and lost in the spirit-stirring songs of the bards, celebrating his gallant life beside his open grave. The young heir was buried beneath that symbol of the cross, which he had covered with his body when he fell.

On my return from Persia, I encountered in the Quarantine Office at Trebizond, Hadschi-Schemis-Beg, a *work* of the Ubiches and a relation of Hadschi-Dokhum-Oku. This chieftain, who was making a journey to Constantinople in the interest of his countrymen, related to me the above episode of the war in Ubichia, with all the animation peculiar to these mountaineers.

The distance from Ardler to Sotsch (Suscha) is only thirty versts* which the Russian expedition accomplished in three days hard fighting. The march of the column was certainly impeded by the steep and woody

* Twenty miles.

nature of the ground, but the prudent measures of General Anrep were able partially to neutralize these obstructions. The auxiliary Abchasians, Suanetians, and Imeritians, answered the purpose of scouts, driving the enemy from their concealment in the bushes and trees, while the Russian tirailleurs followed in their track. The regiments of the line forming the column fired over the heads of the skirmishers, and of the Caucasian auxiliaries, and the guns and mortars of the naval squadron swept the tops of the hills, and every spot where a body of natives was seen to congregate. The continual broadsides of the men-of-war were of material assistance to the column, and several Russian officers assert that without their aid, this expedition might have terminated unfavourably to the Russians.

On the third day, the contest became still hotter and more bitter than on the previous ones. The highlanders had lost many men, and were thus bound by the duty of retaliation which is held sacred throughout the Caucasus to expiate the deaths of their slaughtered brethren, by an equal number of Russian victims. A clever manœuvre on the part of

the Muscovites destroyed the lives of many Ubiches. General Anrep caused a batallion to be concealed in a ravine, and managed by his manœuvring to force the enemy into this ambush. The Circassians finding themselves attacked in the rear, lost courage for a moment, fled to the higher mountains, and contrary to their usual practice, abandoned about a hundred bodies on the scene of combat. But they soon recovered their spirit, and pursued the Russian rear-guard fighting all the way till it reached the walls of Sotsch. The Russians themselves, admit that their loss amounted to five hundred killed in these actions ; the mountaineers suffered principally from the broadsides of the squadron. After the determined resistance that the Russians encountered in Ubichia, they lost all desire of making any fresh attempts to penetrate farther into this unknown mountain region. The only advantage derived from this operation, was a more accurate survey of the section of coast between Ardler and Sotsch. *The Russian general did not think it desirable to send back his troops by land to Ardler, but had them transported thither by the squadron.* Though the loss of the natives was, according to

all appearances, greater than that of the Russians, yet the facts of the case prove that the expedition against the Ubiches, which is the last military operation of any importance that has taken place on the coast of the Black Sea, did not terminate favourably to the Russians.

The foregoing details of the Russian expedition against the Ubiches were related and confirmed to me by various eye-witnesses of the event, whom I met, and with whom I conversed at Kertch, and subsequently in the Caucasus. General Anrep's version of this military operation, agreed with them in the most essential points, though it was naturally somewhat more favourable to the Russians ; and he dwelt with especial complacency on the beautiful manœuvre, (his own device) by which the foe was taken in the rear, and lost many men. The Russian generals in the Caucasus readily inform strangers respecting their successful exploits and victories, but they observe a cautious silence relating to their defeats, and the gloomy future of the Circassian struggle. Formerly they were more communicative with foreigners on these points, and were glad of any opportunities of expressing their opinions freely on these topics to strangers,

provided they were not deterred by the stiff etiquette of rank, and spirit of caste which is in Russia such a serious barrier to all easy intercourse in society. But since Count de Suzannet drew up a long article on the state of the Caucasus, which appeared in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," in 1840, this disposition has undergone a great change. In this article, the Count committed the indiscretion of introducing oral communications of Generals Golovin, Grabbe, Rajewski, and Anrep, which were not always favourable to the position of the Russians in the Caucasus, and compromised these gentlemen at St. Petersburg. The Emperor Nicholas read these revelations of Count Suzannet, was indignant at the unguarded statements of his generals, and sent the obnoxious number of the "Revue des Deux Mondes" to General Golovin, who resided at that period at Tiflis, in the capacity of Commander-in-chief of the army, accompanying the review with the earnest warning that he should be more discreet in future in his communications with foreigners. Since that period, the superior Russian officers who used to be frank and communicative, have become very cautious in their expressions to

strangers. It is only among the subordinate officers who do not belong to the staff, that foreigners can meet with men who give a correct picture of the state of the Caucasus, and who relate the military operations in which they have shared, without disguise. I was fortunate enough to meet with a man of this stamp in * * * *, and his attractive conversation whiled away the tedium occasioned by my detention through the continuation of bad weather.

The Russians possess, at present, seventeen strongholds on the east coast of the Black Sea, from Taman to the borders of Guria. They call these strongholds *kreposts*, which means fortresses, but they seldom deserve this appellation. Most of them consist of simple earthen parapets, a shallow ditch and a wall, behind which are built the barracks, the church, and the officers' dwellings. These *kreposts*, which are almost identical with the French *camps retranchés* of Algeria, could not resist the assault of regular troops provided with artillery. But the mountaineers of the Caucasus, like the Arabs of Algeria, have it not in their power to use breaching batteries against them, and the earthen walls of the forts, furnished with

guns of heavy calibre, are a formidable obstacle to the native warriors, armed with swords and muskets only. Some of these strongholds are built on rocks, and defended by nature. Their garrisons commonly consist of 500, and seldom exceed 1,000 men. Life, in most of these fortresses, is indescribably monotonous and melancholy. On the land side it is impossible to take a short walk without imminent danger of your life, unless you are escorted by a hundred soldiers. A mountaineer is sure to lie concealed behind every bush and on every rock, waiting day and night to send his bullet through the body of some unhappy pedestrian. The traveller, Dubois, relates that during his residence in these forts, the windows were often smashed by Circassian bullets, which occasionally forced their way into the *salle-à-manger* of the officers.

The situation of the garrisons is somewhat more supportable in summer, because a Russian squadron cruises along the coast, and a regular line of steam-boats provide them with fresh provisions and various conveniences. The garrisons are enlivened by the arrival of newspapers and visitors, who place the unfortunate

victims in a state of spiritual communion with Europe and the civilized world; but the long winter, which lasts seven or eight months, is a dreary season for the garrisons. The squadron returns to Sevastopol in October, and steam-boats seldom venture across in winter, on account of the furious storms and complete deficiency of good anchorage on that coast. During this season the garrison, lead a real prison life; their food is salt meat, their occupation and diversion consists in looking at the snowy mountains or listening to the roar of the breakers. The officers obtain a slight mitigation of this captivity, in reading, whist-parties, punch, and the steaming tea-kettle; but the poor privates, who lie in wretched barracks which admit the chill mountain air, and who suffer from a real deficiency of fuel, are in a most deplorable position. It is well known that after the suppression of the last Polish insurrection, many young men, some of them belonging to the noblest families, were sent as private soldiers to the Caucasus and distributed among various Russian corps.

Let the reader imagine the misery of these unhappy youths; clothed in a coarse soldier's

coat, groaning under an iron discipline, condemned to common black bread and salt meat, immured in these solitary forts, amongst rough Russian peasants' sons as their comrades, from whom they are alienated by natural hatred, notwithstanding the affinity of race. Can we wonder that many in this deplorable position resorted to suicide, the last expedient of desperation. Dubois, who generally conceals what is unfavourable to Russia in the Caucasus, relates that during his residence at the krepost Gagra, a Pole of the garrison jumped from the walls of the fort over the precipice and was dashed to pieces, that he might put an end to his wretched existence. Those Poles who fly to the mountains do not improve their lot thereby; they are condemned to slavery by a hard-hearted people, who are incapable of forming any distinction between Russians and Poles. Indeed, life in the Caucasian mountains appears to be more intolerable than the hardships of a Russian soldier, for many deserters return of their own accord, though a barbarous and disgraceful punishment awaits them. In some fortresses, for example, Anapa, Gelendschik, &c., the lot of the garrisons is not quite so painful, because they

are not closely blockaded there, and carry on some commercial intercourse with the neighbouring Circassian tribes ; but no description can give an idea of the desolate and irksome life spent by the garrisons of the forts Williaminoff, Lazareff, Suscha, Ardler, Gagra, and Pitzunda. In Abchasia the Russian fortresses can breathe a little more freely. The precincts of the fort of Redout-Kaleh can be safely visited to the distance of some versts ; and on the coasts of Mingrelia and Guria, the Russian garrisons are exposed to no other danger save that of a deadly fever.

It is well known that the object of the erection of a chain of forts along the Circassian coast, was to extinguish all intercourse between the Turks and the tribes of the Caucasus. The Russians hoped that by cutting off all supplies of ammunition from the Circassians on the sea-side, it would be no very difficult matter to subjugate the mountaineers. They have been disappointed in this expectation, and the position of the Russians has not been improved by their maintaining a body of fifteen or twenty thousand men in their different posts along the coast.

Every fort possesses some row boats, which,

manned by Cossacks, coast along the shore, in fine weather, in search of any little Turkish vessels that may have ventured thither. If they discover any, they land at night in the neighbourhood and try to set fire to them before the mountaineers can come down to help the Turkish crews. The Turks, who know these tactics of the Cossacks, do all in their power to withdraw their vessels out of the sight of the Russian row-boats, and to this end they frequently cover the whole of their craft with leaves and branches, and suspend twigs of fir to the masts to make the boats' crews fancy they are trees.

If any credit may be placed in the statements of the Russian generals, the slave trade between Circassia and Turkey has almost ceased. But such is not really the case, and I obtained a correct account of the real state of the case from well-informed men during my last residence at Trebizond. The trade with Circassian girls is still carried on as extensively as before, only it requires more circumspection, and is confined to the stormy winter months, lasting from October to March, during which the Russian cruisers remove from the havenless coast. The spectator

is filled with astonishment on viewing at Samsun and Sinope the small fragile barks in which the Turkish slave-dealers venture on their adventurous voyages during this most perilous season. These slavers commonly furnish themselves with a charter from the Russian consul for Kertch, under the pretext of shipping a cargo of corn at that place; and they are protected by this document if they fall into the hands of Russian men-of-war on the passage, or if they are cast away on the coast in the vicinity of the Russian fortresses. Unless they were provided with these charters, they would be treated as slave-traders by the Russian cruisers, and even transported to Siberia. The vessels they employ are so small, that if the sea is at all calm, and the shore flat, they can be drawn up on land.

It is commonly assumed that these Turkish ships supply the Circassians with ammunition; but this is a mistake. The Turkish slave-traders very seldom bring any arms to the Caucasus, and these consist commonly of ornamental arms as presents for the chief; nor do they bring much powder, and only as a present to the princes and knights.

The Circassians will not engage in barter, and they only hand over their beauties for Turkish harems, against good bright silver. The tribes of the Caucasus are not deficient in fire-arms as well as kinschals and schaschkas (swords), and they find opportunities of buying powder and lead on all hands, even from the Cossacks on the Kouban. It commonly takes a couple of weeks for the slave-traders to complete their arrangements with the Circassians; the Konak answers the purpose of mediator. It is generally only the daughters of (pschilt) slaves, and tschofokotls (freed men), who are sold to the Turks; rarely does a work (nobleman) resolve to exchange his sons and daughters for shining piastres; yet this sometimes happens.

The girls commonly leave their rugged mountains and inhuman parents without much regret, because they have been carefully prepared for this forcible separation, by the splendid picture that their relatives give of the enjoyments and magnificence of a Turkish harem. Each vessel carries a full cargo of thirty or forty girls, who are packed close together like herrings in a tub, and submit with great resignation to the

distress of the sea-voyage, which they hope soon to exchange for the delights of the City of the Sultan.

The captains are well versed in all the characteristics of the Black Sea. Once or twice a month in winter, a fresh wind blows down from the Caucasus, lasting generally several days consecutively. The Turkish captains make use of this wind to get off as rapidly as possible with their living cargo. They commonly transport the girls to Rizeh, or to Sinope and Samsun, but never direct to Trebizond, for the Russian consul there, M. de Gersi, keeps a tolerably vigilant eye on the shipping; and though he may secretly connive at the trade, he will not suffer it to be carried on too boldly before his very face.

It is computed, that, on the average, five out of six vessels accomplish their mission. It is reported that during the winter from 1843 to 1844, twenty-eight vessels undertook expeditions to the Circassian coast. Out of this number, twenty-three returned without loss or hindrance; three were burned by the Russians, and two foundered at sea with their cargo of beauty. A Turkish captain at Sinope related

to me the following story:—A few years ago one of these slave-ships sprung a leak in the open sea, just as a Russian steamer, coming from Redout-Kaleh, happened to sail by. The Turkish captain, who preferred the prospect of the cold air of Siberia to that of drowning, hung out a signal of distress, and the Russian steamer came up to save the slave-ship and its living cargo. But so deeply rooted is the hatred of Russians in the Circassian heart, that the noble blood of these maidens rebelled at the thought of becoming the property of a Muscovite grey coat, instead of sharing the couch of a proud and luxurious Turkish pacha.

These girls, who had taken leave of their mountains without much emotion, raised a fearful cry of anguish when the Russian ship drew nigh. Some jumped desperately into the sea, others plunged a knife into their breast—death being more welcome to these heroines than the marriage-bed of the detested Muscovite. Nevertheless, the greater part of them were taken on board the Russian ship, and brought to Anapa, whence the girls were forwarded to the land of the Cossacks, and partly granted as handmaids to the officers, partly distributed among the

Cossacks of the line. Only one single man of the Turkish crew came back, having succeeded in escaping from prison at Anapa, and in flying to the mountains. It is probable that the remainder were forced to make a pilgrimage to Siberia, for nothing has been heard of them since.

Almost every Turkish and Austrian steamer that makes the passage from Trebizond to Constantinople, along the coast of Asia Minor, in winter, has a number of Circassian girls on board. The Turkish slave-traders commonly bring their goods from Riseh or other harbours of Lasistan to Trebizond, and, to tranquillize the scruples of M. de Gersi, the Pacha assures him that these girls come from Adschara and Lasistan; for the shocking practice of trading in girls is prevalent also among the inhabitants of that part of the coast. In Trebizond they are handed over to the steamers as fore-deck passengers. I once made the journey myself from Trebizond to Constantinople, on an Austrian steam-boat, with a dozen Circassian girls. They were mostly children of from twelve to fourteen years of age, with interesting and noble features, but very pale and thin, and a wild fire glowed in

their black lustrous eyes. Only two of them, who were much better dressed than the others and carefully veiled, showed a certain roundness of contour; they appeared eighteen or twenty years old. The Turkish slave-trader devoted especial attention to the latter, and often brought them coffee, a luxury never enjoyed by the others. When I asked the Turk why this distinction was made, he informed me that those two girls who had better clothing, were the daughters of noblemen, with beautiful rosy cheeks, and better fed than the others, and, consequently, they would fetch a higher price at Stamboul. He hoped to sell the handsomest for thirty thousand and her companion for twenty thousand piastres. He spoke contemptuously of the others, and stated that he should consider himself fortunate if he could dispose of them at two thousand piastres (£16) per head. This Turkish trader was very richly attired in furs and silk, and, notwithstanding his vile occupation, he appeared a man of very sociable manners. He informed me, among other things, that since the occupation of the Caucasian coast by the Russians, his trade had become much more difficult and dangerous, but also much more

lucrative. At an earlier period, when numbers of Greeks and Armenians were brought to the market at Constantinople, the handsomest girl never fetched above ten thousand piastres; but now a well-fed rosy slave from Guria or Adschara, about fifteen years of age, could scarcely be obtained at Stamboul for forty thousand piastres. * * *

* * * The Black Sea had at length somewhat calmed down, and a sailor of the packet-boat knocked at my door to inform me that they were about to start. I found the good-natured captain waiting my arrival on the deck. A fresh breeze bore us swiftly away from Kertch; the rain continued to pour down, and I was forced to seek refuge in the cabin, where I met some compensation for the unpleasantness of the weather in some capital caviare and Crimean wine. Though I retained very agreeable recollections of the Crimea, yet I managed to leave it without shedding a tear, and I sailed away in a merry mood for the Land of the Cossacks.

CHAPTER II.

Scythian Storms—Cossack Comfort—Fanagorian Antiquities
—Cossack Life—The Story of Wassily Iguroff, the Demon
of the Steppe—Danger of a New Irruption of Barbarians
in the West.

FATHER PROMETHEUS had really good cause to warn his liberator against the fierce blasts of the land of the mare's-milk-drinking Scyths. I do not mean to doubt that the wandering demi-god stood very firmly on his legs, or that his entire frame was cast in a solid and powerful mould. But if Hercules, on his pedestrian tour northwards of the Black Sea, encountered a March gale, like that which I experienced on my arrival at Taman, he must,

at any rate, have been famously shaken and weather beaten, if he was not blown straight away to the moon, as Prometheus feared to be :

“ Beware of the sweeping blast of Boreas,
Lest it suck thee up in its raging vortex.”

This was one of those good cheap bits of advice, that the liberated Titan gave to the travelling club-man on his way to the Caucasus. Æschylus has omitted to relate if the son of Jupiter, while facing this windy prospect, made as sour a face or as sorry a figure as the writer of these pages, when after a tempestuous passage of the straits, he landed sea-sick in the Cossack town of Taman, and heard that there was no such thing as an inn there. But, even at this remote epoch, I cannot withhold a sigh when I think of the deplorable situation of Master Hercules on his arrival at this place, only moderately furnished with luggage as usual, and at any rate, unprovided with a well-lined great-coat, a paletot and gutta percha boots, without a trunk or carpet-bag, without any luggage but his club, perhaps even without the classical *padaroschna*,* for want of which

* Imperial permit, or *passo-partout*.

the Scythian postmasters would all refuse him their horses. But his greatest calamity would be the probable deficiency of silver roubles in his purse. I assume, of course, that household arrangements were not much more comfortable in this corner of the Black, Sea at the period in question, than they are now, and that the Scythians, addicted to a mare's milk diet, were as deficient in inns, as prodigal of stench, filth and fleas in their houses, as their descendants, the brandy-drinking Cossacks.

“But can no better shelter be found in the whole place?”—I ejaculated, in a most melancholy tone, whilst I dragged my portmanteau from one corner of the room to another, in order to remove it from the streams of water pouring through the roof. The Cossack landlord of this enticing cottage, who had been prevailed upon to become my *konak*, or host, stared at me with an expression of mingled astonishment and contempt. It seemed to him quite unaccountable that such trifles as a wet bed, a smoky room, and vermin should occasion the slightest uneasiness or discomfort.

It is here proper to observe, however, that my present expedition through the Cossack

territory took place a year before my travels in the interior of Asia Minor, and in the wretched country of the Kurds, so that I was not half sufficiently hardened against the hardships and troubles to be encountered in a semi-barbarous country. I grant that I had experienced some specimens of "roughing it in the waste" during my tour in Algeria, and my wanderings among the Arabs. But the French are greatly in advance of the Russians, and of all other nations in the speedy introduction of conveniences and comforts at the outposts and in the wilderness.

Notwithstanding all their discomforts, however, the Cossacks are far from unsociable or unamiable people. The Russian captain, who brought me over to Taman, indulged in a good deal of gossip in the little town, after our arrival, and found an attentive audience among the Tschernomorski Cossacks. He had asserted, probably from motives of vanity, that his passenger was a man of high birth, who was well provided with written and stamped papers from St. Petersburg, and had been recommended to him both by the Governor and the Commandant of Kertch.

Statements of this nature are seldom thrown

away in Russia, and my bearded host, though inwardly disaffected towards me, yet seeing my long moody face, hurried off through the little town to find dry quarters for me. He discovered a suitable abode in the house of a Tschernomorski officer, who gave up his best room to me, and received me with Cossack hospitality of the old school. He was a veteran, wore the cross of Vladimir, and was married to a third wife, a young blue-eyed and extremely pretty little woman, to whom God had given the greatest of female charms—an amiable temper.

Whilst the *samovar* (Russian tea-kettle) was bubbling and singing, the torrents of rain began to slacken, the dark clouds had rolled away from the Black Sea, and the heavy gale alone continued to lash the angry surges through the straits of the Bosphorus. After I had been strengthened by the tea, I wrapped myself in a rough burka, made my bow to the worthy couple, and hurried off to Fanagoria, where I hoped to meet with a countryman.

Fanagoria is a Russian fortress, which, according to an antiquary named Kohler, stands on the site of the ancient Pontian city of Phana-

goria, and this conjecture is supported by the discovery of monumental inscriptions. The whole of this Tauri-Scythian coast contains numerous archæological remains, and we cannot help regretting that the excavations, once actively carried on here, at the expense of the Russian Government, have been lately neglected. When it was observed that every excavation did not infallibly lead to the discovery of splendid gold trinkets, coins, arms, &c., of the age of Mithridates, the zeal for these researches slackened very materially.

I heard many amusing stories about the way in which the Russian functionaries carried on their researches. On one occasion a marble sarcophagus was discovered, which was destined for the archæological collection at Moscow. The employé charged with its transport found that the weight of the ancient coffin was excessive, and caused a large piece of it to be struck off; after which operation, the mutilated sarcophagus reached its destination. Another sarcophagus was converted into a water trough. But the supreme government is not to be blamed for this vandalism. The Ministers on the Baltic are entirely incapable of superintending the details

of the functionaries on the Sea of Azov. "Les distances sont le fleau de la Russie," said the Emperor once to the Marquis de Custine.

Fanagoria is now an insignificant and a tedious place. The garrison consists of Russian invalids, who are in no danger of an assault from the Circassians, on account of the distance of the Caucasus. I had been recommended to the town apothecary by a friend at Kertch, and his name had such a German sound that I hoped to find that he could speak my mother-tongue. In this, however, I was disappointed, for though he was of German descent on his father's side, his mother had been a Pole. Nor did his wife, who was a native of Gallicia, know much more of my language. Nevertheless, he had a clean and pleasant house, very neatly furnished, and his geraniums and roses were quite a relief after the Cossack filth at Taman. The apothecary was a worthy and a happy man; yet he had one ambition, one ideal, to which all his wishes were directed. It was the ribbon of St. Ann in his button-hole, which would raise him a step in the Tchín. "There is no system," writes a Sclavonic writer, "which encourages personal

ambition and egotism like this. The constant hope of rank, decorations and orders of all kinds, which increases with its gratification, becomes at length the all-engrossing idea of life, obstructing all spontaneous spiritual development, and turning man into a machine, moved according to the whim of government."

There are millions in Russia like the apothecary of Fanagoria, who are quietly, but absolutely, governed by the lust for decorations. Greedy Armenians, whose god is money, have been known to spend large sums to obtain the cross of St. Stanislaus, and I have known men who have given more than ten thousand roubles (£1,660) for an order. The copper cross of St. George is of no pecuniary advantage to the private soldiers, yet they wear it with unspeakable gratification over their grey great-coats. Peter the Great, by introducing the Tchin system, has inoculated the whole people with an unbounded passion for external distinction. This becomes a still more powerful lever in the hands of Government, than enthusiasm, love of glory, or of country. This simple, worthy apothecary, who in England might have been the counterpart of Dickens'

creation, the harmless Pinch, would probably have faced 24-pounder batteries, like those at the battle of Eylau, to get the cross of Vladimir, or the diploma of the sixth class.

When I awoke the next morning under the hospitable roof of the apothecary, I found, to my sorrow, that the sky was as dark, and the weather as stormy as ever. This occasioned me much annoyance for many reasons, among others, because it prevented my visiting the renowned mud volcanoes, situated half a day's journey from Fanagoria. One of the most remarkable of these is the Kuku Oboo, (in Tartar signifying Blue hill, and called by the Malo-Russians, Pakla, hell), which was visited, in 1794, by the naturalist, Pallas, during a violent eruption. The mass of mud cast out on that occasion covered the country for the space of a verst (two-thirds of a mile). These phenomena, and the frequent occurrence of mineral springs in the Caucasus, show the volcanic character of the whole region.

During my involuntary detention at Fanagoria, I went over every day to Taman to inquire about the arrival of ships from Kertch. One day, as I was standing on the strand,

wrapped in my burka,* looking over at the Crimean coast enveloped in mist, and disregarding the steady shower-bath to which I was exposed, I was accosted in good French by a Cossack officer, decorated with the St. Ann's order of the second class. Delighted to meet a person who could chat readily in a familiar idiom, I returned the salutation of this polite stranger, whose features and uniform immediately pronounced him to be a Don Cossack, and, consequently, almost a stranger in this district. After explaining to him my sorrows in the detention of my carriage and luggage at Kertch, this friendly man recommended three cures for my troubles—patience, a smoking bowl of punch, and a cheerful conversation by the warm fireside, till the heaven showed its blue once more, and the sea sank into a calm.

To this end he invited me to enter his little house, where I could dry my burka, whilst he provided for the creature comforts and the gossip. This proposal was not unwelcome to me, and I followed him into a neat stone

* Rough great coat.

house, close at hand. We placed ourselves comfortably before the blazing fire. To the left was suspended, in the corner, the large picture of a saint, adorned with gilding, and to the right, the portrait of Nicholas; before us, on the fire, was bubbling an earthen punchbowl of colossal dimensions. The travelling companion of the Don Cossack Major, a staff officer from Stavropol, had prepared the jovial potation during his absence, and showed himself a true master in the noble art.

“*Mais vous buvez comme une demoiselle!*” bawled out the Cossack, when he saw that I paid only a moderate court to his fire-water, whilst he drank it up in copious draughts.

As I was desirous, however, of finding my way back to Fanagoria in the dark, I determined to be abstemious. Nevertheless, I admit that I was put to shame by this bearded Cossack! Thrice did he fill and empty a mighty goblet without the least effect, though his belaced and gilded comrade soon showed in his reddening face the influence of the potent drink. The Major of Tscherkash, as before related, wore the St. Ann's order of the second class; but I am persuaded that if ever a punch,

arrack, or schnapps order is founded in Russia, he will be sure to obtain a first class. This man was the greatest toper I ever met with, save a Turkish cavass, who escorted me from Erzeroum to the Persian frontier.

These two Russian officers appeared charged with some special commission, and were regarded by the Tchernomorski Cossacks with fear and trembling. The Stavropol staff-officer belonged to a noble Moscow family, was a man of refined manners, and spoke French without the least foreign accent, but it was easy to perceive that the Cossack major had only received some kind of cultivation in later life, and his civilized exterior occasionally gave way before an explosion of old Cossack frankness and vehemence. He spoke French with a Slavonic accent, having only acquired it during his campaign in the west, and he had something so jovial and hearty about him, that I got on much better with him than with his more refined but straight-laced companion. He told us countless anecdotes, merry or melancholy, as the case might be, relating to his campaigns; he described his impressions of Germany and France, uttered his judgments on armies and their leaders, related

numerous interesting anecdotes about the Russian generals Platoff, Benningsen, Miloradowitsch, Kutusoff, Rajewski, Jermoloff, &c., and wound up with a circumstantial description of his former condition and mode of life at his home on the Don, and with the life and deeds of his grandfather—a narration which was especially rivetting from the warmth with which it was pourtrayed. All soldiers who survived the wars of Napoleon had a large store of interesting experiences, but I have known few who could describe their experience with so much warmth and freshness as this veteran. His foreign pronunciation of French rather heightened than lessened the charm of his narrative. He was probably a man of sixty, judging from his white hair, but strong and vigorous withal, notwithstanding many tough blows received in war. Though all his tales were uncommonly interesting, I shall only present the reader with the biography of old Iguroff, his maternal grandfather, precisely in the form in which I wrote it in my pocket-book, when it was fresh in my recollection :

“ If your travels,” began the Cossack, “ should ever lead you to my home on the Don, do not

confine your visit to Novo-Tscherkask; go farther south, and especially penetrate as far as the steppes between the Don and the Manytsch, and the banks of the Sal; there you will find some of the old Cossack manners which are quite worth observing, and possibly you may meet still with men whose figure and mode of life may call to mind my grandfather, who was the genuine type of the Cossack of the old school. To the south of the Don, and on its right bank, where the great mass of our tribe now dwell, all is changed. Novo-Tscherkask would only give you a picture of altered and corrupt manners. It is the head-quarters of a bad population that has degenerated from its forefathers, to which, I am sorry to say (here a sigh and another gulp), I also belong. The enjoyments and vices of civilized nations have found their way amongst us for half a century. Bankruptcy and malversation, gambling, campaign and adultery, are as common now on the Don as on the Seine, whilst the arts, sciences, and noble ornaments of civilization have not yet found their way to us. But the farther you go from the capital, the deeper you plunge into the heart of the Steppes, the more frequently will

you encounter a breath of the spirit of our fathers, albeit mixed with some roughness ; and this breath will do you more good than all the artificial refinement, which you may meet at Taganrog and Tscherkask. On the left bank of the Don you find Cossack families scattered in solitary straw and reed huts, or dwelling in tents during the summer, who rove about leading almost as nomadic a life as their neighbours the Calmucks. My family originates on my mother's side, from that district, including my ancestor Wassily Iguroff, 'the Stiepa-Tschort (Steppe Devil), one of the most remarkable men which the wonderful world of the Steppes has ever produced.

“ Our people on the Don were, as you know, for ages a free people—*i. e.*, serfdom has never existed among us. It is asserted that we Cossacks are a mixture of Slavonic, Circassian and Tartar elements, and that our language shows that Russian emigrants contributed the chief element of the compound. Yet, our social condition has always been so entirely different from that of the fore-named races, that we have never had amongst us Muschiks, as among the Russians and Poles, nor Pschilts and

Tschofokotls, as among the Circassians, nor a trace of the manners and customs of the odious Moguls. The Cossacks, save in Ukraine, formed a complete republic before Peter the Great. The land of their boundless steppe was common property, and belonged to all who chose to till the ground, or to speculate in herds of wild cattle and horses, as Tscheredniks and Taboontschiks. But though we had no genuine landed aristocracy, entire social equality did not exist amongst us, and some families maintained a superior influence in peace and war.

“ Amongst these families that of the Iguroffs, my maternal grandfather’s, was especially conspicuous. Their superior influence was not founded on heraldic devices or parchment rolls, but rested alone on their strong arms, which had wielded the ponderous lance from time immemorial: it depended also on their impetuous valour, on the wealth of their herds, their numerous relations, and the large clan of gallant warriors, friends and retainers that they could lead into the field.

“ Often did the Iguroffs carry on war of their own accord against the Tartars of the Golden Horde, or against the Nogay Tartars, subject to

the Khans of the Crimea, without having asked leave of the Hetman previously. Whosoever had a lust for booty or Nogay skulls joined the banners of the Iguroffs on these occasions.

“ On the Don and the Manytsch, the belief prevailed throughout the land, that the god of war smiled with especial favour on this family, and that they seldom came back from their forays with empty hands. Sometimes matters turned out quite differently, when the Hetman marched forth with a whole army, and found the enemy prepared to meet him. Nevertheless the Iguroffs were at length rendered foolhardy by their good luck, which, however, suddenly met with a fearful check. Their daring rendered them careless, and they advanced, continually farther into the Nogay Steppes in order to drive off herds. Once they advanced, late in the year, as far as Perekop. They made a great booty, but an immense swarm of Nogay horsemen awaited their return, and cut off their road to the Don.

“ The Cossack horses were tired and half-starved, for a heavy fall of snow had deprived them of the forage of the Steppe, whilst the Nogay horses appeared in the field in high

condition. Our long-maned horses would now have had no chance in a race with the swift Tartar steeds, hence the contest must be decided by cold steel—the scymetar against the lance. The conflict was desperate, but did not last long, for the great superiority of the enemy soon overpowered our party.

“My grandfather Wassily was one of the first who fell; his hard skull had been unable to withstand the still harder steel of a Nogay warrior. The fearful carnage ended with a massacre of the whole band of Cossacks. More than a hundred cavaliers, all bearing the name of Iguroff, bit the dust, together with three times that number of their friends and acquaintances who had joined that ill-starred expedition. My grandfather was the only survivor of the catastrophe. He lay with his skull half split, under his mortally wounded horse, with the snowy ground for his couch. Whilst his furious enemies were striding over the bodies of the slain and cutting off their heads, for which they obtained a handsome consideration from the Khan at Baktchi-Serai, Wassily, who had returned to consciousness, buried himself under the snow. He used to relate that he

owed his life entirely to his horse. The faithful animal lay some time quietly breathing, and the long hairs of his mane concealed the fallen rider from the hawk's eyes of the Nogays.

"After Wassily had covered himself with snow, the dying horse rolled over the spot where his master was concealed, and thus effaced every trace of his being buried there; then it continued to lie quietly as before, till it breathed for the last time. The Nogays took its bridle and saddle, without noticing the rider concealed beneath, and left the bloody field with much booty, and a crop of Cossack heads.

"My grandfather lay a good while unconscious under his snowy counterpane. The action had taken place at daybreak, and when he came to himself, the midnight moon shone over the steppe. The snow which had covered his head appeared to have staunched the bleeding of his wound, and to have had a beneficial effect on it. He only felt a dull pain in his brain, but no bodily weakness, and after tying his sash round the wound, he came forth from his snowy lair. A fearful spectacle then met his view. The bodies of the slain, the corpses of his father, his brothers, cousins, friends lay

stiff and stark-naked, and headless trunks stretched over the steppes. Wolves and jackals had assembled to the banquet, and were howling and gnawing the bodies in the moonlight. The tremendous bass voice of my grandfather dispersed the beasts. He sought out the body of his father amongst the dead, recognizing it by a scar on his hand, and he buried it under the snow to save it from the teeth of the wolves. Then he pursued his way across the steppe, which was familiar to him even by night. Luckily he found a sound horse, which had escaped from the Nogays, after the fall of its rider, and was engaged in breaking through the snow with its hoofs to satisfy the cravings of hunger. Our horses always recognize us by a peculiar whistle. Hence the animal let itself be easily caught, and bore my father to the Don, after galloping hard all night. He must have been lost but for this fortunate accident; for he was never much of a pedestrian, and the mounted Nogays would assuredly have overtaken him in the steppe the following day.

“Mourning amongst the men of the Don differs widely from yours in the West. There is not much sighing or crying with us, especially

in the case of warriors, who have found a glorious death on the battle-field. We leave lamentation to the women, and praying to the priests; and after the body has been lowered into the earth, and we have cast a handful of earth over it, we assemble with our relatives and friends to drink, smoke, and chat; we relate the adventures of the departed, we praise, if possible, his good qualities, his piety, his courage, and his prowess; and we think to do greater honour to him thus than by tears and masses.

“Thus it happened also with Wassily Iguroff, when he returned alone of all the four hundred and related his sad story. He obtained forthwith a large inheritance from his father and childless relations, consisting of horned cattle, horses, ornaments, and a considerable sum of money, besides a good supply of vodka or brandy skins, a drink held in high repute among us since time immemorial, and at that time an expensive beverage. Wassily devoted his great supply of brandy to celebrate the funeral of the departed. (I much fear that our young people, especially the rich, will shortly renounce brandy for wine, punch, and especially champagne.)

“Thousands of guests hurried up from both

banks of the Don to hear the story of his defeat from his own mouth, and to do honour to his liquor. Whilst the Cossacks were assembled in front of our ancestral abode, were slaughtering and devouring lambs, and celebrating the memory of the departed according to their fashion, Iguroff was lying on his couch within, suffering from his wound fever; but after three days he had so far recovered that he could leave the house and contend with his friends in a drinking match. Suddenly he raised his stentorian voice in the midst of the funeral banquet, challenging the assembly to avenge the slaughtered heroes. The Cossacks, inflamed alike by the fiery vodka and his stirring appeal, tore the pictures of the saints from their naked breasts, and swore retaliation with tremendous oaths. The horses were saddled in the midst of a terrific whirlwind of snow; thousands of avenging lances plunged into the icy flood of the Don, and my father, swimming at their head, landed first on the right bank, amidst a thundering hurrah! They then swept off to the Nogay land, like a pack of wolves.

“The two eldest sons of Wassily, though still young boys, were forced to ride with them.

Though still too tender to engage in the fight, they were to be witnesses of the bloody revenge. After riding hard, day and night, without stopping, our people reached a Nogay encampment, containing a part of those who had shared in the massacre and the booty of the Iguroffs. Day had not yet dawned, and the Nogays were sunk in sleep. After a slight opposition, all were cut down; the infant in the womb was not spared, and the bald heads stuck on the points of the lances, satisfied the Cossack revenge. After this, Wassily led his riders to the scene of the massacre of his brothers. All that the jaws of the wolves had spared was buried in the steppe. The Cossacks brought back and buried by the Sal river the body of Wassily's father, which he had hidden in the snow. The very women exchanged their mourning for joy when they saw the bloody Nogay heads. Yet the funeral feast was renewed, and the rest of the brandy disappeared.

“This adventure occurred in the first half of the last century. At that period, my grandfather was a very young man, though already renowned as a champion, as a man of herculean

strength, gigantic size and savage bravery. He married three times, and reached an unusual age, even in our country, where strength and health have always been at home. Thirteen sons were the fruit of his first and second marriage. His third wife, a celebrated beauty of Tscherkask, presented him with a daughter, and though she cost him the life of his wife, I really believe that he loved this daughter more tenderly than his thirteen boys together. This favourite child was my mother; twenty years have elapsed since her death, but my grandfather survived her, as well as all his sons. Would that I were a painter, so that I could clearly pourtray to you the appearance of my grandfather, as I see him now before me; words are incapable of doing justice to the subject, for his person was very extraordinary. It was calculated to make a deep and wonderful impression on his grandchildren in their earliest infancy, and we could actually never look at him without a feeling of respect and awe. He measured several inches over six feet, and might have passed for a giant throughout Europe. He wore, moreover, a high cap, with a bunch of ravens'

plumes. Even when the whole military force of the Don was mustered, his colossal form towered more than a hand above the tallest Cossack warriors. But the breadth of his shoulders, the really herculean build of his bones, thews and sinews, from which almost all flesh and fat had disappeared, and the forest of hair that covered his person from scalp to sole, were still more remarkable than his height. When I, as a little boy, remember him, he must have been full seventy years old. His bronzed face was seamed with furrows, an iron-grey and shaggy beard descended to his breast; he had an aquiline nose and a pair of large blood-shot eyes, whose fixed look, together with the large scar in his forehead, gave him a forbidding aspect. He was reputed the best rider in the Don territory, which is saying a good deal. He never rode any steeds except the descendants of the faithful beast, that had saved his life whilst dying in the Nogay steppe, and whose offspring were noted for the same coal-black colour and length of mane as the dam. He was also matchless in wielding the lance and the schaschka, and in the endurance of unheard-

of hardships; nor had he an equal over the brandy bottle."

At this place, the Major halted for a moment in his narrative, and took a long draught from his glass of punch, as if he wished to imply that, at all events, in this noble exercise his ancestors need have no cause to be ashamed of him; after this, he proceeded with his narrative.

"It was not only the imposing—I might almost say devilish appearance of my grandfather, which inspired us, his numerous grandchildren, with such respect and fear in early childhood—feelings that were shared by thousands of our neighbours, even including the Calmucks. His eccentric manners were still more striking than his gigantic stature, or his blood-shot eagle eyes. Before the butchery in the Nogay steppe, Wassily Iguroff was a jovial, and even a handsome fellow. He not only loved his horse, war, schnapps, and pretty girls, but he was a skilful dancer, a capital singer, knew many of our old popular ditties by heart, and is said to have composed some himself. But since that catastrophe his whole nature and countenance underwent a

change; he became moody and silent, and his songs were hushed. The friends of his youth no longer recognized the merry Wassily, who used to sing, chat and laugh before and after every bold stroke, and who now was seldom roused from his moody silence even in the most boisterous assembly. Some ascribed this change to the dreadful mental shock he experienced at the massacre; others, with more reason, attributed it to the material shock inflicted on his head. The Nogay scymetar had entered so far into his skull, that it had probably injured his brain, and it required the prodigious strength of my grandfather's constitution to recover at all from such a blow. Whatever the cause, he exhibited strange eccentricities on every occasion, savouring of insanity. I will not repeat all the marvellous legends related of him, half of which were probably inventions. But I know, that though his face was familiar to us boys, his behaviour seemed to us often dreadful. It seems to me as if I still see my giant grandsire, with his grizzly beard, seated by the fire, as was his wont, blowing thick clouds of smoke from his clay pipe, drinking grog, and seeming

quite dumb, save that he occasionally looked up and stared hard with his bloodshot eyes at his grandchildren playing about him. He was kind to us all, and especially so to his favourite daughter. But he never showed his affection by caresses, only when the Armenian cattle traders arrived, he used to buy us a number of pretty toys. He caused a large wooden house to be built by his father's reed cottage. In the corner of the largest room a deep niche was left for the picture of the Mother of God, surrounded by eleven wooden figures of saints, all of them gilt over. The picture was placed in a thick wooden frame, and was partially concealed by a curtain. You will see, later, why I describe this so minutely. A lamp burned continually in this corner, and many decorations of stars, wreaths, chains and rings of gold, silver and pearls glittered around the shrine.

“ After every successful foray, Wassily suspended an additional votive offering to his shrine. You know to what lengths the Malo-Russians carry their worship of saints, and it is carried still further among the Cossacks. My grandfather insisted on all his guests of whatever creed,

crossing themselves before the shrine on entering his house, nor would it have been safe for them to have resisted. I shall never forget the terror I felt at his fearful looks when my cousin Michael, a boy of ten years old, who was playing with a sling with me, hit the frame and picture with an unlucky stone. The stroke occasioned a certain rattling sound, which seemed to proceed from the inside of the wood; but the ferocious expression which suddenly clouded the countenance of my grandfather, called my thoughts away from the frame. The old man seemed to emit flames from his bloodshot eyes, and his teeth gnashed so fearfully that I rushed out of the door in terrible alarm. My cousin had remained motionless, trembling with fear, but the terrible old man seized him by the hair, and threw him out of the house. The lad was soon after drowned in a bog, and wiseacres said it was a judgment, whilst busy tongues ventured to suggest that his grandfather threw him in, though he was incapable of such a base crime.

“ From that hour no one ventured to approach his sanctum. My grandfather stretched a rope across the room, and no mortal was to transgress the limit. He kept the lamp always trimmed

himself. After dinner every one bowed to the niche and left the room, the old man remaining there an hour alone. Not a soul knew what he did at such times. We were often stimulated by curiosity, but not one of us ventured to gratify it. Another of his peculiarities was his great respect for a *mohill** in the steppe. He once caused a cross to be erected on its summit, and forbade access to it henceforth to everybody but himself. The mohill was on his own pasture land, and although it was clothed with high grass, his Tscheredniks were ordered not to drive the cattle there. He visited it often himself, but always on dark stormy days like the present. When a tempest swept through the sky, and the rain beat in heavy streams against the window, he was often seen to saddle his steed, to throw on his burka, and gallop off to the mohill. What he did there was a complete riddle to all. Some Cossacks related that they had occasionally espied old Wassily galloping perpetually round the mound full speed, and singing away as lustily as in his youth, amidst the crashing of the thunder and the

* The name given by the Malo-Russians to the mounds in the steppe.

whistling of the whirlwind. They added that he indulged in sundry eccentric antics—that he sang or howled an old ancestral song to the accompaniment of the elements, after which he dashed suddenly up the hill, and tied his horse fast to the cross. What more he did there they could not say. As a lad, I had often resolved to follow him on his ride, but I was deterred by respect and awe.

“One of my cousins, Peter Iguroff, also a favourite grandchild of the old man’s, almost lost his life in trying to satisfy his curiosity. One day, when he saw his grandfather prepare for his ride, the boy ran into the steppe and hid himself in the high grass not far from the mohill. The old man came, made his usual circle round the mound, and then mounted the hill. Here he drew forth a kind of axe, and began to dig in the earth. Peter wished to creep nearer, in order to observe him more closely, but my grandfather saw him, and, uttering a withering curse, he flung the axe at him, but it luckily flew over his head. The boy took to his heels as fast as his legs could carry him, and did not dare to show himself to the old man for a whole twelvemonth. From

that day all his family believed that the veteran used to dig for treasure in the mound. This belief spreading, and being coupled with the impression produced by his colossal figure and wizard face, led to the epithet of *Stiepa Tchort* (Steppe Devil), which was applied to him throughout the country. His friends commonly named him 'Father Vassily.' Notwithstanding his Satanic surname, he was held in great respect, and his word was law in all disputes.

"My grandfather, with his sons and his oldest grandchildren, accompanied Munnich's and Dolgorouki's expeditions with the Russian armies against the Khans of the Crimea, and took part in Suwarof's campaign in Poland. Next to the Nogays, he hated no people so much as the Poles—a feeling very common among the Cossacks since their oppression by the Polish nobility.

"Wassily Iguroff is said to have fought on foot for the first time before Praga. A cannon ball having swept away his horse, he dashed among the Russian infantry, lance in hand, and was one of the first who stormed the Polish batteries. At the siege of Baktchi-Serai, which

put an end for ever to the Tartar forays, my grandfather showed a sanguinary thirst for slaughter, which was generally foreign to his character. He led his squadrons into the burning palace of the Khans, where fanatics were defending themselves desperately from court to court and from room to room. Our Cossacks drove these furious Tartars before their lances, and my grandfather, always at their head, penetrated at length into the harem—into those chambers celebrated in the verses of Pouschkin, where the beautiful Pole, Maria Potocka, met with a violent death. The Cossacks avenged themselves on the gentle and the fair. The wives, children, and slaves of Saheb Gerai begged in vain for mercy.

“ My grandfather smote all without pity, and at the end of the carnage swung his blood-dripping schascka in the air, uttering a shout of jubilee. Perhaps the massacre of his brethren was still fresh in his memory, and he thought it his duty to work out his last revenge in the conquered residence of the Khans.

“ My grandfather did not share in the campaigns of the Russians in Italy and Germany, against the French. His great age excused his

attendance, though his strength remained almost undiminished, and he was still unmatched in the saddle and with the lance. But when Napoleon declared war on Russia, in 1812, and set in motion his immense masses against the heart of our empire, when our beloved Czar Alexander summoned all his people to arms for Viera, (the faith), and Otetchestvo, (country), the energetic veteran declared that he would join the fight with his grandsons. Before our departure he spoke little, but his red eyes seemed to flash fire, and he often muttered between his teeth, whilst stroking his beard, "*tchort*" (devil), and "*Bunapart!*"

"My mother was appointed to guard the house during our absence, and especially charged to watch the shrine, and trim the lamp; for Wassily always believed if it were quenched, one member of the family would die. The old man started, escorted by thirteen sons and half a hundred grandsons.

"We joined the army of Kutusoff before the battle of Borodino; it was my third campaign. I had already obtained the rank of lieutenant, but served on this occasion as common Cossack by the side of my grandfather.

As Wassily could neither read nor write Russian, he was entered as a sub-officer ; but Platoff gave him the command of a whole squadron, which was nominally commanded by one of my uncles. It would be a long story were I to relate all that happened in the march from Moscow to the Rhine. Amongst all the uncouth and strange figures that followed the call of the Czar from the remotest corners of the empire, scarcely one was a match for Wassily, the Steppe Devil. Yet there was an abundance of picturesque, fabulous, terrible figures in that army. Some of them were fellows who had passed half their life in the saddle—genuine Centaurs of the steppe. The strangest were, perhaps, the Oural Cossacks, who could scarcely be distinguished from Oural bears. Many of these troops were left behind, the Czar being afraid to show them to the West.

“Wassily Iguroff, though ninety years old, displayed the courage and endurance of a young man in the field. He bid defiance to storms, snow and hardships, and his body seemed as callous as leather. Nobody was so frugal or so vigilant. His tremendous bass voice was

always our trumpet-call by the bivouac fire, at dawn. The depth and strength of that voice exceeded the roaring of a bull or a bear, and his boisterous hurrah was always our rallying signal in battle. We required no clarion or trumpet, for his voice was clearer and louder than any wind instrument. He seldom said much, but he was pleased to hear our tales at night after the fatigues of the day, and he was especially pleased if we brought him booty and money. Not a few gold pieces found their way into his pockets. If one of us brought back a large sum, his face brightened, he removed his pipe from his mouth, and said, *choroscho* (good). This alone was a great reward to us, and many of us exposed our lives to obtain this approbation.

“ At first all prisoners were cut down, but when the Emperor Alexander offered a piece of gold for every living Frenchman, our grandsire forbade the massacre. His quick eye and ready wit astonished us all in the retreat of the French. The old man was a terribly imposing figure as he swept over the snow, with his nodding plume, and lance in rest. He had always an instinct for booty, and the right time and place for victory. He was never

wounded. A French grenadier, who remained near a deserted cannon and sought for death, fired at him once, at close quarters. For the first time our grandsire was unhorsed; all flew to his help. It was found, however, that the ball had struck against his scabbard, and that the shock alone had unhorsed him. Since the cut of the Nogay scymetar, old Wassily seemed sword and bullet proof: yet, the tirailleur bullets used to whistle merrily about his shoulders! But the French lead avoided a nearer acquaintance with him!

“When we reached the banks of the Rhine, the veteran felt a longing for the steppes of his fathers; nor was he satisfied by the beauties of the West, for old Wassily was a Cossack of the old stamp, in whose eyes the Don was the loveliest of all streams, and the steppes more attractive than the most fruitful regions. This love of Cossack life and home is no longer so strong in my generation. We were accustomed in our youth to be long absent from home, and many of us were not at all displeased with the luxuries of France and Germany. Many who have been educated in Petersburg go so far as to call the steppe *barbarous*.

“ In consideration of his great age, the Steppe Devil was suffered to return home, accompanied by two of his sons. The remainder of the Iguroffs stayed with the army in France. Six of Wassily’s sons and fifteen of his grandsons never saw the land of the Don again ; they fell victims to the war, or to the typhus. I brought back two crosses of honour and a stiff leg, and spent five years at St. Petersburg, where I tried to supply my want of education, in my youth.

“ After an absence of eight years I returned home. My mother and many near relations were dead, but my grandfather lived on in a green and hearty old age. He continued to blow his clouds of tobacco, by the chimney-corner, to indulge in frequent oaths, and to maintain a moody silence, as in the days of my childhood. The same mysteries surrounded the niche and the picture as before, and he was said, as formerly, to gallop round the mohill in stormy weather. It had often been a question with us what became of his money, of which he had now amassed a large sum. We naturally inferred that he must have buried it somewhere.

“ The time at length arrived when my grandfather received the whole clan of Iguroffs at the baptism of a great grandson. It was a stormy December day. As the Pope was in the act of sprinkling the child, the old man uttered a terrific cry. His red eyes were fixed on the holy niche. The lamp was extinguished. We were all much astonished, especially the Pope, who let the poor infant fall into the basin. Whilst some were fishing up the little one, others ran to my grandsire, who lay extended, with his hand on the scar of his wound, which had become dark, red, and angry. At length he came to himself, shook his head, and began to chaunt one of his ancestral songs, such as he used to sing in his rounds by the mohill. But his voice became gradually weaker, and it was now evident that he was near his last agony. Our relations all retired, and I, with my elder cousins, remained alone with the dying veteran. We opened all the windows, as usual, to let his spirit pass out. The storm was raging furiously, the house shook and rattled, and the old man had become a stiff corpse, when suddenly the holy picture, frame, veil and all, fell down with an awful crash. The acci-

dent was probably occasioned by the wind, but we were much struck by the coincidence. At length, we raised up the frame, and found, by its weight, that it must contain something. We soon discovered a concealed receptacle, containing a large sum of money, which was divided among his descendants. We also dug, after the funeral, in the mohill, and found a large amount of silver. Now the mysterious ways of the old man were explained. Amongst the shepherds of that part—my relations are all dead—the report is yet rife that the ghost of the Steppe Devil still gallops round the mohill during stormy weather. One of my nephews affirmed, with solemn oaths, that, on one dark November evening, he met my grandfather by that mohill, on a black horse. The old man appeared just the same as during life, only his cap and feathers were much taller, and looked like an eagle's crest; the old man, however, did not sing, as was his wont. I cannot decide if my nephew really saw him, or dreamt it, but no one amongst us doubts the story. As often as the heavens grow dark with stormy clouds on the banks of the Don, and when the lightnings sear the sky, and the Northern storms sweep over

the steppe, the Don Cossacks cross themselves, for they all believe that at such times my ghostly ancestor still rides, as of yore, round the Mogul mounds."

When the Cossack major had concluded his tale, he paused a minute, emptied two glasses of punch, and then proceeded, in an altered tone, to make severe strictures on the present degenerate race of Cossacks.

"Men and manners," he pursued, "are sadly altered amongst us since Yermak conquered Kamtschatka. Hence no more poets appear in our land. Our Hetman resides now on the Neva. The Emperor has graciously allowed us to appoint the hereditary prince,* Hetman of the Don Cossacks. There is more order amongst us now; but every state has its advantages. How wild, fiery and untamed we used to be. We are now more civilized and disciplined, but the old rough times had their interesting features. A man was not then only valued for his rank and ribband. Only fancy, my grandfather never had a Tchin, the plain copper cross of St. George was his only decoration, whilst I," and the Major looked with

* The present emperor.

some complacency at the St. Ann's cross on his breast, "have an order of the second class. Yet the immortal Platoff paid my grandsire greater respect than to any colonel. I am sorry to say that our young people have no longer a proper regard for age, and only value men by their rank. They are also deplorably indifferent to the traditions and fame of their ancestors."

The last sentence was aimed at the Major's son, a specimen of a fast young Cossack, who had just entered, and appeared bored by his father's tale. He was also chary of punch, and paid his addresses to tea and champagne. He was a handsome young officer of a slight figure, well set-off in the Cossack uniform, and industriously engaged in twirling his well-combed mustachio, whilst all his movements bespoke a certain grace. He related sad things of the progress of Novo-Tcherkask on the road to perdition. Large sums of money had been lost at play, and a French confectioner had established a store of genuine champagne Clicquot in that modern Sodom. He told us many things of his recollections of St. Petersburg, and pronounced the evolutions of Taglioni the most beautiful thing in the world.

Father and son began to chat in Russian, when I wished them good evening, and the staff officer escorted me to Fanagoria. On the road this Muscovite became more communicative, and we talked of the old Cossack's narrative.

"From old Iguroff to his great-grandson you can distinguish," he said, "three epochs in Cossack history, three transitions in the development of these remarkable cavaliers. The grandsire is a representative of the blunt old spirit of the sons of the Steppe, that Peter the Great began to bridle with his iron hand. This was a difficult task at that time; but now every thing is so well observed, that the chastising arm of our Emperor can smite the Cossacks with the speed of lightning. The Major is the type of a transitional generation. He would by no means relish the old equality, and anarchy of the steppes. He has seen and tasted the beauties and delights of Western Europe. Yet he has one foot in the past, and sighs and longs for the freedom of the good old times. His son is quite a creature of modern times, issuing from the cadet school with the vices and advantages of large cities, elegant in his

manners, superficial and empty in mind and heart."

I asked the Muscovite if he thought the Major's story true. He answered :

" I have dwelt at Novo-Tscherkask, and made enquiries, which led me to infer that, in most essentials his statements may be depended upon. Wild beasts, like his grandfather, may have lived on the banks of the Don during the last century. Now, however, they have all died out. They are no longer tolerated by military discipline, and the inhabitants of the steppe have all become much tamer. A giant like Iguroff, if he appeared among the Cossacks of the present day, could no longer play the same part ; he could be thrashed like any other Cossack. The Don Cossacks are now admirably disciplined, and it is only since their new organization by the Emperor, that they have become a really valuable military force. Ten years ago, a few necessary modifications and reforms, such as the abrogation of useless privileges that interfered with discipline occasioned some ill-blood. But now all changes are tolerated without opposition, and the Cossacks soon become inured to them."

During this conversation, we had reached the fortress, and after wishing the Russian good night, I was about to seek my quarters; but the rain having ceased, and the stars gleaming bright over the solitary strand, I was induced to extend my walk and ascend a high mohill. I sat for a long time on its summit, musing on what I had heard. A somewhat monotonous, but beautiful landscape extended beneath me, faintly lighted by the stars. In the foreground was to be seen the shining flood of the Taurian straits, with mysterious mounds lining either shore; the boundless world of steppes, beginning at my feet, stretched in dreary monotony, thousands of miles away, to the icy Bay of Sancta Laurentia. What food for thought has the Western wanderer on the brink of Asia's world of steppes! A mysterious veil conceals alike the past and the future in that region. What has become of all those nations who dwelt here since the fabulous ages, the Taurians and Scythians, located near "the remotest parts of the earth, the Palus Mœotis?" Does the same blood still course in the veins of the Cossacks as that which flowed in the Scyths,

the Sauromatai, the Mœotians, Sinds and Kerketes, the Achaers, Heniochs, Chersonitans, Komans, or other races of whom we know nothing but the name? Or did they all seek refuge before mightier oppressors in the mountains, and form the nucleus of that wonderful compound of races on the Caucasian citadel—the virile band which still bravely defies the claws of the Double Eagle? Will the historian or ethnographer ever pierce that night of the past? The Cossacks and Kabardans laugh at their guests, if they question them about these matters. But what will the future produce? Is it quite as obscure as the past? Can we not infer it from its present position? Or has, perchance, that muscular race, which holds the territory whence the greatest catastrophes have always visited Europe, at length ended its mission; and is civilization henceforth threatened with no more whirlwinds from that quarter? I do not aspire to the gift of prophecy; but I fancy that these skilful Cossacks now answer the purpose of trained elephants to tame the wild ones, and bend them to the service of their lord. Thus, we learn that hundreds of the warlike hordes

of the Siberian steppes have been already taught to obey the word of command that proceeds from the banks of the Neva. All these hordes are now registered as available recruits. Thousands of drill-sergeants from Moscow and the Don are now engaged in teaching them to manœuvre, and some of them have pitched their tents as far as the Chinese border. For more than ten years past, these men have been actively engaged in training squadrons to act in regular military operations. They are said to be highly picturesque corps, well worth a scrutiny by curious European tourists, and resembling "big-bellied Centaurs of the steppe." Nevertheless, let the European tranquillize himself. Possibly all this exercising and training may only be to present a picturesque array of two hundred thousand tamed beasts of the steppe on parade at St. Petersburg!

Ay! how the Siberian wind swept the sand over that mohill to the westward! Then it seemed to me as though I saw in the faint starlight, those mighty hordes that Asia is once more to pour over the enervated and effeminate nations of Western Europe! Me-

thought I heard the savage cries of the disciplined Moguls, with their barbarian spirit, shouting their terrible "Halla!" like the sons of Genghis and Batu, when they marched forth at the head of their millions of steppe devils to lay waste the world! And the Mogul mounds opened themselves, and the ancestral spirits shouted with joy to their sons and grandchildren, from the funereal barrows of the steppe!

I turned away from this vision on the mohill, and wrapped in my burka, hurried home to my warm and cheerful quarters in the house of the apothecary. On my way thither, the storm-wind was no longer whistling the Cossack melody of "Halla!" and "Hurrah!" it seemed only to blow a warning in my ears, which took the form of the words of a Slavonic writer, which I beg the reader to read over twice:

"We Slavonians owe our Western brethren, a warning of the utmost moment. The man of the West is too forgetful of the north of Europe and of Asia, the home of plundering and exterminating nations. Let no man believe that these nations have ceased to exist. They still continue there, like a cloud big with tem-

pests, only awaiting the signal from above, to dart down from the table-lands of central Asia upon Europe. Let no one suppose that the spirit of Attila, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Suwarof, the terrible scourges of humanity, is extinct * * * Those lands, those men, and that spirit are still there to keep civilization alive, and to warn it of the fact, that it is not yet time for the West to turn its swords into ploughshares, or its barracks into charitable institutions."

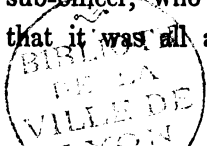
CHAPTER III.

Departure from Fanagoria—Scene at Taman—The river Kouban—The appearance of the Tschernomorski Cossacks compared with that of the Circassian—First sight of the Caucasus—Arrival at Ekaterinodar—Picture of that City—Danger of travelling along the Kouban—The Cathedral of Ekaterinodar—Its Garrison—Cause of the submission of the Circassian Tribes on the left bank.

My frail quarters at Fanagoria seemed about to be shaken down every moment by the violence of the wind on the night of March 9th. This was, however, positively the last appearance of the Boreas of the steppes. The wind fell after midnight, and a bright frosty morning showed that the weather was changed, and that the Black Sea would soon be calm. The smiling face of my host, on his appearance,

intimated that he was the bearer of good news. A vessel had arrived at Kertch with a carriage of such an outlandish shape, that it must be mine. Two minutes later, I was cheered with the sight of Stephen Nogell, my Hungarian servant, a faithful, friendly Magyar, who accompanied me in all my peregrinations in Southern Russia. With him came M. V—f, a native of the Netherlands, serving as a volunteer in the army of the Caucasus, and who begged for a place in my carriage, which I gladly gave him. M. V— had passed many years in the Caucasus, knew the country and the people in the mountains and the steppes well ; and being familiar with the Russian and Tartar tongues, was a very useful as well as amusing companion.

I parted from my friendly host, whose eyes were the only moist ones that I left behind me in the land of the Cossacks ; but when I arrived at Taman, I was detained by a most unpleasant piece of business. The postmaster and his people would only furnish me with horses, and not with rope harness. The Russian sub-officer, who accompanied me, maintained that it was all a pretence, that the Tscherno-



morski Cossacks were the most impudent rascals in the world, and must be resisted. He proceeded to administer a volley of oaths, accompanied with heavy blows on the table, to bring the postmaster to reason, charging him with want of respect to a foreigner under imperial protection. The postmaster appeared terrified, but had probably no ropes to produce. I would have willingly yielded, but the sub-officer insisted.

Unluckily my friends, the Don major and the staff officer, had left Taman. I, therefore, sent the sub-officer with the circular note of the Minister Perowski to the Commandant. In the Crimea this document had always ensured respect and obedience. But here I soon discovered that the good folks were only used to the influence of epaulettes and decorations. The Commandant treated my papers with indifference, observing that I had no Tchín, and maintained that the postmaster was right. After a good deal more parleying, the Commandant declared the affair to be a mere trifle, and said he would defray the cost of the ropes. This remark silenced me, and I sent my servant to buy the ropes at the bazaar.

I only mention this scene to show that my eyes were opened to some new truths in the land of the Cossacks. You do not find there the slavish humility, grovelling respect, trembling awe, which soldiers, serfs, lower employés, and all of lower degree show to their superiors in Muscovy, and display especially to those who are connected with the central government of St. Petersburg, and to all excellencies and highnesses. The staff officer said that the Cossacks were broken in to discipline and subordination. This is true in general. Their free, manly spirit is broken and gone; but there is a wide interval between Cossack discipline and the servile obedience of the genuine Russians.

Every observant traveller on the banks of the Don and the Kouban must perceive that he is among a people who have never known serfdom or conscription, that even the common men have not quite forgotten that their sires were free, and that they defended their home in the steppe as gallantly against the Kings of Poland and the Czars as against the Osmanli Padischah and the Khan of the Golden Horde. Nor have they yet forgotten their special privileges, of which they have only been deprived

about a dozen years. A Russian *employé* once had a dispute about the price of a horse, with a Cossack, at a post-station in the Caucasus. The Cossack stuck firmly, but courteously, to his demand.

“What do you mean, soldier?” exclaimed the functionary, offended at the independent attitude of the Cossack.

“*Ja nä soldat, ja Kasak,*” (I am not a soldier, I am a Cossack), rejoined the cavalier, very quietly.

Despotism does not weigh with such a heavy hand on the Don and the Oural as on the banks of the Neva, the Moskwa, and the Vistula. The cause of this is very apparent. It is because these southern horsemen have still a way of escape left open to them, whilst it has been cut off from the other vassals of Russia. The Tschernomorski can, if needs be, enter his boat, trust himself to the currents of the Black Sea, and escape to Anatolia. The occupants of the Stanitzas,* on the Terek and the Kouban, if oppressed, can fly over the river to the Nogays and Kabardans, and if reduced to extremity, seek refuge among the

* Fortified Cossack villages.

mountains of their mortal enemies, the Circassians. They would never be delivered up, by any chance, and though their lot be hard, yet it is preferable to the fearful situation of a grey-coated conscript, condemned for life to carry the musket, and submit to the blows of the Russian provost !

“What a frightful country !” remarked my Magyar, after we had passed three post-stations, and the scenery became more bald and monotonous. The dark-blue foaming waves of the Sea of Azoff had disappeared, and nothing remained but the muddy water of the Temrjukian Liman. An endless plain extended to the eastward. The mohills, and other landmarks, were becoming rarer, and at length, the only elevations were the little molehills raised by the steppe marmot. The mountain chain of the Caucasus was not visible from this spot. Only a few men and herds are to be met with in the Tschernomorski plains ; I encountered no travellers whatever. The western, or lower part of the Kouban is seldom visited even by Russian travellers. All who are not called by business to Ekaterinodar, prefer the more convenient route by Novo-

Tscherkask and Stavropol to the Caucasus. Almost all the Armenian traders from Odessa follow this road, or cross in the steam-boat from Kertch to Redout-Kaleh. The road by Stavropol is also the nearest for military men proceeding from St. Petersburg to Tiflis. Those who wish to avoid the difficult winter journey through the mountain passes, embark on board the steamers at Kertch, which give them a free passage to Mingrelia.

We passed the first night in the post-house of Temjuk, and the second in the Stanitza of Kopilskaja. On the third day we dashed along at a flying gallop to Ekaterinodar. No one travels by night in these regions, on account of the bands of Circassians that hang about the road, concealed in the reedy thickets by the river's bank. It is only at the hour of 9 A.M., after the Cossacks have well examined the thickets adjoining the different kreposts, and when no alarm has been given from the look-outs, that the four well-fed Tschernomorski horses are harnessed and the Cossack driver sweeps away over the steppe, as if death were at his heels. Everybody strives to reach before night some post-station, where he finds

free quarters, with a deal sofa, table and chairs ; but no bed, and only one room. Yet there is seldom much competition on the Kouban, from the want of comfort and security on the road. If, however, the room should chance to be occupied, the Russians of high rank—and you seldom meet any other travellers here—are courteous, sociable and amiable. Room is soon found for the stranger, and the samovar provides a refreshing supply of the Chinese herb, so popular with all classes of the community in Muscovy. The superior Russian officers take with them, moreover, a whole larder and *batterie de cuisine*, caviare, meat-patties, pheasants and punch, and the foreigner is politely invited to share these good things. But if the traveller happen to meet no one, and visits the country at fast time, he fares badly. When I was there, the fast or the lowness of the river had put a check to shooting, and no one offered me any game, which is generally plentiful. I was, consequently, reduced to a rice diet.

The Black Sea Cossacks ought, more correctly, to be styled the Kouban Cossacks ; for their abode is principally by that river,

few of them living near the Euxine, on account of its marshy shore in this neighbourhood. The Tschernomorski have room enough in all conscience, as there are only about twenty families to twenty square miles. This is one of the dreariest regions I ever beheld. Not a hill, rock, or wood to break the monotony of the prospect. It is true, the traveller has no cause to fear panthers or rattlesnakes; but if the inhabitants are of my opinion, these descendants of the Saporogi must be far from grateful to Catherine for having been presented with this territory. Tschernomorzia is a fruitful and marshy level, desperately monotonous. The streams descending from the Caucasus pursue a sluggish course when they reach the steppe. Their turbid currents leave behind them, ere they reach the plains, those mighty trachyte and porphyritic boulders, which they roll along in their angry tide as they thunder down the mountain heights in picturesque cataracts. In the steppe, they soon change their character; their fall is slight, their bed broad and deep, and they leave a heavy deposit of mud on their banks, which are fringed with trees and brushwood, offering the only

vegetation to relieve the eye. From the right bank of the Kouban to the Don is one immense level, without wood or rock—in summer a luxuriant pasturage, in winter one field of snow. The previous winter having been mild, I found the land of the Cossacks enamelled with flowers in the month of March.

The Tschernomorski Cossacks are handsome men in the full sense of the term. Not only are they distinguished for their athletic and powerful figures, but their features are well chiselled and expressive. They are the handsomest Slavonic tribe that I have ever seen. Even when beardless, their faces are handsomer than those of the Cossacks of the Line, who have no decided type about them, and whose finest men remind you sometimes of Circassians, at others of Turks and Tartars. Military regulations having condemned both imperial and beard, the Tschernomorskis cultivate their mustachios with especial tenderness. They draw them out so, that they often stretch beyond their cheeks, and they comb and wax them with great care. Few people can boast of handsomer mustachios; even the Hungarians must yield them the palm in this respect.

In other points, these two races have so much resemblance between them, that my young Magyar was quite struck with it. But they have no affinity to their Circassian neighbours across the Kouban.

The Schapsooks, who dwell on its left bank, are spare and finely formed, and a mighty energy speaks out of their thin eagles' faces, which are characteristic of the Circassian type. The frame of the Tschernomorskis is, on the other hand, more robust and athletic than elegant, and an expression of repose and phlegm reigns in their handsome and regular countenances, which presents the most marked contrast to the warlike fire flashing from the eyes of the Circassian Usdens (chiefs). The winter dress of the Cossacks is not becoming; they wrap themselves in sheepskin coats, which give them a somewhat grotesque appearance. Even when under arms, and escorting a convoy, they retain their unwieldy attire, which is only exchanged for the blue uniform when the inspecting general makes his appearance on the Kouban.

Ninety versts* from Taman, between Temr-

* A Russian verst = 0.143376 of a German geographical mile, 0.23960 of a French mile, of 25 to a degree, two-thirds

juk and Kopilskaja, the chain of the Caucasus is seen for the first time on the southern horizon of the Kouban Steppe. The first appearance of these mountains is not so imposing as might be imagined, owing to their great distance, and because their giant summits, the Elbruz, Kasbek, and Passenta, are not yet visible. Nor can you distinguish from hence the peculiar features of the Caucasus, furrowed with wild ravines, and broken by pointed summits and jagged outlines. Even farther east, between Kopilskaja and Ekaterinodar, the distant chain veiled in mist did not assume a picturesque form. The mountains appeared almost of an uniform height, and only a single peak, which bore some resemblance to the Tschatir Dag, in the Crimea, rose to a considerable elevation above the others. The farther we advanced into the land of the Cossacks, the more did the Caucasus appear to run away from us. Its snowy summits entirely disappeared from view on the other

of a British statute mile, or 1166 yards 2 feet; 104 versts make 60 English geographical miles. See Preface to "Wrangel's Narrative of an Expedition to the Polar Sea." Edited by Major Edward Sabine.

side of Ustlabinskaya. A misty atmosphere concealed this southern background till our arrival at Ekaterinograd, on the Terek, where we at length obtained, on a fine day, a full view of the colossal Caucasian chain, which, I must confess, produced an indescribably sublime impression upon me.

We reached Ekaterinodar, the capital of the Tschernomorski Cossacks, in good time on the 12th of March. The Yamschick (driver) of the last station, dreading the Circassians in the thickets to the right, urged his horses to a terrific pace, and our carriage flew along with the speed of lightning. I was engaged in thanking my stars that the steppe did not bring forth stones, when we suddenly encountered another hostile element. The carriage stuck fast in the mud. No cursing or thrashing could make the horses drag it out; and though it was sorely against the will of my Cossack that we alighted, we were forced to leave it behind us. Albeit our stalwart mustachioed driver swore that he had often got out of a worse mess, and swang his whip *con furore*, we soon found that it was a hopeless business — *lasciate ogni speranza*—and we made our way to the town

on foot, leaving our luggage to be brought after us on men's backs.

On an impartial estimate of the Cossack capital, and after comparing it with many hundred cities whither my peregrinations have led me, I readily admit, that none can dispute with it the palm of being the first mudhole in the world.

“But comfort yourself, my dear fellow,” said my Dutch companion, “you soon get accustomed to it in the steppe. Besides, this is not much. This is only the appearance of Ekaterinodar in fine dry weather. You should come here during a wet winter to know this city of sloughs, and to see the formidable barrier which it presents to the Circassians. It is very lucky that nothing but the carriage stuck fast. Many riders, with their horses, have been embogged for days together.” Thus comforted, I entered the Cossack town.

I have often seen designs of Cossack towns in Russia, but they give you no just idea of them. You must visit them yourself to know what they are like. Steppe towns and steppe life have nothing analagous in the West. A man, looking down on the Tschernomorski

capital from a balloon, would form no unfavourable idea of it. Almost all the houses are small, are built of mud and earth, some few of wood, and all are thatched with straw, save the residence of the Hetman. But the streets are straight, broad and airy, and the houses look like rows of soldiers. It contains many gardens and orchards, carefully tended, and refreshing to the eye after the bare steppes. But, let the traveller draw near, and he will be disenchanted. The Polish element, dirt, prevails everywhere. Black swine are seen on all sides, wallowing in the filth, and a ceaseless grunting jubilee greets the ear from morn till dewy eve. The inhabitants are noted for the breeding of swine, and for their excellent bacon.

No walls, ramparts, or ditch surround the place, which, as my Dutch friend remarked, is more effectually defended by its filth. The town contains a krepost in its centre, to which the inhabitants can retire in extremity, though it is a weak post. It certainly gives no high idea of Circassian valour that they have never made an attempt to storm Ekaterinodar, whose fort is only protected by a low wall and ditch, which could be cleared by a good horseman.

But the fact is, that the tribes of the Caucasus, like all mountaineers, are only terrible on their own ground. Genuine highlanders have never been conquerors of the world. The hordes of Attila, Genghis Khan, and Tamerlane, were inhabitants of the steppe and table-lands, and the Saracen and Persian hosts of Omar and Nadir issued from the wilderness. The great losses experienced by the Russians in the Caucasus were always owing to their attempts to penetrate into the woods, defiles, and mountains.

General ——ki, a man of no very brilliant talents, commanded at Ekaterinodar during the absence of Lieutenant-General Sawadofski, who was at that time Hetman of the Don Cossacks. This worthy informed me that I had been very imprudent in travelling without an escort, adding that three thousand Circassians had lately swam across the Kouban, between Temrjuk and Ekaterinodar; that he had issued orders to have all the thickets searched before day-break along the road; but that the wily mountaineers often escape detection, and even with an escort, the traveller is far from safe.

These sentiments, emanating from one inte-

rested in giving a favourable view of the country, made some impression on me, and I resolved to stay a few days at Ekaterinodar, in order to make farther inquiries as to the best mode of proceeding. The March wind blew so cold, that I felt no inclination to be dragged off naked to the mountains, and to freeze there as a Circassian slave. M. V—f was discussing pheasants and other delicacies with some Cossack friends. I went to visit the little fort, and quaint Cossack Cathedral. This building is formed of six high and grotesque wooden pillars. Two monstrous bells were ringing for evening worship; a strange, uncouth peal, such as I never heard elsewhere. I never saw less taste or more gaudy finery about any religious edifice than this. The altars were groaning with gold and silver ornaments, flags, and pictures of saints; but the wooden walls of the church are very filthy. The limbs of the saints are of solid silver; but their faces are ridiculous distortions. The Black Sea Cossacks seemed even less conversant with the fine arts than the Arabs of Constantine.

My friend, the English traveller, Longworth, asked me, on my return to Constantinople,

about the treasures in the Cathedral at Ekaterinodar. Many Europeans who have read the travels of Klaproth, fancy that this region is richer in gold and precious stones than any province in Russia. This is an error. Few of the Black Sea Cossacks accompanied the Russian armies in their lucrative campaigns. Most of the booty in Poland, Italy, &c., and the German ducats worn by Cossack girls as necklaces, were carried off by the Don, and other tribes farther north. The Kouban and Terek Cossacks, as protectors of the empire to the south, will never be removed far from the frontier. Their engagements have been chiefly with the Circassians, and the finery in the Cathedral at Ekaterinodar testifies rather to their devotion than their wealth.

The population of Ekaterinodar amounts to five thousand souls, including the garrison. The latter is composed of eight hundred, mostly married, but able-bodied Cossacks, and one hundred and fifty foot soldiers. If a signal from the outposts announce a Circassian incursion, the whole mounted garrison turns out into the steppe, and often goes some versts away. The small body of infantry is

the only garrison that remains, and, as we have said before, it gives no high idea of Circassian prowess, that the place has not been taken ere now. Mr. Longworth, who resided among the Shapsooks, and knew this people well, is justly of opinion that we ought not to measure their warlike qualities by a European standard. Always accustomed to bush fighting, to incursions and stratagems, the Circassians are not adapted to large and deliberately planned expeditions. Rebellious to discipline, they are incapable of profiting by the advantages resulting from personal bravery, by order and a systematic co-operation of infantry and cavalry, by the tactical evolutions of European troops, and the concentration of masses on a given point. I have often discussed this matter at Pera with Mr. Longworth, over our tchibouks, and we both came to the conclusion, that no great result could be expected from an offensive war against the Russians, at least in the Western Caucasus, and that it was, on the whole, the best policy of the Circassians to reserve all their strength for a defensive war. On their own ground, they will long form a terrible force, and many years will elapse ere the Muscovs

wrest from them any decided advantage. After the experience of the Russians, for half a century in the Caucasus, it may be safely affirmed that two centuries must elapse before the mountaineers are completely curbed, and under the yoke of the ukase. Nor will the most attentive observer of contemporaneous history be disposed to admit as a certainty, that the Russian Cabinet will have the ability, or the inclination, to persevere in its momentous undertaking for so long a period.

CHAPTER IV.

The Circassians in Ekaterinodar and in Turkey—Beauty of the genuine Adighè people—Chora-Beg—Peaceable intercourse between the Cossacks and Circassians—Relations of the Neutral Tribes—An Evening among the Cossacks—Adventures of a German Physician in the Caucasus—Artimollah, the grateful Circassian, an Episode of the War in the Caucasus.

THE Friday market at Ekaterinodar swarmed with Circassians. They were handsome men, with coal-black beards, aquiline noses, and flashing black eyes. This was the first occasion on which I saw a large body of them together. I had often met single Circassian wanderers elsewhere, in Asiatic Turkey, in Southern Russia, on the Black Sea, and on the Sea of Marmora. You often meet with natives of the Caucasus at Constantinople, dressed in the well-known Cir-

cassian costume; but they are members of some of the various tribes that people the Caucasian isthmus, and their figures and faces differ as much as their character and occupation. The Tschigeths and Abchasians, who are not noted for their heroic valour, carry on the slave, or some other trade with Turkey; the ardently religious Lesghian and Tschetschensian has, probably, the pilgrimage to Mecca in view; the object of the Usden is, perhaps, the love of adventure, sympathy with the Turks, and visits to eminent relations. It is very possible, however, to meet with twenty individuals in the bazaar in Constantinople, wearing the Circassian costume, without possessing the Circassian type. This frequently occasions erroneous statements regarding the celebrated beauty of these mountaineers, whom many tourists at Constantinople pronounce to be unworthy of their fame. Even the Caucasian squadrons of the guard at St. Petersburg consist of the greatest possible mixture of the tribes. The genuine Adighè must be seen on the Kouban; it is here that you find the most splendid representatives of that tribe.

The Psadooks, to the south of Ekaterinodar,

and, still more, the Shapsooks, whose abode is situated a few miles beyond the Kouban, and extends as far as the most northern declivity of the highest chain, belong to the handsomest of the tribes, and are supposed, together with the Kabardans, to speak the purest dialect of the Adighè language. I grant that those who expect to find ideals of manly beauty throughout these tribes, will be often greatly disappointed. For even among the Circassians, the great body of the people consists of additions from other races, of vassals and slaves of noblemen, whose origin cannot be easily ascertained, but who are probably the descendants of prisoners, or of subjugated tribes. The Circassian nobles, *works*, i. e. knights, form at most one-fifth, and some well-informed Russians say only one-tenth, of the Adighè people. These men alone have hereditary possessions, slaves, and votes in the deliberative assemblies; and it is only these *works*, and the still more distinguished members of the princely families (*pschis*), who are entitled to the high praise lavished on Circassian beauty. This aristocratic caste despises all connection with a plebeian, even if he is free, and has

become rich by trade. The Circassian nobleman only courts the daughter of his peer, and preserves thereby the purity of the race, the nobility of blood and person, the beauty of physiognomy, the chivalrous pride of bearing, and a peculiar elegance of movement, manners, and mode of speech.

The Circassian knight is characterized by a personal superiority, which has its origin alike in his mental energy, and in the consciousness of his bodily strength and beauty. This superiority of the pure Circassian betrays itself equally under the Muscovite discipline, and in the Mussulman East, where the sons of the Caucasus at Cairo, as Mamelukes, and at Stamboul, as Pachas, always played a distinguished part. Even the Turk, who imposes on all other Orientals by certain magnanimous qualities, admits the superiority of the Circassian Usdens. The Emperor Nicholas, who maintained an iron discipline amongst all the various kinds of troops in his immense empire, displayed a striking consideration towards the Circassian squadrons of his guard. Persons who are intimately acquainted with the arrangements at St. Petersburg, relate many characteristic anec-

notes that show how the bold, independent spirit of these Caucasian mountaineers remains unbroken by the Russian rod, and how this spirit so imposes on the Emperor, and even on the severest of barrack-masters, the Grand Duke Michael, that both have often tolerated open mutiny.

At a review, when the Circassian cavalry once plainly refused to obey orders, the Emperor was satisfied with giving them a formal rebuke through Count Benkendorf. By the side of the coarse heavy Russian soldier, the Circassian looks like an eagle amongst a flock of bustards. An Englishman, who resided a long time at St. Petersburg, relates that whenever the multitude draws back in terror, in a crowd, you may be sure that an officer of the guards, a policeman or a Circassian is coming. They do not venture even to punish very severely capital crimes committed by these people. A Circassian, who once plunged his kinschal* into the heart of a droschky driver at St. Petersburg, because of an exorbitant fare, was only punished by being sent back to the Cau-

* Dagger.

casus. The knout, and exile for life, to the Siberian mines would have been the fate of all Slavonic subjects of the Czar committing the same offence.

Amongst the Circassians at Ekaterinodar, one *work*, belonging to the Shapsook tribe, was especially remarkable for his beauty and imposing bearing. All the most picturesque forms of Arabs and Moors that I saw in Algeria must strike their colours before this eagle of the Caucasus. I certainly found, subsequently, in Mingrelia, more ideal countenances, approaching nearer to the antique Apollo type; but their expression was too soft and effeminate, and the hero's head on the Kouban pleased me better. I stood some time rooted to the ground before the Shapsook, so powerful was the impression he made upon me. "What a study?" thus I mused, "for a German painter, who in vain seeks for such models in Rome, or for a Vernet, who finds in groups of Arabs the highest aim for his brush!" The forms of the Arabs, which are rather priestly than warlike, represented by Vernet at Versailles, would not create such an effect as a picture of a Circassian by a Peter Hess! The Shapsook chief appeared,

however, quite conscious of his splendid appearance. With a proud bearing, and the light, half-floating step, peculiar to these mountaineers, he stalked through the groups of Cossacks into the market, casting looks of the profoundest contempt on their unwieldy forms thickly wrapped in sheepskins. His uncommonly spare figure, his beautiful foot, the spirit and chivalrous character of all his movements, the richness of his dress and the splendour of his arms contrasted very favourably with the muscular, but somewhat uncouth make, and the ugly woolly winter clothing of the Tschernomorskis. Nor was the contrast less striking between the noble profile of his face, and his magnificent eyes, and the beautiful, well fed, but entirely vacant and unmeaning countenances of his opponents on the right bank of the Kouban.

By the assistance of a Cossack, who knew the Adighè language, I succeeded in making the acquaintance of the Caucasian knight, and in entering into conversation with him. He was named Chora-Beg, and inhabited an aoul, thirty versts (twenty miles) south of Ekaterinodar. He was astonished to find that I was neither a "Moscof" nor an "Inglis." He had only some

obscure knowledge that, besides these two nations, there was another Christian people which had become very powerful under Sultan Bunapart, and had waged war with the Padi-scha of the Russians. On the other hand, he had never heard of the existence, or even name of a Nemze* nation. He readily allowed me to examine his beautiful arms, and I showed him my double-barrelled fowling-piece. He had never seen a fluted-rifle barrel, and he seemed rather sceptical as to my assertion that it carried much farther than a common gun. Besides, a kinschal and pistols, he wore a long, ponderous, slightly curved cavalry sabre (schaschka), with an ivory and silver hilt, which, at my request, he drew from its scabbard, and brandished twice in the air. How well he looked, the chivalrous mountaineer! How his eagle eyes flashed!

On my asking him, how many Russians he had killed with his schaschka, a peculiar expression passed over his features. I could not exactly decipher the Circassian's inmost thought, but I fancied I could detect hatred and a

* *Nemze*, or *Niemce*, is the name given by Russians to Germans, and signifies the Dumb.—*Translator*.

curl of contempt in his striking physionomy. He said that it was a long time since his tribe had been at war with Russia. Since the "deaf General" (Sass) had left the land of the Cossacks, there had been a truce between the Russians and the Shapsooks. Only individuals among them were still disposed to join the bands of Adighès, which come from a greater distance in the mountains to cross the Kouban. Doubtless, Chora-Beg only told me half the truth, and the proud look of his eye whilst he spoke, belied his words. The Circassians surrounding him were inferior to him in corporeal beauty, and in nobleness of manners. Some of these were his vassals and retainers, who are called Tschofokotls, and who are a degree higher than the actual slaves (*Pschilts*). Among the remaining Circassians who were present, were several men of the Psadook tribe, who entertained less hostile feelings against the Russians, and have lately made proposals of submission to Prince Woronzof. It was easy, at first sight, to distinguish the knights from the vassals and retainers in these groups, from the noble character of their features, and, indeed, of their whole person, even when they

were not conspicuous by their attire. The Usden only appears in his silver embroidered dress on extraordinary occasions, and I have never seen, on the Kouban or Terek, or in the interior of the Caucasus, coats of mail such as those worn by the Circassian squadrons at St. Petersburg.

This unrestrained appearance of Circassians on Russian ground is a very significant fact, bearing on the present state of the Kouban district. It is a strange thing to see these men, who had invaded the country a few days before, perhaps, plundering and killing, now moving about peaceably among groups of Cossacks. The Russian system consists in offering a friendly reception to the neighbouring tribes on the other side of the Kouban, in not forbidding access to their towns and stanitzas to their known enemies, and in giving a free passage to all Circassians who do not crowd together in too large bodies.

The advantages and evils of this plan are nearly equally balanced. It is evident that the introduction of commercial habits is the most certain method that the Russians could employ to enervate the virile character of the

Adighès. A system like this, which identifies the material prosperity of the Circassians with a peaceful intercourse with the Russians, must effect their object more surely and speedily than powder and shot, which have led to such severe losses, and obtained such slight results. Woronzof, by his recent regulations to facilitate barter with the Circassians, though to the loss of the treasury, has shown that he has a much deeper insight into the Caucasian question than his predecessors. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that this humane system has serious disadvantages, and is opposed by several of the most able and experienced officers in the army of the Caucasus. Numerous spies steal across the border among the Circassians, and move about without hindrance. Nothing escapes their practised eyes, and they bring back accurate details of all the stanitzas and kreposts, the weakest points of attack, &c. It will be difficult for the Russians to concentrate large bodies of men for an expedition without its being discovered immediately. The wily plan of General Sass used to be, to deceive the Circassians who frequented the markets, but his stratagems did not always avail him.

On the left bank of the Kouban, opposite the Cossack capital, dwell the neutral or so-called friendly tribes, nominally subject to Russia. Their territory extends from ten to thirty versts (twenty miles) southward towards the mountains. They are not very numerous, and their character and mode of life resemble more those of the Kabardans, than the highland Circassians. These poor people who till the ground as well as breed cattle, are in a deplorable situation. Hemmed in between the Russians and their opponents, they do their utmost to remain neutral, pledge their friendship to both parties, fight one day for the Russians, and the next for their compatriots, and answer the purpose of scouts and spies to both. Even a portion of the Psadooks and Schapsooks belong to these neutral tribes, besides the greater part of the inhabitants on both banks of the Laba. They live too near the mouths of the Russian cannon to be able to bid them defiance with impunity, like their brethren in the south, who have a safe asylum close at hand in their forests and ravines. They take part in most of the mountain assemblies of the Usdens, by means of deputies, whenever important questions are in agitation, and

they always incline to the side of peace. A great many Usdens of the Schapsook tribe belong to this peace party.

In the above-mentioned assemblies, the party that advocates quiet, and remonstrates against any warlike project, is generally the most numerous ; but it is frequently overruled by the greater energy of the warlike minority, and yields to avoid drawing on itself the revenge of the more combative mountaineers. The Russian generals always obtain correct information of what transpires in these assemblies, by means of well paid spies. It is not an uncommon case, however, for the tribes "friendly" to Russia, to join the incursions of the hostile mountaineers, either from lust for booty, or from fear of being chastized by their compatriots for their neutrality. If on the other hand, the Cossacks form an expedition to attack and burn down the abodes of their opponents, their Circassian allies are compelled to join them, receiving high pay for their services ; but they do not push their countrymen very close, though they consume a great deal of powder, to satisfy the Russian generals, and fire over the heads of the hostile mountaineers. In all these expeditions, a secret

understanding exists between the Circassians of the steppe, and of the mountains, to do each other as little harm as possible. The Russian generals conduct themselves on the whole in a very forbearing manner towards the neutral tribes, because they prefer to retain them as lukewarm friends, rather than to drive them to become declared enemies.

At the same time, it should be remembered that these ambiguous allies afford the Russians the only intelligence they obtain of the hostile plans hatched in the mountains. They are also serviceable in procuring an exchange of prisoners.

During my walk, Mr. V—f, had dined with his friends and comrades, and tossed off many a glass of brandy down his well-seasoned throat to the honour of the Emperor and to his own. When I met him again, he showed a bold face, and laughed at all the dangers that we might encounter on the road to Stavropol. "Courage," he said, "we have eight Cossacks for an escort, and four loaded barrels in the carriage. If our troopers were to turn tail, we could at all events shoot down four of the scamps, and then resort to our swords and daggers. But nothing of the kind will happen. The whole line is in a state

of alarm, and troops are marching up from Stavropol. Be sure this is another false report, and that the danger is magnified by fear.

I was only half convinced by these assurances, but I willingly accepted my companion's offer to introduce me to his Cossack friends. We crawled into the little house of a Tchernomorski captain, where a drinking bout was taking place. A dozen *mustaches* were seated huddled together, playing at cards and drinking from vast bowls of *vodka* (brandy) before them. They were sitting over their dessert, and none of them were sober. The host shook hands with me so cordially, that I was ready to cry out with pain; and immediately after I had to incur the pressure of a dozen equally muscular gripes. None of the guests were above the captain in rank, and they spoke nothing but Russian. This was a good opportunity for me to turn to account my slight fund of this language, but the Tchernomorskis spoke such an uncouth dialect, or else my ears were so unpractised that I could scarcely follow them. The Cossacks did not approve of my resorting to an interpreter, as they like to talk face to face.

I had no cause to complain of want of courtesy,

either here or anywhere else in Russia. Hospitality is common to all the Slavonic tribes, and as far as my experience goes, it is more refreshing to the wanderer than that of the Tartars, Turks, and Arabs, which has been much exaggerated.

On my entering, a wild tumult prevailed in the room, and the vodka drinkers seemed about to sink into a state of bestiality. The presence of a stranger made them sober. Even the Cossacks make great efforts to conceal their state from foreigners. Boiled and roast meat was handed to me, and the host went round the circle enjoining his guests to observe decorum in my presence. Travellers from the west are so rare on the Kouban, that they create quite a sensation among these rude Cossacks, who have sufficient vanity to wish a good impression to be made on their visitors. Hence my entrance put a stop to the cards, to the shouting and cursing, and even the vodka glasses were only sipped after a long pause. This scene reminded me of an episode in the campaign of Charles XII against Peter the Great, related by Norberg. The Cossacks of the Ukraine, then allies of the Swedes, reeled up to the royal table after copious potations. The signs of intoxication had ever filled the

Swedish king with horror, and in consideration of this feeling, the Cossack commander promised General Rhenschild, that they would remain sober till ten o'clock in the morning. I know not how long the self-denial of my Tchernomorski's would have lasted, but I soon freed them from their restraint, by retiring into a side room with a German physician and a dragoman, the two most cultivated inhabitants of Ekaterinodar. I passed a pleasant evening with these companions, chatting over our tea, whilst the Cossacks played and drank in the adjacent apartment.

The German physician, a man advanced in years, had passed an adventurous life, and his wanderings had ultimately led him, after many vicissitudes, amongst the Tchernomorski Cossacks. There are, unfortunately, but too many specimens of these German adventurers in the East, men whose lives exceed the most fantastic romance. Most of them do little honour to the German name, but the doctor at Ekaterinodar was superior to the majority in mind and culture. He had run away from school in Germany, on account of some daring frolic, had gone to Russia, where his knowledge of

medicine obtained him a post in the navy, had married, and become a Russian subject. Having offended and challenged a superior officer, he had been degraded to the ranks; he was said, also, to have been punished for a deficit in the balance of the hospital accounts. His faithful wife, accompanied him to the Caucasus, where, after some years, he obtained the fourteenth rank in the Tchin again. For the second time degraded on account of a duel, he was forced to carry a musket for nine years. At length, he became an officer once more, accompanied many expeditions as military surgeon, and was now stationed for a time on the Kouban, though he expected daily to be ordered on a route. His faithful wife had died whilst he was a private, and he bestowed many sighs upon her memory. Though far from envying the poor man his black bread diet of ten year's duration, I should have been glad of enjoying his opportunities of obtaining an insight into the Caucasus.

As the doctor saw that I was especially interested about this matter, he ransacked his memory to retail a series of adventures that he had experienced during his residence in the

Caucasus. The dragoman contradicted him sometimes, and on many points he differed widely from the doctor. Yet both had enjoyed excellent opportunities for years, of judging correctly men and manners in this part of the world, and both spoke fluently the Tartar language, which is the universal vehicle of intercourse throughout the Caucasian range.

The dragoman had accompanied General —— in all his inspections, and had often resided for months together among the neutral tribes on the left bank of the Kouban. Neither the doctor nor the interpreter had a very favourable idea of the Circassians, but their judgment of individual men and cases was diametrically opposed. The doctor regarded the people over the Kouban in a somewhat milder light than the other, who would not allow the Circassians a single good quality, and even denied their bravery. I found equally contradictory statements in other parts of the East. Men who had resided for many years on the spot, among the same people, under equally favourable circumstances, had the most conflicting opinions of their value and importance. For example, what can be more contradictory than the opinions

entertained of the Turks. It is an axiom, that a country should never be judged from the account of one single author. Correct objective perception is a rare quality, and impartiality is observed by only a few.

Though the Circassians have their native doctors, and have a high opinion of their skill, yet they gladly have recourse to Russian surgeons. I do not know a single people in the East, which does not place the most implicit reliance in European physicians. The Kabyles and Arabs in Algeria readily consult the French *chirurgiens majors*, and the Circassians and Tschetschensians on the Kouban and Terek, come down to the Russian apothecary, if their own doctors can do them no good.

The European doctor is held in high esteem even by the Koords, and the devil-worshipping Yezidees. Hence the German doctor had a fair Circassian practice, and ventured as a *hakim** over the Kouban into districts where every other European would have lost his life

* Physician (Arabicè). The term is in general use throughout the East.

or his freedom. He admitted that, generally speaking, his philanthropic exertions had not elicited much gratitude, yet he thought that some of his Caucasian friends had testified their friendship, and shown a noble spirit. From among the numerous tales and episodes that he related to us that evening, I shall introduce the following extracts, which I find in my Caucasian diary.

“It is a prevalent opinion,” began the doctor, “among the Russians and Cossacks, that a war of extermination should be waged against the Circassians, because these people are perfectly incapable of appreciating gentleness, friendship and benefits conferred, are unsusceptible of any generous emotion, and because it is impossible to civilize them. Many instances of Circassian barbarity—fearful examples of retaliation, demoniacal acts of villany, will be related to you, in support of this opinion, and, possibly, these statements may contain half the truth. But whoever looks at all deeply into the matter will not subscribe unconditionally to a condemnatory verdict, and will attribute many terrible events to circumstances. Many of their chief crimes may, to a certain extent, be excused by

reason of their peculiar position ; as, for instance, sale of their children. The latter go to pass a happy and a splendid existence at Stamboul ; and the price of their beauty probably rescues their family from starvation, or procures them powder and shot to defend their independence. The Circassians are a poor people ; their rugged land is wanting in almost every necessary. When we consider the extreme disproportion between our means and those of the Circassians, we ought not to wonder if they resort to desperate expedients. Engaged in perpetual warfare, and pledged by oath to resist the Russian yoke to the last drop of their blood, their manners cannot assume a more gentle character, without paralyzing their powers of resistance. Nor have the Russians invariably, on their part, given a pattern of exemplary humanity. I do not, on this account, accuse our generals ; for the sternest discipline is often unable to prevent terrible excesses in war. Blood calls for blood, and if an aoul is carried with the bayonet, it is puerile to talk of brotherly love. Even the most refined officers, on such occasions, listen more readily to the voice of revenge, than to the counsels of policy, or the

dictates of humanity. This lies in the very nature of the thing. Benevolent philanthropists may twaddle otherwise, but they do not know what war is, or what man is with all his passions.

“The charge of black criminality and incurable barbarism, brought against the Circassians, is just as ridiculous as the absurd admiration expressed for them by our countryman, the botanist, Charles Koch, and a posse of sentimental German poets. I have, moreover, some motives for vindicating them against this accusation, drawn from my personal experience. I grant that my Circassian practice did not bring me in much profit. (The mountaineers are generally not satisfied with medicine alone, but expect a present with it.) Yet I owe my life to a Circassian cured by me, and this, after all is the handsomest fee that can be given to a doctor. Listen to my story, and judge for yourself. Thirteen years ago I was stationed with my regiment at Stavropol. I was at that time a private soldier, but do not imagine that my lot was so deplorable as that of the Russian grey-coat. Degradation to the ranks is of frequent occurrence in Russia, and a

man of education and position, who is reduced from the Tchin to the rank of a private, not for some dishonourable crime, but on account of a common misdemeanour, such as carelessness in the management of crown property, an error in subordination, the impetuosity of temper, or great peevishness and severity, is never exposed to all the hardships of a common soldier. His superiors are always very considerate to him; each of them endeavours, as far as possible, to alleviate his lot. No man is safe in Russia, and the same thing may happen to them any day. How many former generals are now carrying muskets! Hence it is good policy for every officer to strive to alleviate the condition of those reduced to the ranks, as he thereby secures grateful friends to himself in case of a similar mishap befalling him. I must say, that during the long period that I served as common soldier, my officers always behaved rather as friends than as superiors to me. I was always admitted into the society of the sub-officers, and chatted, drank, and played with them as an equal. This feature of Russian character, *i. e.* the mitigation of the severity of the system by considerate treatment of those reduced in rank, deserves our commendation.

“ One evening I sat at play at Stavropol with two young lieutenants, when my orderly entered with the announcement, that orders had just been issued to march to Kawkaskaja. I might have easily avoided this march, by shamming sickness. But heated by wine, being in an adventurous mood, and hoping to encounter some romantic episodes, I felt a strong desire to join the expedition. I seized my musket and cartouche box, placed myself in rank and file, and we marched off to the beat of the drum; my wife knew nothing about it. This sudden departure was occasioned by a despatch from the commandant of the fort of Kawkaskaja, containing a pressing demand for reinforcements, as the spies had informed him that he must prepare for the assault of a very large body of Circassians. When we reached the Kouban, the incursion of the mountaineers had already taken place. But we found the whole Cossack population on foot, and the infantry and cannon prepared for the foe. We endeavoured to cut off the retreat of the enemy from the Kouban, and after a slight resistance they dispersed and fled. A great portion of them sought refuge in the thickets and reeds, but one body, pressed

on all sides, rushed into a post-station, cut down the secretary, ostlers, and guards, and barricaded themselves in the house. The Cossacks of the Line attempted to storm it at once, but the Circassians defended themselves like devils. Some dozen Cossacks were shot off their horses, and the foremost assailants were cut to pieces at the door. The Cossacks drew back, delayed and awaited the infantry. My company received orders to carry the post-house at the point of the bayonet. Our general was on the spot in person, his fiery red countenance, rendered purple with wrath and vodka. He bawled a fearful oath at our captain, because he thought that he did not march fast enough, and that he was shy of Circassian bullets. General—ki was a man of coarse mind and barbarous severity. In his fits of passion, he frightened us ten times more than all the Circassians put together. His curses gave wings to the legs of our captain, and the whole company set off running to storm the station. The windows were broken, the doors burst in, we fought in the house and the stables, and after twenty minutes of an indescribably murderous conflict, not a Circassian stirred, but all our officers and one-third of our men had fallen on the spot.

“When all was over, the wounded had been transported to the Krepost, and we were in the act of burying the dead in a large pit, it happened that an old Circassian recovered consciousness, and looked earnestly with his large eyes, at the soldiers who were about to cast him in as a corpse. A soldier was raising his piece to run him through, when I interfered. The Circassian who was awaiting the mortal stroke with perfect serenity, excited my compassion in a greater degree than I have ever experienced on other occasions, and in all the warlike scenes of a twenty year’s military life in the Caucasus.

“You have no conception how beautiful this old man was, and what noble eyes he had. Notwithstanding the blood that disfigured his face, and his silvery beard, I thought I had never seen a more venerable head ; and he could not have created a more painful interest if he had been my own father. It is not uncommon for those whose finer feelings are not quite extinguished by the horrors of war, to experience revulsions like this, after the heat of the fight is over. As long as the conflict rages, and your blood boils, the most good-natured soldier is merciless. An hour sooner, I should not have

warded off the bayonet from the old man ; perhaps I should have run him through myself. I could mention numerous instances of humanity, especially in Poles ; but I never saw them in the heat of battle. The smell of powder, and the clash of bayonets and schaschkas seem to extinguish pity in the softest hearts. Men of gentle nature are especially rare under the Russian colours, compared with those who have no feelings. The former are commonly young hands ; for war corrupts and destroys the noblest natures, and in the Caucasus sooner than elsewhere.

“ I caused the Circassian to be carried to the hospital of the Krepost, where one of my friends acted as chief surgeon. There was plenty of work for me now. I obtained leave of absence from barrack duty ; and I exchanged the musket for the scalpel, a common accident in my life. Many Russians, as well as my Circassian, required amputation. I cut off three fingers from his left hand. His right arm, which was much more injured, and his bad wound in the head, healed of themselves. When he was nearly cured, I took him to my room, where my wife, who had followed me from

Stavropol, nursed him very kindly. His convalescence gave me greater pleasure than I ever experienced from the cure of any other patient. The Circassian was a Mollah; the beauty of his head gave an intimation of his gentle character and his piety. I procured him a Koran, in which he read from morning till night; and he was much given to prayer, which is not very usual with the Circassians. One day I made a little trip with my doctor along the Line, in order to visit patients. When I returned, I learnt with surprise that my old Circassian was flown. He was not very narrowly watched, because he was considered to be too weak to run away. About noon, he had crept to the banks of the river, where he used often to go and warm his limbs in the sun. There he prayed, and then the sentry saw him plunge into the river, and swim across with powerful strokes. I remained some time longer at Kaukaskaja; but I heard nothing more of him. Nevertheless, my wife fancied that a quarter of lamb, which was brought as a present by a common Circassian, came from the old man.

“ Five years later, I was removed again to the Kouban, where I was directed to establish a

hospital. I had been restored, in the interim, to the rank of officer, and had an appointment as assistant-surgeon. I was often visited by invalid Circassians; and I made occasional visits to their aouls, where I invariably met with a hospitable reception. The usual fee of a doctor in those mountains, consists of milk, honey, bread, grapes, and wine, and, as a rarity, half a lamb. Money is seldom or never given by the Circassians, even if they are tormented by a painful malady. They prefer to meet death with stoical indifference, rather than pay a couple of silver roubles for a glass of physic. One day, a blooming young Circassian called upon me, and begged me to visit his grandfather, who was ill in a neighbouring aoul of the Psadook tribe. He assured me that I should be quite satisfied with my fee. I was in a bad temper; and having no inclination for the ride, I bluntly declined the proposition of the young man, notwithstanding the gentle but pressing supplication he made, that I would accede to it. He persisted, however, in his request; he would absolutely take no refusal, and swore solemnly that if I went, I should far from repent of it. At length, he offered me a handful of roubles,

which I might keep as a security, if I happened not to be satisfied with the fee for my visit. Such an offer was very unusual ; and I had never seen a disposition of this sort in the Circassian character. I might have been offended with good reason at the proposition ; but the open countenance of the young mountaineer, who had scarcely emerged from boyhood, his honest look and noble bearing, ended by inspiring me with confidence and sympathy. In a querulous tone, I ordered my servant to saddle my horse, and crossed over the Kouban at Ustlaba, accompanied by my Cossack servant and the Circassian.

“The aoul was represented by the youth as being only fifteen versts distant from Ustlaba. But we proceeded much farther without seeing the aoul. My servant became anxious, and drew my attention to the circumstance, that we had already passed the dwelling-place of the Psadooks ; and I began to share his suspicions. To add to our annoyance, the road became more difficult, passing through endless bogs and reedy thickets. I no longer ventured to think of returning, and complained bitterly to my guide that he had led me astray. But he remained perfectly placid, looked at me as

honestly as before : and when he perceived that my anxiety was nevertheless on the increase, he handed me his pistols, with the words : ‘ Shoot me, if you find yourself deceived by me.’ At length, we caught sight of an aoul in a mountain ravine, which the youth pointed out to us.

“ I was led into the principal house, which was surmounted by a square tower with battlements. An old man was seated in the second room, wrapped in his burka. He arose on my entrance, and saluted me in a very dignified manner by placing both hands on his heart. Imagine my astonishment, when I recognized him as my old patient of *Kaukaskaja* ! Our recognition and salutation was very hearty ; and soon his sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters advanced to salute their guest. All asked me about my wife, who had nursed the old man so carefully, and expressed their sorrow when they heard that she was dead. I cannot speak in too high terms of the handsome and flattering reception I encountered from all, including the young and beautiful girls, who, though more graceful than the most elegant Parisians, were very coarsely attired. Their faces were unveiled ; and they did not show the least

constraint in their demeanour, as is usual with other Mohammedan females. Carpets and burkas were arranged to give me a comfortable seat; bread, honey, wine, and fruit, coffee and viands were handed to me; and a whole lamb was placed on a spit, to roast over the charcoal. Never in my whole life have I felt so much professional pleasure as I experienced in the family circle of this most grateful Caucasian patient.

“Arti-Mollah—such was the old man’s name—appeared the most important individual in the aoul, and the respect in which he was held was attested by the circumstance that none of the nobles even ventured to sit down in his presence. My enquiry as to who required my advice, met with no direct reply, but I was informed that I should see in the evening. Soon after this, there was a great stir in the aoul, much tumult and noise were perceptible without, one band of knights arrived after another, and even before nightfall some thousands of Circassians were encamped on the slopes of the mountains. I now began to perceive that a military expedition was projected, and I became deeply concerned. The young people bustled about in all directions,

but the old Mollah remained perfectly tranquil, seated by my side. The room gradually filled with guests, who all appeared chieftains of the highest rank, haughty, magnificent men, glittering with the most splendid arms. The Mollah entered into an animated conversation with them in the Adighè language, which I do not understand ; he seemed to be relating his connection with me. Their eagle eyes were fixed on me : long did they measure me with the most intent observation, and then they addressed me politely in the Tartar tongue, in which language the conversation was continued, as most of them understood it.

“ At this moment, which was one of such painful anxiety to me, I did not think it opportune to press my old host with questions. But when the room became gradually empty, and the splendid knights and horsemen seemed to have withdrawn, I ventured to request an explanation of the riddle. An attack was projected on the stanitza where I had established a hospital. A Polish deserter was their guide, and the Circassians appeared confident of success. Arti-Mollah knew that I was living there, he had induced me to leave it the day before the

projected attack on the stanitza, in order to save my life, and to this end he had sent his grandson to me with a pretended message. Unhappily the result only justified too well the daring confidence of the foe. They crossed the river during a pitch-dark night, without having attracted the observation of the Cossack outposts. The morning mist permitted the Circassians to creep close up to the stanitza, and the Polish deserter showed them the place where entrance was the easiest. Seldom has an incursion across the Kouban been more successful. The whole population of the stanitza was surprised in sleep, the sentries were cut down, only a few succeeding in escaping in their shirts, most of the men were put to death, the women and children were bound on to the horses, and carried off across the river. If the Mollah had not induced me to leave, I should have undoubtedly perished, like most of my acquaintance. Whether I would or not, I was forced to stay as guest or half a prisoner, in the house of Artimollah, who was too old and infirm to follow the others ; whilst the men of his family accompanied the expedition. During their absence, I was entertained in the most hospitable and kindly manner,

by the old man, the women and the girls. Their hospitality extended even to my Cossack servant, whom they treated at first rather harshly, shutting him up in the stable, but whom, at my request, they liberated and proceeded to treat with more civility. On the following night the expedition returned. Their approach and their triumph were proclaimed afar off by the shouts of the horsemen, heavily laden with booty and prisoners, by the firing of muskets and other tokens of rejoicing. My Cossack was frightened to death when he saw his wife and youngest boy among the prisoners, and he was almost beside himself with distress of mind. Arti-Mollah would not at first listen to my request, that they should at once be set at liberty, but he ultimately acceded, when I became more pressing. The matter was attended with many difficulties, though the Circassian who had possession of Peter's wife and child belonged to the same tribe as Arti-Mollah. My Cossack was obliged to pledge himself to provide four oxen and thirty sheep as a compensation for them, I stood security for him, and Peter recovered those whom he had lost. We were forced to pass two more days in the house of our *konak*. The room was never empty of guests,

and I became personally acquainted, on this occasion, with the most renowned Circassian champions, princes, and knights, the Pschi Selim, the old veteran Guz Beg, Dschimbulat, the lion of the Caucasus, Mansur Beg, and many others. I was also consulted by a crowd of patients who came to me for advice and physic. At length, I was suffered to depart with my man Peter. My old friend took leave of me in the same solemn and dignified manner as when he received me ; many members of his family saluted me in rotation, with the most amiable and affectionate demonstrations. Amongst them, I must mention a lovely grand-daughter, graceful and rosy, the most beautiful nymph of the Caucasus that I ever beheld, and whom I should have greatly preferred to carry back across the Kouban, instead of the splendid horse which was presented to me by the old man, and which, though a veteran, still remains the greatest ornament of my stable. Escorted by a few knights, we reached the Russian border without accident, and my adventure excited no little sensation, for such an instance of Circassian gratitude was unprecedented.

“ Arti-Mollah is still living, but since his aoul

has been visited by the foe, he dwells more in the heart of the mountains, and has joined the neutral tribes. He is reported to be still engaged without intermission in preaching hatred and war against the Russians. It is remarkable, however, that I have never heard a syllable from him since that time. I have occasionally sent messengers to him with a pressing request for the exchange of prisoners, but I never received any answer. Perhaps the old man thinks that he has quite repaid his debt of gratitude, by the service that he rendered me on that occasion, and possibly he now only looks upon me as a Russian, an enemy, and an infidel, and not as the friend and physician who once healed, tended, and nursed him."

CHAPTER V.

Nature on the Kouban—Original dwelling of the Cossacks, and signification of their name—Love of the Cossacks for an adventurous Life—Evening Walk by the Kouban—Rapidity of travelling in Russia—Surprisal of Wassir-niskaja—The Line Cossacks—Massacre of a Cossack Detachment at Ustlaba—Visit to the Left Bank of the Kouban—Line Cossacks and Circassians—Arrival at Stavropol.

GEOLOGISTS and artists must be driven to despair by the uniform level prevailing along the Kouban, without the relief of a mountain, hill, or rock, whilst even boulder stones are sought for in vain along the banks of its sluggish current.

On the other hand, my eyes were greeted with an animated military spectacle, and I devoted all my observation to the Cossacks, and their

mode of life, strolled about their dirty capital of Ekaterinodar, prowled into the market, the houses, hovels, rooms, courts and gardens, examining all in detail, and was not at all embarrassed in my movements, because a bad cold prevented my perceiving the strong odours attaching to Cossack houses and persons. The Circassians would naturally have been the favourite objects of my attention, but, with the exception of the Psadook chief, Chora Beg, the other Caucasian visitors showed little disposition to converse with me; hence I dismissed my courteous interpreter, and kept to the more accessible Cossacks, pledged them in a glass of vodka, in their little houses, and kept both ears open when they, or my friend the doctor, related numerous episodes of their vicissitudes, hardships, and adventures. We often discussed the early history and probable origin of the Cossacks, and Tschernomorski officers confirmed what I had often heard advanced by the Don Cossacks, *i. e.*, that the Cossacks, as far as they could trust tradition, even before the time of Peter the Great, were not confined to the Ukraine, but that their territory stretched southward as far as Bessarabia, and eastward beyond the left

bank of the Don, and that even since Yermak's first visit to Siberia, many bands of Cossacks used to rove through the great world of steppes, as adventurers, and formed settlements in certain districts, where the situation, game, and abundance of fish invited them. Even to the northward, the Cossacks extended beyond the borders of the Ukraine, as far as Great Russia. The annals of the age of Vassily the Blind, in the year 1444, make mention of the Russian Cossacks as a peculiar kind of light troops; whilst the name occurs for the first time in 1517. Even Karamsin is of opinion that the name of Cossacks was known in Great Russia before the invasion of Batu, and that it was applied to the Torks, or Berendejes, whose territory extended as far as the Dnieper. It is on the Dnieper below Kief, that the first dwellings of the Malo-Russian Cossacks occur at present. The Torks and Berendejes were often styled Tscherkessians by the Muscovites, a name also applied to all the Cossacks, although the Great Russians had no connection whatever in those early times with the Caucasian Circassians. It is probable that separate Cossack settlements extended at a remote period as far as the Oural river, and the

present Oural Cossacks, though wilder and more picturesque than their brethren on the Don, speak a genuine Slavonic idiom. When the Empress Catherine removed a portion of the Ukraine Cossacks to the right bank of the Don, they were not transported among a strange people, for besides the Calmucks and Nogays, they had genuine Cossack tribes for their neighbours on the left bank, who had already carried on an independent war against the Crimean Khans for many years.

We had many discussions about the origin of the name Cossack. My friends were not a little wrath to hear that a philologist, Klaproth, had affirmed that the word meant in Tartar, a robber. I tranquillized them by adding, that the great Russian historian had stood up to defend their honourable name against the linguist, maintaining that the word Cossack, far from meaning a rascal, signified a *volunteer*, *partizan*, *dare-devil*, and that it could not have been a term of reproach at any time, as it was only applied to bold soldiers who bled and died for freedom, country, and religion! This pleased my acquaintances much better, and taking long draughts from the brandy glass, they gave Klap-

roth many a groan, and Karamsin some hearty cheers. They had never cumbered their wits much about such matters heretofore, nor had they ever read Klapproth or Karamsin. Their favourite delights consist of vodka, dice, and cards; these are also their scriptures, and their morning and evening prayers. It is the opinion of profound and philosophical thinkers, that there exists a law of progress and humanity, by means of which, culture and civilization will eventually spread over the whole earth; they maintain, that this law is as necessary and undeniable as the physical motion of the earth, and the circulation of the blood. The truth and depth of these views are strongly demonstrated, even in the land of the Scyths, when you perceive that a French confectioner deals in champagne of the first quality, at four silver roubles (twelve shillings) for a foaming bottle; on the Tanais, that at Novo-Tscherkask, graceful Cossack maidens dance quadrilles almost as elegantly as Parisians, and that at Ekaterinodar, whist and *preference* have become the favourite pastime of Cossack society. When will the other blessings of Western civilization follow? When shall we read that the Cossack

booksellers, in the catalogue of the fair at Ekaterinodar, advertise ten thousand new titles of forthcoming volumes.

I met here, a captain, who had accompanied the last friendly landing of the Russians at Constantinople, and who had inscribed his name on a plane tree at Unkiar-Skelessi. How this man regretted that Ibrahim had not been more rash, and marched against Stamboul. This would have given the Cossacks the desired opportunity of measuring their lances against the scymetars of the Egyptians, and a more attractive field than the Caucasus would have opened up to Russian lust for fighting and plunder. The captain imagined that the Russian eagle would have advanced, at least, as far as the Holy Land, perhaps to Egypt; that he would have drunk the water of the Nile, and seen the Pyramids! I comforted the Tchernomorsk with the assurance that there were better things to taste and see in Germany, and I gave him an account of the manufactories of Esslingen and Leipzig, preparatory to the time when a second Attila or Suwarrow shall fulfill the intense desire of these hairy steppe horsemen to become more familiarly acquainted with

them. I informed him that Esslingen champagne is a greater restorative than the slimy Nile water, and if the ancient Egyptians left stone pyramids to their descendants, Leipzig printers and scribbling sages are honestly employed in piling up pyramids of books for their contemporaries.

The evening before my departure from Ekaterinodar, I strolled again to the banks of the memorable river, which has carried so many thousand drops of Russian and Circassian blood to the sea. It flows very near the fort, and has here a breadth of two hundred paces, rather steep and sandy banks, and is said to be very deep. Though no rain had fallen for some days, the water was of a dirty brown colour; its course is just as sluggish as that of the Rion below Maran, and its fall between Ekaterinodar and the Black Sea, scarcely amounts to one hundred feet. On the opposite bank, you perceive several aouls of friendly tribes of Circassians. The smoke of the turf fire rose over the huts, and herds of cattle were feeding peacefully by their side. At such a sight, no one would have thought of the deadly feuds of this country, or that

the people were in a state of perpetual warfare. But if you cast your eye on the right bank, it met, all along the stream, numerous airy stations of the Cossacks, perched on four high beams, where the sentry's post presents the appearance of a dove cot in a German village. A bad ladder leads up to it, and above sits a Tchernomorski, almost like a statue, in his sheep-skin coat, keeping his eyes eternally fixed on the hostile bank. He is perched so high, that you can scarcely see his long moustachios, and as a comfort, in his tedious duty, he has a bottle of brandy for a companion. From that elevation, his glance commands the plain to a great distance, yet it is not always able to penetrate the reed thickets, and the brush-wood. The enemy often deceive his hawk's eyes, and he only becomes aware of their passage, when it is too late to give the signal of alarm. Should he even escape the Circassian kinschal on such occasions, he is sure to receive a good thrashing from the Russians. At Ekaterinodar you cannot obtain a sight of any hostile villages, for they only begin in the ravines of the mountains. Even the Caucasus does not stand forth very majes-

tically near this town, yet the outline of the snow-covered chain, presented a finer and more definite appearance than on the tedious drive from Taman across the steppe.

The following day, my escort was punctually at the door. It consisted of eight Tchernomorski troopers, with red lances, but without any special uniform, some being clad in grey infantry coats, whilst others wore sheep-skin wrappers over their broad shoulders. Besides their lance, they carried a musket, without a bayonet, slung across their back in their leather cross-belt. The carriage was drawn across the steppe at the usual impetuous speed, by four well-fed Cossack horses. The yamschik seldom made use of the whip, but the penetrating tones of his bass voice were enough to spur on his steeds with the speed of the wind. This is the mode of travelling in Russia, to cut short the immense distances. A king, in his travels in Germany, does not get on so fast as any functionary in Russia, with an Imperial Padaroschna in his pocket. When the roads are as dry as they were during my gallop across the steppes of the Kouban, you advance at least half as fast as on the railroads in Germany.

This cannot, of course, be effected without much cruelty to animals, and no post-horse in Russia attains the usual age, most of them being driven to death after a few years. The great abundance of horses, however, prevents people from caring much about their loss. If the population increase, and the pasture-lands diminish, the case will be altered. Not only did my escort always keep up with the carriage, but one of the troopers usually darted ahead, to take on my order for another escort to the next station. Before my carriage reached it, eight fresh lancers generally galloped up to meet me, and relieve my old escort. Though the presence of these troopers did not add much to our security, they afforded us much entertainment, for these wild lancers looked very picturesque, on their long-maned horses, and balancing their long spears in the air with much dexterity, they afforded an agreeable relief to the eye, amidst the monotony of the steppe.

The first great Cossack stanitza that we reached, was called Karsundskaja; it was protected by a ditch and a hedge of thorns. The nearer you approach the villages of the Line Cos-

sacks, the stronger became the villages, for danger increases as you go east, where the depth and width of the river diminishes, and most of the incursions take place. We found active preparations in the village of Wassirinskaja. Scouts had informed the commandant of Ustlaba of an anticipated attack of the enemy across the river. He had sent a pressing request for reinforcements to General Gurko, and an infantry regiment, commanded by the German Colonel Witzinghof, had started in forced marches from Stavropol to the right wing. Two cannon had just been brought into Wassirinskaja, under the escort of a hundred Tchernomorski troopers, the infantry was under arms, and the whole Cossack population had their lances at hand, and their horses saddled. Though the danger appeared near and pressing—(for the spies stated that three thousand Circassian cavaliers were assembled at the foot of the mountains) the Russians and Cossacks looked quiet enough, and no fear or excitement was to be traced in their impassive countenances. It was impossible to discover if the severity of military discipline kept under all expression of surprise, or if familiarity with danger, devastation and death

had blunted their feelings. My companion, M. V—f, explained to me that greater preparations and precautions were employed at this stanitza than elsewhere. This post had been attacked and partially burned by the Circassians, in January, 1842, many Cossacks had fallen on that occasion, and about sixty women and children had perished in the flames. M. V—f, happened to be staying at Wassirinskaja on that dreadful night, when on his road to join his regiment at Sundscha. His lively description of the horrors of the fight and conflagration, though given with the coolness and plain manner of a soldier, who thought it nothing out of the way, and who did not strive to produce an effect, by exaggerated pathos, working on the nerves of his audience, was more graphic and moving than the extravagant episodes of an accomplished novelist. The effect of his story may certainly have been heightened by the fact that we were on the scene of its performance, and that the danger of the moment kept all minds in suspense. I shall only repeat the essential points of his narrative.

“Information,” began my companion, “had been received from the spies, that the Circassians were assembling in the mountains, and infantry

pickets were distributed in all the villages. But the scouts had also informed General S—i, that they should obtain certain intelligence of the day of their passage, so soon as the Usdens had come to a determination on the subject. It is usual in Circassia to discuss and dispute for a fortnight, before the incursion takes place, hence most expeditions to the right bank are failures. The Russians were misled by these promises of their paid spies, and General S—i hoped to inflict a severe punishment on the assailants. Unhappily the incursion of the Circassians took place five days sooner than had been anticipated. Mansur Beg had detected treachery, had suddenly dissolved the assembly in which he had a principal voice, and had hurried to the Kouban with twelve hundred horsemen, whilst the remaining chieftains were still quarrelling about the period when the projected expedition should take place. Our informers were themselves duped, and had no time to apprise General S—i of Mansur's sudden departure. I had met some companions at Wassirinskaja, and we chatted together till midnight. Excitement and unusual anxiety, which must surely have been the work of my guardian angel, kept me long from sleeping. I

was lying dozing, when a noise without roused me. I immediately apprehended danger, and darted out in my shirt. Not a shot had been fired, but I immediately recognized the jackall-like *schream* of the enemy—I had heard it often before in the mountains, through the fresh morning air, when I was bivouacking with my *tirailleurs* at the van-guard. It is still a mystery to me how the Circassians could penetrate into the well guarded *stanitza*, without being perceived by the *videttes*. Our infantry, which consisted of a company and a half, only began to open its fire when half the village was in possession of the enemy, and notwithstanding the moonlight, their balls did us more mischief than the Circassians. I endeavoured first to take refuge with the infantry which had formed in the square around the guard-house. But the Circassians had intercepted the way, and I could do nothing better than leap over the hedges and ditches, and conceal myself outside the *stanitza*.

“ Most of the families were inclosed in their houses, and sought to defend themselves in them ; but the mountaineers laid piles of hay and straw against them to burn them down. A frightful

conflagration was the result, lighting up with its dreadful glare, the stanitza and the sky ; it was almost as light as day. Those shut up in their houses rushed out and tried to cut their way through, but the schaschka of the cruel foe drove them back. You should have heard the cries of the poor women amidst the flames and smoke ! Many preferred being burned to death to slavery, and the Circassians did not make many prisoners. I succeeded, at length, in reaching the guard-house. If the occasion had been less appalling, I could not have helped laughing at the appearance of our soldiers, who most of them were standing under arms, without trousers, and were continually loading and firing. We stood firm, the light of the conflagration assisted our aim, and the Circassians did not dare to close with us with the sword ; unhappily, we were not strong enough to attack them with the bayonet. Day-break put an end to the conflict, and the enemy drew off almost uninjured, with booty, prisoners, and their dead. When General S—i, arrived from Ekaterinodar, with a regiment of Cossacks, the mountaineers had vanished, and the general only witnessed the results of this fearful night ; the

smoking ruins of the houses, the blackened and mutilated remains of those burned or slain, weeping mothers, seeking their children, weeping children seeking their mothers, and dumb pallid fathers who did not dare to weep. Our brave infantry presented arms without trousers, before the well defended guard-house."

The stanitzza of Waroneschkaja, forms the limit between Tchernomorzia, and the territory of the Cossacks of the Line. The latter are distinguished by special dress, physical frame, features, and a peculiar and strong religious disposition, which displays itself, however, more in external forms than in exemplary virtues. Their dress and arms are the same as the Circassians, with whom, I at first, confounded them, much to my consternation. They carry the schaschka and pistols; and their make is much more elegant and supple, but far less robust, than that of the Tchernomorski. They are reckoned more efficient soldiers than the latter. By the abduction of women and children from the mountains, they have obtained a great infusion of Circassian blood, and have inherited along with it the main virtue of the mountaineers—bravery.

The Russian Generals are indebted to the Line Cossacks for their most successful strokes in the Caucasus. The Russian officers commonly speak with contempt and disparagement of the Don Cossacks, who only remaining three years in the Caucasus, are less initiated in this kind of warfare, and appear slow and clumsy beside the dexterity of the Line Cossacks on the Terek and Upper Kouban. The author of the well-known English book, "Revelations of Russia," besides countless other errors, has committed that of ascribing the defence of the plains of southern Russia, near the Caucasus, entirely to the Tchernomorski Cossacks, declaring the latter to be the best irregular cavalry in the Russian service, whilst he appears entirely ignorant of the Cossacks of the Line, most of whom do not derive their origin from the Ukraine.

The incursions of the Circassians do not succeed so often among the Line Cossacks, who are always prepared, and defend themselves desperately, as among the Tchernomorski, though the Upper Kouban presents more favourable ground for the mountaineers, than the lower course of the stream. From Waroneschkaja to

Kaukaskaja, the traveller encounters a warlike population, always ready for the strife; and even the young boys are ever ready to ride forth beside their bearded fathers, if the object be to hunt the enemy among the bushes. The Tchernomorski are lazier, less vigilant, and less disposed to cross the Kouban, and close with the foe. I often found these Cossacks moody, and with dejected looks, lying on the grass by their saddled steeds, which were quietly cropping the turf, when the men had been ordered to explore the thickets. If my travelling companion remonstrated with them on the subject, they rose up slowly, grasping their red lances, and yawning.

Ten days before my arrival at the stanitza Ustlaba, the Circassians had crossed the river between Waroneschkaja, and the former place. According to Russian accounts, which generally exaggerate the numbers of their enemies, they were three thousand strong. They seem to have been induced to make the attempt, owing to the low state of the water, and for the same reason they were collecting again in the mountains, for another attack. A thick fog, common in these steppes, at this season, had concealed

the large body of cavalry from the Cossack outposts. The enemy drew up along the high road, and it has not been ascertained whether they purposed an attack against the strong krepost Ustlaba, or against some of the weaker stanitzas. Before they reached a certain village, they came suddenly on a detachment of fifty Cossacks, escorting a gun. Owing to the dense fog, the hostile cavalry scarcely saw each other ere they came in contact. Flight was impossible for the Cossacks of the Line, but they defended themselves like men. Forty-seven of them were cut down, and only three were captured and carried over the Kouban with the gun. The Circassians did not undertake anything more; probably they thought the Cossacks were the rear-guard of a division, whereas their destination had been to escort the field-piece to Waroneschkaja. Not far from the former quarantine of Ustlaba, they showed us the spot where the bodies of the forty-seven Cossacks had been found. I now thanked my stars for my compulsory detention at Taman, and I was loud in the praises of the Black Sea storms, for on reckoning upon what day I should have reached Ustlaba, if I had not been

detained at Kertch, Feodosia and Taman, I found that it would have been the very time when the Cossack detachment, in question, had been massacred. If we had not been preserved by an unusual accident, my neck and that of my companions would have made a close acquaintance with Circassian steel, or we should have enjoyed the interesting experience of slavery amongst the Caucasian rocks. I had a warm debate with my companions, as to the course we should adopt in the event of being attacked. Successful resistance was out of the question. We were only fourteen men in all, and imperfectly armed. The Circassians seldom cross the Kouban less than two hundred strong. Our escort would probably have given their horses the rein. Their only use is as scouts to apprise you of an attack beforehand. But this can only be done when the country is an open one; amongst thickets you run the greatest risk.

Ustlaba is one of the largest villages in the territory of the Cossacks of the Line. The little houses with thatched roofs, are built in staring, straight lines, like a battalion drawn up in rank and file. The white church with its green cupola, a tower and turrets, standing

in the midst of the place, presents a very picturesque appearance. The fortress of Ust-labinskaja, situated at the distance of a rifle-shot from the village, is more strongly fortified than any of the outposts on the Kouban. We passed the night here, and enjoyed the military tumult that filled the place. Spies had just come down from above, and had been closeted in a private interview with the commandant. The hostile assembly of Urdens took place on the left bank of the Laba; the point where the passage was to be effected was not yet known to the scouts, but the Circassians were hourly expected, and the garrison passed the night under arms. Before sunset, I strolled outside the stanitza, by the bank of the river, my faithful rifle in my hand.

I took advantage of this opportunity to examine the left bank, and caused myself to be ferried over. The ground was covered with a high growth of brushwood, and the silence of evening was only broken by the stroke of the woodman's axe. The repose, and the peaceful occupations of the fishermen and wood-cutter, formed a striking contrast to the movement and the ringing of arms inside the

fort and the stanitza. Whilst there was an almost total dearth of wild trees and bushes on the right bank, the hills on the left presented a rich growth of timber, and the farther you advanced towards the Laba, the higher and more majestic appeared the growth of the oaks and beech trees. I saw no trace of aouls in the neighbourhood; but ten versts to the southward, columns of smoke were seen eddying up, which must have proceeded from the charcoal fires of Circassian villages. Russian guests would not fare very well there, thought I, as I re-crossed the river to the right bank, for even the Cossack woodmen warned me not to remain on that dangerous ground after nightfall. I did not inflict my presence on the commandant of Ustlabinskaja, as the poor man was almost at his wits' end, what with hurry, writing despatches, and receiving messages. He had, however, provided comfortable quarters for me in the stanitza, where I received the visits of some young officers, including an interesting Pole, who heartily embraced my attendant, when he heard that he was a Hungarian. Our conversation related to the danger to which the place was exposed,

and the probable place where the enemy's blow would fall. We also spoke of the destruction of the last detachment of Cossacks. News had been received of the three prisoners, and measures were in agitation for their recovery by ransom, through the medium of the neutral tribes. Half the garrison spent the night under arms, and the remainder slept with their clothes on, and their arms at their side. Even the stout lad of my Cossack host, a boy of five years of age, showed me his firelock.

The golden dawn shone bright and merry through the chinks of the Cossack house. The Circassians had kept aloof, and we all smiled at the terrors of the preceding evening. Forebodings and blue devils are fostered by the shades of evening; every evil becomes doubly oppressive in the night; whilst the cheerful light of day, chases away the spleen and black spectacles, and infuses courage and comfort once more into the heart. Seated in our coach, and galloping, as usual, full speed with our Cossack driver over the steppe, I felt quite joyful again; the steppe wind whistled merrily behind us, a light purple hue tinged the pale blue horizon, and dew-drops glistened on the crowns of the

crocuses and snow-drops. Gazing at the splendour of the opening day, I could no longer comprehend the gloom of the previous night.

Between Ustlaba and Ladoschskaja, as also farther east, towards Stavropol, we often met single Circassian horsemen, who had crossed the Kouban with peaceful intentions. They cannot be distinguished from the Line Cossacks, in matters of dress and equipment. But the genuine Circassian type is not so prominent in the features of the latter; and it is generally easy to discriminate the Circassians, by the greater nobleness of their features, the delicately chizelled aquiline nose, and the thick growth of dark coloured beard. And even if these characteristics were wanting, you could easily recognise the Circassians by their lofty bearing. Whilst all Cossacks who passed, pulled off their caps most humbly, even thirty paces before reaching us, the Circassians rode past proudly, without moving their hand to salute us. The men are usually handsomer than the women, among the Cossacks, as well as the Great Russians. Partly as a physiognomical study, I endeavoured to peep under the caps of all the Cossack women and

girls, at every halt we made at a stanitza. Hence, in my long transit from the Black Sea to the Terek, I must have carefully examined, at least, a thousand females; yet it is only during my stay at the great stanitza of Kaukaskaja, that I find written down in my note-book, "At length again a pretty woman!" I did not see one face so comely as that of my hostess at Taman, during all my wanderings in the land of the Cossacks.

On the other hand, the male population appears to great advantage, especially in the great stanitzas of Ladoschskaja, Kasanskaja, and Kaukaskaja. The boys, who always ran to meet us in crowds, had intelligent, cheerful, and open-hearted faces, into which one could look with pleasure. The iron military code of Russia did not yet crush these poor lads; they moved about unrestrained and merry, and looked at us with bold eyes. At the krepost Tifiskaja, I found a strong infantry garrison, under the German Colonel Wachsmund. At the village of Tinischberg, a Colonel Witzinghof was posted with his regiment; and, in short, all along the line of the Kouban, there were alarming reports, and constant movements of troops.

Following the warning of the Cossack general, we never left our quarters too early, or reached them after dusk. It would be foolhardy to travel along the Kouban by night. The danger of incursions decreases as soon as you reach the fortress of Novo-Alexandropolskaja. At this place, the high road leaves the river, and passes near Tartar tribes, without seeing the Kouban again. Twenty-five versts before Stavropol, at Nova-Troizkaja, we left our Cossacks behind us, and proceeded to Stavropol without any escort. The character of the country, also, alters about here. During the whole journey from Taman to this place, the only undulations that appear on the right bank of the Kouban, are some Mogul mounds, few and far between, and the little molehills and piles raised by the steppe marmots. The only bushes and shrubs are the reeds by the river side, whilst on the Circassian bank, there is a considerable growth of timber, especially on the Upper Kouban. We lost sight of the distant Caucasian chain, even at Kaukaskaja, where you behold endless woody plains on the left bank, inhabited more by Nogay than by Circassian tribes. The

country is indescribably fruitful in this neighbourhood. A cloudy horizon prevented our seeing the icy giants of the Caucasus, even when we approached them more to the south; and it was only at Ekaterinograd on the Terek,* that the mighty chain stood forth in all its grandeur. Before you come to Stavropol, the level steppe begins to be broken by hilly ground, consisting of a tertiary chalk formation, rich in fossil mussels, and covered with a slight growth of dwarf oak brushwood.

Stavropol is a light, airy and rather considerable town with uncommonly wide streets, in which horse-races might easily take place without inconvenience to pedestrians or passing equipages. I longed to make a present of one of these broad thoroughfares to the Romans, instead of their narrow gloomy Corso. I grant that the uncommon regularity of the straight, stiff streets of the capital of Cis-Caucasia remind one unpleasantly, like all Russian towns, of a military state, and the monotony of barrack life. Nevertheless, the sunshine and cleanliness, the elegant form of the modern houses, which

* Stavropol is 220 versts from Ekaterinograd, and is built on the river Ashla.

are painted white, with green roofs, create an agreeable impression, at least, at first. The general staff of the commanding officer of the Line is located at Stavropol, that officer being subordinate to the commanding officer at Tiflis, but, in reality, the conductor and manager of all considerable operations on the Kouban and the Terek.

An escort was given to me to use in all dangerous places on the Terek, by the civil, jolly, and corpulent chief of the staff of Cis-Caucasia, General Trasskin. Meanwhile, I gave myself a day's repose, and made an agreeable acquaintance with the occupant of the room next to mine, a Livonian captain, who passed a pleasant evening with me in animated conversation. The next day we started for the Terek steppe amidst showers of rain.

CHAPTER VI.

Political Relations of the Population of the Caucasian steppe
—The Georgiefsk Market—Arrival in Ekaterinograd—A
View of the Caucasus — Pheasant Shooting — General
Gurko — Dangerous Travelling on the Terek — Vladi-
kaukas.

A FEW versts south of Stavropol, the hills with their tertiary fossil remains, and their small oak woods, disappear, and the bare, gloomy level of the steppe recommences. In clear weather, the tops of the highest Caucasian mountains, and especially the white pyramids of the Elbrus, are visible from Stavropol. We saw nothing of them ; for it rained continually. We performed the journey to Georgiefsk tolerably quickly, as neither dangers nor curiosities induced us to halt anywhere. As far as Ekaterinograd on the Terek, a Russian general may

ride alone without an escort ; for on both sides the country, there dwell only friendly tribes of Nogay Tartars, and a few Kabardans. The latter, notwithstanding their pure Circassian blood, renounce the warlike spirit of their ancestors and their fellow-countrymen in the mountains. It is true that they are not attached to the Russians from partiality, and are almost as subdued by the pressure of circumstances as their Nogay neighbours. The inhabitants of the steppe, from the first, were never able to make any effectual resistance to the Russian bayonets ; and since their love of freedom did not extend so far as to exchange the rich pastures of Kabarda, and the comfortable life in the plains, with the dwellings between the rocky chasms and the eternal snows of the Caucasus, there remained no alternative for them but subjection.

The relations of these Kabardan and Nogay tribes must not be confounded with those of the neutral Caucasian tribes, on the left side of the Kouban. The latter have the mountains at hand as a refuge, and the warlike Mansur Beg, with his gallant followers, at a convenient distance ; for the Muscovites have not yet dared to send

the Russian Natschalniks and Pristafs into their aouls, and make them acquainted with tributes and stripes, like the inhabitants of Georgia and Armenia. Towards the Kabardans, the government shows infinitely more consideration and forbearance than towards any other populations of the great southern Russian steppe, whose geographical position makes all escape impossible. A Russian *employé* holds his head much higher among the cowardly Nogay people on the Sea of Azoff, than in an aoul of the Kabardans, where he well knows that a highly aggrieved population, when irritated, will always find means of flying, leaving their immoveable property behind them, and of ultimately taking revenge. We must readily admit the wise circumspection and discretion of the Russian government, in the administration of the conquered provinces. The Tartars of the Crimea, the Nogays on the other side of Perekop, the Kalmucks on the Don and Manytsch, were obliged to yield unconditionally to the Russian system, they are heavily taxed, tremble if the Muscovite district-officer frowns upon them, and are only safe so long as a good, just, and humane Governor like Woronzoff,

being placed at the head of the administration, secures them from the excessive oppression of subordinate functionaries.

For more than forty years, the emigration of the inhabitants has not been permitted; and, besides, the sea and the great distance, prevent them from escaping with their families and property. If, however, to-morrow, the Emperor Alexander command the introduction of a conscription (which the Tartars especially fear,) those races must immediately obey, for they are bereft of all means of resistance, as well as flight. The Cossack guards them near at hand, as the shepherd watches the sheep. The Kabardans, and in some measure, also, the Nogays in the great steppe between the Terek and Kouban, are treated with mildness as privileged subjects; they pay only a small tax, and do not come under the rod of the Russian police. If, seas or wastes lay between them and the sheltering rocky citadel of the Caucasus, that great refuge of all oppressed people, they would not be treated so gently. The Circassian tribes on the left bank of the Lower Kouban, are treated, on the other hand, as useful friends and allies, and not as subjects, because their

pliant disposition is known, and their assistance as scouts very useful.

Not only do they pay no tribute, but they enjoy peculiar commercial privileges, and they are well paid when they march with the Russian columns against the hostile mountaineers, whilst their most influential chieftains are frequently decorated. The populations composing the three races of the South-Russian and Caucasian steppes, fall into the three previous categories. The mountaineers alone enjoy independence; nevertheless, one-tenth of their clans side with Russia, partly owing to the vicinity of the Muscovite fortresses, partly owing to material advantages, or to hatred entertained against other rival tribes.

I found the little town of Georgiefsk so lively and bustling, that I was induced to remain there a short time, especially as it contained a large market, presenting a surprising variety of costumes and faces, including representatives of all the races inhabiting the neighbouring districts. Though the Crimean market of Simpheropol is frequented by a much larger crowd of people, its elements are not so varied, and hence not so entertaining

as those encountered at Georgiefsk. The majority of the frequenters of the latter market consist of Kabardans, Nogays and Russians, and there was also a sprinkling of gipsies, Elbrus Tartars, Circassians and Armenians. The Kabardans have noble and slender figures, aquiline noses, and darker complexions than the Circassians, whom I saw at Ekaterinodar. Their pronunciation of the Adighè idiom appeared to me distincter and more melodious, and on hearing them speak, it is easier to retain some of the words. There is no difference between their dress and that of the Circassians; their arms are also similar, and they have cast aside, since half a century, their cuirasses, bows and arrows, which have also been discarded by the mountaineers of the Caucasus. Nor is it an easy matter to obtain these articles for money, as they are only kept as curiosities by a few families of Usdens.

The Nogays who were present at the market, had the genuine Mogul type, small, sparkling eyes, and projecting cheek-bones, exactly resembling those of the Calmucks. An old fellow, of at least eighty years of age, with a snow white beard, looked precisely like a satyr,

and his physiognomy appeared to me even uglier and more brutish than the frightful and sensual Soudan negroes in Algeria. Compared with a race so fundamentally ugly, the beauty of the Circassian type, and the handsome Elbrus Tartars of the Karatschai tribe, formed an extreme contrast. Nevertheless, I did not remark among the hundreds of Kabardans and mountaineers present, any form or carriage so distinguished or heroic as those of the Circassian chief Chora Beg, at Ekaterinodar. But it is easy to perceive, amongst the mixture of tribes at the Georgiefsk market, that as regards muscular development, breadth of chest and strength of frame, the Cossacks surpass all the Mohammedan tribes of the steppes, and of the mountains.

We continually noticed in these steppes, solitary mohills, *i. e.*, rude conical mounds, which are ascribed to the Moguls, and probably extend from the shores of the Euxine to the Caspian Sea. In other respects, the journey presented little interest. The mists and clouds concealed the Caucasus, which we were now rapidly approaching. Fatigued, and not in the best humour, we at length arrived at Ekateri-

nograd, the chief town of the Cossacks of the Line, situated on the left bank of the Terek, equalling Ekaterinodar in size, but inferior to the Tschernomorski capital in interest, because it presents fewer opportunities of visits from the Circassians.

Some hours before my arrival at Ekaterinograd, a Cossack had galloped in, announcing the approach of Lieutenant-General Gurko, brother of the Commander-in-chief at Stavropol, who was travelling to Tifis, and required relays of horses for himself and suite along the road. The Russian post-master, accordingly, refused to furnish any horses to other passengers, although the General was not expected until three days later. In order to preserve his person from the rudeness or ill-treatment of the Russian travellers, who were all very savage at the delay, the post-master stuck his Stanislaus order in the button-hole of his laced coat. This decoration protected him effectually from boxes on the ear, and a sound thrashing, to which Russian post-masters are frequently exposed, but not from the curses of the impatient travellers. I endured this delay patiently, in the hope of having better weather for our

journey. We feasted on delicate pheasants, which are here to be had for a trifling sum, washed down with bad Georgian wine, and then we stretched ourselves on our hard straw beds.

When I awoke the next morning, the bright sun (which was quite a novelty) shone in through the crevices of the wall, and my servant, who had gone out before me, suddenly entered my chamber with the welcome tidings, that the Caucasus was to be seen in unclouded beauty. I hurried out immediately, and before me was presented such an exquisite landscape, that I shall never forget it to the day of judgment. The mist, which had so long enveloped the Caucasus, was all dispelled, and a bright clear atmosphere reigned over steppe and mountain. I now heartily rejoiced at the gloomy weather of the last few days, as the surprise was all the greater, the effect of the indescribable grandeur of the whole scene all the more powerful, since the curtain had risen so suddenly. The icy Caucasian giants stood out in an endless chain, forming the background of the steppe. They appeared very near, although their real distance was several days' journey. They rose up over

the dark wooded foreground of the mountain in the most eccentric shapes, resembling teeth, pillars, horns, cupolas, and pyramids. Neither the Swiss Alps, the Taurus, the Atlas, the Balkan, the Appenine, or any of the well-known mountains of Europe, have such furrowed and broken, rocky and snowy precipices, or such bold peaks as the giants of the main chain of the Caucasus. The Orientals have rightly named the Caucasus, "the thousand pointed." Amongst the mountainous countries through which I have travelled in three hemispheres, I am not acquainted with any spot so favourably placed to give you an extensive view over an entire highland region, as the Terek steppe, near Georgiefsk. The traveller stands here at an almost equal distance from both the extremities of the Caucasus on the Black and Caspian Seas. Let the reader imagine an almost entirely level steppe, but slightly elevated above the surface of the sea, and only very thinly sprinkled with trees. In the background of this naked plain, rise up suddenly and almost without a break, a chain of giant mountains, four hundred miles in length, whose average height above the Terek steppe, amounts to from ten to twelve thousand

feet. I much doubt whether there is any spot on the earth more favourably situated for taking in at a glance, chains of mountains of such extent and size. Viewed from the plains, and at a little distance, the Caucasus surpasses the European Alps in picturesque beauty, but in the interior, owing to its want of lakes and large waterfalls, and its scarcity of glaciers, it does not bear comparison with Switzerland and the Tyrol.

The Elbrus, to the south-west, presents itself as seen from Georgiefsk, in a perfectly conical form with truncated summits, and clothed from head to foot in a mantle of snow. According to the barometrical measurement of the academicians who accompanied the expedition of General Emanuel, its elevation amounts to 15,420 French feet, and it forms the centre of an amphitheatre of craters. Although no mountains, in its immediate neighbourhood, rival it in elevation, (the mountains Anal, Kindschal, and Bermamuck, which surround it in the form of a half circle, are from 4000 to 5000 feet lower), yet the Elbrus appears to the eye less elevated, and less magnificent than the Kasbek, to the southward, which, according to the measurement of Meyer, is about the height

of 'Mont Blanc. The Kasbek, whose summit resembles the hump of a camel, is surrounded by mighty giants, but distinctly overtops them all.

Ekaterinograd is a common Cossack town, regularly built with streets at right angles consisting of rather poor little houses, and contains nothing very remarkable. The Terek which flows at some distance from the walls, is not so broad and deep here as the Kouban at Ekaterinodar. I walked for some hours along its banks, in search of pheasants, but found none, although some Cossack sportsmen, even unattended by dogs, returned with plenty of game, which is so cheap, that I bought a brace of pheasants for one and a half paper roubles. A Russian officer can obtain them for half the money, and these birds are so abundant, that the Cossacks put the finest pheasants in their pot, or roast them for their family board.

Whilst we were feasting on this dainty fare, in the little Cossack house, a most unfortunate piece of news arrived, and set the whole community in a ferment. A swarm of mounted Tschetschensians had laid waste the country surrounding Mosdok, had ventured into the

very streets of the town, cut down unarmed men, and carried off prisoners. Mosdok is situated* not many versts east of Ekaterinograd. No such specimen of daring on the part of the warriors of Schamyl had been experienced for six months; and the Russian staff officers made grave faces, when they considered how slight was the protection afforded by the fortresses, against so bold and active an enemy.

General Gurko would not come, but the decorated post-master remained inexorable, and resisted all bribes. At last, I determined to hire three Cossack horses to take me to Vladelkukas, although the journey, conducted in this manner, was very tedious. The first day, we enjoyed the view of the Caucasus chain till nightfall. In the stanitza of Alexandroff, where we took up our quarters for the night, I saw the sun set magnificently behind the Elbrus. The giant summit of this mighty mountain was refulgent with a ruby tint. When the sun had already set, and the Elbrus had become dim and scarcely visible, a light mist, tinged with the reflection of the sun-

* Mosdok stands on the Terek, thirty-four versts from Ekaterinograd.

set blush, stole round the other snowy giants which surround the Kasbek, the summit itself of the Kasbek retaining the illumination longest.

On the second day, the heavens were clouded, the mountains disappeared, and towards evening we had a thick, drifting snow, and a rough steppe wind. My carriage was escorted to Vladkaukas by only a few Don and Oural Cossacks. It was not possible to procure a large number of men, for at every post-house they were obliged to keep twenty-five troopers in readiness for Lieutenant-General Gurko's escort.

At length, this great man, whom the Emperor had appointed Civil Governor in Trans-Caucasia, arrived, and we spent the evening together in the stanitza of Nikolajefsk. I paid my visit to the General, gave him my papers, and at the same time told him that I had brought a letter from Count Woronzoff for his brother at Stavropol. All this made no impression on the General, who, though tolerably good-natured, was regarded as a narrow-minded and rough man, and strongly resembled in countenance, deportment, and manners the cutler N—— at L——. When I had ex-

plained to him the scientific object of my Caucasian journey, a comic expression of extreme astonishment overspread his well-conditioned countenance. I asked the General to allow me to travel on under the protection of his escort, and I must admit that he promised me that I should enjoy this advantage; but he started the next day without waiting for my carriage, though my Cossack was only two minutes after time. Nevertheless, it would have been impossible for me to have kept pace with the General, as he travelled twice as fast as I could do, and changed horses very frequently.

On the third day after my departure from Ekaterinograd, we found ourselves in a very melancholy position. The road was covered with a deep bed of snow; our wearied horses could scarcely be urged forwards; a violent wind blew in our faces, and the Cossacks of the escort entreated us to hasten, because this country was notoriously dangerous. My coachman was a young Cossack of about fourteen years of age, who was in the most horrible alarm, and who thrashed the horses with all his strength, without being able to bring them to a trot. I consulted with my conductor what to

do, should a band of Tschetschensians show themselves on the Terek. We must naturally have cut the traces and fled; for what could five men do against a hundred?

I recited Pouschkin's Tschetschensian song, and repeated the last words in a loud voice, in order to increase the alarm of the Cossack boy: "Tschetschentz chodit sa räkoi," (the Tschetschensian goes by the river). On hearing this, the boy was terrified, and looked, full of anxiety, towards the white banks of the Terek; but the thick snow-drift deprived the enemy of all desire of indulging in a plundering expedition into the steppe; and we, at length, reached Vladikaukas with whole skins, and without having met one hostile Tschetschensian.

Vladikaukas, the strongest and most important stronghold of Russian Cis-Caucasia, is situated at the foot of the Caucasian outlyers, in a plain, on both banks of the Terek, and commands the entrance of the mountain pass which leads from here through the ravines and narrow defiles of the Terek, to Georgia. The neighbouring mountains are finely wooded, especially on the eastern side, where, however, it is dangerous to take a walk, and where no

Russian wood-cutter would dare to go without a strong military escort. In Vladikaukas there is a very respectable inn, kept by a Pole, containing a billiard-table, and a numerous society of Russian officers. The garrison consists of several regiments, at that time under the command of General Baldinin, a brave and jovial man, whom the soldiers loved as a father.

On the day of my arrival, there was a great military review, and hundreds of the neighbouring mountaineers had come down to behold the sight. The greater part of these Caucasians consisted of Ossetians, Tschetschensians, and Ingusches. As I should not readily find other opportunities of observing so many individuals of these races, inhabiting the north side of the Caucasus, I determined to remain some few days at Vladikaukas.

CHAPTER VII.

Stay at Vladikaukas—Indifferent Success of the Russians on the North Side of the Mountains—An Ossetian Physician—The Ingusches—A Military Review—A Polish Jew as Prisoner of Schamyl—Journey across the Caucasus—Its Natural Features—The Kreuzberg—Detention at Ananur—Arrival at Tiflis.

“VLADIKAUKAS is still, as it used to be, a very important and useful military centre, where every one seeks refuge after escaping from the ambuscades of the Circassians and Kabardons in the neighbourhood. The old barbarous mode of life still prevails among the natives, so that even the smallest excursion is attended with danger, and on that account forbidden.” Nineteen years ago, Perrot wrote the previous remarks during his second journey through the Caucasus, and they are still in great a measure applicable to

the present time. The road from Ekaterinograd to Vladikaukas, is still considered very unsafe, and no Russian soldier would venture alone, out of range, beyond the wall of the fortress, in the direction of the mountains. Those who know the importance which all the Russian leaders attach to this stronghold, on account of its situation commanding the great pass to Georgia; those who recollect reading in the various narratives of travels, that important masses of troops are always concentrated there, that every means are used by the Russians by steel and gold, either to subdue, or to win over the neighbouring tribes, and those who compare the mightiest endeavours with the small results which Russia has obtained after more than fifty years occupation of these head-quarters of the Caucasus, will not lose confidence in the determined resistance of the mountaineers, nor pronounce, like Neumann, those persons to be "dreamers," who assert that the war in the Caucasus will continue, and that the freedom of the Daghestan and Tschetschensian tribes will be preserved for more than a century.

During my residence in this stronghold, the scene appeared as animated and warlike as at any former period. In the inn, kept by my

Polish host, I met a number of Russian military men, and the threatening aspect of things was the general talk of the day.

Within the fortress at Vladikaukas, the Russians are perfectly secure from all attacks, the garrison being always numerous. Surrounding this place, is a small neutral territory, occupied by Ossetians, Kabardans and Ingushes, who side partly with the Russians, and partly with Schamyl. A league further in the mountains, begin the dwellings of the free tribes. Any Russians who ventured among them, would be retained as prisoners, or sold as slaves in the interior of Tschetschina. The Russian wood-cutters dare not venture even in the woods which cover the neighbouring hills to the east and south of Vladikaukas, without the escort of a strong detachment, and even then they are in continual fear of an attack. A mountain war against an inflexible, fanatical and freedom loving people, is attended with difficulties, which baffle the most learned combinations of European tacticians, and the Russians with all their immense hordes, their inexhaustible resources, their firmness and bravery, are not much nearer the subjugation

of the Caucasus, than the Tartars, the Turks, and the Persians were before them. We do not imply by this, that the Tschetschensians, by means of Schamyl or his successors, will be ever destined, or will ever be able to preserve Asia from a Russian invasion. The great Caucasian road, so wonderfully laid down by nature, and commanded by the fortresses of Vladikaukas and Dariel, has never yet been blocked up, either by Schamyl or his predecessors, Shasi Mullah and Scheik Mansur, and so long as they cannot effect this, no power in the world is able to protect the whole of central Asia from a Russian invasion, if at any time an ambitious Emperor should occupy the Russian throne.

The eastern Caucasians are inferior to the genuine Circassians, in physical development; even the Kabardans here are less handsome than their clansmen on the Kouban and the Black Sea. A tall, lean man, with a coal-black beard, an aquiline nose, an earnest expression, and intelligent eyes, pleased me the most amongst all the natives present. I took him, (for he was splendidly equipped,) to be an eminent chieftain, and was not a little

surprised, when Colonel Nestoroff, the commandant, introduced the imposing Caucasian to me as an Ossetian physician. He was not only celebrated as a medical man amongst his countrymen in the mountains, but had also a considerable practice amongst the Russians, and the regimental doctors were not a little jealous of their barbarous colleague. He had at this time under his care, a Russian lieutenant-colonel, whose fractured arm none of the Russian surgeons had been able to cure, with all their ointments and bandages, whilst the curative system of the Ossetian, which consisted of vegetable fomentations, produced immediately a good effect. The invalid officer* repeatedly assured me that the other mountaineers present were chiefly Ingusches, of the so-called neutral tribes. The Ingusches speak, like the Tschetschensians, a dialect of the Mizdschegsch language, and appear to have the same origin as the latter warlike people, but they do not enjoy an equal re-

* Some months after I met the Lieutenant-Colonel again in Tiflis. He still wore his arm in a sling; and the tone of exaggerated praise in which he spoke of the Ossetian physician, at Vladikaukas, was greatly altered.

putation for bravery, and Schamyl can depend less on them, than on any other of the mountain tribes of the Eastern Caucasus. Only a small number of the Ingushes appear to acknowledge the Mohammedan belief, and they are not so fanatical as the Lesghians and Tschetschensians. Like the Ossetians, their neighbours, the Ingushes appear to be indifferent with regard to their religion, although they practice some secret religious ceremonies. Klapproth, who remained some time in their neighbourhood, maintains that the Ingushes, whom he calls a "free and independent people," have a peculiar religion, and are equally averse to Christianity and Islamism. Their god is called "Dale." Their priest is always an old man of upright life, whom they name "Zanin stag," which means "a pure man," and who kills the victims for sacrifice. Sometimes, the Ingushes make pilgrimages to the ruins of the Christian churches existing in their mountains, which, like all the Christian ruins in the Caucasus, whose origin is buried in obscurity, are ascribed to the Georgian Queen Thamar. The Ingushes frequently borrow their names from animals; some are called

dog (Pon), others, pig (Hoka), and the women have still more singular names, for instance, "Assir Wachara," (who rides a calf,) "Assiali wachara," (who rides a cow). If an Ingusch loses a son, another who has lost a daughter comes to him, and says: "Thy son will require a wife in the other world; I will give him my daughter; give me the price of the bride." Such a proposal is never rejected, even should the price of the bride be thirty cows. .

The mountaineers, some hundreds of whom, came daily to visit Vladikaukas, appeared to be much interested in a great military review which I witnessed. Their eagle eyes were steadily directed towards the lines of muskets in the Russian ranks. The regular movement of thousands at one word of command, the united rattle of weapons as they clashed with one stroke in performing the exercise, the marches, the evolutions, the flourish of trumpets, and the band, presented features which fixed their attention in the highest possible degree. The exercise was fatiguing, as it lasted a long time; the air was cold, snow lay on the ground, and during the examination of the soldiers'

knapsacks, the men were obliged to lie down on the snow.

I was particularly interested in comparing the broad-shouldered, snub-nosed Russians, with the slender Circassians, with their noble aquiline profile, as they stood together, in dense masses, near me. In the countenances of the former, appeared a uniform expression of patience and brutish obedience, every trace of spontaneous thought being entirely drilled out of them. On the other hand, I beheld a fearless demeanour, a haughty expression of countenance, each individual feeling himself a man, and being a thorough hero. What could those Ingushes think of this spectacle? If closely pressed with obtrusive questions, they would scarcely have confessed their inmost thoughts, and it was necessary to guess them through the expression of their countenances. Perhaps I may be mistaken, but I thought that I read nothing favourable to the Russian system in them. Those faces full of pride, hatred, and contempt, seemed to say, "Look at them, those drivelling slaves, who would make us bend our necks beneath the yoke of their master—is not their lot the most miserable? Let us thank God that we

do not, as yet, share their fate, and let us fight on to the utmost, rather than become slaves as they are."

A special house, with a suite of small furnished rooms, has been established for the officers and strangers travelling to Vladikaukas. Among the soldiers who are stationed here, for the escort of travellers, I met a Polish Jew who spoke German. My acquaintance with this man, whose origin could be divined at first sight, was of the greatest interest to me, as he had lived in captivity for three years in the interior of Great Tschetchina, as slave of the Murad chief, Achwerdi Mahoma; he had often seen Schamyl, and was able to give me much information respecting the state of affairs in the interior, Schamyl's personal peculiarities, and the manners of the Murids and mode of life of the Eastern tribes. Unfortunately, this Jew had not the gift of observation to any great degree, and his intelligence consisted exclusively in a sort of cunning, and the art of dissimulation which had eventually rescued him from slavery. Of the Caucasians he spoke unfavourably. During the first part of his captivity, especially when he did not understand much of their

language, he suffered very severely ; he was obliged to labour hard, endured hunger, and was so often punished with blows, that he thought himself almost fortunate to be again amongst the Russians.

As a married soldier, he found himself here less unfortunate than most of the other privates, for the pretty face of his young wife, gained him the protection of some staff officers, and the musketeer Isaac, was happily not of a very jealous disposition. In order to assist his memory, and make his tongue somewhat voluble, I treated the Jew to a couple of glasses of excellent arrack. This made him decidedly more communicative. The particulars which I learned from him respecting the condition of the enemy's country, and especially of its energetic chief, I shall reserve for a subsequent part of this work. Thus much must be evident to all who have had intercourse with people who have seen Schamyl with their own eyes : that we must not regard this bold leader as a noble hero of the stamp of the Arab Saladin, or the Scotch Rob Roy. He shares with Abd-el-Kader, fanaticism, a warlike spirit, priestly eloquence, and an exact knowledge of his people, firmness,

and the talent of a partizan leader, without the natural mildness, deep spiritual piety, and priestly cultivation of the Marabout; also, without having those impulses of magnanimity and generosity, which the Arab chief has shown in many cases. It is a remarkable fact, that both exercise the same denial in reference to sexual instinct. Schamyl, like Abd-el-Kader has only one wife, whom he seldom visits, and from whom he lives separate for months together.* This characteristic will appear especially remarkable to those who know that chastity is one of the rarest qualities of Orientals.

As far as the station of Lars, I made use of Colonel Nestoroff's written order for escorts. Proceeding thence, we travelled over the main chain of mountains in two carriages, and without any escort. The entrance into this celebrated Caucasian pass, which begins about a couple of versts south of Vladikaukas, affords a rich entertainment to the lover of romantic scenery. The rocky declivities enclosing the

* This is opposed to Bodenstedt's opinion, who says, that Schamyl has three wives. I believe, however, that Mr. Bodenstedt has been incorrect in this, as well as in many other respects.—*Author.*

pass are generally steep, frequently precipitous, rising in the form of terraces, in many cases presenting a jagged outline, and always displaying picturesque and diversified forms on the side of the pass. Trees decorated with beautiful foliage, though at this season leafless, adorn the declivities, yet the woods become continually thinner the higher you ascend, and when they disappear, the rocks lose their most beautiful ornament, without finding a compensation even in the more majestic forms of the mountains in the main chain.

The rocky scenery of the Caucasian pass is relieved and improved by the abundance of copious streams. Springs and rivulets rush merrily over the magnificent granite precipices, and form numerous cascades, which are inferior, however, to the Swiss waterfalls. The Terek, which is, even here, a stream of respectable size, rushes through the pass in its turbulent course, and leaps, wildly thundering down some small falls of inconsiderable height; indeed, during the month of June, the river occupies the entire breadth of the pass, destroys the bridges, and, in a short time, interrupts all intercourse. The Cossacks alone, with their excellent horses,

manage to effect a passage, and the postal communication between Trans-Caucasia and Russia is never entirely interrupted. The magnificence of the view which greets the traveller at the entrance of the pass, was, on the first day, heightened, rather than diminished, by the misty atmosphere.

My companion, a young dragoon officer, and myself, were so enchanted with it, that we could no longer remain in the carriage, and we ordered the two Cossacks, who escorted us, to dismount and take our places, with the promise of a larger *douceur*, in the event of their being called to account for it. Seizing their lances, we vaulted into the saddles of their long-haired steeds, and rode away in front, or drew up behind the carriage, according to the peculiar attractions afforded by the individual features of the scenery. In case the Caucasians had attacked us, it is doubtful if we should have imposed on them as much as genuine Cossacks, but, fortunately, the Tschetschensians did not show themselves.

The trees at Lars are both thinly scattered and small in size, and the traveller has to pay dear for fuel. We passed the night here,

visited the old castellated ruins in the neighbourhood, whose origin is unknown, and chatted in the evening over the tea-table with the drunken post-master, who spoke a little German, and described the difficulties of the way over the Kreuzberg in dismal colours. Some days afterwards, we travelled on without any escort. The danger of an attack is greatest in the steppe, and in the mountain passes. It diminishes as you climb higher up the pass, and in the main chain of the Caucasus, you travel as safely as in Georgia. Owing to the extreme steepness of the declivities of the pass, the boldest robbers of the Caucasus would not readily venture into the defile to lie in wait for travellers, for their return with their booty over the almost perpendicular rocks, would be a very difficult matter to accomplish. The neighbourhood of the Kasbek, where the traveller enters the central chain, and where the pass widens considerably, is not inhabited by Tschetschenians or Ingushes, but chiefly by Ossetians, nominal Christians, mixed with a few Georgians. These Christian Ossetians have similar weapons, and dress like the other Caucasians. They are quite as faithless, and as eager after

the property of strangers, but do not possess the energy, the religious fanaticism, the proud independence, and the warlike spirit of the Mohammedan tribes of the Caucasus. They fear the Russians, and those of their chiefs who are in the Russian pay, keep on good terms with their masters, through fear, and personal interest. Since the Russian government lays the greatest stress on securing the connection between Cis- and Trans-Caucasia, robberies on the part of the Ossetians would draw down the heaviest punishment on them at the hands of the Muscops, and the inhabitants of the higher mountains are not protected, like the people of the lower chains, against the attacks of the Russian columns, by impenetrable woods or inaccessible rocky defiles.

The rocky forms of the central chain, notwithstanding their greater altitude, are not so ruggedly wild, so jagged, or so picturesque as in the subordinate chain. Sir Robert Ker Porter, a noted British traveller, who made the same journey over Kasbek, speaks of the beauty of the scenery in extravagant terms, and thinks that no other mountains he has seen can be compared with the Caucasus in magnitude

and picturesque beauty. This opinion appears to me exaggerated. The Caucasus is deficient in lakes, like those of Switzerland, and no glaciers have been hitherto discovered equalling those of Chamouni in size, nor does it offer any waterfalls to be compared with those of the Aar and Staubbach.

As we advanced, the mighty Kasbek was enveloped in mist. The villages situated at its foot, on both banks of the Terek, are inhabited by Georgians, and a convent erected on its declivity is inhabited by Georgian monks. We took up our night quarters at Kobi, which is situated somewhat higher than the village of Kasbek. The miserable hamlet of Kobi is perched in the middle of an Alpine valley, which was covered with a considerable quantity of half-melted snow, notwithstanding the advanced season of the year. We whiled away the time till evening in shooting wild-fowl, but, to our vexation, found no new or rare species of birds.

The following day, we equipped ourselves for our journey over the Kreuzberg. Six horses were harnessed to my carriage, and yet we proceeded at a very slow pace, on account of

the steepness of the declivity, and of the masses of snow which, after being daily removed by a host of labourers, were continually renewed by fresh snow-drifts and avalanches. The road attains here the great elevation of 7534 feet; the quicksilver of the thermometer fell to 22°, and a cutting storm wind blew the snow-flakes in our faces. I reckon this day on the Caucasus as the most trying I ever experienced. Notwithstanding our fur cloaks, we were nearly frozen. About a mile from Keschaur, the snow was so deep on the edge of a precipice 2000 feet in depth, that the drivers almost despaired of advancing, and persuaded us to alight, and we waded up to our middle in snow, following the carriage, which was almost suspended over the frightful abyss at our side. I cannot conceive what would have happened if we had chanced to encounter another vehicle, as it was impossible to turn aside or to turn back, owing to the narrowness of the road.

At length, when we reached the miserable post-house at Keschaur, I felt extremely unwell, and I threw myself, quite exhausted, on my straw bed; but a profuse perspiration produced considerable relief, and I was able to join the

party at tea. A warm fire and steaming kettle gradually restored our good-humour, and we recovered our spirits, though we lamented that we had not made the sea-passage to Redout-Kaleh, and voted a spring journey over the Caucasus to the devil.

The southern declivity of the Kreuzberg, towards Pasanur is not so steep as the northern slope, but it is very arduous, and in winter somewhat dangerous. Nevertheless the skilful driving of our Russian postillion secured us from all serious accidents, though the axle of my carriage broke between Pasanur and Anamur, and this untoward circumstance condemned me to remain some days longer in this beautiful, but rather secluded spot. The inhabitants of Anamur are Georgians. They observe strict fasts, and there was considerable difficulty in obtaining food, because these bigoted people consider it sinful even to sell flesh during Lent. On offering twice its value, however, they were induced to sell us half a ham, but we were obliged to carve it with our own knives, as their tender consciences made them reluctant even to touch the forbidden food. The christianity of the Georgians is confined to strict fasts and mumbled orisons, for

we cannot commend them on the score of morals and commercial intercourse. Charity and benevolence seem, almost unknown to them, but to chew a piece of ham before Easter, is regarded as a damnable sin, which could not be atoned for by everlasting fire. The Oriental Christians perform the same follies during their fasts, as the Mohammedans during the Ramazan.

We proceeded on our journey, after a delay of of a few days, passing through Duschet and Mizchet, to Tiflis, and arrived at this capital of Trans-Caucasia, at a favourable time of the summer.*

* The Pass of the Kreuzberg is called in Russian, "Kres-towaja Gora," both names signifying "Mountain of the Cross."

CHAPTER VIII.

Residence at Kasbek—Natural History—Wanderings in the Mountains to the Regions of Eternal Snow—Details respecting the Sect of the Duchoborzi—Glaziers of the Kasbek—Excursions to Kobi—The Ossetians—Mineral Springs of the Caucasus—Caucasian and Swiss Scenery compared.

AFTER a three months' residence in Trans-Caucasia, I returned to the Caucasus, in order to spend the hottest part of the summer in the high Alps. Tiflis had become insupportable from dust and glare, and from the deficiency of drinkable water—the parched landscape had lost all its charm, and offered no longer any temptation to our rambling propensities. Upon the heights of the Caucasus, the sun's rays are mitigated by the cool glaciers, and the Alpine breezes, which sweep across them. Delicious

springs murmur in all directions, and just when the Kur valleys of Georgia are burnt up into deserts, the Alpine flora is in its greatest splendour. This summer sojourn in the Caucasus lives in my memory, as the most enjoyable period of all my wanderings in the east. The most favourable time for Natural History researches, and for rambling in all directions through the valleys and ravines of this high mountain region, is during the month of August. Appetite, sleep, frame of mind, were never in finer order than at this time.

The old Cossack and Stephen Nogell the Hungarian, had accompanied me as far as Kasbek. My servants were in the post-chaise, whilst I rode the Cossack horse to enjoy the views. On our arrival at the village of Kasbek, I sent the Hungarian to collect plants and insects on the north side of the mountain, near Vladikaukas. Though the specimens he brought back were not numerous, yet I felt convinced the flora, and more particularly the fauna of that side of the Caucasus, differ from those of the southern slope. During the absence of my companions, I made an excursion to the neigh-

bourhood of the Kasbek, and ascended this celebrated mountain as far as the lower boundary of eternal snow. Two Georgian youths, of thirteen or fourteen years old, accompanied me. They spoke a little Russian, and seemed very intelligent ; their honesty I cannot praise as highly. Opposite Kasbek, on the left bank of the Terek, stands a village of some importance called Kerget, it is built exactly on the slope of the declivity, the houses are constructed with terraces like those of the Ossetians. The inhabitants are a Georgian race, and speak that language—yet their dress and weapons are those of the Ossetians and Circassians. How these Georgians came to be intercalated amongst Ossetians and Ingushes is unknown. Overhanging the village, and about six hundred feet above the bed of the Terek, stands a Georgian monastery. Thus far is practicable on horseback, further up the road becomes difficult, and as the glaciers are approached, it becomes impossible to proceed, except on foot. The green and variegated region of the higher Alpine meadows is separated from the lower edge of the moraines by a broad and deep ravine at the bottom of which thunder mighty mountain torrents ; these moraines con-

sist of immense blocks of porphyritic rock ; a border of somewhat dirty ice skirted each glacier, which following the slope of the mountain from west to east, gradually approach, and then disappear into the depths of the ravine. After surmounting, not without much exertion and fatigue, the ravine and moraines, we pushed on across the ice until we reached the highest glacier. My two young Georgian guides, though strong and active climbers, here began to lose courage and to flag. They spoke of avalanches, robbers, and all kinds of dangers, and represented themselves as completely exhausted, although I am convinced they felt the fatigue less than I did.

I was obliged, therefore, to give way, as no inducement could prevail on them to go further. I ventured on alone to the top of the highest glacier. There, upon a height of nearly eleven thousand feet, I had an unimpeded view of the entire region of glaciers, of the verdant declivities and ravines, far below, covered with rich pasturage, and many tinted Alpine flowers, and of a portion of the higher valleys of the Caucasus, towards the north-east and west ; through which rush numerous mountain torrents. The glaciers of the Kasbek

are inferior to those of Mont Blanc, and of the Bernese Oberland in extent, in size, and in beauty; it is only in the higher regions that the ice has the beautiful blue colour. When I compare the view from the Kasbek with that from the hut of Messrs. Agassiz and Dolfuss, overlooking the Aar glacier, where the huge aiguilles of Finsteraarhorn, Schreckhorn, Wetterhorn and the neighbouring giants advance their icy masses threateningly towards the Grimsel, I cannot but admit, that for grandeur, variety, and picturesque beauty, Switzerland must have the preference, although few of the Swiss mountains equal the Kasbek in bulk or elevation. Nor does the Elbrus, with its regular cone-shaped form, or the lofty mountains in its vicinity, offer any view at all comparable to that of the Jungfrau from Interlachen. It is true, that all the glaciers of the Caucasus have not been visited by Europeans; for instance, we have no description of the mountain land of the Suani, in the Western Caucasus, which must be particularly picturesque, and rich in glaciers. Also, the country of the Ubiches, which no European traveller has yet explored, must have its glaciers.

When I returned to the village on the evening of August 2nd, tired out with my wanderings amongst the glaciers, I found everything in an extraordinary state of confusion. Hundreds of heavily-laden vehicles were rolling slowly through the village ; old men with patriarchal beards, little children, women, with infants in their arms, were seated in them, surrounded by their household, and farming goods, and chattels. These poor emigrants took me suddenly back into Europe. I could have imagined myself at Havre or Bremen ; the costume of the men reminded me of that of the Wurtemburger peasant, but the narrow-brimmed shabby hat, and still more, the long beard, bespoke the Russian. They were, in fact, emigrants from Southern Russia, forced by a ukase of the Emperor to leave their beautiful and fruitful home, on the borders of the sea of Azoff, to settle in the barren deserts of the cold mountain region beyond Achalzich and Gumri, on the other side of the Caucasus, and at the extreme boundary of the Russian Empire. As I had often heard of this tribe, during my stay in the Crimea, I examined them with much interest

whilst they passed through the village, which they continued to do for a couple of days.

Some of the old men of seventy or eighty had a most venerable, almost apostolic appearance, and were so remarkably alike, they resembled so many twin brothers. The women and young girls were rarely pretty; they wore a frightful head-dress, fastened in front by a broad band, and a jacket, generally blue, hung down over the hips, such as Russian serfs usually wear. The children, and particularly the boys, had a gentle, good-tempered expression of countenance. The whole tribe seemed like one large family. Sometimes ten or more waggons would halt, and the men dismount and congregate round some old woman, who, from a huge bottle of schnaps, would distribute a glass to each, and finish by a bumper to herself.

It was easy to see, by their uniform simplicity of dress, their thoughtful expression of face, and their patriarchial communism, that they belonged to one of the reformed sects, and they reminded me of the German Separatists in Georgia. The sight of so many

men wandering forth with resolute and earnest resignation, affected me deeply.

I knew the melancholy lot which awaited them, as I had staid some time at Gumri, and had become acquainted with the Duchoborzi already settled there. They lived in a state of the greatest want and wretchedness; ill-used and plundered by Russian functionaries—many families perished from starvation and misery.

The Duchoborzi were settled, by command of the Emperor Alexander, in the steppes near the Sea of Azoff, as he feared the spread of their religious opinions, should they remain in the interior of the empire. They formed eleven beautiful and flourishing villages on the banks of the Maloschna (Milk River,) in the neighbourhood of the Nogay Tartars, German Moravians, and Malokanians. In no part of the Russian empire was agriculture, horticulture, and the breeding of cattle so flourishing as amongst the religious sects of the Maloschna and Duchoborzi. They grew rich, but kept themselves mistrustfully apart from their neighbours, and permitted no strangers to be present during the performance of the mysteries of their religion—what these were, I have never

heard. The Duchoborzi assemble daily in their churches and sing psalms. They believe that the Holy Ghost, the Father, or the Son dwell in man, but they appear to have no clear conception of the meaning of their religious forms. They listen with the greatest attention to the complicated and fanatical discourses of their elders, and believe that their chief priest holds direct intercourse with the Godhead. He exercises a secret and unbounded influence, before which all tremble. The Russian scholar, Köppen, dwelt some time amongst them, and, no doubt, learnt much about their institutions and secret religious services, but he was forbidden, by his government, to reveal any of the observations he had made.

As long as the Emperor Alexander lived, the Duchoborzi were left in peace. They paid their taxes regularly, furnished recruits, and submitted in everything to their duties as subjects. Social intercourse with the Russians of the national religion was forbidden ; but beyond this they were not aggrieved. On the accession of Nicholas to the Imperial throne, their condition underwent a material change. His wish to restore the unity of the Russian church, was

known, and his consequent dislike of Sectarianism. This was sufficient to excite the priests and functionaries in the vicinity of the Duchoborzi to a series of persecutions against these unfortunates. They were accused of sheltering escaped criminals within their villages, and of burying their dead without making any report in the official registers. It was also said, that persons suspected of revealing any of their ceremonies, were tried secretly, and never more heard of. Upon these vague reports, a commission of enquiry was set on foot, and the threat of exile to Siberia or Trans-Caucasia filled the pocket of many a hungry official. Impartial men, however, maintain that the suspicion of the Duchoborzi affording shelter to deserters, is not unfounded, as the following circumstance, if reliable, will prove. A Russian Isprawnik (police-officer), had traced one of these fugitives to a Duchoborzi village. This being found out by the inhabitants, they murdered the man to avoid detection, and threw the body into a mill-stream, belonging to a German colony, with the intention of casting suspicion upon the colonists. These facts, though never clearly proved against them, were the ostensible reasons

for drawing down upon Sectarians, a general persecution; more than a hundred were imprisoned, scourged, and tortured, though they gave certain proofs of their innocence.

Soon after this, an imperial ukase sent them all forth as exiles to the most sterile and melancholy part of Trans-Caucasia, at the utmost limits of the empire, where grain only ripens in the hottest summer, and they have to depend almost entirely on the breeding of cattle, as a means of sustenance. I was staying in Arpatschai, in 1843. Several thousand of the Duchoborzi were already settled there. They formed seven villages; but all the people were in the most wretched condition: the children looked pale, and wasted from the bad quality, and insufficiency of the food. I asked one boy if he would come with me as my servant, and have plenty of food and good clothes to wear. He replied that he would like it very much, if he could take his Maminka (little mother) with him.

Notwithstanding the dreadful misery of these first settlers, which destroyed so many of them, the remainder of the Duchoborzi, to the number of from 4000 to 5000, were unpitifully driven

from their beautiful and prosperous settlements, on the Milk River, to share the fate of the former. They had to sell nearly all they possessed for anything they could get, and then, with patient submission, to set out in their long and melancholy journey over the Caucasus. They had been given the choice of remaining on the banks of the Maloschna, and of denying their faith for that of the Greek church ; but few did so. It is remarkable that a religion, with so vague an idea of the Deity, and of another world, should have enabled them to resist all temporal welfare, and to exchange their comfortable houses for a miserable banishment, rather than accept the creed of the Mother Church they had forsaken.

It is affirmed by those well acquainted with the present state of things in Russia, that the number of schismatics, who practise their religion in secret, is very great.

Some Russians of eminence remarked to the Marquis de Custine, that, although the government kept the existence of these sects as secret as possible, and used very stringent measures to suppress them, yet they seemed ineradicable. It was even whispered to M. de Custine, that these sects might eventually become

dangerous to the government. "C'est par des divisions religieuses que périra l'empire Russe." It is also the opinion of a celebrated German diplomatist, that the first symptoms of danger to Russia, powerful and united as she apparently seems, will most probably arise within the heart of the empire from religious opposition. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the home politics of Russia to judge of this important subject. It may be advanced, however, in opposition to these views, that these sects appear to have no political tendencies, and that the Emperor has not more faithful or devoted subjects, than they who venture to differ from him in creed. For instance, the Cossacks of the Line, who belong to a particular sect, are said to be amongst the bravest and most serviceable troops of the Russian army. None of the Duchoborzi, or Malokanians, with whom I have had any intercourse, have ever complained of the Emperor; they have invariably expressed their deep reverence for him personally. An old man of the Duchoborzi said to me in conversation: "The Emperor is not to blame for our misfortunes. He is a good and gracious Lord; but the priests and officials have spoken ill of us to him.

He knows us not. God bless Nicholas Paulowitch !”

Such fidelity on the part of persecuted, ill-used, and exiled men, made me shudder even more than it affected me. It reminded me of that Russian boyar, who, suffering during a whole day the tortures of the rack, to which Ivan, the Terrible, had sentenced him, perseveringly exclaimed between every sigh of agony: “Lord God, bless tyrants.”

During the two days the Duchoborzi were passing through the village of Kasbek, I also remained there. The sight of these emigrants had such an effect upon me, that I neglected my scientific excursions up the mountains. The resolute character, the calm submissiveness of this people pleased me. They were grave, yet not dejected ; both women and men were equally active, when there was anything to arrange or repack ; and many of the waggons were skilfully charioteered by the older women, who displayed also great activity in keeping their small droves of cattle together. The miserable booths of Kasbek offered little beyond white bread and nuts, which the young Duchoborzi took from us with *naïve* readiness without a word in reply.

The fathers thanked us by a nod, and a kind look ; whilst the women cried from the waggons, with remarkably sweet voices. "Pakorno blagadarju, Gospodin"—Many thanks, Sir.

When the march of the Duchoborzi through the village was over, we betook ourselves again to our wanderings in the mountains. Though we were at the foot of the Kasbek, only the most easterly of its camel's-hump-shaped summits was visible, nor is it on this side seen to such advantage as on the Karbardan steppes, or from the mountains of Georgia. Like Ararat, this Caucasian colossus loses in majesty when viewed immediately from its base. The Kasbek is totally deficient in that border of forest which gives to the Jungfrau so beautiful an effect, as seen from Lauterbrunnen. A few stunted aspens were the only trees I saw in this neighbourhood, and on the higher slopes the birch willows and aspen scarcely exceed the growth of shrubs. I cannot sufficiently account for the dwarfishness of these trees, as neither the degree of cold in winter, nor the elevation above the sea, are such as to occasion it.

Russian travellers had often told us of fearful avalanches of stone, which, every five or six

years, fall from the Kasbek into the valley of the Terek, and which, for months together, block up the roads, and fill up the bed of the river, thus preventing any intercourse along them, between Tiflis and Southern Russia. These stone avalanches are the accumulated piles of several moraines, which gradually slide down from the glaciers in an easterly direction. On my second visit to the Kasbek, I saw one of these vast accumulations of moraines, which had attained an almost incredible height; its constantly increasing mass was gradually nearing the precipitous edge of the mountain, where, upon losing its equilibrium, it would fall with destructive force into the valley beneath. The inhabitants anticipated that this would shortly occur, and told me it would take many months to disencumber the roads of the *débris*, and bring back the Terek into its proper bed.

The last evening of my stay in the village of Kasbek, I spent most agreeably with several Russian officers from the seat of war at Daghestan; the next day, I set out on my return to Kobi, where I took up my quarters for the third time. We were lodged in the worst room in the post-house, and even this wretched

accommodation was often disputed by newcomers.

The neighbourhood of Kobi is inhabited by the tribe of Ossetians. From their language, they are supposed to be of Medo-Persian origin. They live in aouls (villages), which have a solid square tower in the midst, surrounded by their dwellings, built of stone, and these rarely exceed about thirty in number. As the different tribes of the Caucasus are constantly in feud with each other, these towers or strongholds serve as retreats, into which the inhabitants retire for shelter and defence. The Ossetians have been subdued by the Russians, and are under the administration of a Natschalnik (district officer), by birth a Georgian. He resides in a country-house between Ketschaur and Pasanur. The Russians very wisely try to conciliate these turbulent mountain tribes, whose evident dislike to the Russian yoke they seek to overcome rather by persuasion and compliancy than by force.

It is extremely necessary for a stranger to have a "Konak," or protector, to secure himself, during his wanderings amongst the Moslem as well as the Christian tribes of the Caucasus,

from injury or death at their hands. Such a Konak offered himself to me on my first visit to an Ossetian village; but less from disinterested motives than the expectation of all kinds of gifts in exchange for his proffered friendship. The Ossetians, like the other tribes of the Caucasus, are covetous of gain. My Ossetian friend knew enough Russian to enable us to understand each other, and he spoke largely of the importance of a Konak.

“No Ossetian,” said he, “will dare injure a hair of your head, knowing he will have me for an enemy, and should any misfortune happen to you, my kinschal will not rest in its sheath until it is revenged.”

As I had no great faith in his officiousness, I told him that I also carried a kinschal to defend myself, and that my gun was my best protector. However, as often as I made my appearance in the neighbourhood of his aoul, my importunate Konak, with every sign of the truest satisfaction, would follow me up the mountains wherever I went. He called me “Prad,” (brother), and confessed he never had loved any one before half as well; he begged me also to dispose of all he possessed, and promised to

bring me milk, butter, and cheese to Kobi. He did bring a can of sour milk, which Stephan Nogell said would be scarcely given to pigs in Hungary. My Ossetian friend, with further assurances of friendship, disclaimed all wish of kopecks for the milk. The conversation which followed is worthy of being verbally copied from my diary.

“Brother,” said the Ossetian, “I love thee as the apple of my eye. The milk I bring thee is from my favourite cow, and will be relished by thee; it costs nothing—it is a gift of love; but hast thou not a pair of old boots for me? the road to our aoul is stony and rough, and I am foot-sore.”

I gave him a pair, which did not quite fit him; he took them, but espying a pair of new shoes in the corner of the room, he continued:

“These boots I shall keep in remembrance of thee—as often as I look upon them, I shall think of thee; but there lie good shoes, which will fit me, and make me happy. Give them to me, brother, and all I possess is thine.”

I replied, that I could not part with the shoes.

“Well,” said my friend, “here is a beautiful knife—let me keep this in remembrance of thee, whom I love more than my brother. Drink of the milk—it is good, and allow me to take the knife?”

I nodded affirmatively, but with impatience, to show him I was tired of his importunity.

“The milk tastes good to thee,” said the Ossetian, in the same insinuating tone; “I took it from my best cow, and thou shalt see her. But hast thou any powder? We will shoot *durra* for thee, and bring thee the choicest portions.”

The Ossetian received several cartridges, and still persevered in his suit.

“At Tiflis there is excellent tobacco, which smells sweeter than our mountain flowers. Thou hast certainly brought some of this with thee, and wilt rejoice the heart of my old father, at home, with several pipes of it?”

I told my dear brother, that I was no smoker, and never carried any tobacco with me. The greedy eyes of the Caucasian swept over everything in the room, in order to make a further selection. I signed to the Hungarian to remove such articles as were lying about, to

spare my Konak any further temptation. The milk-can was, in the meanwhile, emptied, and the Ossetian began again his demands.

“The milk has tasted good to thee; I thought it would, for a beautiful cow, such as mine, is not to be found in the mountains. To-morrow I will bring thee more milk; it costs thee nothing. But hast thou not a glass of vodka? I am tired, and my home is far hence.”

I allowed the Ossetian to be presented with a glass of schnaps, and, at the same time, had him shown the door. He took his leave, still protesting that he loved me as a brother, and that the milk did not cost me a single kopeck.

There are no mountains in Europe as rich in mineral springs as those of the Caucasus; about ten years ago, the celebrated baths of Pätigorsk on the north side of the mountains, came into note, and are visited by the St. Petersburgers, though the journey is both long and fatiguing. The ferruginous springs on the north side of the Kreuzberg, between Kobi and Keschaur, are not so well known, and are not used by invalids. I counted fifty of these copious springs; they

gushed forth in large jets, out of a deep basin, and form small cascades which fall over the precipices.

The varied and beautiful meteoric effects, so common in the Tyrol and Switzerland, the gorgeous spectacle of the sun rising and setting, the sublimity of the thunderstorms, the peculiar piles of mist which look like aërial spectres, hovering over mountain and valley, are very rarely seen in the Caucasus, where, during summer, the clear, blue cloudless, sky is seldom overcast. Once only did I enjoy the spectacle of a violent thunder-storm, it was on the 8th of August, about mid-day there reigned an unusual stillness in the atmosphere, whilst a gloomy twilight gradually stole over the landscape, magical and ever varying lights glanced across the mountain peaks, caused by the broken rays of the sun. The silence was, at length, interrupted by the most terrific explosions, and then commenced a scene, to which my feeble pen is unable to do justice. The giants of the Caucasus looked dark and mysterious in the sullen gloom; clouds, black as ink, edged with a yellow or blood-red border, sped fleetly past, and spectral shapes of mist in continual metamorphosis, were driven.

along by the raging storm ; the dense masses of clouds emitted molten streams of red and blue forked lightning, which cast over the snowy slopes of the Caucasus a lurid horrible brightness, and the triply echoing peals of thunder reverberated with solemn grandeur through the mountains. At length, when the contending elements had expended their wrath in angry strife, a beautiful double rainbow gently spread its lovely tinted bow across the sullen sky, as peacemaker, and lastly, the silvery beams of the moon burst forth upon the scene. The lightning grew less vivid—the thunder rolled growling away, and the wrath of the elements was appeased.

I remember only two scenes, in all my wanderings, at all comparable with this, one was in the highlands of Armenia, the other in the Swiss Alps, near the Lake of Lucerne. The storm had concentrated itself around the mountains of that neighbourhood, and I actually stood within its atmosphere. The valley of the Rigi, with the little village of St. Maria Zum Schnee, with the peaks of the mountains, were illuminated by magical electric lights, resembling Bengal fire. A rainbow of unusual brilliancy spanned the

Rigi, terminating in the valley beneath ; a few greyish clouds of changeful appearance, swept constantly to and fro ; if to this, we add the wonderfully beautiful panorama of this celebrated locality—a scene may be imagined little inferior to that of the Caucasus.

I have seen the sun rise and set from both the Kreuzberg and the Kasbek, but have no hesitation in saying, the scene is less enchanting than from the mountains of Switzerland or the Tyrol. It is unaccompanied, in the Caucasus, by that beautiful purple and rich change of colouring, which is usual in the European Alps.

Being driven by the fleas, one morning, earlier than usual from my couch in the wretched post-house, I found it light enough to contemplate the distant panorama of the wild mountain region which surrounded me. To the north, the higher snow-covered peaks of the Caucasian Alps were visible ; to the east, rose lofty, precipitous mountains, mostly of a pyramidal form ; to the south, the summits only of the mountains were snow-capped, whilst thick forests clothed their base. To the west, the mountains were of a lower elevation than the

others, and, except in the ravines and hollows, were free from snow. It was completely daylight before the sun appeared. The edges of the clouds floating above the western mountains were first illuminated; then the higher peaks of the central chain to the north caught the glow. Their relative height was easily ascertained by the rotation in which they reflected the first beams of the God of day. The eastern horizon then burst forth like a brilliant conflagration, and, at last, the sun rose, dazzling and golden, but without the rosy blush of dawn.

Beautiful as this was, sunrise from the Rigi and sunset from the Bernese Oberland, are incomparably finer. How vividly do I remember the summer evenings spent at Interlaken. There the lovely Jungfrau, like a heavenly spirit in purest white, looks down upon pleasant Böödeli; the setting sun reflects a rosy light upon it, exquisitely beautiful, which, as it fades away, leaves a solemn, death-like effect upon the imagination, as if the spirit of the mountain had passed away, leaving only the corpse, adorned by its circlet of green forest, for the last ceremony. I have seen nothing similar to this in the Caucasus.

From the Terek steppes and the uplands of Georgia, the Caucasian mountains surpass those of Europe in grandeur, and as the Russians are not yet acquainted with a hundredth part of their valleys and ravines, there may be many highly picturesque spots, scarcely inferior to our Alpine scenes, and waterfalls to equal in beauty those of the Aar at Handek, or the Reichenbach in the lower valley of Hasli; but it is ascertained with tolerable certainty from the natives, that this mountain region is totally deficient in those lovely crystal lakes, one of the greatest charms of Switzerland, and which render it the most beautiful mountain region in the world. Such a union of the lovely and sublime, as may be met with about the Lake of Thun, or on the north side of the Lake of Lucerne, opposite Mont Pilatus, might be in vain sought for in the Caucasus. Neither can the varied and picturesque charm of the view from the Rigi be equalled from any of the Caucasian heights. The forests of the Caucasus, especially towards the Black Sea, and the flora of the treeless region, are decidedly richer and more extensive than those of the Tyrol and Switzerland; but this does not out-

weigh the loveliness of the Alpine lakes, or the magnificence of the Swiss glaciers. The character of the scenery from the Ketschaur leaves the beholder cold and untouched, whilst the mere remembrance of the exquisite landscapes of Switzerland and the Tyrol force us to exclaim with Victor Jacquemont, who, at the sight of the highest mountains of the globe—the Himalaya—cried, “Oh! how lovely are the Alps of Europe!”

CHAPTER IX.

Illustrations of the Caucasian Nations—The Tschetschensians
and the Ossetians.

THE erudite and intellectual author of the "History of the Empire of Trebizond," calls the Caucasus, "the gate through which the first unshapen rudiments of culture have passed from the East into Europe." Ritter, in his classical work, "The Antechamber of the History of European Nations," has dwelt on the great importance of the Caucasian mountains, in connection with our most ancient history, and has illustrated the subject with profound and acute researches, and Fallmerayer considers it a matter of certainty, that tribes of emigrants passed over the Euxine as conquerors or settlers from the Caucasian isthmus, in

mythical times, to the districts about Hœmus and Olympus, and that the most ancient history of Greece is to be traced, not in the Peloponnesus, in Attica, or Doris, but in the glens of the Caucasus. But, hitherto, all historical researches have failed in pointing out which of the present Caucasian tribes shared in these momentous migrations. Perhaps this problem may be solved in the future, if all the districts of the Caucasus are visited by skilful philologists, and ethnographers. One of the most distinguished members of the Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg has proposed this comprehensive plan of an expedition to the Caucasus. A special inquirer should be devoted exclusively to every Caucasian dialect. An important advantage might accrue to our historical and ethnographical knowledge, if the Russian government could be induced to adopt this plan.

Several eminent scholars have occupied themselves of late years with the language of the Western Caucasus. Sjögren and Dubois de Montpereux have confirmed, by careful study, the opinion previously advanced by Klaproth, that the Ossetians dwelling on the highest Caucasian Alps, are of Median origin. Chora-Beg-

Mursin-Nogma, serving in the Circassian squadron of the guard, at St. Petersburg, has recently published a grammar of the Kabardan language, which is almost identical with the Circassian. There occur words in this language which are frightfully difficult to be pronounced by a European tongue, *e. g.*, *Kithetschebsipogopsi* (flowing water), *thithl* (book), &c. The Russian academician, Sjögren, observes that he has practised for hours together to obtain the proper pronunciation of the latter word, but that he only succeeded in doing so twice. The most recent labours of the Swiss, Dubois, in connection with the west Circassian languages are very important. By careful comparison, he has shown with much perspicuity, that the idioms of the Circassians, Kabardans, and Abchasians, belong to the Tschudic stock of languages, and are very closely allied to the Finnic. No one has devoted his attention to the dialect of the Ubiches, Tschigetes, and Suanetians; and we are in like manner almost entirely ignorant of the idioms of the Eastern Caucasus, spoken by the Avars, Ingusches, Tschetschensians, Kists, Kudetches, Chasy-

kumiks, and of the numerous tribes comprehended under the name of Lesghians.

These latter tribes, though generally agreeing in customs, differ often considerably in their languages. Even the number of the different dialects and tongues spoken in the Caucasus is not exactly known. No country upon earth offers so great a medley of races and of languages, within a small compass, as the Eastern Caucasus. Mussudi and Ebn Haukal adduced seventy-two languages; and Abulfeda calls the mountain of the Albanian gate, Djebel-el-Alason, *i. e.*, the mountain of languages. Gldenstedt has given us a few small vocabularies of some East Caucasian languages; but they are meagre and unsatisfactory. Several of these idioms appear even to exceed the Kabardan in uncouthness of tone. Pallas says that the Ingusches speak, as if they have stones in their mouth. During my residence in Trans-Caucasia, I formed an acquaintance with a Lesghian. Though philology is not my branch of study, actuated rather by curiosity than any scientific motive, I wished to turn my acquaintance with this man to account, in drawing up a short vocabulary

of his dialect. To this end, I profited by the assistance of Mr. Abowian, at Tifis, a distinguished linguist, who speaks Tartar admirably—a tongue which is currently spoken among the Lesghians, besides their own idiom. But this little, trifling undertaking of mine encountered greater impediments than I had anticipated: for many Lesghian words are so extremely uncouth, that it appears to me impossible to describe them with our alphabet. Occasionally, some tones would occur that are quite indescribable, appearing to issue from the very intestines of the Lesghian, and to stick in his throat on delivery. I found it impossible to help laughing out loud at some of his tones; but the Lesghian was offended at this, and did not visit me again.

1. THE TSCHETSCHENSANS.

The Tschetschensians are at the head of the resistance to the northern aggressor in the eastern Caucasus, in the same way that the Circassians form the nucleus of opposition in the western Caucasus, whilst the smaller or tamer tribes of the Abchasians, Ubiches, Tschigetiens, Tartars of the Elbrus (Karatschai), and the Kabardans, related with the Adighè by

blood and tongue, rally round them. The term Tschetschensians is only strictly applicable to a small clan of this people, which has, however, become so very prominent by its boldness and energy, that the Russians designate the whole people by this appellation; though including the Kists and Ingusches, which are related to them, the whole tribe of genuine Tschetschensians does not exceed 150,000 souls. The clan is called Midschegi by the Circassians, Tartars, and Lesghians. The extremely uncouth idiom of the Tschetschensians has nothing in common, either with the Circassian idiom, nor with that of the Lesghians, or that of the Tartars and Ossetians, though single words may, in some cases, have been imported from the different Caucasian idioms into the Tschetschensian tongue. Klaproth represents it as perfectly independent and original in its structure, adding, however, that it has adopted many terms from the language of the neighbouring tribe of Avars. The historical origin of the Tschetschensians is involved in the deepest obscurity. They are regarded as the aborigines of the Caucasian isthmus, who, like the other nations inhabit-

ing "the craggy citadel of the Caucasus," have preserved the uncouth customs and military spirit of their ancestors, and they are still as in the time of Æschylus,

"Wild troops, terrible in battle and clash of brazen spears."

The Tschetschensians have, at a very recent period, given a terrible denial to the German *savant* who, in his book, "Russia and the Circassians," estimates so slightly the powers of resistance inherent in the Caucasian nations, and regards them as infallibly doomed to fall under the Russian sceptre and sword. Ritter, our celebrated geographer, gifted with such a marvellous penetration, has more correctly appreciated the defensive strength of these Caucasian mountaineers, when he says: "The wars of Timur, of Peter the Great, and of Nadir Shah, against the people of the eastern Caucasus, have proved that these localities of Daghestan and Lesghistan belong to the great isolated citadels of nations, which are able to protect their defenders and occupants against all the waves of nations that may break against them, and which hurl back the hosts of the mightiest rulers, in the same way that the

raging breakers are dashed back by the cliffs that gird the islands of the ocean."

The Tschetschensians inhabit the beautiful mountain district between the high Caucasian chain and the Terek. Their territory is limited to the eastward by the Koissu, to the westward, by the pass leading from Vladikaukas to Trans-Caucasia. This mountain district abounds in magnificent forests and pasturages; but the lofty situation of the valleys in the Tschetschensian territory, only admits of scanty harvests of corn. Nevertheless, harvest time is an important season for the mountaineers, who commonly remain very quiet till the grain is carried and stacked. When late in the autumn, the hayricks have disappeared from the fields, and the raging waters of the Terek and Sundscha have fallen, it is well known along the Cossack line that no great interval will elapse ere the warlike Tschetschensian yell will be heard. All the Russian posts situated in the Terek plains from Vladikaukas to Vnesapnaja, and exposed to the incursions of the Tschetschensians, Vladikaukas, Grosnaja, Girselaul, and Temirchantschura, are at present the chief centres of Russian operations against the Tschetschensians. The spare bar-

barians of the Caucasus can be seen daily in great numbers in the above named fortresses. Like the Circassians, they visit the Russian fortresses, chiefly for diversion, and the Russians who anticipate beneficial results from frequent intercourse with their enemies, let them enter and depart from their strongholds without any impediment.

At Vladikaukas, a large and important stronghold on the Terek, I saw, for the first time, many bodies of Tschetschensians together, and as I was just come from the Kouban, where I had seen the Circassians, it was natural that I should compare the impression made upon me by these two people. They both play the same part in the Caucasus, but differ in their language and origin, and had no intercourse till within the last few years. I find the following opinion on the Tschetschensians, in my diary, written at Vladikaukas. The Tschetschensians please me less than the Circassians, whom they resemble in their spare figures, bold carriage, and aquiline noses, but without having an identical expression of the whole face. In the countenance of the Circassian Usdens, there prevails a frank, open dashing, and somewhat wild expression, and

their bearing is so chivalrous, that you cannot look at these bandit chiefs without pleasure. A greater energy, and a more sinister and threatening character prevails in the more swarthy faces of the Tschetschensians ; I saw men amongst them, whose eyes flashed with a cunning and sanguinary spirit that terrified me. I could safely accept the hospitality and friendship of a Circassian Usden, but I should not venture to accede to the invitation of a Tschetschensian to visit his aoul. The faces of the Tschetschensian are, generally speaking, somewhat thinner and longer than those of the Circassians, their black beards are more scanty than with other Orientals, *e. g.*, the Turks and the Arabs. Their costume, however, appears to be common to all the tribes of the Caucasus ; scanty brown breeches, brown coats, with a leathern belt round their hips, and with party coloured pockets on both sides of the breast, where they keep their cartridges. Their head is adorned with the Caucasian turban, a great cap variegated at the top, with a broad fur brim, which slouching down over the forehead, increases the wild and sinister character of the physiognomies of these mountaineers. All wore broad kinschals in their belt, and many of

them a long pistol slung over their back. Some chieftains were much more richly clothed ; they wore coats with silver embroidery, and splendid daggers and swords with silver handles. The Tschetschensians, who together with a considerable number of Ossetians and Kabardans were present at the military review, superintended by General Baldinin, in the large square at Vladikaukas, appeared to regard the sight with interest, whilst I surveyed the picturesque figures of the mountaineers with the same feeling.

I reproduce this fragment from my diary, without any alteration, but I confess that the narratives that I had previously heard related by Russian officers, concerning the Circassians and Tschetschensians, may have had some influence on the comparison that I made between the two people. All Russian accounts are somewhat more favourable to the inhabitants of the Western Caucasus than to the tribes peopling the eastern part of the chain.

The faithful observance of oaths is not so common among the Tschetschensians, they treat their prisoners with greater severity, and they are moreover animated with a religious fanaticism,

unknown to the Circassians. The latter characteristic peculiarity distinguishes the Eastern from the Western Caucasians. Among the Circassians, few individuals are circumcised, and if they have cared rather more for the Koran latterly, it resulted more from their wish to show their hostility and hatred to the Christian Russian, than from any spiritual impulse. I received very remarkable oral statements respecting them, from one of the two Englishmen who lived two years among the Circassians with Bell. This Englishman, who had long resided in the East, remarked that "religious intolerance is seldom quite obliterated among the Moslems of the East. Even the enlightened Turks still feel a slight disinclination towards us, which originates in the difference of religion. Not a trace of this is to be found among the Circassians, they knew that Bell and I were opponents of the Russians, and that was enough to secure us a friendly reception amongst them. No one asked about our faith. If the Circassians were not engaged in strife against Russia, they would show the greatest indifference to Islam." In Bell's "Journal of a Residence in Circassia," many passages likewise occur, proving with what little

religious enthusiasm the Circassians are animated. It was once discussed in an assembly of Usdens, if the corn should be burned in case the Russians attacked them. One chieftain remarked: "our book, (the Koran) forbids this." "Oh," rejoined another, "a good deal of nonsense is written in our book."

A remark of this kind would hardly have been ventured by Turkish Grandees. The sophisticated ulemas at Constantinople will never find it difficult to discover passages in that obscure and contradictory book, which by forced interpretation can justify every exclusive regulation, as in the case of that expression in the Koran which pronounces "disorder as worse than murder," and which was made use of by the ulemas to vindicate the practice of fratricide, introduced by Mohammed, and made a law of the empire. But it would never occur to Turkish grandees, openly to reject the language of the Koran, whilst the principal grounds for resistance to Russia, among the Circassians, are an innate love of freedom and independence, together with, perhaps, the hope of plunder and booty; the hatred of Russian supremacy among the Tschetschensians, finds its chief lever in the

glowing fanaticism. All great leaders of the Tschetschensians from Scheik Mansur, who knew twenty thousand spiritual verses by heart, down to Schamyl, the present chief of the Tschetschensians, who plays the part of a prophet, have felt the necessity of basing their secular power on the religious fanaticism of their people, just as Abd-el-Kader did in Algeria. This religious fanaticism in the Eastern Caucasus, facilitates the cohesion of tribes speaking different idioms, under one head, and impedes the progress of conquest to the numerous Russian hosts, which are sure to encounter a protracted resistance in the heroic valour of the mountaineers, the natural features of their territory, a universal citadel for nations, and especially in their ardent religious enthusiasm.

During my residence on the banks of the Terek, and amongst the high Caucasian Alps, I received many interesting accounts of the mode of life, and customs of the Tschetschensians. I was especially attracted by the simple story of a Polish soldier, who had spent almost a year as prisoner amongst that people, and who was detained, moreover, in the immediate neighbourhood of the dreaded chief, Schamyl, whom he

was forced to serve as a slave. He was not able to endure the rough life in the mountains, the severe climate, and the coarse fare, and he took advantage of the first opportunity that offered to return under the Russian double-eagle, though as a Pole, he felt very little sympathy for its cause. If we may credit his statement, he had been taken prisoner by the mountaineers during an expedition of General Grabbe; and he narrowly escaped receiving the three thousand blows with rods, that are commonly inflicted on Russian deserters in the Caucasus, and which imply as much as dying a torturing death, unless there are some humanely disposed officers, who know him, to mitigate the severity of the chastisement. It was with great difficulty that the unfortunate Pole succeeded in convincing the court-martial of his innocence, and escaped an agonizing punishment, which, even according to the admission of Russian officers, is often inflicted on innocent men.

According to the statement of this Pole and other prisoners, who had escaped, or been exchanged, almost the same remarks apply to the dwellings, mode of life, and occupation of the Tschetschensians, as to those of the Circassians.

2. THE OSSETIANS.

The Ossetians have retained no knowledge or memory of the age when their ancestors migrated from other countries to the Caucasian mountains. Their first conversion to Christianity is attributed to Queen Thamar, whose armies are reported to have brought into the Caucasus the crosses, whereof the effigy is often seen on the rocks. The Russians made many efforts, after the occupation of Georgia, to win back to Christianity the Ossetians, who had long since relapsed into Paganism. This was easily accomplished with a people indifferent about religious matters, especially as a linen shirt and a silver cross were given to every Ossetian who underwent baptism. The pious zeal of the new converts was greatly excited by these means, and there was no end to the number of neophytes who aspired to the right of baptism, till at length it came to pass, that one *immersion* was not reckoned sufficient, and that many Ossetians, in order to become genuine Christians, and at the same time to become the owners of a respectable amount of linen, received the holy sacrament five or six times following.

I myself, saw no trace of Christianity among the Ossetians, save that they gave their children Christian names, and can make the sign of the cross.

The Russian government has, for some time, installed priests of the Russo-Greek church in Ossetia. According to the notion of these priests, it constitutes a deadly sin to eat meat, or any animal produce, such as milk, eggs, &c., during their long fasts : and they have begun to preach fasting to their new flocks. But the Ossetian men were scandalized at this. " God," said they, " is very sparing of corn to us on our mountains, and has left us entirely to be supported by our herds and flocks. We shall die of hunger, if we abstain for forty days, from the enjoyment of that which God has given us to support life. But if it be really God's will, that we should fast, he will keep us in health and strength, without any food ; and in order to see if this be really the case, we will make the experiment on you priests." A tribe near Vladikaukas, made the first experiment of shutting up their parson. No bread was given to him, but a glorious piece of roast beef, baked in butter and grease, was laid before him on the

table. The unhappy curator of souls was a good deal distressed, but he managed to hold out the first day. On the second day, however, the good Pope was overcome by the assaults of the flesh, and attacked the joint of beef as bravely as if it had been the eve of the carnival. Hereupon the Ossetian chiefs joined him, laughing heartily.

“You see now,” they said, “that it is the will of God we should enjoy, at all seasons, the gifts He has presented to us.” And at these words, they sat down beside the shepherd of their souls, and helped him to dispatch the roast beef he had attacked. The strict accuracy of this occurrence has been guaranteed to me on the best authority.

A new church has been built at Kobi ; and I was very curious to see what would be the behaviour of the Ossetians during Divine service. I did not, therefore, delay to go there on the first Sunday of my stay, entering the church punctually as the bells began to ring. But the church was as yet very empty, and the Pope, in splendid vestments, with his attendants, was at the door. The bells rang a second and a third time ; but none of the Ossetians entered the church, though numbers of them were

walking up and down before the booths of Kobi. At length, the Pope began the mass ; and the whole devout assembly consisted of a Russian post-boy, who, it must be admitted, kissed the pictures of the saints with great unction. If the Russian government had permitted other Christian confessions to hold intercourse with the mountaineers of the Caucasus, possibly Christianity might have been something better amongst these men, than "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

Capuchins of the Romish propaganda have settled in Georgia and Imeritia ; but they have been strictly forbidden to make proselytes, even among the Mahometans and heathen. Some Protestant missionaries who were sent out from Bâle, men of cultivated minds and the noblest impulses, were driven out of the country by Baron Rosen, in a manner which attaches an eternal disgrace to the name of this former Governor-General. I am acquainted with young Catholic Imeritians, who ardently wish to be educated as missionaries in the school of the Propaganda at Rome ; but the permission of going to the capital of Catholic Christendom is always withheld from

them. No Jew, heathen, or Mohammedan, can become a Christian in Russia, if he do not determine to enter the Russo-Greek Church. In southern Russia, it has happened more than once, that Jews of education have been moved by the sublime and solemn service of the Catholic Church, or by the simple worship of Protestantism, often equally efficacious in rousing and touching the heart, whilst the comfortless formalities of the Greek ceremonies, and the uncultivated character of the Russian priests deterred them. But they were not suffered to become either Catholics or Protestants; and as they would not accept the Russo-Greek faith, they were forced to remain Jews.

Christianity, such as it has been taught to the Ossetians, has not contributed, in the least, in refining the manners of this people. The Ossetians are still, as formerly, regarded as the one of the tribes in the Caucasus that is most addicted to murder, without possessing the heroic valour of the Circassians and Tschetschensians. Blood feuds still prevail amongst them in all their force, and revenge in general, which is constantly attacked in Christianity by the beautiful and merciful principle of love, is especially pre-

dominant amongst them. It happened, during my stay in the country, that eight sheep belonging to an Ossetian, were secretly butchered, during the night. It is possible that the proprietor of the sheep had inflicted some injury on the horse of the man who had cut their throats ; and this is the way in which redress is sought in the Caucasus. But a really dreadful circumstance occurred a few years ago in Ossetia. Two tribes had been excited to the most furious rage and a deadly feud, by a murder ; and many of their members lost their lives, partly in a fair fight, partly by foul means. But as both clans were numerous and powerful, no end could be seen to this feud, till both were utterly exterminated. A compromise was effected, and their dead were counted on both sides. One of the tribes, which had suffered greater losses than the other, received as a compensation a number of children from the rival tribe, who were barbarously butchered, whereupon peace was concluded. I often after made enquiries to ascertain if the Russian priesthood had done nothing to counteract this fearful custom, on Christian grounds ; but I was told in reply

that the priests did not meddle with this practice which is certainly disgraceful, but of long standing, and that, notwithstanding the unlucky adventure of the roast-beef, they persist in preaching a strict observance of fasting to their Ossetian flocks.

A journey from Kobi to Oni is, at the present time, almost unattended with danger, and the traveller may venture even as far as the district of the Suani, who are but little known, and who dwell in the western part of the higher Alps, in the neighbourhood of the most magnificent glaciers, without risk of losing his life, if he place himself under the protection of a Suanian, which he can easily obtain by a donation. In every expedition, however, great caution is required. A couple of stout guides, and good weapons, protect you sufficiently against a single robber, and there is little danger of being attacked by a larger number. I would not, however, recommend any one to travel *alone* here.

Being made quite secure, through the good reception I encountered in a village, I was induced to do a very unwise thing. Both my

servants, the Hungarian and the Cossack, had remained ill at Kobi, and I made a long excursion amongst the mountains alone, with no weapon but my kinschal. Whilst I stood on a beautiful tract of mountain table-land, absorbed in the contemplation of the Kasbek, to the eastward of Kobi, which, with its everlasting masses of snow, presented a surpassingly magnificent appearance, two Ossetians drew near me, and addressed me in broken Russian, inviting me to follow them to their aoul. I was very thirsty, and the prospect of a bowl of fresh milk, overcame the impression which had been created by the unprepossessing physiognomies of these two individuals. Having arrived in the village, I was, as usual, surrounded by many curious persons, whose importunities soon assumed a threatening character. A hundred thievish eyes flashed upon me from under their rakish caps, surveying me, and all I had about me, with undisguised covetousness. They asked me if I were alone, and they talked together, in such a tone and manner as augured me no good. As they did not see anything very tempting about me, they wanted to have my

entomological needles, on which I stuck my butterflies and beetles, and these I distributed amongst them without hesitation. Half-a-dozen hands then attempted to handle my kinschal, but I drew it out quickly, and said in Russian: "My friends, I am very sorry not to have known that I should have been with you to-day. I have all kinds of pretty things at home, which I brought with me from Tifis. To-morrow, I will bring them to you here, in gratitude for your friendly reception."

These necessary lies did not fail in their effect; they let me drink the milk in peace, and asked me what presents I had in Kobi for them. I promised them tobacco and powder, which, after gold, is most esteemed by the Ossetians. This good prospect occasioned great joy. I, however, made haste to take my leave, and get away as fast as I could from this mountain nest, firmly resolved never to return to it again, or ever to visit another aoul without an escort. If any of the Ossetian shepherds beckoned to me from a distance on the grassy slopes of the mountain, I always hastened to climb, up or down, in another

direction ; and as the Ossetians do not use their legs willingly without a motive, I was quite sure they would not follow me.

The Ossetians belong to the great Indo-Germanic race—at least, all the learned, who have studied their language most attentively, agree in this opinion. Dubois and Sjögren appear to have accomplished the most in this respect, although their researches are, as yet, very defective. The dress of this people is in no respect different from that of the Circassians.

Like them, they have the slender form and light, magnificent carriage ; but in beauty, and energetic expression of countenance, they are generally inferior to the Circassians, as well as the rest of the Caucasians, with the exception, perhaps, of the Lesghians, amongst whom, there are a great number of ugly individuals. Their skin is less dark than that of the Tschetschensians, their hair and beards not so black as those of the Circassians. One of the earlier travellers in the Caucasus, if I am not mistaken, Klaproth, says, the Ossetians are all fair ; no individuals with black hair are to be seen amongst them. This is essentially false.

Most of the Ossetians have dark, if not coal black hair. There are many individuals who have brown and red hair ; but there are few genuine blondes. I once related to an Ossetian in Tiflis, that, amongst the learned in Germany, it is a common opinion, that we Germans are of the same stock as the Ossetians, and that our forefathers formerly dwelt in the Caucasian mountains. The Ossetian, who was a very handsome man, with the Circassian aquiline profile, laughed outright at this ; and an educated Russian, who was standing near, agreed with him.

A Wurtemberg peasant, of the colony of Marienfeld, was just then passing by. The plump figure of this German, his broad countenance, with its heavy expression, and his slouching gait, contrasted certainly, in a striking manner, with the glorious figure of the Caucasian. "How is it possible," said the Russian, "that there can be such fools amongst you, as to believe that people of such different types, could possibly proceed from the same stock ? No, the ancestors of these two men, have no more come from the same nest, than hawks and turkey-

cocks. Look you, this Ossetian and that German carry on the same business. They plough the field and tend the cattle. Let them send their peasants to the high mountains, and dress them all in the Caucasian coat, yet you would never make an Ossetian, or Circassian out of them. Even a thousand years hence, it will be easy to distinguish the posterity of both, a mile off."

CHAPTER X.

The Russian army in the Caucasus.

THE strength of the Russian army in the Caucasus is continually varying according to the mortality, and the accession of reinforcements. In 1843, it amounted to more than 117,000 men, of whom 75,000 to 80,000 belonged to the force in Cis-Caucasia, who are scattered in garrisons in the forts along the Black Sea, and in the kreposts along the Kouban, the Terek, the Sundscha and the Koissu.

Whoever takes the trouble to cast a glance over the map, and see the immensely extended line of the Russian operations, will not be surprised at the effective force of 80,000 men in Cis-Caucasia, because this army has not only to guard the east coast of the Black Sea, in a chain

of forts, intended to cut off all communication between the Circassians and Turkey, but also to protect the extensive Cossack settlements on the Kouban and the Terek, embracing a length of 1200 versts, and to watch the two great arteries of communication with Trans-Caucasia. Besides all this, it must furnish the necessary troops for the expeditionary columns of the Russians against the interior of the hostile territory. The occurrences in Daghestan, in the years 1842-43, have proved, that up to that date, the force had been even insufficient, and pressing requests were made for reinforcements, especially as the destructive fevers were unusually fatal in those years. In years when the intermittent fevers were most fatal, there commonly died one-sixth of the whole Caucasian army. The mortality was especially great in the fortresses along the Black Sea ; and experience has proved that the intermediate countries between the hills and the sea, where the blocking up of rivers creates great marshes, are not the most unhealthy, but that it is the sea air that gives a predisposition to fever, in countries near the coast, and exposed to it. In proportion as the Russians build kreposts, to encircle the moun-

tains, they weaken their line of operations, and they require a greater accession of strength. The Russians have committed the same fault in Circassia, as the French in Algeria in former years, when they attempted to strengthen their position by numerous fortified villages, intrenched camps, block-houses, &c., till Abd-el-Kader showed the futility of the plan, by breaking into the Mitidja plain in 1839, (November). Bugeaud superseded this system by *colonnes mobiles*, and obtained great successes. In the Caucasus, the former enterprize of Chasi-Mullah against Kislar, the attack of Mosdok by the Tschetschenians, and the success of Schamyl in Avaria, have proved the impossibility of checking the incursions of an uncommonly swift enemy ; and there is reason to anticipate that orders will emanate from St. Petersburg, to change a system that has been hitherto so unprofitable. If the intelligence I received in southern Russia were correct, concerning the movements of troops in the Caucasus, the efficient force of the Russians in Caucasia, including 20,000 fresh troops, will amount to 100,000 men. The 37,000 men in the Trans-Caucasian provinces, are much scattered, and serve chiefly to guard the extensive

frontier lines on the side of Persia and Turkey, in order to protect the Russian territory from the inroads of the plague, and of smugglers. The frontier guards consist chiefly of Don Cossacks ; but they do not prevent the entrance of the Oriental contagion, or of English contraband goods. The plague is continually imported from Bajesid into the Tartar villages of the province of Erivan ; and smuggling, though on a small scale, is actively carried on, especially with Persia.

At Vladikaukas, the great stronghold of the Russians in the Caucasus, I was present, for the first time, at a review of Russian troops. I had previously observed among the Tchernomorski Cossacks a resemblance to the Magyars, and, in the Line Cossacks, a greater mixture of types ; and now, amongst the infantry, I remarked an almost universal prevalence of the Slavonic type. All the soldiers were powerfully built men, with broad faces, broad shoulders, and respectable mustachios ; and they performed their evolutions with incredible accuracy. Notwithstanding the very unbecoming grey great-coats, there is no mistaking the uncommonly powerful frame of the Slavonians. The Russian regi-

ments seem almost exclusively composed of grenadiers with broad shoulders and large bones; and I am not surprised that such men have always been formidable opponents in a charge of bayonets. Ségur relates that, on the field of Borodino, you could always distinguish a Russian from a French or German body, by its greater massiveness. Such a large and solid make, with such considerable muscular development, gives the Russians in rank and file, a great advantage over troops that are not so powerfully built. To this must be added an iron discipline, which the Russian army possesses in a higher degree than any other in Europe, the habit of obedience and of endurance till death, and that bull-dog stubbornness peculiar to the Slavonians, who never let go when they have once seized hold. Frederic the Great used to say: "The Russians can be killed, but they cannot be worsted;" and his dashing hussar, Seidlitz, who scattered the perfumed and powdered French at Rossbach like chaff, had to sweat blood with his bearded troopers, at Zorndorf, before the day declared against the Russians. Napoleon's victorious guard experienced the same resistance at Eylau.

The grenadier stature of Russian soldiers, and their property of standing like a wall in a shower of bullets, are very valuable qualities in regular pitched battles, and an open country, but they are not of much service in the Caucasus, where the stout Russian climbs up the steeps, puffing, sweating, and with endless labour, whilst the slender, active Tschetschensian runs up them in half the time. The tribes of the Caucasus know the strength of the Russians in rank and file, when shoulder to shoulder, in serried array, they present a stern fence of bayonets to the assailant. The charges of the Circassian cavalry fall powerless on these steely cliffs. But the Tschetschensians know from experience the weak side of the Russian army. They avoid as far as possible to engage with a close column; but they dart down on the Russian skirmishers with the greatest confidence, and then every mountaineer singles out his foe. The lusty, broad-shouldered Russian, with heavy knapsack, and a dress that hinders his movements, is threatened by an active enemy, who circles round him like a bird of prey, searching for the vulnerable point of his muscular but unwieldy foe with his schashka,

and wearying him with his evolutions. It is like the battle of the royal eagle with the buck, who shows his strong horns to his foe, but can only defend himself, and is unable to attack his antagonist, or to follow him in the air, and ends by falling a prey to his claws. A Russian officer once said to me : " One would have supposed that the Russian soldier, with his longer weapon, the bayonet, would have the advantage in single combat over the Tschetschensian, who only carries a sword and kinschal to cut and thrust with. But this is far from the case. Amongst those that fall in these duels, the Russians bear the proportion of one-third more than the Circassians. It is also a remarkable fact, that the Russian soldier, who meets death with such wonderful courage in serried array, and shows so much bravery in battle with the regular armies of Europe, with the Persians and Turks, often behaves with pusillanimity in the Caucasus, and runs away from the outposts and kreposts, notwithstanding the severe punishment to which he exposes himself. I myself," continued this officer, " ran the greatest risk in the murderous engagements at Itschkeri (July, 1842), because I

ran to help a tirailleur, who was fighting with a Tschetschensian, when the soldier took to his heels, and left me to fight it out alone with the mountaineer."

Other disadvantages are added to that experienced by the Russian, from his strong, unwieldy body, in conflict with another, perhaps physically weaker, but more dexterous and supple in mountain warfare. The severe discipline, and the bodily chastisements convert the Russian soldier into a very ductile member of an army corps, which has its advantages in fighting in masses. But in fighting man to man, and dispersed, the combatant who is only brave from obedience, is not on an equal footing with him who is impelled to battle by enthusiasm and hatred of the foe. During my nomadic life in the Trans-Caucasian mountains, when I slept in the woods some nights, my gallant young Hungarian servant was amused and astonished, at the timidity and cowardice of our Cossacks. And yet, the same men who behaved so pusillanimously at the distant possibility of an attack of robbers, would have died without flinching in the midst of their squadron. We shall more easily comprehend the successful

resistance of the Caucasian mountaineers, if we consider the advantage they possess in their very abstemious habits, when, like the Circassians and Tschetschensians, they can live for weeks on a little flour and spring water, with wild fruits, whilst the men of the North, with large stomachs, are used to substantial fare. The difficulty of the war is greatly increased to the Russians, by the want of provisions, and by the obstacles that oppose the passage of a large convoy in the mountains. In such inhospitable regions as the Caucasian isthmus, those remain commonly masters of the field, who can stand out against hunger the longest.

Marshal Marmont gives in his Travels, a comparative table of the expenses of maintaining soldiers in each of the five principal European kingdoms. According to his statement, an Austrian infantry soldier, costs 212 francs: a Prussian, 240: a Frenchman, 340: an English foot soldier, 538: and a Russian, only 120 francs. If this estimate is correct, which cannot be doubted, as the author was well informed, and had such good sources of information; a regiment costs* less to support

* Russian regiments have four battalions.

in Russia, than a battalion in England, and the Russian soldier, who on account of his northern constitution, has a larger stomach than all the others, is forced to put up with the worst fare of all. We have here to remark, that of the 120 francs, forming his pay, many silver pieces may wander into the pockets of others, before the money finds its way to the barracks, in the shape of rations, clothing, and pay. A Russian sub-officer, whom I questioned on the subject, endeavoured to show me, by a very detailed analysis, that the private, including his clothing, ration, and pay, hardly receives one-third of that amount. In hard cash, the Russian soldier in the Caucasus, receives yearly, nine roubles, hence about two pfennigs per day, out of which he has to buy his cap, his cravat, soap, blacking, pipe-cl y, and salt for his soup.

“Our soldiers are forced to steal a little,” added the sub-officer. “This paltry sum scarcely suffices for soap and blacking. If the soldier’s linen is not always white, and his boots are not always well polished, he receives a thrashing with a rod.”

Every Russian soldier in the Caucasus, receives for his daily food, three pounds of

bread, of the colour of coal, a watery soup, to which three pounds of bacon are added, for 250 men, a ration of brandy, and once a week a piece of meat. The same sub-officer, a German, serving in Daghestan added: "God lends strength to our men, by a miracle, for it would be impossible for them to support all the hardships of this war, with such bad fare, unless they were thus assisted."

But these observations only apply to the Eastern Caucasus; the garrisons on the Black Sea, who receive their supply from transports, and are more frequently inspected by the superior generals, are provided like the Russian Marines, with good and nourishing food. It is well known, and written down in most works of travels, that the functionaries in Russia, especially those of the middle or lower rank, are apt to make singular mistakes, relating to money matters, and are continually confounding the *meum* and *tuum*. During my residence of a year and a half, on the Russian soil, scarcely a day passed without my hearing complaints on this subject, from men of the most various professions, and I heard so many stories related about it, that I was at length

quite bored with them. I naturally avoided all comments on the subject, and I commonly satisfied myself with remarking, when my opinion was asked, that every country has its peculiar customs and usages. It is certain that Shakespeare would not have said in Russia: 'Conscience makes cowards of us all.' The following saying of Hadji Baba is applicable to the army of functionaries, especially to those who have to carry on law suits.

You need only show the beloved gold,
And every head will incline.
The iron beam does not resist
The scale that hath the greater weight.

I heard many victims exclaim: "ah! if the Emperor knew this!" They have not yet lost all hope, that matters will still improve; they have a great confidence in the stern justice of the Emperor Nicholas, and they only lament the great distance from St. Petersburg, which generally prevents the voice of the oppressed from reaching it. The short visit of the Emperor is still in the lively recollection of every one; especially of the soldiers. On this occasion, the Czar stood forth one day in all his majesty, as criminal judge of injustice: General

Prince Dadian was accused by an unknown person, to the Emperor, of having employed offensive expressions to his soldiers. At a review at Tiflis, the Emperor, in public, before the eyes of the soldiers and people, tore off the golden aiguillettes from the general who wore them as the distinguishing sign of his being a staff officer.

The general was condemned to be degraded, and was obliged to wear the grey coat of the Russian privates, and to carry a musket for many years. This excited the greatest sensation in the army, and the more, because Prince Dadian was son-in-law of Baron Rosen, at that time commander-in-chief of the Caucasian army. The joy of the soldiers would have been undoubtedly increased if such examples of severity had been multiplied, because this was the only way of making them profitable. It was the tacit, though not publicly expressed opinion of most officers, that poor Prince Dadian was greatly to be pitied, as he had not done more or less than many other superior officers, who had not been held responsible for their offences. "Il faut profiter d'une bonne place," is the favourite

saying of most. Such a universal sympathy for a man, whom a just ruler had righteously punished, gives a measure for a correct estimate of the standard of morals prevailing in the Caucasus among the Russians. I grant that the more honest functionaries, and especially the body of the people express many wishes that this deeply seated, and incredible corruption of the employés should be diminished, if it cannot be eradicated, (which now appears impossible). It is not improbable that the soldiers who were placed under the orders of Prince Dadian will be rather pained than pleased at his chastisement. For it is seldom that revenge spares those who complain against their superiors in the Russian army, and this explains the rarity of complaints. Many men deserving of credit, related to me numerous examples of the small advantage derived from complaints, even when they were admitted as well-founded.

I shall cite one of these. A major at Sevastopol was enamoured with the young wife of a sergeant, and as she would not consent to listen to his proposals, the major took every opportunity of ill-treating the man and his wife.

One day, he accused the sergeant of neglecting the proper supervision of his company, another day he charged the woman with not having washed her husband's shirt clean enough; in short, the unhappy couple had to endure stripes without number. The sergeant, who preferred to endure blows rather than wear horns, ran off, at length, to Simpheropol where the commanding general then resided. His complaints were listened to, and were admitted as well founded, by a commission appointed to examine the case. The major was removed, and the sergeant received from his successor, as a compensation, five hundred blows, ostensibly because he had left the garrison at Sevastopol without leave.

A correspondent of the "Allgemeine Zeitung," who has imparted much edifying intelligence from Russia, writing from the Polish frontier, April 28, 1843, says, "It is confirmed, that the soldiers of the Russian army, henceforth, must not be punished previous to the decision of a Court of Inquiry. Consequently, wilful beating inflicted at the option of the officer will henceforth cease."

Nobody knew anything about such a restriction in the Caucasian army, nor has there been

any talk of the diminution in thrashing. It is true, that a mitigation of capricious chastisements has often been commanded, but as a Russian officer once observed, "It is difficult to carry out such orders, and people do not readily give up old customs."

It is also true, that the exact number of blows is prescribed in all cases for all officers; a lieutenant must not administer above one hundred and fifty, a colonel not more than five hundred. There are often, however, slight errors in calculation. *Cedo alteram!* A major assured me, that he had given one thousand blows with switches to a soldier of his company, who had many times stolen, and after that, the fellow did not steal any more. (This is very probable, as he must certainly have been lamed for life!) Still, there are some conscientious officers, who are punctilious in not exceeding their powers. I found the statements that I had heard abroad, respecting the punishments in the Russian army, more exaggerated as regards quantity, but many false notions are entertained respecting the quality of the blows. People often talk abroad, of the knout as the common instrument of punishment in the Russian army. This is

entirely false. Soldiers and civilians without distinction, are only knouted when they are condemned to be transported to Siberia. Who-soever is banished to that icy region, if he be not a noble and holds no rank, receives before his departure a number of stripes with the knout, never exceeding twenty-five, as a token of remembrance. It is only great criminals that receive more than twenty-five stripes; but death often precedes the twentieth blow. This fearful instrument of torture is a whip, with a broad, heavy, double-edged leathern lash, seven foot long. The executioner is a pardoned criminal, who is always kept shut up. The candidate for this office is chosen from the most powerful individuals, and the man is bound by fearful oaths, not to mitigate the chastisement of any one, even his own father.

The impression produced by this heavy leathern lash on the naked back is frightful, and at the application of the first stroke, the victim breaks forth into such a dreadful scream, that it can only be compared to those emitted by men on the rack and the wheel, when they were still in use among us. At the tenth or twelfth blow, the scream generally ceases, and

then you commonly only hear the groans of the insensible victim, rising from his couch of agony. "So often as I hear of an execution," said a German to me at Tiflis, "I run out of the town into the mountains, in order not to hear the screams that ring through the whole town. Everything is an affair of habit. I have not yet been long enough in the country, and a German easily turns sick at such an exhibition—strong Russian nerves are wanted to bear it."

I have often witnessed in Alsace, and in the south of France, the compassionate expression of the crowd, who saw a criminal condemned to drag the cannon ball. A shower of silver and copper descended on all hands, the women were especially compassionate, and even the gendarme escort bent down many times to pick up the money, and hand it to the chained prisoner. I have never witnessed such scenes in Russia. The people surround the prisoner with cold, unfeeling curiosity, listen to the groans of the victim, and remain mute.

Condemnation to Siberia, and the knout, are rare in the army. This punishment is commonly reserved for the greater criminals; *e. g.*, murderers, conspirators, or mutineers.

Thieves are commonly punished with five hundred blows with a rod ; and deserters have to run the gauntlet through three thousand men. The latter punishment, if carried out to the letter, would, in most cases, occasion death ; but there are commonly some more humane officers, who come to an understanding to mitigate the punishment, and order their companies secretly, to strike gently, especially when the delinquent is ready to drop. It is true, that a long time may elapse before he drops, for the victim's hands are held by two non-commissioned officers, who, at the same time, thrust the butt-end of their guns into his ribs ; whilst, immediately in front of him, soldiers walk with their bayonets pointed to his breast, to prevent him from moving too fast. As his cries might easily awaken the pity of the soldiers, who would then strike too softly, a drum is beaten during the execution ; so that you can only judge by the contortions of his face, of the sufferings of the victim, in advancing along his bloody path. Should the condemned at length sink, notwithstanding the support of the butt-ends of the guns, a surgeon comes up, to examine if he can really stand

it no longer, or if his fainting is shammed. The opinion of the doctor decides if he shall really continue his walk, or if he must be led to the hospital; and when his back is healed, he has to receive the rest of his blows. For they always lay great stress, in Russia, on the full amount being applied.

It might be supposed that, with such a punishment before them, few would be tempted to desert. Yet, desertion is frequent in the Caucasian army, and would be much more frequent, if the Russian deserters met with a better reception at the hands of the Circassian and Tchetschensian mountaineers. When we consider the mode of recruiting in vogue in the Russian army, we cannot be much surprised at the severity of the discipline, and of the punishments employed in it; and we shall easily perceive why no conscripts willingly follow the Russian flag. More than two-thirds of the conscripts are supplied by the serfs of the nobles; and as it is left to the latter to appoint those of their slaves for the army, whom they choose, it is natural that they should first get rid of the most lazy and unmannerly of their vassals, and those who pay the least yearly

obrok (yearly tribute of the serfs). Many Russians, who are not serfs, are condemned to be soldiers for their crimes. Thus, if a cabman at St. Petersburg, drive over a man through carelessness, he is made a soldier. A gipsy taken up as a vagrant, a Jew kidnapped as a smuggler, a Tartar detected in stealing, an employé who has plundered the public fund entrusted to him, an Armenian merchant who has been discovered cheating; all these worthy people are clothed in the soldier's grey coat. The same crime that, in France, would prevent a man from bearing arms, and lead to a military functionary being cashiered, occasions a man's being condemned to serve in the army in Russia. It might be inferred from this, that punishments are less severe in Russia than in France, because in cases where, in the latter country, a man is dressed in the red costume of the Toulon galley slaves, they only clothe them in the honourable uniform of the army in Russia. But twenty-five years' service in this uniform, under Muscovite discipline, are no trifle; and I can understand the cry of grief uttered by an Armenian mother, at Erivan, who, hearing that her son was con-

demned to be a soldier, exclaimed, "that she would rather follow him a corpse to the grave." It can be easily conceived, that an army thus recruited, cannot dispense with blows, and that the honourable treatment is impossible in Russia which is observed, for instance, in the Prussian army, in which young men of all conditions are called upon to serve, and where the coarser spirits are kept in check by those more refined.

Though most competent judges, who are well acquainted with the subject, are agreed on the necessity of corporal punishment in the Russian army, there is a great difference of opinion relating to its extension to the soldiers' wives. A great part of the Russian soldiers, especially in the Caucasus, are married. The women are exposed to the same punishment as their husbands, if they violate the regulations; *e. g.*, if they do not keep their houses clean enough. The younger and prettier soldiers' wives endeavour to avoid the infliction by showing favours to the officers, in which they are by no means sparing. At the same time, prudishness would generally be dangerous. Hence, there are very few examples in the

Caucasian camps, of a similar faithfulness to that shown by the serjeant's wife at Sebastopol. The husbands readily connive at their own dishonour, for they find good intercessors in their young wives, who shield them commonly from blows.

Though the type of the Slavonic face has generally a great resemblance everywhere, yet an experienced eye will readily detect the Little Russian from the Great Russian, in the ranks of the regiments; in like manner the Pole, and especially the Jew, can be easily distinguished among the other grey-coats. The number of Jewish soldiers in the Russian army increase every year, though many go over to the Greek Church, in the hope of thereby improving their lot. The drawing of recruits is enforced with the greatest severity among the Polish Jews, and in Southern Russia. The poor devils endure much suffering, from the sneers and jokes of their comrades, but they bear these, and other hardships, with exemplary patience. The Poles are more unbending, and desert to the mountains in great numbers, though they are forced to work hard as servants among the Circassians, or are sold as slaves in

Turkey. Though many of these Polish deserters have endured terrible hardships in their adventures, yet they will frequently repeat them. I once met in Turkey, among the wild tribe of the Lasians, a Pole, who told me that he had been twice seized as a deserter, had been forced to run the gauntlet twice, had received in all six thousand blows, and had yet ran away for the third time. His physical powers, however, had been permanently broken by this ill-treatment. Nevertheless, the Poles are lauded, even by the Russian officers, as good and intelligent soldiers, and a great proportion of the non-commissioned officers consist of them.

Many of those Polish nobles who, after the last revolution, were sent as common soldiers to the Caucasus, have risen to the rank of officers, after five or six years service in the ranks, through their exemplary conduct and tried bravery. These Polish officers of the Caucasian army, are distinguished for a more humane treatment of their subordinates, and for a peculiar amiability, which is inherent in, or is affected by, the Poles generally. The manners and character of the Poles appear especially adapted to make conquests in the

female heart, a fact established by experience in Russia, as well as in Germany and France. Most of the Polish officers and soldiers with whom I became acquainted in the Russian army, were serious, silent and melancholy men. Suicides are frequent among them. Dubois relates the case of a Pole who threw himself from the fortress of Gagra, and was dashed to pieces on the rocks. His motive was disgust with the Russian service. In a town of Circassia, I saw a Pole of striking manly beauty, who, as I was informed, exercised a special charm on the female heart, but notwithstanding his *bonnes fortunes*, remained always sunk in a gloomy, brooding reverie. His melancholy eyes seemed to speak the sentiment of a German poet :

This sorrowing heart, fair maiden, is oppressed
With wrongs so deep, it never can have rest
Until my country's freedom, and her fame
Are given back to Poland's sons again.

The Poles serving in the Caucasus, have retained the most lasting remembrance of their country and of the past, though clothed in Russian uniforms.

What struck me especially in the camps

and posts of the Russians in the Caucasus, was the silence and want of all campaigning life and barrack fun. Order, silence and monotony prevailed within, as well as outside the barracks and tents. I always felt saddened, till I became accustomed to this want of life. It is only in the Cossack stanitzas that you find a little more animation and merriment. These light troops constitute, in reality, a warlike people in themselves, and, as regards their organization and spirit, differ so widely from the rest of the Russian army, that I purpose to devote the following chapter to this subject. I could not avoid noticing the striking contrast between the jollity of the French bivouacs in Algeria, and the dismal Russian posts in the Caucasus, where you meet no trace of the mirth, the music and dancing, the puns, story-telling and frolic, that diversify the monotony of campaigning in North Africa. In the Caucasus, there is a total absence of the witty devices, the inventive, happy and ingenious spirit, and the thousand improvised entertainments of the intelligent French soldiery. At the same time, I grant that a civilian is not exposed to the banterings and frolic of the

French camp. Even vodka seldom makes the Russian soldier merry, and when reeling and staggering, he never forgets to respect his superiors. I have often seen drunken Russians at Jalta, staggering about with their fellows, snatch at their caps, when they met a man whose good clothing betrayed a Tschin.

Nevertheless, there are seasons when everything changes, in the most unaccountable manner in the camps of the Caucasus, and when the oppressive silence is broken, as it were, by a miracle, by an outburst of music, singing, and dancing. Even at Jalta, I had been struck by seeing the Russian soldiers, engaged in repairing the harbour, return home to quarters every night, singing in chorus. Had it not been for the dismal countenances of the men, this might have been mistaken for an expression of hilarity. But as I never saw these mustachios smile whilst singing, I inquired respecting the motives of this propensity to sing, recurring every evening, and I was told in reply, that there was an order for the men to sing after their work was finished. I have more than once seen men shouting with all their might in chorus, who a couple of hours

before, had been groaning and blubbing most lustily under a good thrashing.

I shall never forget the impression produced on me by a great review that I witnessed at Vladikaukas. It was on the 27th May, 1843, when the whole garrison marched forth amidst all the pomp and circumstance of war from this important fortress situated in a splendid country, at the very foot of the Caucasus. The day was cloudy and cool, the earth was covered with snow, and the finest peaks of the Caucasus were veiled in mist. Every grey coat carried on his back, a linen sack which appeared to be well filled. Shoulder to shoulder these brawny muscular men stood firm as a wall, and their broad snub noses, and sun-burnt faces stared from behind the flashing hedge of bayonets with one uniform vacant expression. At the word of command, all the soldiers lay down at full length on the snow, and remained lying on their cold bed whilst the music played, and the inspecting General Baldinin, a kind-hearted and jovial man, rode round and through the ranks. Presently, at the word of command, twenty singers stood up, a leader began to chaunt, and the remainder fell in, in a noisy chorus; one of

them played an accompaniment during the performance, on a little fife that he drew from his pocket.

The Russian spectators were highly edified at the sight of this snowy bivouac, and the Tchetschensians who were present looked on during this singular entertainment with great interest, though a haughty contempt was easily traceable on their faces, which bore a great likeness to birds of prey. The Russian spectators respectfully pulled off their caps before the general, but the proud mountaineers raised not a hand in salutation. At length, the battalions arose from the snow at the word of their commander. After this, the singing choruses were formed on a large scale, some soldiers danced but remained in stiff array, for all had been most rigidly pre-ordained. This compulsory hilarity made no cheerful impression on me. But the faces of the men relaxed to an expression of real and genuine satisfaction when two great pitchers of brandy were brought ; a good glass of the comfortable liquor being handed to each soldier. The review terminated amidst hurrahs delivered to order. The Russian military music is very fine. Drums

and trumpets rang loud through the mountains, a rattling peal, like the voice of the God of war awakening the echoes of the Caucasus. Sky and mountains unveiled at the blast of battle, and the mighty Caucasus stood forth from the clouds, wild and grim as if taking up the Russian challenge and answering the peal of their trumpets.

CHAPTER XI.

The Cossacks.

THE Tchernomorski Cossacks who inhabit the right bank of the Kouban, from the wastes of the Black Sea and that of Azoff, to very near the country where the Laba empties itself into the Kouban, are the descendants of the notorious Zaporogi Cossacks, to whom their present residence was assigned by a ukase of Empress Catharine on the 8th of April, 1783. At the time of their migration, they amounted to about 60,000 individuals. The plague which occurred in the year 1796, and the unhealthiness of the climate to which they were not yet accustomed, considerably diminished their number during the first period of their settlement. To this must be added the mur-

derous conflict with the Circassians. Since that time, the population has increased very little, and bears no proportion to the extensive territory it occupies. Their territory, which is intersected with marshes, is rich in luxuriant pastures, and very favourable to agriculture, but in other respects it is monotonous and dreary beyond description. The rough north storms from Siberia, opposed by no mountains, sweep over here during a great part of the year with frightful violence; the sudden and violent showers of rain in winter, and the over-flowing of the Kouban, increase the difficulties of intercourse between the Cossack stanitzas, whilst in summer, when there is little rain, the sun burns up the grass of the steppes, diminishes the pasture ground for the flocks, and changes wide tracks of country into a brown arid waste.

In addition to the deplorable monotony of the country which wearies the eye, the inhospitable nature of the climate, and the fevers; the inhabitants are exposed to all the miseries of war, and severe military service, and to the danger of being killed by a bold enemy in

sudden incursions, or at all events of being robbed of their property, wives, and children.

The Tchernomorski Cossacks set on foot ten regiments, each of which consists of one thousand men. After three years' service, the men lay down their lances on the domestic hearth, and seize again the scythe and the plough, and are relieved by other Cossacks, till their turn comes once more for serving. All their officers are native Cossacks, their Hetman is General Sawadofski, commanding at Ekaterinodar.

The Tchernomorski are strong, well-conditioned men, with regular, handsome features, remarkably like Hungarian peasants. They wear no whiskers, like the Cossack race, but much handsomer moustachios, which being very long, extend beyond their cheeks on both sides, and are kept in good order. They only wear their uniforms at reviews, and on holidays; otherwise, I saw most of the Tchernomorski on duty, dressed in coarse sheep-skin coats. The breeches were of coarse ticking, stuck into the boots, and the head covered with a Circassian cap. Their weapons consist

of a lance painted red, eight feet long, with a musket without a bayonet, which they sling across their back.

I have heard many exaggerated descriptions of the beauty of the Cossack women. I have sometimes remarked amongst the Cossack girls, very lovely figures, but this is rare, and on the whole, we cannot help wondering here, as well as in other parts of Russia, to meet so few pretty women, amidst such a powerful and handsome race of men. It is much easier to explain this amongst the Cossacks, than in the large Russian cities, for instance, in St. Petersburg. The young Cossack girls are early accustomed to hard, exhausting labour, and the rough northern storms which blow over their tender faces whilst ploughing, are as injurious to the preservation of beauty, as the hot sun of July, which they encounter during the time of harvest. Their dress, also, is not calculated to display their figure to the best advantage, nor do those fair Cossacks of the Black Sea know how to adorn themselves with finery and agreeable coquetry. This remark must only be applied generally; for there is no want of beautiful exceptions.

When I was in my little Cossack house at Taman, writing a description in my diary of the first impression which this country made on me, the wife of the officer with whom I was quartered, stepped into the room. She wore a cloth cloak trimmed with fur, from which drops of rain were falling, for the storm was fearfully wild without; her delicate little feet were enclosed in parti-coloured stockings, and from beneath the blue silken kerchief, which was wound about her head, peeped out a face of marvellous beauty. The light blue eyes, the delicate complexion, the pretty mouth, and especially the indescribably lovely expression of roguishness and cheerfulness which animated the beautiful features, together with the soft-toned voice with which she gave the salutation of 'Strastwuitje, sudar!' to the stranger guest with so much grace, made no small impression on me, and I was about to conclude my first sketch of the Cossack women with an enthusiastic panygeric on their beauty, when, most fortunately, I recollected that an Englishman, writing from a town in France, mentioned that all the women there had red hair, and were quarrelsome, just because, on

looking down from a postchaise, he saw a woman who had red hair, and was wrangling with her husband. I acted wisely in this respect, for I determined not to notice anything in my chapter respecting the fair sex amongst the Cossacks, until I had met with more specimens of them, during my travels through the country of the Cossacks. I have never met with any other face so beautiful as that of Maria K—ff, the wife of my host in Taman.”

The Tchernomorski have not distinguished themselves in war against the Caucasian mountaineers, they are also less feared by the Circassians than the Cossacks of the Line, who are much more pugnacious, dexterous, and brave, than their neighbours. An inclination for a careless, dreamy, lazy life, is the ruling trait in the character of the latter, and the military of the remaining corps of the army in the Caucasus, often speak of these Cossacks with contempt.

The invasions of the Circassians succeed more easily with the Tchernomorski than with the vigilant Cossacks of the Line, who have acquired the cunning and dexterity of the mountaineers in warfare. I often observed the phlegmatic character of the Tchernomorski

Cossack, when I have entered a stanitza, or solitary post-house, where no sentries were stationed, and the Cossacks, at a distance from their weapons, were lazily dreaming on the grass, in the vicinity of an enemy who, almost weekly, carried on plundering expeditions against them. If it happen that any of those Cossacks are required for a service, say for escorting a convoy, they saddle their horses as sullenly as possible, and take up their red lance, yawning all the while. You see expressed in their sleek faces, the same character of mind as in Shakspeare's fat knight, when he was to march forth against Percy Hotspur.

These poor Tchernomorski do not owe the Empress Catherine many thanks for the magnificent present of extensive territory in such a country. They would doubtless gladly be again where once their sires lived, and near more peaceable neighbours than the mountaineers of the Caucasus.

During my journey, on the Kouban, I shared this wish with them, respecting myself. Each day I heard of plundering incursions; even in the stanitzas, it was said, that a man was not safe from the enemy's shot behind

the ditch. The nobles of the Tchernomorski, and the officers of various ranks, who dwell in Ekaterinodar on the Kouban, the chief town of the Cossacks, endeavour to console themselves by drink, intrigues, and gambling, for their banishment to this gloomy land. In all my travels through Europe, Africa, and Asia, I have never found so much filth in any place as in Ekaterinodar, where, even in the dry summer, wheels remain sticking in the streets ; and I never saw a more unrestrained life than is led in the chief town of the Tchernomorski Cossack.

At the village of Waroneschkaja, my Tchernomorski escort was relieved by the Cossacks of the Line. These wear the Circassian dress ; a coat of bright brown cloth, with a leathern girdle round the hips, and with gay coloured lappets on both sides the breast, in which they stick the cartridges, blue breeches and Circassian fur cap. Instead of a lance, they have a sabre (schaschka), slightly curved towards the point ; a dagger (kinschal) a foot and a half long and two inches wide ; and a long pistol slung across the back. When these troops, to whom a Tchernomorski riding forward, had

brought my order for an escort, darted over the steppe, being deceived by their dress, I took them to be Circassians, and thought it was an attack.

As far as Stavropol, I journeyed always with a guard of Cossacks in the Circassian costume. From Stavropol to the country of the Terek, my escort consisted of Don and Oural Cossacks, amongst whom there were not such manly and handsome figures as amongst the Cossacks of the Line. Those who are acquainted with the nature of the land and the Circassian mode of attack, would place little confidence in the protection of such a band of horsemen which, even in the case of generals, does not exceed twenty-five men. The Circassians, who conceal themselves in the bushes and reeds along the way, seldom cross the Kouban with a less number than five hundred men. If the escort be composed of brave men, they will consider it their duty to shed their blood in defence of the traveller ; but these men escape with difficulty death or imprisonment. In most cases, however, the escort wisely takes flight ; and it is not wrong in so doing ; for, by opposition, the amount of victims would be still greater without saving the traveller.

The only advantage which is gained by an escort over the Kouban for the security of the traveller, is this—that these Cossacks give you speedy intelligence of the appearance of the Circassians, when they leave their ambush. Thus you may possibly find time to cut the ropes of one of the horses, and dash away with them over the steppe. In this manner, escape is possible ; but these cases are rare ; for the Circassians rush out from their ambush with lightning speed, so that the traveller has scarcely time to mount the horse. I placed very little confidence in the protection of my escort, having heard from experienced men of the danger of travelling on the Kouban. Their company, however, afforded me in my solitude a good opportunity of a thorough insight into this remarkable body of cavalry.

At every six or eight versts my escort was changed ; so that between Ekaterinodar and Vladikaukas, I was escorted by more than six hundred different Cossacks. Whilst my Russian postillion was driving the horses with the speed of an arrow over the steppes, the Cossacks dashed on, in full chase before and beside the carriage, and one of them rode on still faster to

prepare the new escort at the next post-house, so that the journey might not be at all delayed. Still wilder and more picturesque forms met my eye, as I advanced, and the sight of them made the monotonous country somewhat less wearisome to me.

The Cossacks of the Caucasian Line, according to the information of Monsieur de Fonton, an officer in attendance on Prince Paskewitch, form a military colony of 48,000 men, on the banks of the rivers Kouban and Terek. They set on foot 6092 serviceable troopers. A like number of troops, not in ordinary service, but who are occupied in cultivating the land, remain always ready on an emergency, to obey the summons of the Commander-general.

These Cossacks possess considerable wealth in cattle, viz: 26,000 horses, 96,000 head of horned cattle, and 188,000 sheep. The Cossacks of the Line have also to carry on petty warfare against the mountaineers. They dwell in large villages, (stanitzas) whose streets are broad and regular, as in all Russian towns. The small houses are built of reed-posts and clay. In the centre of the place stands a small stone church with a tower and turret, ornamented and

cheerful looking, the walls covered with white, and the roof and turret of a bright green colour. Nearly all the villages have no other fortification, than a thick hedge of prickly branches, which are difficult to climb over, but very easily to be set on fire; sometimes the villages are surrounded by a ditch. Between the various stanitzas, you meet outposts, at all points, where the crossing over the Kouban is most easy of execution. Little sentry-boxes are perched on four poles, looking like dove-cots, and are reached by a ladder. The Cossack sentry sits immoveable upon his airy throne, his sharp spying eyes constantly directed towards the bank of the stream. When the watch happens to see a troop of Circassians swimming across the river, he takes some reeds or straw, which is found by the side of every post-house, sets it alight, and mounting his horse, dashes to the next village or fort, (krepost). There the alarm signal has been already remarked, and a cannon shot has called the village Cossacks to arms. All those who are in the stanitzas, spring on their horses, and hasten to the Kouban to seek out the enemy, and cut off his retreat. If the Circassians

observe that the men in the stanitzas have been informed of their crossing the Kouban, they usually return, as in that case, they know that an attack on the village would cause more loss of blood, than gain of booty, for many of the stanitzas have small garrisons of Russian infantry of the line, who, whilst the Cossacks surround the enemy from without, fire upon him behind the hedge of thorns, and thus they often inflict considerable loss on the Circassians. Sometimes, however, the latter manage to cross the Kouban during the night, with stillness and caution, so that the scouts do not perceive it, and then some village is usually selected, destroyed, and thoroughly plundered, before a larger body of Cossacks is able to hasten to their relief. The attacked stanitza is then set on fire, and the red flames give a light, which discovers the retreat of the mountaineers, who, shouting with joy over their booty, and the accomplishment of their bloody purpose, carry off on their horses the women and children of the Cossacks to their aouls, and stick the heads of their slaughtered enemies on the points of their sabres.

Sometimes, the desire for gaining more

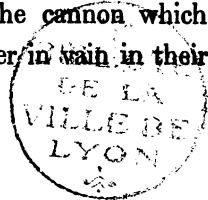
heads and prisoners, detains the Circassians too long in the captured stanitza, and they find their retreat cut off by a superior number of Cossacks. In such cases, they leave both booty and prisoners behind, fly over the steppes like the hurricane, and endeavour to cross over by another way. It is then a chase for life or death. The Circassians, screaming like jackalls, sweep, on their long-maned horses, over the boundless plain, and behind them come the Cossacks, shouting their hurrahs, and thirsting for revenge for the death of their wives and little ones. The Circassians endeavour, through a real or pretended flight, either to secure a retreat in another direction, or at least to entice the Cossacks away from their infantry and field artillery. If they succeed, a troop of the most determined Circassians, suddenly wheel about their horses, throw themselves upon the most impetuous pursuers, strike them down from the saddle, and then whilst the distant and dispersed Cossacks and Circassians hasten to the succour of their own people, begins the most picturesque cavalry *mêlée* that can be imagined. Sabres glitter and clink one against the other,

unseated riders continue their desperate fight on foot, and thrust the long, two-edged kinschal into their opponent's breast. Those who are afraid of engaging in close combat with their swords, discharge at some distance their guns and pistols, and gallop up if the enemy be struck down from his saddle, in order to give the finishing blow with their schaschka to him, whom in the conflict they dared not meet face to face. With equal equipments, equally good horses, and an almost equal skill in fighting, the issue of a struggle between the Circassians and Cossacks of the Line is doubtful, and generally depends upon the superiority of numbers of one or other of the parties. But the clumsy Don and Tchernomorski Cossacks, who are armed with lances, and are little exercised in war, are no match for the Circassian cavalry in such conflicts. There has been much dispute respecting the advantage and disadvantage of the lance as a cavalry weapon. Distinguished military authorities, amongst others, Marshal Marmont, prefer the lance, to the sword.

At the battle of Dresden, the Duke of Ragusa relates that the Austrian infantry were repeat-

edly attacked by the French Cuirassiers, but that they repelled all their attacks, though their muskets were rendered unserviceable by the rain. This infantry was only overcome when fifty Lancers from the escort of General Latour-Maubourg's charged, and made openings in the ranks of the Austrians, and facilitated the triumph of the Cuirassiers. Marmont asserts that the matter would have been settled at once, if the Cuirassiers had been provided with the formidable lance. In an engagement of serried masses, the lance is, most certainly, a fearful, irresistible weapon; but in single combat, the lance is at a disadvantage against a trooper experienced in the use of his sword. This has been discovered in Russia, where, generally speaking, the lance is such a favourite cavalry weapon, and consequently some of the Caucasian Cossacks are armed with sword and dagger. The Circassians are careful not to charge a regiment of Don Cossacks drawn up in line, where they see long rows of lances staring at them. But in a wild cavalry scuffle, such as we have often seen on the Caucasian line, where each one selects his opponent, the Don Cossack, if the first rush with his lance do not succeed, which it seldom

does, is generally a lost man. The Caucasian skilfully avoids the steel point, or parries the thrust, and closing with his opponent, whose lance, after the failure of the thrust, has become a useless pole, he strikes him out of the saddle with a vigorous blow of the sabre. The victory is commonly decided before the slow, and heavy infantry can hurry up with their long coats and field artillery. The rest of the mountaineers swim back over the Kouban, either rejoicing or burning for revenge, whilst the cannoas which have come up too late, thunder in vain in their rear.



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