TRAVEL ADVENTURE AND SPORT

FROM

BLACKWOODS MAGAZINE

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TRAVEL,
ADVENTURE, AND SPORT

FROM

'Blackwood's Magazine'

VOL. VI.

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TRAVEL, ADVENTURE, AND SPORT.

FROM 'BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.'

SHIRAZ TO BUSHIRE.

BY CAPT. CLAUDE CLERK, C.I.E.

[*MAGA*. SEPT. 1862.]

THE campaign in Persia was a short and successful one. The troops under Sir James Outram had been everywhere victorious. In the course of a few months two large Persian armies, leaving their camps standing, had, after a slight resistance, fled, completely disorganised — the one to the mountain fastnesses in the neighbourhood of Kauzeroon, the other to the arid plains of Khuzistan. The officer in command of the latter, a Kajar, a prince of the blood-royal, had written to the Shah, and had assured him that though in due course of time the heads of all the invading infidels would most undoubtedly adorn the gate of his majesty's palace, for the present their big long-range guns had utterly destroyed the courage of the troops of the "king of kings." A 68-pound shot, which had gone lobbing by the Kajar's Cashmere-shawl tent, had on one occasion been picked up, placed on a camel's back, and at once started off to the capital, and eventually submitted to the inspection of the august eyes of the sovereign. When the intelligence reached Teheran that whole regiments had retired *en masse* without firing a shot—without ever having seen the colour of their enemy's moustaches—some of the general officers and chiefs of tribes were ordered into the presence, and had there received the punishment of the stick: this accomplished, the rapacious Prime Minister laid hands upon them, and lightened them of all their ready money and jewel-hilted daggers. The Persian soldiers, who are not to be surpassed by any troops in the world for their endurance of fatigue, and for the length of their marches through an impoverished country, were, for the want of being led by their officers, after a few engagements, ready for immediate flight at the gleam of a British bayonet. Sir James Outram, hampered by the difficulty of procuring baggage-animals, had been obliged to encamp on the plain near Mahamra: this small town is situated on the right bank of the Hafar Canal. At a point a few furlongs distant from the town, the canal joins the noble river of the Shut-el-Arab. A march on Shuster had been determined upon, and a good understanding brought about with the chiefs of the Chab Arabs, the establishment of which, there appeared every probability, would have brought us into camp as many baggage-animals, in the shape of camels and mules, as were requisite for the advance of the army into the interior. A few weeks more would have seen Sir James Outram at Shuster, and there, awing the capital, with a victorious army at his elbow, he would have dictated his own terms; but diplomacy, which had failed so completely in all its efforts at the commencement of the Persian difficulty, again stepped in, and stayed the sword, to whose sole arbitration the matter very justly had been deferred. Whilst Sir James Outram had been planning a campaign, the carrying out of which would have brought the Prime Minister to his senses, and would have forced him to accept any terms, however advantageous to the English, Lord Cowley and Ferukh Khan had been busy with their pens at Paris. The result of their operations was, that a victorious general was stopped in mid-career, and a treaty of peace drawn out, in which the conquered power treated apparently on equal terms with the conquering. In due course of time, when one morning the camp was astir as usual, at an early hour, busy with the preparations for a march into the interior, the despatch bearing the treaty of peace arrived. When the news spread, a general feeling of disappointment prevailed throughout the little camp. In a few hours the piles of commissariat stores, the mountain-train, the light field-guns, the animals of the land-transport, were being hurried down for re-embarkation to the river—the frigates and transports lying off, ready to receive them, a few yards from the banks. More than one young subaltern, who had pictured himself arrayed in gorgeous silks of Persia's loom, the result of a successful *loot*, or who had indulged in a vision of rapid promotion, possibly of a brevet, now sadly turned his thoughts to the routine life of an Indian cantonment, perhaps less sadly to a favourite pony which he had been obliged to leave behind, his only regret when his regiment was ordered off, at a few hours' notice, on active service. He little thought that in the course of a few short weeks that routine life of cantonments would be a thing of the past—at least for many months to come — that before two short months were over the north of India would be in a blaze of insurrection, that he might be one of those called upon to stem its tide, and that the work in store for him would be far heavier, far more harassing, than anything he had seen in Persia, or that he would have been likely to see had the war continued. A week after the arrival of the despatch saw the frigates, each with its two or three transports in tow, steaming down the Shut-el-Arab, bearing their living freights, some to Bushire, some direct to

India. The date-groves of Mahamra were silent and deserted; the bustle and stir of a camp were no more; the only objects moving on that white glistening plain beyond were a few half-naked Arabs scratching about in the sand where the camp had stood; and these, seen through a hazy mirage, were grotesque-looking enough, their heads appearing and disappearing in upper stratas of the heated air, separated by several yards from their bodies, and their arms and legs glancing hither and thither in detached fragments over the surface of the baking soil. As we passed up the river on our way to Baghdad, on board the little river steamer the Comet, a glance up the Hafar Canal showed us the tall masts of an English sloop-of-war, her long 32-pounders peering out ominously at the low mud-walls of the town of Mahamra. The sloop, lying at anchor in the deep water of the canal, was all that remained of the fleet of some five-and-thirty vessels that were lying off here and in the Shut-el-Arab river so short a time previous. The sloop had been ordered to anchor here, and to remain till the news reached that the terms of the treaty had been fully carried out by the Persians; also a certain portion of the British force before Bushire was to remain under the same orders. One of the terms of the treaty was to the effect that commissioners were to proceed to Herat, and see that the town had been entirely evacuated by the Persian troops. Until their report bearing this out fully should reach the officer in command, English troops were to remain at Bushire, and the sloop was to remain before Mahamra. As the sharp bows of the Comet flashed by the opening of the canal into the Shut-el-Arab, we took a last look at Mahamra, its demolished batteries, and its belts of date-groves, among which scores of stout trees might be seen smashed and doubled like broken straws, where a 68-pounder from the English frigates had gone crashing through the belt into the camp beyond. Soon we reached the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates: the little vessel, steaming gaily along these, the waters of the old old world, shot into the channel of the Tigris. Three days' constant steaming, lodging now and then on a sandbank, brought us to Baghdad. Here it was determined upon by General Outram and the Honourable Charles Murray, that a mission, consisting of three officers and a doctor, should proceed to Herat. We were ordered to accompany the Minister, and form part of his suite, as far as the capital, for which place he was soon to set forth, the war being finished. From the capital we were to make the best of our way through Khorassan, and across the eastern frontier of Persia, into Afghanistan. If we reached that place—and the odds, as it turned out afterwards, were considerably against such an event—we were to remain there till orders from the Indian Government should reach us. The English Minister's return to the capital, from the day we crossed the Turko-Persian frontier, was an ovation the whole way. The boom of those big guns of the English had inspired the Persian mind with a wholesome dread of England's power of retaliation, at all events for the time being. The journey was a sort of daily recurring *fête champêtre.* Tents of gorgeous hues were pitched in shady spots, tiny streams of water brought their pleasant music to our ears the livelong day and night. Lumps of snow, dipped in delicious sherbets, were handed to us in delicately-carved wooden spoons the instant our feet were out of the stirrup at the end of the morning's march. Scores of wild-looking Kurdish horsemen scoured the country in all directions. Wheeling in circles, pursuing one another at tip-top speed over sometimes roughish ground, they playfully sent their jerreeds humming through the air under our very noses. They plunged boldly miles away to the right and left into every wooded hollow and dell, so assuring themselves that no murderous, plundering Buktiaree was there lying concealed, meditating mischief to our precious persons. Our Mehmandar, the officer appointed by the Shah to accompany the Minister, was a stout, handsome-looking man, who had an easy off-hand manner of telling most astonishing lies. Our early experience of his Munchausen talents dated from the very first morning he met us at the frontier. That day the camp was pitched on the banks of a small stream, whose clear rapids and still, deep pools were highly suggestive of trout, a fish the Persians have, I believe, only lately begun to appreciate for the use of the table. The Mehmandar, who had been some days awaiting in this camp the arrival of the Minister at the frontier, was asked whether any fish had been taken in the stream. "Fish! by Allah!" a fish that very morning had been taken by his people—such a fish as he had not seen for many a day. He gave us, in fine rolling language, the length, the depth, and the breadth thereof, the number of strokes on his back, and the colour of his belly; in fact, he entered so minutely into the detail, and swore so emphatically "*Becheshm*" — by his eyes — to every particular regarding the capture of the prize, that I, for one, never dreamt for one moment but that the whole of the statement was true. On making inquiries afterwards, we learned that no fish had been taken by any of the Mehmandar's people, and what was more, the inhabitants of the neighbouring village assured us that no fish had ever been known in the stream. Four weeks' journey brought us to the capital. We rode in, smothered with dust; the Minister in front, riding on a tall, maneless, Turkoman horse, presented that morning by the Shah, and decked out in turquoise beads and gold and silver trappings. Beside him rode the Persian officer of state, who had ridden out the prescribed number of miles—not a yard beyond—to meet the English Minister, and escort him to the gate of the embassy. We, the junior members of the mission, came crowding in behind, a regular fight ensuing between the different members of the Persian official's suite and ourselves at the narrow gateways, and through the hardly less narrow streets, as to who should push through first, and as to who should get hustled into the rear of the *cortège*, there to be bumped to and fro by the pipe-bearers and servants, with their horses laden with felt cloths and huge saddle-bags.

The first day in the Persian capital I shall never forget; from noon till the time the sun was below the horizon it was one long series of receiving and paying of visits. There was a running accompaniment of sherbets, pipes, coffee, and tea, in the regular rotation. How the rest of our party felt the next morning, I cannot say; I was a great deal too ill to inquire. My parched mouth and throat seemed anxious to assure me, by dint of a raging thirst, that my kalioon had, in the course of yesterday's civilities, consumed all the tobacco of Fars. Before the day was many hours old, I had convinced myself that even this mild way of smoking—the kalioon—did not render tobacco perfectly harmless. At Teheran we were delayed more than a month. The Prime Minister, having quite determined in his own mind that everything was to be done to prevent our proceeding to Herat (for he was well aware that the presence of English officers in that city would be the signal overthrow of his crooked policy), made, on the contrary, daily protestations that he was doing everything he could to aid our departure. At length, seeing that we were not to be denied, he said openly that we should travel at our own risk, and that he would provide no escort, and that no Commissioner on the part of Persia would be sent with the English Commissioners to Herat. After some long marches, sometimes by day, sometimes by night, suffering at times, both our cattle and selves, from a scarcity of good water, and after having passed by some of the favourite Turkoman haunts without being led off a string of white slaves to the market of Bokhara, an event that had been hinted to us as probable, we finally arrived at Herat in the month of September. But before we reached that place, my head servant, who, I believe, had been a servant of Mr Layard during his sojourn at Nineveh, died one morning from sheer fatigue.

We remained the winter in the city, guests of the Afghaan chief, Sultan Ahmed Khan, the chief known as Sultan Jan during the Afghaan war. In the early spring of the year we turned our horses' heads westwards, and rode for Teheran, but pursuing a route more to the southward than the one we had come by, and which, I believe, had not been travelled by any European since Forster in 1783-84. From the capital we struck south by Ispahan and Shiraz. From the latter place we descended the formidable passes of the Kotul-e-pierzun, and the Kotul-e-Doktur, to Bushire, thus completing a journey of about three thousand miles, every foot of which had been ridden on horseback. It is a journal of the last ten days or so of this journey that occupies the following pages, and which, I trust, may interest some of my readers.

We had made a stay at Shiraz of about ten days. We had strolled through its bazaars, and we had wondered at the dilapidation and the decay that had met us at every turn. But notwithstanding ruined walls and crumbling arches, we had found the bazaars crowded from sunrise to sunset with a busy, noisy crowd: for the Shirazee is a cheerful, light-hearted fellow, and goes to his work singing and laughing, and apparently void of all care. There is nothing in his character in common with the solemn-looking silent denizen of a Turkish or Egyptian bazaar, except, perhaps, his propensity to take you in—a propensity he will most assuredly display, should you once open a bargain with him. We had visited the burial-places of Saadi and Hafiz, elbowing our way thither through crowds of travel-stained pilgrims. These had come, many of them, from far-distant provinces of Persia, to repeat long prayers and countless Allahs at these tombs, which are held in reverence and great sanctity as the shrines of departed saints. Here also we had found collected several of those wandering dervishes, wild-looking men, who, with beards uncombed, deerskins on their backs, and calabashes slung across their shoulders, and with large strings of beads hung around their necks and waists, implored us, with outstretched palms, for charity, at the same time that they deafened us with their dismal howls of "*La illaha illallah!*" At the sight of our small silver pieces they invoked thousands of blessings on our heads, and that with the full power of their lungs; but from the evil gleam of their bloodshot eyes, it was evident that they often, at the same time, silently prayed that the infidels might be roasted in eternal fires. For many of these dervishes hold themselves out to be the most desperate of fanatics, hoping thereby to gain the sympathy of the pilgrims, who are mostly of a bigoted class. One of the favourite chants with which they entertain the passers-by, is the one in which they sing that the true believer's road to heaven and houris must be washed with the blood of *kafirs* (infidels).

Though early in the summer, the corn throughout the valley had a golden-yellow tinge, and the noonday sun, with its already powerful rays, was withering the roses and ripening the fruit in the garden which had been allotted to us by the authorities as our place of abode during our stay. We revelled in a profusion of peaches, nectarines, apricots, plums of various sorts, and figs of most exquisite flavour;

and these were, all and each of them, delicacies that were duly appreciated by us after several weeks' travel, by night and by day, through desert sandy plains.

We had entered the valley, or rather the plain, of Shiraz from the north, and the first glimpse of the town which we had coming from that direction was one by no means calculated to throw the beholder into an ecstasy of delight with its beauty. We did not even feel inclined to exclaim, "If there is a paradise on earth—*humeen ust*, *humeen ust*—it is this! it is this!" These were our own particular feelings as we reined up our horses and looked down into a plain tolerably well cultivated, and irrigated by tiny streams of water. The even surface of the plain was broken by neither river nor lake, and there were no trees beyond a few dark-coloured patches of orange-groves and orchards scattered in the immediate vicinity of the town. Not so was it with the Persians of our suite. A murmur of delight burst from them, and one of their number, who gave himself some pretensions as an apt quoter, immediately threw up his hands and repeated the above line of one of their favourite poets. Upon this they all gave way to their feelings, and fell to invoking the blessed Prophet, and the holy saint Imam Reza, whose shrine we had visited some months previous, and whom they now, one and all, fervently thanked for having brought them thus far on their journey in safety. The sight of waving corn and of running streams of water, be these ever so small, has at once the effect of throwing a Persian into raptures. The "*properantis aquæ per amœnos ambitus agros*" has an especial charm for him; and I often remarked that when from a hill-top we looked down upon anything of the kind, some one of the party was sure to be ready with Saadi's couplet; for all are given to quoting, from the first vizier of the realm to your spreader of carpets. The previous day we had crossed "Bendemeer's Stream," and as my horse splashed through its turbid waters, swollen by the melting snow, I could think only of the fair Shirazee who wooed the ever-faithful Azeem in vain. Where we crossed the river it was about twenty yards broad. It had worn a tolerably deep bed through the stony arid plain, across which our road had that morning lain. The "bower of roses had vanished," and where these were once bright by the calm Bendemeer, we saw only some green rushes and sedgy pools. Our last march to Shiraz was one of about sixteen miles; it lay through a hilly bare country, and the road was execrable, covered with rocks and rolling stones. Till you are within half a mile of the town you see nothing of it, then it is immediately below you, the road leading straight down upon it through a rugged stony defile. The only conspicuous object in the town is the citadel, built of sunburnt brick, and laying some claim to being in a state of repair:

this is the town residence of the Prince-Governor of the district, the uncle of the reigning King of Persia. The walls and bastions surrounding the town are for the most part in ruins, and the ditch is nearly filled up with the *débris*. A mule with its load can be driven across the ditch, and then over the wall into the town—in many places with ease. The rest of the town presents the usual appearance of towns in Persia: an expanse of flat-roofed, fragile-looking buildings of a light dust colour, half of which seem to be in ruins, or partially so. The very ruinous state of the walls and bastions around the town, and of the bazaars, is to be accounted for by the great earthquake which occurred here some years ago, and destroyed some five thousand of the inhabitants. The Shirazees say that since then many of the inhabitants have fled the city, and that the town has never regained its wonted thriving appearance.

Owing to some question of etiquette that had not been amicably arranged between the people of the Prince-Governor and our master of the ceremonies, who was nothing more or less than our head servant, no visits had been interchanged between the authorities of the place and ourselves. We had also good grounds for supposing that the Prince-Governor had received instructions from the capital previous to our arrival, ordering him to treat our party with as little civility as possible. The then Prime Minister at Teheran had always looked upon our party with disfavour; and having had experience of this, we were fully prepared to receive what the Persians deem a cold reception at the hands of the authorities of a large town like Shiraz. It was consequently no great disappointment to us—in fact, it was rather a relief than otherwise, to be left entirely to ourselves; and besides, we had had considerable experience during our twelve months in Persia of Vizeers and governors, sherbets, pipes, and sweetmeats. But though we secretly rejoiced, our servants were bitterly grieved at such a state of affairs. Our head-man stretched every point to establish amicable relations. He swore by Allah, and by his beard, and by the souls of his children yet unborn, that our party of five was a sublime mixture of noble lords and general officers, and that, consequently, we were entitled to be treated with especial honour and profound respect; and, really anxious to bring about an interchange of visits, he added that we would, with a condescension such as was quite unusual with us, advance more than the ordinary number of steps to meet the Lord High Treasurer, who, he insisted, should pay us the first visit on behalf of his lord and master the Prince-Governor. Our servant, who rejoiced in the name of Gaffar Beg (which means literally the Knight Pardoner; we christened him "the Pardoner" in consequence), found, after three or four days, that his eloquence was completely thrown away—as he finally confessed himself, "he was talking to people who were deaf as the ruined pillars of the Chéhal Minaar." Several times during the conferences with the Prince's people, the Pardoner might be seen working himself into a frenzy, or at least a very fair semblance of it. With his head thrown back, and his beard pushed scornfully forward into the faces of the opposing party, he would sometimes, finding that a milder eloquence was of no avail, try to bully them into civility. Among other delicate attentions which he vowed he would pay to their relations, male and female, he swore with a sonorous oath that he would most assuredly burn their fathers. But it was all to no purpose; the Prince's people, acting under orders, were evidently not inclined to come to terms, and the Pardoner was always to be seen retiring from the conflict of words much discomfited, and adjusting his tall lambskin cap, which had been shaken by his energy a little out of its orthodox slanting position. He and all our other servants were especially interested in this wise. On the establishment of amicable relations, it would have been etiquette to exchange presents. The present from our side would have had to have been taken to the Prince by our head servant. He would have been presented with a shawl or a gold piece for himself. This is the universal custom, and a very handsome perquisite it usually is to your head-man in this country. Had affairs been arranged as our Persians wished them to be—that is to say, an interchange of visits and courtesies between the authorities and ourselves—we should daily have been plied with a dozen or so of trays containing sweetmeats, cakes, fruits, and loaves of sugar. These would have been prepared daily for us in the Prince's *anderoon*, or women's quarters, and sent thence to us by the hands of his needy retainers. This species of civility always proved a very expensive one to us, for every individual bringing such a tray had to be presented with money far exceeding the value of the contents of the tray he bore. Besides, with the exception perhaps of a little of the fruit, the trays, with their contents of piled-up sweetmeats, hard as flint, and cakes fried in oil, were made over *in toto* to our servants, before whom they disappeared like snow before a summer sun. So it was that our servants were all of one mind on the subject; and when the ultimatum was arrived at, that there should be no interchange of civilities between the authorities and ourselves, they took the matter greatly to heart, for their visions of unlimited feastings were hopelessly dispelled.

We were anxious to get down the formidable mountain-passes that lie between Shiraz and the sea-coast before the weather became oppressively hot; we had, consequently, limited our stay at Shiraz to ten days at the most. At the end of that time we had hoped to have given our tired horses a good rest, and to have hired a fresh string of mules, for those which had been marching daily with us for the last month had been pretty well knocked up. As the time for our departure drew nigh, we became anxious to know how the authorities were going to act towards us in the matter of furnishing us with an escort. Some sort of escort, sent in the Prince's name, was absolutely necessary; for we knew that without it, in the wild country we were about to traverse, neither food for ourselves nor fodder for the cattle would be supplied by the villagers. Not a single European had travelled this road since the war, nor, indeed, for many years previous to our arrival. The route we proposed taking down the passes was at all times considered unsafe for a small party, and we remembered that it was somewhere off this road that two officers of, I think, Sir John Malcolm's suite were murdered by the Buktiarees. So, taking these things into consideration, we had come to the conclusion that half-a-dozen or so additional horsemen to our small party would be an advantage rather than otherwise. When we had fixed on a day for our leaving, the Pardoner, who had the arrangement of all these matters in his own hands, intimated to the authorities that we expected a certain number of gholaums, servants of the Prince, to be ready, as an escort for us, at a certain hour in the morning. The gholaums were promised at once. It now remained only a question how many would be sent. The Pardoner vowed that unless fifty men, armed to the teeth, and mounted on good horses, were sent, we could not possibly think of taking our departure. After several messages had gone to and fro, we learnt that *two* gholaums would be furnished us as an escort. The Pardoner was furious of course, notwithstanding these said gholaums were described in glowing terms as bold horsemen and expert lion-eaters. We were quite satisfied: we knew that, for all the purposes for which we really required them, two were nearly as good as twenty. But that evening the Pardoner waxed wroth, and nothing would pacify him as he recounted the several indignities to which we had been subjected since our arrival. He summed up his woes much in these words: "Since the hour we approached this accursed city—may unclean animals defile it to all eternity!—these Shirazee dogs have laughed at our beards. Instead of their having come out to welcome us a good *fursung* from the city gate, they met us close to the walls, and then the deputation consisted only of a beggarly mirza—may his mother be burnt! —instead of the first vizeer of the province. Then, again, in the place of four tall Turkoman horses being led as an offering before the English lords, nothing was seen but a small Arab horse, whose coat on the neck turned in several places in an unpropitious way. Here"—surveying the garden around him with a scornful glance—"we have been placed in the abode usually allotted to men unknown to the world, where, as the 'Jehannemah,' whose orange-groves and running waters are the talk of the whole universe, the Prince's own summer-house, should by rights have been placed at our entire disposal: the *peishkesh*,[1] which should have covered the floors of three double-poled tents, consisted of four miserly trays of fruit, and of as many loaves of sugar." As it happened, a loaf of the identical sugar was in the centre of a bowl sweetening some sherbet and snow which we were drinking from time to time. Unfortunately for us, his wrathful eye fell upon it. "See," said he, as he pushed his thumb with one fell thrust through snow, sherbet, and dissolving sugar, "even this sugar is the cheap sugar of Mozanderan, not the snow-mountain of the Feringees, which costs a gold *tomam* the loaf." He was proceeding to enumerate several other indignities to which we had been wantonly subjected, and which were of as little moment to us as they were of grave import to him, when he was interrupted by the arrival of two horsemen at the gate. These, as it turned out, were the two gholaums who had been deputed to accompany us to Bushire. They had come to take any orders we might have to give preparatory to our march, and to make the acquaintance of our people, their *compagnons de voyage* to be. One of them assumed a superiority of rank to the other, so he it was that was ordered into the presence. As the man pulled off his long heavy boots, the Pardoner, in a very audible whisper, suggested to him the propriety of his taking his stand on the very edge of the carpet on which we were sitting; he was on no account to approach nearer. This was by way of imbuing the stranger with a proper respect of our exalted persons. The gholaum, although at first disposed to swagger a little and give himself airs as a Prince's servant, understood at once from this little hint that we were people not likely to brook any trifling. Consequently, he stepped respectfully forward, and, bending his body till he showed us the very top of his tall lambskin hat, he dropped his arm down the outside of his right leg. The Pardoner smiled approval, while we condescendingly acknowledged the salute. It was manifest that our new acquaintance had taken infinite pains to render his personal appearance as prepossessing as it had been in his power to do. He was just fresh from the bath. The palms of his hands and the soles of his feet were dyed a deep chestnut colour, and every finger-nail was of the same dark hue. His beard, carefully combed out, shone resplendent with a black purple dye; and his moustaches, on which the bathman's (and who is also the hairdresser) strength must have been exerted, were pulled up, and pointed fiercely to the corners of his eyes. He was armed to the teeth, and being a tall big-boned man, his *tout ensemble* was that of a very desperate fellow, and that was evidently the character which he was anxious to hold in our estimation. He wore a sort of shawl coat, very short-waisted, and thrown quite open in front. The sleeves and collar were turned down with the black lambskin of Bokhara; and his trousers, tied at the knee, were more like short petticoats than the article we designate by the name of trouser. He was very eloquent on the manifold dangers of the road which he was about to travel with us as escort. When we told him that it was our custom to travel at least half the march by night, he put on a face of terror; he vowed that such a mode of travelling on the road we were about to take would involve certain destruction. He said that, if we took his advice, we should never mount our horses till broad daylight; that if we rode in the darkness of night, the Buktiarees would be down upon us, and their hands on our beards, before we should have time to exclaim a single "*Astufferillah*"—a "God forbid you!" Upon this one of our party, a Swede, with a short whistle that was quite peculiar with him, made a significant sabre-cut with a book which happened to be at hand, and as the gholaum could find no answer to this most forcible argument, he said no more about the Buktiarees. We told him in conclusion, that by the rise of the sun, on the day after the morrow, he and his attendant gholaum were to be in readiness before our gate. He answered, "*Belli cheshm*"—"On my eyes be it"—and then withdrew. As he was tramping heavily away with his big boots through the gateway, affecting the airs of a man of some consequence, he suddenly sneezed : whether it was some tobacco that my servant was pounding for the pipe, or whether it was the dust eddying through the gate that blew against him, I know not, but sneeze he did, and the effect was disastrous. With the journey in prospect, the omen was evidently an inauspicious one. He stopped as if he had been shot. There was only one way of charming away the evil mishap, and that he instantly adopted. Hanging his arms down close along his sides, he turned the elbows slightly forwards, and then he blew carefully first over the right shoulder and then over the left. But even this ceremony, performed as if his very life depended upon it, did not seem to give the hoped-for relief. He walked away, but *quantum mutatus ab illo*, he slunk off like one who dared not venture on a look behind him. His appearance had undergone such a sudden change, and he looked altogether so chopfallen, that, do what I could, it was impossible to prevent my laughter reaching his ears as he rode away. I am quite sure he never forgave me my hard-heartedness.

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[1] Offering usually presented to strangers on their arrival at a place.

The next afternoon I thought I would go and say good-bye to an old Mirza, a man of some wealth, which he had made in the service of our Government in India. He had been very civil to us during our stay at Shiraz. As I rode up one of the very narrow streets leading to his house—indeed, nothing more than a narrow passage between high bank walls—I came suddenly upon a tall veiled woman; following her was her female attendant. She was either coming from or going to the bath. She was to all appearance a lady of rank. Her dark-blue silk veil, which covered her from head to foot, was rustling and swaying as she approached steadily down upon me. The circumference of the veil, below where it swept the wall on both sides, would have rivalled the crinoline of any London belle. As I said before, the street was narrow. What was to be done? Turn I could not, even had I wished to do so, for my servant was following close upon me; and had I turned back to get out of the way of a woman, he would probably have instantly poured forth upon her a volume of startling and horrible abuse. For this a Persian invariably does if a woman happens to get into his way, and often he will strike at her with his whip. It then occurred to me, it was just within the bounds of possibility that, if I pushed my horse close in against the wall to allow her as much room as possible to pass, her curiosity to see the Feringee would cause her to lift her veil as she went by. *My* curiosity was at that point, that I would have charged the very wall itself, had I been sure that the unveiled face of this majestic form would have greeted me on the other side. In the full consciousness of her youth and beauty—for the latter I had quite made up my mind she possessed, the former could not but exist with that proud airy step—she advanced towards me, keeping the very centre of the narrow road. I felt that I positively grew pale with anxiety as the veiled face came level with my horse's head. Was I fated to see only that provoking bit of white gauze that so effectually concealed the face beneath? or was I to be dazzled with the beauty it so jealously guarded? For a few seconds I was in anxious doubt, and then the rosy-tipped fingers held back for one instant the white gauze veil that fell before the face. And the beauty that shone upon me during that one short instant was one I have never forgotten—never can forget. It was not the soft beauty that floats down upon you from the eyes of the Fornarina—no, far from it; nor was it the beauty of a Magdalen, beaming with love and affection. Yet, by some strange freak of memory, when I recalled afterwards the beautiful vision, I was oddly enough reminded of both. Such a momentary glimpse was it, that I find a delineation of each particular feature utterly impossible; but I will write as far as I am able that which remains as a fair memory of the past. The hair parted low on the forehead, but the hood of the veil, coming well forward, allowed only a little of it to be seen. That, I could not but observe, was black and glossy as a raven's wing, and the glitter of gold showed that a few coins were "wreathed in the dark midnight of her hair." The eyebrows were not arched, but appeared—either by nature or art, I had not time to distinguish—to be carried right across in one continuous dark line. Singular as this seems, it by no means marred the strange beauty of the face. The eyes were large and softly brown, as a deer's ; for that one instant they flashed forth a look, which was perhaps more of wonderment than alarm, at the black-coated infidel, over whom, at that very moment, the skirts of her veil were sweeping. The complexion was exquisitely fair. No wanton ray of old Sol had ever touched that pale, bloodless cheek, which seemed as if it could never have known a blush. One thought of the lines,

> " In all her veins,
> No conscious drop, to form a blush, remains."

Beyond a small blue spot tattooed on the centre of her chin, I can give no further description of a face that haunts me like a dream whenever I think upon it. Instinctively I turned round and watched her as she sped away down the passage, and was then lost to sight amid the crowd of the bazaar. But as the eyes, upon a sudden darkness, retain the image of the object they last gazed upon, so was my mind impressed for hours afterwards with the beauty of the fair Shirazee. I had observed that my groom, who was riding behind me, had also made way for her to pass, in a way that was quite unusual with him : for, generally, if a woman came in his way, he would screech out an execration at her, but would never offer to leave her room to pass. I concluded, therefore, that the momentary withdrawal of the veil had not been lost upon him; and that he, as well as myself, had been awed by the beauty of that face, which by rights would be beheld till the day of her death, of all living men, by her husband alone. . . . I saw that face but once again, long afterwards, and under strange circumstances. I was being strangled by two African negroes: grinning horribly, their white teeth gleamed down upon me in savage triumph; and with their giant limbs they were pressing the life's breath from my body. Against their brawny strength I was powerless as a child to resist. A veiled figure approached. At once I recognised that step and lofty mien. For one instant the veil was thrown back, and there was the face with its strange beauty; but this time the eyes glittered with a cruel joy, as they drank in the death-struggles of the infidel. . . . The sense of suffocation awoke me, and I found that my saddle, which I had put up on end to protect my head and shoulders from the night-wind, had fallen forward upon me, and was covering my face and neck. . . .

The old Mirza kept me talking a long time, plying me with innumerable pipes and countless cups of tea; his little girl, a pretty rosy-cheeked child, was playing about the room; her long black hair was plaited carefully, and interwoven with it were large gold pieces; amulets, engraven with holy verses of the

Koran, were strung like beads around her neck and arms; and these were all, he told me, to shield her tender years from the evil eye. When I told him that we had introduced railways into India, he was astonished beyond measure: of the mode of railway travelling I could make him form no sort of conception whatever. As he knew that the English, as a nation, were not given to speaking but what was to the truth, he may possibly have believed what I said with regard to the rate of speed arrived at in England; but I saw that his nephew, a self-sufficient youth sitting near him, certainly did not, for upon my assuring him that a traveller might be carried over one hundred *fursungs* (a *fursung* being a distance of three and a half miles) between the morning and evening meal, and that he might, if he chose, smoke his kalioon or read his Koran the whole way without being once interrupted, my young friend exclaimed, "*Deroog—Deroog!*"—"It is a lie! it is a lie!" and by way of showing that such a thing was utterly impossible, he added that "were the traveller forced through the air at such a high rate of speed, his heart would inevitably leap from his mouth." The old Mirza was much pained evidently. He feared lest I should take this somewhat brusque incredulity of his nephew to heart; so the old gentleman made a great smoke with his pipe, and behind a wreathing cloud of it I could just make him out frowning the youth into silence, whilst he told him that whatever an Englishman said was true, and although there was no harm in accusing a Persian of telling lies and eating dirt, still that saying such things to an Englishman was a matter of very grave offence. The sun was setting as the hospitable old Mirza stood at his gate to see me on my horse. I wished him good-bye, fervently praying that his shadow might never be less, he that God should ever be my protector, and so we parted.

This evening—our last in Shiraz—was one of revelry to our servants. They had had a great deal of hard work and exposure during the last few weeks, and I was consequently anxious to put them in a good humour previous to our start on the morrow. A sheep, with the very fattest tail procurable, had been purchased by my orders at the morning bazaar. It was determined that the gholaum and his fellow should have a summons to attend. It was a stroke of policy to humour him also as much as lay in our power, for on his exertions much of our future comfort on the road depended. I knew that, at a frown of his, hens that had never been known to lay eggs before would in some wonderful way at once produce them in sufficient numbers to fill our saddle-bags; that one oath of his by the Shah's (the King's) beard would instantly cause lambs to frisk and kids to jump in places where before nothing moved but the very toughest and ugliest of old he-goats; that a crack of his whip would make the most obstinate and the most wayward muleteer as obedient as a child; that at a threat of his, villages which had been professed poverty-stricken, and in which the inhabitants lived on stale bread alone, would forthwith flow with milk and with honey, with new bread and barley, and, indeed, with all we required for either ourselves or horses. It did not always happen that the villagers held back everything from us in the shape of supplies, but frequently on our arrival at a small village, consisting of perhaps two or three dozen houses, the villagers, seeing a party of strangers armed to the teeth, and sufficient in number to be equal to the task of taking the village by storm, if they were so minded, grew alarmed, for they at once came to the conclusion that we would exact everything we could from them, and pay for nothing; for this is invariably the case when Persians of rank travel. However, when the gholaum, who was known on the road, and at once recognised as a servant of the Prince's, had muttered a few strange oaths, the poor villagers, in their fright, produced everything they had; for they knew well enough that denying anything of theirs to a servant of the Governor's would only entail further exactions from them at some future time. When our servant actually paid them in silver pieces for what they brought, great was their astonishment and gratitude. It was then difficult to persuade them that there was a limit to what we required.

By the time I reached home, the hour for the "sham," or evening meal, had approached. The gholaum and his attendant duly made their appearance at our gate. The Pardoner, who had taken upon himself the duties of host for the occasion, had paid some attention to his own personal appearance. He wore his pea-green coat, and he had wound his gayest-coloured shawl around his waist. He went forward, took the gholaum by the hand, and led him to the carpet, which had been spread on the ground preparatory to the feast. He then assured his guest that "*Bismillah*,"—"In the name of God he was welcome,"—and requested him to be seated. Hereupon arose a strife between them as to who should outdo the other in civility. The gholaum, with an admirably assumed modesty, would insist upon showing a wish to take the lowest seat on the carpet; the Pardoner vehemently remonstrated; and from the little garden-house where I was sitting, I could overhear him say, as he pointed to the highest seat, "*Bismillah, Bismillah*"—"In the name of God, be seated here." The gholaum, though anxious for the seat of honour, found himself only able to exclaim, "*Az-iltifaut-shumau*"—"By your kindness—may your kindness never be less:" and at length, swearing that he would never consent, consented. Now the Pardoner had no intention whatever in his own mind of allowing the new-comer to take precedence of him; for such conduct on his part would have been acknowledging the superior rank of the gholaum, and would have formed a precedent for the rest of the journey—a state of affairs he was by no means anxious to arrive at. So, no sooner was the gholaum about to take the much-desired-for seat at the end of the carpet, than the Pardoner dropped so suddenly on his heels at the corner, that the guest was obliged to take the seat opposite. Thus they remained equidistant from the seat of honour. Immediately they settled in their places, the Pardoner showed that he was desirous of removing, as much as lay in his power, any unpleasant feeling that might have arisen in the breast of the gholaum from his late disappointment. He assured him that, with such a Roostum—such a Hercules—as he most undoubtedly was, we should have no cause to fear on our coming journey—that we should certainly burn the beards of all the Buktiarees in the mountains. The gholaum pulled up his moustaches, and looked well pleased at the compliment, as he said, "*Inshallah*"—"By the grace of God, we will burn all their fathers;" and then he asked, fiercely, "Whose dogs are the Buktiarees, that they will venture to attack such as we are?" The ferashes and the grooms brought large flaps of bread, one of which was laid before each person. These served as a sort of plate. Then came the different joints of the sheep, boiled, as we should say, to rags, and smothered in mountains of rice. With the rice were mixed raisins, onions, and cloves *à discrétion*. Very soon the servants, one and all, fell to work, their right shoulders leaning well forward, and the left hand drawn back and carefully concealed. Two bowls of curds were placed in the centre of the carpet; into this all from time to time dipped the forefinger, and then disposed of what adhered to it in a manner that was far more effectual than elegant. As the repast advanced, so did good feeling and fellowship prevail. Our little sherbetdar, a good-humoured, round-faced little fellow, was to be seen tearing off the choice bits of the meat, and cramming them with his own fingers into the mouth of the gholaum. This was by way of paying a great compliment; and the gholaum, it was evident, took it as such, for he tried hard to look happy, notwithstanding the gravy streamed from his mouth and the tears from his eyes.

Now, a word about our own party. We had arrived at Shiraz a party of five—four Englishmen and a Swede; but, according to prearranged plans, our party was here to break up. One was to return to Teheran, and, as we heard afterwards, riding in hot haste, and fired as we could only suppose by the zeal of diplomacy, he accomplished the distance, 520 miles, in the extraordinary short time of five days. Considering the miserable half-starved horses, which are the only ones procurable at the post-houses, and on which this journey was performed, it must have been a ride of great fatigue and continued exertion; and to have been accomplished in the time that it was, must have necessitated constant riding by night and by day. The remaining four of us were bound to Bushire, and being anxious to see as much of the country between us as was possible, we separated. Two took the lower road by Feriman, which turns the stupendous mountain-passes of the Kotul-e-Doktur and the Pier-e-zun. There remained then the Swede and myself. We proposed taking the direct road through the above-mentioned defiles, which lead down from the high table-lands of Persia to the low-lying country around the shores of the Persian Gulf. As our journey was the shorter one of the two, we allowed the others the start of a day, and so arranged our marches as to arrive, if possible, on the same day at Bushire. The day fixed for our leaving was the 25th May. By eight o'clock on that morning carpets were rolled up and stowed away, saddle-bags were packed, and the tea-kettle — the most indispensable of your travelling-kit in Persia, always the last thing left out, and the first thing unpacked—was finally tied upon the last mule-load. The gholaum, solemnly muttering a *Bismillah,* led the way through the gate; we followed in a cloud of dust, the servants on their horses, and the mules with their muleteers clattering after us. You might have seen that every horse's tail was ornamented with a small turquoise-coloured bead. I observed that my own especial favourite riding-horse carried one also in his mane. Some dozen or so of hairs were passed through the bead, then turned back, and thus securely fastened. Now, if it had come to pass that any old woman, even granting she were the ugliest and most malicious of her sex, had looked upon us as we rode forth, the glance of her evil eye would have been turned off from us by these turquoise-coloured beads as effectually as is the dagger-point by the steel cuirass. So at least my groom told me, when I asked him one day what was the meaning of these ornaments. This said groom was a singularly silent, gloomy-looking individual. He had his own peculiar way of doing everything. Any remonstrance of mine against his odd fancies I found of not the slightest avail. What I thought was a strange whim of his, was the saving up the blood of a hare that had been shot. Hares are very scarce in Persia, but now and then I did manage to shoot one on the line of march. Whenever this happened, my groom looked upon it as a most auspicious event. It was one of the few occasions on which he really appeared pleased. With a grim smile of joy he would instantly fasten upon the hare, and, drawing forth a little leathern case, which I believe he kept expressly for the purpose, he would most scrupulously treasure up in it every drop of blood that was obtainable. The first time I saw him thus engaged I felt curious to know for what purpose he was taking such infinite trouble. He informed me, with an air of mystery, that the blood of a hare, sprinkled on the barley that was given in the evening to a horse, would greatly increase his courage, and add much to his powers of endurance. On several occasions I tried to persuade him that, in my humble opinion, such a belief was founded on error; but I never succeeded in shaking his faith one bit. Another fancy of his was that my horse should wear an ornament in the shape of a leathern collar bedecked with silver, and with some verses of the blessed Koran sewn inside of it: this, he declared, would most assuredly keep the horse fat, and drive off all manner of diseases. As such an ornament was much at variance with my own ideas as to what was proper, I told him that really I could not hear of such a thing; and after much remonstrance on his part, I finally triumphed. But I believe this was the only single instance in which I persuaded him to let me do as I wished regarding my own horses.

We were in the saddle, as I said before, by eight o'clock, a much later hour than is usual for the morning start in Persia. But we proposed making only a short march that day, and the mid-day heat we were to pass at the house of a Swedish doctor, the only European resident at Shiraz. Oddly enough, my companion, after having travelled over for the last two years Southern Europe, Asia Minor, and Persia, met his first fellow-countryman at Shiraz. What the doctor's name was I forget, but his history, in a few words, was this: He had been thirteen years in Persia. He had left his own country when quite a lad, and had wandered through Turkey and Persia.

Having been brought up for the medical profession, he was eventually attached as a doctor to the Persian army, and he had served with it in that capacity the greater part of his sojourn in the country. His house was situated in the opposite quarter of the town to that in which we were, so to reach it we had to make our way through the crowded bazaars. The gholaum rode in front of the party. With the zeal of new office, he rained down blows upon the heads and shoulders of the unoffending crowd in a manner that was truly startling to witness. He carried a long hazel wand for the express purpose, and he used it like a fiend. At the same time he poured forth upon them a torrent of abuse. "Whose dogs are you, to stand in the road of the favoured guests of the Prince?" "*Rah bideh!*" — "Give way;" "Your fathers' graves are defiled;" "Your mothers are burnt." And with every downward blow, he roared out a *goorumsauk*, a word it is best to leave untranslated, as it sounds far more sonorous in the Persian than in the English language. As our knees and our horses' chests pushed a road through the sea of heads, I observed an old wizen-faced man with a long grey beard. From the make of his clothes and his dark face, I saw at once he was a native of India. He had perched himself on the ledge of a stall of the bazaar. As we approached, he defiantly slapped his breast, and shrieked out in Hindustani that he had just arrived from Lucknow, and that he had seen the English, men, women, and children, slaughtered there, and lying dead in heaps; that the streets were a *guz* deep with their accursed blood. He wore the green turban, proclaiming him to be a Synd, a descendant of the Prophet. The gholaum, probably on this account, and also that he did not understand a word that was said, did not favour the old villain with the stick, which I inwardly prayed he would do. The doctor, arrayed in his Persian costume, received us with great civility at his gate. Two or three of our servants were admitted with us; the rest, with the mules, went off to a neighbouring *caravanserai.* A Persian breakfast, with its dishes swimming in grease and smothered in onions, followed by trays of fruits and sweetmeats of various kinds, was the entertainment provided us by our host. This Homeric abundance, with its accompanying pipes, gave us steady occupation for at least two hours. The doctor produced some Shiraz wine of his own make: it was the veriest *vin ordinaire* I ever drank. However, we drank it with a fortitude that was worthy of a better reward than the anguish and torment which subsequently we were fated to endure. How bitterly we repented us of our civility! Our host was married to a young Armenian lady, but as he had quite adopted the manners and customs of the country in which he had so long sojourned, we were not graced with her presence; but from the opening and shutting of the venetians of a window on the opposite side of the yard, and from a cloud of white drapery that was dimly discernible through them, I strongly suspected that the light of the good doctor's harem was there watching with curiosity the movements and appetites of the strangers.

As the sun dipped towards the naked rocky hills that bound the valley on the west, we prepared for a start. Our good host, wishing to see the last of us, insisted upon riding out of the city with us. He amused us by speaking of his experience with the Persian army when on service. He said the men were good enough, and of such wonderful endurance and obedience that under good officers they would do anything. He informed us that he was the only European with the Persian forces when they made their night attack on Sir James Outram's force at Boorasjoon; indeed, he gave us to understand that he planned and led the attack himself; and if it had not been for "*ces coquins d'officiers qui ne se battent jamais*," as he said, and who ran at the first fire of our troops, we should have suffered considerably.

On our dismounting to take leave of the hospitable doctor, he produced a flat-shaped bottle which he had carried, stowed away in one of his saddle-bags. He declared that our finishing the contents of it between the three of us, before we shook hands to say good-bye, would give him infinite pleasure. Indeed, he seemed to think that friends could not part in any orthodox way but this. The bottle contained, as I found out afterwards to my cost, arrack, and very strong arrack into the bargain. One sip, which I took in the spirit of good-fellowship, sent the tears gushing into my eyes, and I lay gasping on the ground like a trout on a river's bank. The two Swedes drank it like so much water. At length, after many protestations of mutual friendship, we bid the good doctor a final adieu. He returned to his Persian home; we turned our horses' heads towards the village where we purposed remaining for the night. The road led through a well-cultivated plain, and heavy golden crops of the bearded wheat waved like a sunlit ocean in the evening breeze. To the right we could see the long lines of the Mesjid-i-Verdeh gardens sweeping close up to the base of the mountains that bound the valley on the northern side. We rode about four miles to the village of Koosan, a small place of about one hundred houses. There was no *caravanserai*, so the gholaum, who had ridden on in front, had prepared for our occupation a small house at the corner of the village. The inhabitants had, as a matter of course, been summarily ejected. We found the family huddled up together on a house-top adjoining. Poor people! they were evidently under the apprehension that we should appropriate, or otherwise dispose of, the household gods and provisions, which were all scattered about in the rooms and yards just as they had left them; for they had been ordered to decamp at a moment's notice by the ruthless gholaum. The

Reesh-Suffeed, the greybeard of the family, at length came forward. In trembling accents he told us that their house and all it contained were at our entire disposal, and that he himself was our humble slave. We assured the old gentleman that our servants would not be allowed to touch anything in the house; and, presenting him with a few silver pieces, he went away quite contented. We were on the point of sitting down to our hard-boiled eggs and cold fowl, when the sound of a horse galloping attracted our attention. We were on the flat terrace on the top of the house. Thence we could see a horseman galloping as if for dear life. He was approaching us from the direction of Shiraz, leaving a long line of dust behind him. He pulled up immediately in front of our door. The Pardoner, who had subsided into rather a secondary position in the presence of the all-commanding gholaum, took advantage of his momentary absence to assume the questioning of the stranger. He rushed out of the gate, and seizing the horseman by the knee, commenced eagerly to question him. "In the name of the Prophet, whence come you?" "Has the Prime Minister had the stick?" Or, "Has the 'Antelope' (the reigning monarch's favourite wife, so-called) born a son and heir into the world, that you ride in such desperate haste?" The horseman threw himself out of the saddle; and, being anxious to keep up a few minutes longer the curiosity which his arrival was evidently exciting amongst our servants, he could only prevail upon himself to answer to their eager inquiries, that "God was the only God, and that Mohammed was his Prophet." At length he opened his saddle-bags, and brought forth two closed metal dishes. Then, seeing that our eyes were upon him, he threw himself down upon the ground; and, with an eye to future *bucksheesh*, he put on the appearance of a man quite overcome with his exertions. The dishes were a present from the kind doctor. One contained a baked fowl hidden in rice and raisins, still smoking hot; the other, a *pasanjan*, the *chef-d'œuvre* of the Persian *cuisine*, the secret of which, like Philippe's "Crameuski à la Polonaise," is beyond the ken of non-culinary mortals. Whilst we were at dinner, little ragged rosy-faced children came tripping along the neighbouring house-tops, and took up points of observation near us. Beyond them were groups of veiled women whispering together, and peering curiously at us through their thick white veils.

We passed the first few hours of darkness in convulsed but futile attempts to sleep. The floor seemed to be alive: we found to our cost—at least I found to mine, for I believe the Swede slept as soundly as ever he did—that there were other inhabitants of the house besides the family of the old greybeard.

May 26th.—We were in the saddle some hours before daybreak. My companion the Swede was bent on an early start this morning, and I was only too anxious to bid adieu to my lively and tenacious friends of the night. The Swede had a wonderfully persuasive way of his own of rousing the muleteers from their slumbers, and of getting them to work in packing away the loads. No matter how long the day's march had been, or how short the night's rest, he was always brisk and lively at the hour agreed upon for getting up. He had a most enviable way of jumping at once into the full possession of his faculties, and of his trousers and boots. With him it appeared to be all the work of a moment. There was no moody silence, no general obfuscation of the intellect, with its accompanying crossness and irritability. He was no sooner on his legs—which in some mysterious manner made their appearance already booted and breeched—than he would spring towards a great bundle of felt cloths, carpets, saddles, and *et ceteras,* and with an accompaniment of *sacrés* would dance a double-shuffle upon and around it. The great mass would instinctively heave at his approach, and then shape itself into servants and muleteers. The Swede, ever active, would blow up the embers of last night's fire, and wave the little black coffee-pot over them in a manner that suggested the idea of a *petite tasse* being ready before we started. A cold bright moon was shining, and by its light we could make out on our left the jagged scarped summit of the Moolleh-Sirdeh Mountain. The road ascended across a stony plain, and led us, just as day was breaking, to a ruined *caravanserai* called Kinaradgah. Around this the hills closed in abruptly. Below was a brawling mountain-torrent, which we crossed by a ruined bridge. There was no sound or appearance of human or animal life, and the bare hills around and the ruins formed a dreary and desolate scene. Through the dim light of the morning we took our last view of the valley of Shiraz, and then commenced a long tiresome ascent. It took us about two hours to get to the top of this, and then we found ourselves overlooking a hilly broken country, well covered in the hollows with bush and shrub, principally the thorny mimosa. At a distance of about twenty-two miles we approached a fine stream of water with a broad jungly bed. This, we were told, was the Karahautch river. The road kept along the left bank of it till we arrived at Khanazeneeoon. The village consisted of about a dozen rude, miserable hovels; the *caravanserai* we found completely in ruins. Provisions were scarce; but the gholaum's threats and the Pardoner's *krans*—a silver piece worth about 10d.—made some bread and some bruised barley-straw to appear. There were some patches of cultivation near the village; and judging from the backwardness of the crops and the crispness and chilliness of the morning air, I should say this place was at least one thousand feet higher than Shiraz. There was no great heat in the middle of the day, as we had experienced during our stay at Shiraz. In the evening a man rode up to the *serai*, and was very anxious to persuade us to allow him to be our guide to the ruins of Shahpoor. The stranger was a square-built powerful man, and from his dress we supposed he belonged to some Eliaut tribe. His beard was dyed a bright red, and this, added to a treacherous thievish eye, did not altogether give him the appearance of a man whose services one would be anxious to enlist as a guide in a lone desert place, as the ruins of Shahpoor were described to be. The ruins were still three marches distant, so we gave "Red Beard" to understand that there was plenty of time to consider the matter, and that at Kauzeroon we should determine whether we would visit the ruins or not, this being still an open question, as they lay some distance off our direct road. Red Beard and the gholaum then had an argument as to the distance of the ruins from our road. The gholaum was as anxious that we should not go as Red Beard that we should. One said the distance was only a "*meidanee asp*"—a few minutes' gallop; the other vowed it was at least two days' march. In the heat of the argument they called each other some horrible names, and Red Beard fingered his dagger in a manner truly ominous. However, he finally withdrew; and when he was safe out of hearing, the gholaum waxed bold as a lion, and informed us that the stranger belonged to a tribe of plundering Eliauts who had lately occupied the pastures around the ruins. These Eliauts, he said, would watch their opportunity, and, should we visit the ruins, they would attack us, and most inevitably cut our throats. Whether the gholaum was right in his suppositions, or whether it was merely with a view to keep us on the straight road, and so give himself and his horse less to do, I know not. Red Beard, except to untie his horse from the gate of the *serai*, never appeared to us again. We saw the last of him as he jogged quietly away over the hills, in the golden light of the setting sun.

27*th*.—We had a march of twenty-three miles before us, so we were in the saddle by 3 A.M. The gholaum had warned us the evening before that this was a march of some danger, as it lay through a lonely uninhabited country. It was only after considerable remonstrance on his part that he would consent to start so many hours before daybreak. He declared that, if he did start so early, we took all responsibility on our own shoulders. The Swede consoled him with the reflection, that if anything *did* go wrong, the first shot fired by us would be at his (the gholaum's) head. To make our party as formidable in numbers as possible, some dozen or so *kecheeckchees* or guards from the village were hired. These were to accompany us for the first twelve miles of our march, as this was considered the portion of it on which we were most liable to attack. As day broke we forded the Kharahautch river. The increasing light showed us the persons of our guards, whom as yet we had only heard pattering along through the darkness by our horses' sides. There were about a dozen of them, wild-looking fellows, with close-fitting felt caps stuck on the top of their matted locks. They were all armed with a long matchlock, a pistol, and a sabre each. Their clothes, for the most part, hung in rags over their large brawny frames. With a sort of coarse sandal on their feet, they strode sturdily along over the stony road. As long as the darkness had hid surrounding objects from our view, our servants had ridden along in silence. If they did venture upon a remark it was in a whisper, and the guards themselves had strode along in silence; for they were as much afraid of the Buktiarees as any of our servants were; and had we been attacked, they, headed by the gholaum, would probably have been the first to run. We ascended the Seena Suffeed, a very steep bit of road, leading—with a true disdain of any engineering principle—straight as an arrow's flight up a mountain-side. By the time we reached the summit, the sun was shedding his rays with a lavish hand down the wooded slopes, and into the gloomy mountain recesses. This broad daylight, added to a level piece of ground that made its appearance by the side of the road on the summit, developed the hitherto dormant manhood of the gholaum. During the darkness of night he had kept his position well in the centre of the party; now that shapeless bundle of felt and linen suddenly assumed the form and appearance of a dashing horseman. He stabbed the lean sides of his Rosinante with the heavy iron stirrups; then he dashed forward, and unslung his long heavy matchlock. In the space of a few minutes, having kept his horse circling at full gallop, he had disposed of any amount of imaginary enemies. At some he pointed his matchlock immediately over his horse's ears. Others, again, were in close pursuit of him. At these he levelled his matchlock, holding it parallel to and immediately over his courser's streaming tail. He threw himself to the right of his saddle, then to the left; he looked from under his horse's belly; and then he finally pulled up his smoking steed. He looked so well pleased with himself, that I have not the least doubt he laid the flattering unction to his soul that he had imbued us with no small admiration of his prowess; and we could not but admit, seeing the very stony and rough state of the ground, that the performance, both on his own part and on the part of his steed, was very creditable. But it was a relief to us when the evolutions had come duly to an end; for the poor horse looked as if he had had quite enough of it—so much so that, at the completion of the performance, the sharp cruel bit threw him so completely on his haunches that I was prepared to see the poor brute go rolling backwards down the mountain-side. A small ruined tower, which they called a guard-house, was close at hand. Here we dismounted to breathe the horses. The servants, taking the direction of Mecca from the position of the rising sun, fell on their knees, and muttered over their prayers. The gholaum had put himself in a conspicuous position in front; and there he remained as a sort of fugleman to the rest.

From the commanding spot on which we stood, the eye ranged over a wide extent of mountain-slopes and mountain-summits fading blue into the distance. The hollows were thickly wooded with the sturdy blackthorn-tree, and a species of dwarf oak. It was one of the most enjoyable views I had seen in this country of level plains and desert wastes. From the tower we commenced the descent to the plain of Dust-Arjun: once in the plain, we struck across it, and passed the village of the same name, nearly all in ruins. The road beyond led away to the edge of the plain, and along the base of a scarped mountain-side. This reared itself up like a giant wall, and out of it were gushing several springs of water. These formed below into one clear limpid stream, which meandered away to the left through the grassy plain. About two miles beyond this we crossed another small stream, and entered the village of Musheer—a little walled place, containing about six houses. We had ridden on a little ahead of the mules, and as the sun was very hot, we pulled up under the gateway, and waited there till the mules came up. We were at once surrounded by the inhabitants. The women, old and young, were all unveiled. They approached us without the least hesitation, and brought us some large jars of curds and whey. The men implored us for medicines: they seemed to think that anything we had by us in the shape of medicine must be precious. I happened to have some dozen rhubarb pills in my saddle-bags, and the properties of the drug having been duly explained, they were carried off as a priceless treasure. Whilst we were waiting here, a mule of ours, carrying one of the grooms and some stable kit, fell backwards into the little stream near the village. The groom soon scrambled out, but the poor mule stuck fast in the black mud. The whole village at once rushed down to the scene of action, and, under a storm of blows and Allahs, the animal struggled on to the bank. Leaving the village, we commenced the rugged ascent of the Pier-e-zun, or "Old Woman's Pass." The path led over one continual mass of large boulders and rocks, and it was as much as we could do to keep the horses on their legs. We ascended continually for about an hour, and then found ourselves on the summit of the Pass. There was no view, for the precipitous mountain-sides closed in upon the road, and allowed nothing but their rocks and chasms immediately over our heads to be seen. We then made a rapid zigzag descent to the *caravanserai* of Mean-i-Kotul. The *serai* had been lately erected, and was in good order in consequence. It was built on a natural terrace some 300 yards square, jutting out from the steep mountain-slope. It is the halfway-house, as the name signifies, on the ascent of the Pier-e-zun from this side. There were no provisions obtainable at the *serai;* but late in the evening some forage for the horses was brought from the villages Kulloonee and Abdoree, which they told us were situated in the valley below. Our evening repast was of the very lightest description possible, and sleep that night was out of the question. Nothing availed against the fury of the mosquitoes and sand-flies; but what with smoking and drinking tea, we passed the hours till the moon shed her welcome light over the wilderness of mountains around us. One o'clock in the morning of the 28th saw us again in the saddle, and continuing the descent of the Pier-e-zun. I was very sleepy; but my horse stumbled and tripped in such an aggravating way down the rough road we were travelling, that I could not but keep awake. A continued descent for about four miles, and we were in the valley of Dusht-Beer. Here we rode under trees of the dwarf oak, ash, and blackthorn. There was no undergrowth, but springy soft turf came close up to the edge of the road. The whole valley was bathed in the silvery light of the moon; and the quiet beauty of the scene was a pleasant change from the rugged slopes of the Pier-e-zun. I was too tired to keep long awake. Our horses moved noiselessly along over the sandy road; and soon the moonlit glades, the stalwart frame of my companion the Swede, and my horse's ears—three objects upon which, alternately, I had in vain tried to rivet my attention—appeared to spin round in mazy confusion, and then dissolve into mist. My eyes shut with a sudden snap, and all senses, save the one of remaining in my saddle, deserted me How far I rode thus oblivious to everything around me, I know not; but this I do know, that when fate decreed I was to be awoke, it was to be done rather rudely. There was a crash—a noise much resembling that which arises upon a heavy weight charging a "bullfinch"; something hit me a violent blow on the nose, which made me reel in my saddle, and eventually laid me backward, with an irresistible thrust, with my head over my horse's tail. My hat was knocked off; and there was a feeling as if all my hair had been dragged out by the roots and my face knocked into a jelly. Literally speaking, I was painfully alive to my situation. When I did venture to take a look, I found that my horse, probably tempted by the grass, had wandered off the road, and carried me against the horizontal branch of a blackthorn-tree. In a few minutes I had convinced myself as to the extent of the damage done; and I consoled myself with the reflection that my nose, though feeling very much as if the redoubtable Sayers had been practising upon it, was still in its proper place—a fact about which, at first, grave doubts had arisen in my mind.

"Quid quisque vitet, nunquam homini satis
Cautum est, in horas;"

and thinking how just was the remark, and how a *triste lignum* also had caused the writing of it, I vowed that this should be the last time that the drowsy god should overcome me in the saddle. A previous conquest of his had led me into trouble some months before. We had left Baghdad some days, and as the weather was very hot, we generally managed to get over the greater part of the march before day broke. The night in question we had been in the saddle since midnight, and after many ineffectual attempts at resistance, I finally succumbed. I was awoke by the tinkling of bells all round me: the sound, I knew, announced the passing of a caravan. By the faint light of a sickly moon I could see, on all sides of me, a sea of long black boxes surging by me. There appeared to be some scores of mules, each laden with two of these boxes, which were balanced like panniers across his back. The boxes were five and six feet long, and many of them but loosely nailed together. My horse had carried me into the midst of a moving cemetery; for these—pah! another sense besides that of sight informed me—were all coffins. They contained the bodies of the devout, who had died in the true faith, and who were now being taken to Kerbela to be eventually buried by their sorrowing relatives in the consecrated ground around the tomb of the holy martyr Hoosein. It was a close sultry night, and for some minutes I found it impossible to get clear of these long black boxes that came crowding upon me as if there was no end to them. For those few minutes—they seemed an age—a sickness came over me that made me reel in my saddle, and left me with scarcely strength sufficient to keep my seat, whilst my horse plunged and started, as every now and again a coffin came bumping against his sides. Many of these coffins had travelled thus hundred of miles; and into their gaping fissures—indeed from some of them whole planks had fallen away—the moon shed her dim rays. I fancied every now and then I could see the ghastly faces of the dead, and their shrivelled limbs as they swayed backwards and forwards in their fragile tenement with the jolting of the mule.

Shortly after day dawned we commenced the descent of the "Kotul-e-Doktur" (the Pass of the Maiden). The descent was very rapid, but the road excellent. It led in a series of short zigzags down the perpendicular side of a stupendous cliff of the mountain. The road was perfectly smooth; quicklime had been used in filling up and levelling the way, after the *débris* of rocks and stones had been hurled over the side. A strong stone parapet is continued down the descent for about two miles. Looking over this parapet at the summit, one might drop a stone on to any one of the tiny zigzags of the way far below, so precipitous is the mountain-side.

This smoothing of the roadway and repairs of the parapet had been effected in 1847 by a merchant of Shiraz. Before this, the Kotul-e-Doktur was considered one of the most dangerous passes in Persia. At the base of the cliff, and looking up at the rugged mountain-brow now capped with fleecy clouds of morning mist, we had every reason to be thankful to the good Shirazee, who had lavished his wealth in making the roadway such an easy one as we had found it. ·This was the one sole instance, during the whole course of our travels in Persia, where it was visible that the hand of man had been at work in mending the road. Even close up to the gates of their large cities, such a thing as road repair is never dreamt of.

The descent finished, we entered the *riante* valley of Kauzeroon. The road passes under a cliff, a large portion of which, we observed, had been scarped away. On the smooth surface of rock a group of figures, considerably larger than life, was represented in a rude bas-relief. This, as we learned, was an attempt on the part of our old friend Timoor Mirza —one of the Persian princes who were once well known in England—to hand his name down to posterity. The whole sculpture, called by the people Nuks-e-Timoor, was a rude imitation of the grand bas-reliefs of the Nuks-i-Roostum, which we had visited, at the same time as the tomb of Darius, some weeks previous. In this the hero, supposed to be Timoor himself, in gala costume, is seen sitting on a chair, which, by the way, is a very rickety-looking affair, and all on one side; and some one, whether man or woman it is difficult to decide, is handing him a kalioon: the attendants, three in number, with their arms duly folded across their chests, stand ranged at the side. The delineation of this scene had certainly no claims to high art; but, looking at the size of the figures, and the large portion of the cliff that must have been scarped away, it was evident that our worthy friend Timoor had spared no pains. In the distant part of the valley to the west, the blue waters of a lake were discernible. Some of our people affirmed that it was a lake of brackish salt water; others, again, said it was sweet water. I inclined to the former opinion, as there were no villages to be seen on its shores. The name it went by was the Durreea Per-i-shoon. As we approached Kauzeroon, we rode through fields of corn extending right across the valley. The harvest had commenced, for the greater part of the heavy crops stood in sheaves. Here we saw the first date-trees since we had left, twelve months ago, the plain around Baghdad. Their presence warned us of our approach to the fierce heats of the sea-level. They cannot live in the high table-lands of Persia. There the snow and ice of winter kills them. We passed under the grey stone walls of the town, and took up our quarters in a small summer-house, at an angle of the Baug-i-Noor, one of the most famed orange-groves of Persia.

It was late in the day when, wooed by the evening breeze, which came sighing through the orange-groves gentle as a woman's voice, we determined on remaining here for the morrow. The cattle were in need of rest, and the servants begged hard for a halt. Our original plan was to make a day of it at the ruins of Shahpoor; but the deep shade of the orange-groves, and the delicious perfume of the blossoms, decided the point. A halt was determined upon, and Shahpoor forgotten, amid the sense of complete repose, and *dolce far niente* of our groves.

We started on the morning of the 30th at about 1 A.M. There was no moon, but the heavens, without a cloud, were in the full glory of starlight. The road led westerly across the valley, at first through cultivation; from this it struck into a waste desert tract of country, thinly covered with bush. As we were moving silently along across this plain, a howl, or rather a shriek, the most unearthly in its tones that I ever heard, suddenly broke the stillness of the night. The sound came from a spot apparently close to the side of the road. It was continued for some moments. Then the shrieks became less and less intense, and finally merged into a loud hissing noise, to which it was horrible to listen. So unearthly was the sound, and so dismally did it strike my ear as it came ringing through the still night air, that I in-voluntarily shuddered, and my very blood ran cold, as I strained my eyes into the gloom of night to see whence such sounds could emanate. So near did it seem, that we instantly pushed our horses onwards, and towards the spot from whence the sound appeared to issue. But it was to no purpose: not a thing moving could we distinguish in the darkness. Was this the voice of the Ghaulee Beaubee — the same lonely demon by whom, the Afghaans aver, every desert and waste solitude of their country is tenanted? In India I had heard, and that often enough, the mournful yellings of jackals, and the strange laughing bark of the hyena; in Africa I had listened in the still night to the grand roar of the lion, as it came booming across the plain; but never in my life had I heard anything so appalling as these unearthly shrieks. Volney, in 'Les Ruines,' speaks of the howling of jackals at night as sounds expressive of loneliness and solitude. I am sure the sounds to which we listened that night were highly suggestive of the same. The Persians said they were the call of an animal whom they named the Sug-i-toor, or tusked dog. Perhaps it was some old toothless jackal —though the call was far more appalling and dismal than anything I had heard from jackals before—who had been jilted in his younger days, and was now possessed of an unhappy spirit, that urged him thus to lament his woes. It may possibly have been an animal that, I believe, some call the "lion's provider." He is commonly supposed to hunt for the larger animals of prey, and then, when he has discovered anything, he invites them to the repast with his, to them, welcome yellings. Whether he had proposed to himself a treat of the kind off our remains, I am not sufficiently a naturalist to declare positively, but he certainly haunted us with his dreadful howls and shrieks for about ten minutes. One of our servants then fired a pistol-shot at random into the darkness toward the sound, and we heard no more of our dismal visitant. The first streak of dawn showed us we were passing some low stony hills to the right of our road. Beyond these, we were told, at a distance of some twelve miles, lay the ruins of Shahpoor. We left the plain of Kauzeroon by the pass of Tung-i-Toorkoon; and a most formidable defile we found it. Hitherto I had never had the misfortune to ride through any pass approaching this one in roughness and badness of road. Turning west, we struck into a defile, leading through gigantic rocks of limestone and gypsum, piled in confused masses around us. For about a mile and a half the hard dry bed of a mountain-torrent was the only roadmaker. So narrow is the way that, in many places, two horsemen could not ride abreast. We dismounted, and led our horses over the great boulders of rock, over which the passing caravans had worn, here and there, rough steps. The horses found a difficulty in getting along; even the sure-footed mules looked down in their cautious way, and went on carefully picking their steps. Not a bush, or a shrub, or even a blade of grass was visible—nothing but these huge masses of naked rock met the eye. There was not a vestige of a sound of animal life; all around was the dead silence of the grave. It was a place that Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude might have found especial delight in; but I, for one, was glad to emerge from the gloomy pass, and to enter the little valley of Koomaridge. For about four miles we rode through fields where the villagers were all busy with the harvest, though the greater part of the crops, we observed, was in. At a distance that we reckoned at nineteen miles, we arrived at Koomaridge, a small village, the houses in which were all built of stone. There was no place for us to put up in save a stable; and though this was swarming with fleas and other vermin, we were glad to take refuge in it from the already powerful scorching rays of the sun. Every house we saw had its three or four bee-hives, and the villagers brought us a quantity of fine clean-looking honey. It was very sweet, though with but little flavour. A happy thought of the Swede's set us to work mixing it with the curds and whey, which was usually the *pièce de resistance* of our breakfast. Milk in this shape is generally obtainable in the smallest villages of Persia, and since we had left Shiraz, it had been our principal subsistence. Tea one drinks at all hours of the day and night, but never with milk. The heat during the day in our stable was great. We had spread our carpets on a spot that had been swept and sprinkled with water—a little oasis amid the desert of dust and rubbish around—but, owing to the swarms of flies and fleas, to which we finally became a helpless prey, our midday siesta was of a most troubled and feverish character. In the evening the men returned from the harvest-field; and whilst we were at dinner, they gathered in groups about our humble dwelling. This gave the gholaum a good opportunity of holding forth to them about the badness of the lodging which had been provided us. They swore by Allah that there was no help for it. They said that every place that was not actually occupied by their wives and families was at present filled with corn that had as yet not been trodden out. The men of this village were fine sturdy-looking fellows. Two or three of them came forward, and said that during the war they had run the gauntlet of the Persian army, and carried fruit and provisions into the English camp, then before Bushire.

No sooner was it dark than we clambered up to our stable-top. There, with the starlit vault of heaven above us, we enjoyed some few hours' sleep, undisturbed.

31*st.*—This was comparatively a short march of twelve miles. But as we had the formidable descent of the Kotul-e-Koomaridge before us, we started at about 4 A.M. The gholaum said, that by starting at this hour we should reach the worst part of the road about the time day would break. We descended continually, splashing every now and then through a stream. The road seemed to find a pleasure in crossing from bank to bank. It was anything but a pleasure to us, for our horses slipped and stumbled about in the darkness over the rocky bed in such a way, that a cold bath seemed imminent more than once. After riding about three miles, a ruined toll-house on the right warned us that we were on the summit of the pass. We halted some little time here, to allow ourselves the advantage of full daylight before we commenced the descent, which the gholaum described as "*nal-shicken,*" literally, shoe-breaking to a degree. This is a word very commonly made use of; and when a Persian does not know the name of any particular mountain-pass or ascent — perhaps a name does not exist — he will at once christen it *nal-shicken.* As daylight streamed over the wilderness of mountains around us, we found we were looking down upon a scene surpassing, in savage wild grandeur, anything either of us had ever beheld. From the height on which we stood, the road plunged down the precipitous mountain-side, like an eagle from his eyrie, into the gloomy depths below. To the right and to the left, sharp jagged rocks of limestone-rock shot up as if ready to impale us. The mountains about the pass form a sort of horse-shoe around it; and their rugged foreheads, clearly defined against the morning sky, beetled ominously over every inch of the descent. It looked as if a child's strength exerted on those awful summits could crush a host in the pass below. We thought the pass of the Tungi Toorkoon bad, but it was a joke compared to this. There was no trace of the hand of man having been employed in any one single part of the descent. Since the day that Alexander and his legions had poured down it, this must have been one of the great highways of Persia; still, there was no sign that there had been any attempt to better or broaden the roadway. Our horses were down on their sides several times, and I saw the Swede himself shoot down the smooth sloping side of a mass of rock like an avalanche. The gholaum was the only one of the party who did not dismount. His horse was a wonderfully sure-footed animal. Without any assistance from his rider, he picked his way, doubled his legs under him, and sprang from rock to rock like a goat. It was the most marvellous performance on the part of a horse I ever saw — off sawdust. I led my favourite horse, a hot-blooded fiery chestnut, the whole way, but he was slipping and plunging like a mad thing, and in such a fearful way that I knew at any moment he might be over the side and dashed to a thousand atoms. It was with no small relief then that, at the end of three quarters of an hour or so, I heard the gholaum gurgle out an "*Alhumdulillah,*"

—"Praise be to God." We were over the worst of it, and I breathed more freely, and tried to coax the chestnut into a happier frame of mind than his distended nostrils and foaming sides then betokened. We pushed on to the Khoonazaberni river, and were soon gladdened by the sight of its clear waters flashing merrily along over their rocky bed. It was a fine stream, some thirty or forty yards wide, and the road kept along the bank till we debouched into the plain of Kisht. The sun's rays were hot ere we reached the village of Koonartakta. Here we found a good *caravanserai*, built some little distance from the straggling village, which we heard was occupied by a nomad tribe. From the platform on the top of the *serai* we looked down upon a well-cultivated plain, some eight or nine miles long, and dotted with a few villages. Dark-green lines swept across the plain in all directions; these were the famous date-bearing groves of Kisht. The *serai* was a well-built one, and the walls were of such a substantial thickness that we did not feel the heat to-day as we had done yesterday. We were, notwithstanding, at least 2000 feet nearer the sea-level.

A little after noon, when most of the servants were asleep, and I only happened by accident to be awake —for we generally managed an hour or two's sleep during the great heat of the day—I noticed my groom Hassan at some fifty yards from the *serai* leading one of my horses round and round a certain spot. The horse was limping, and I observed that Hassan, with his eyes fixed on the ground, after having led the horse round a certain number of times, put him about and led him round in the reverse way. Although the horse seemed to have had quite enough of the ceremony, I knew that in the end it would be best not to interfere. Had I ordered the horse to be taken back to his picket before the performance had come duly to an end, it would only have ensured the poor animal being taken out at some unearthly hour of the night, when Mr Hassan would first have assured himself that interference on my part was out of the question. So I watched patiently till the horse was brought back to his picket in the courtyard of the *serai*. Hassan was then somewhat taken aback by my hailing him from the terrace above: he knew that from the position I then occupied I must have witnessed the whole of the ceremony. In answer to my inquiry as to what it all meant, he informed me in a mysterious solemn manner that under the spot over which he had led the horse a hyena had been buried some years ago—that a *kecheekchee* or guard of the *serai* had assured him of the fact! Hassan then went on to say that, if a lame horse was led round the grave of a hyena a certain number of times one way, and then a certain number of times the other, he would be a sound horse again ere the sun rose on the morrow. Such was the solution of the mystery. I held my peace, and repressed a smile. As to giving

Hassan a piece of my mind about the absurdity of the whole thing, I would not have done it for a kingdom. With some show of reason on my side, I might have argued that a dead hyena could work no sort of charm over a living horse; that the hyena, having been dead so many years, could not in any manner add to the efficacy of the cure, and a quantity of others that I deemed valid objections. But he would only have laughed me to scorn, and his conviction would only have become deeper rooted: for previous experience had taught me that in all that concerned horse-flesh, Hassan looked upon me as one of the most hopelessly ignorant of mortals. Before he left me, he regretted that the hyena had been dead and buried for so many years; had it been otherwise, he would certainly have secured some hairs of the animal's tail, and, with these in his possession, he assured me his wife would have to record many an "interesting event," and he would have been the happy father of strong and healthy children, whereas at present it was a reproach amongst his friends that Allah had denied to him even a single one of these "dear pledges."

1st June.—On leaving the *serai* we struck across the plain of Kisht for about a mile in a southerly direction: then commenced another difficult descent, that of the Kotul-e-Maloo, the last of these formidable mountain-passes. The moon shone down the sides of a lofty precipitous peak that overhung the road immediately to the right. By the faint light silvering the awful precipices and crags around us, we could but faintly discern the wildness of the scene; but it was one that Gaspard Poussin only could have dared to paint. Though the road was a trifle better than that of yesterday's march, the descent was very rough and very rapid. About an hour after daybreak we crossed a rapid mountain stream, which the guides called the Rohilla river. The water came well up over the horses' girths, and the ford was so rocky that the mules in crossing slipped and stumbled in a manner that was quite alarming to witness; for if they had once got off the ford, the stream would have swept them away beyond all hope. However, all got over without mishap, the muleteers keeping up a thundering chorus of Allahs the while. In winter, this ford, owing to the rapid current of its icy waters, is considered a very dangerous one. Every year, we were told, both men and cattle are lost in it. A little beyond the ford we passed two large bridges, completely in ruins; the large single arch of one was still standing, its massive brick buttresses defying the rapid stream below. These were probably the work of the good King Shah Abbas, Persia's best monarch.

Leaving the river, we struck suddenly into a gloomy gorge of the mountains; this led us down upon the village of Dalakee; and when the view opened out, the plain, which stretches away without a break from the foot of these mountains to the shores of the Persian Gulf, was spread like a map below us. The small village of Dalakee lay immediately under the mountains, their rugged perpendicular sides almost overhanging it. The only place we found in the village to put up in was a small and ruined *caravanserai*. The sole occupant of this was an aged donkey. Infirm with years, and supported by voluntary contributions, his old age was passing away amid the ruins quietly enough till our unhappy arrival: then, of course, nothing would satisfy our servants but that he was to be summarily ejected. It was in vain we assured them that the aged pensioner, being left unmolested, would be in no way incompatible with our day's comfort. They no sooner saw us with our boots off, standing on our little carpet island, and consequently judging that interference on our part was improbable, than they commenced to belabour the poor donkey's sides with their whips; —they screamed at him, and by way of adding insult to injury, they swore by the Prophet that he was the "grandfather of asses." And so, under a storm of blows and abuse, the poor old fellow made a slow retreat. But it was only for a time; presently he came stealing back, and again ensconced himself in his wonted corner. His love of home gave the servants, we were glad to see, an infinity of trouble. As often as he was driven forth, so often did he come stealing back again; till at last one of the servants had to take up his station at the gate of the *serai*, and there he awaited the enemy like Hector at the Scæan gate. The heat during the day was terrific. We kept our heads bandaged with towels wrung out with cold water ; still it seemed that only something short of a miracle could save us from a brain-fever : never in my life had I felt anything so crushing, so overpowering, as this day's heat was. The sky was as of brass, and over it there was the one glory of the sun. The rocky sides of the mountains above us appeared to glow and burn in its fierce rays. The very earth gave out heat, and appeared to scorch one like a fiery oven. The dark lines of date-groves, sweeping across the plain, now appeared, in the hazy glare of the sunlight, broken into thousands of fragments. Several mirages, of a deep-blue colour, and smooth and calm as the bosom of a lake, waved and danced over the burning plain. The heat about four or five in the afternoon was so great, and of so suffocating a character, that I thought more than once if those burning rocks above us were to topple over and crush us in their ruin, such a death would be a joyous release from the dreadful sense of oppression. I had heard that instances had occurred in the Persian Gulf of the sailors rushing to the ship's side and jumping overboard, and that with a certainty of death before them. I now for the first time understood the feeling, for I felt certain that any long continuance of the heat we had that day would have driven many men raving mad. As the sun was setting we made our way across the heated plain to the banks of the Rohilla river. The distance was about a mile, and from the languor and exhaustion of the past day we could move but slowly along, till we neared the banks, and heard the pleasant rush of the river; then we hurried forward like a lover to the feet of his mistress, and in a few minutes we had taken refuge from the scorched earth beneath the veil of the dark rushing waters. Not till the stars glimmered down their silvery streaks across the stream could we tear ourselves away from the grateful luxury of its pleasant waters. That night we passed in vain endeavours to sleep. Mosquitoes of gigantic size thirsted for our blood. I cannot say I forgave them, but there was an excuse for them. The night was a thirsty one, and the heat almost as oppressive as it had been during the day. The shades of night had brought no cool breeze, or indeed breeze of any kind, to our fevered frames. I tossed about for some hours, amusing myself with wringing out towels and wrapping them round my head. This seemed to allay the feverish rush of blood, that appeared to be pouring like a mill-stream from every vein of my body into my throbbing temples.

2d June.—We were in the saddle at 3 A.M., and glad to find ourselves moving through the air and away from the mosquito-haunted *serai*. The road, bearing S.S.E., kept along the base of the mountains.

The air was strongly impregnated with the smell of naphtha. As far as I was concerned, I must confess it had rather a stifling effect than otherwise upon me; but it seemed to clear the pipes of one of the muleteers, a sturdy little fellow, who always perched himself upon the top of the highest pile of baggage; for as he rode along, he suddenly tolled forth an appeal to some faithless fair one. He sang vehemently through his nose, and with an amount of energy worthy of a better fate than his appeared to be, owing to the heartlessness of the stag-eyed one. He called her his "sugar-lips," his "sugar-eating parrot," and entreated her to return; but as the song proceeded, he learnt it was all in vain; he reaped only vexation and sorrow; and, finally, *comme un vilain il fut traité*. When day broke we saw on our right a far-spreading marshy swamp: this was fed by two streams that crossed the road. The water of both these streams was of a dark-brown colour, and with a sort of blue film floating upon the surface. The air was heavy with the effluvia of naphtha. Having ridden some nine miles across the plain, we arrived at the walled town of Boorasjoon. The inhabitants flocked out to meet us, and conducted us to the house of the governor of the town, which he had vacated for our use. The walls were thick and the rooms lofty, so for this one day at least we found ourselves comfortably housed. In the course of the afternoon the governor called upon us. He was a well-grown stalwart young fellow. In addition to being heavily armed, he carried an English fowling-piece in his hand. He told us in the most matter-of-fact way that, ten days previous to our arrival, he had, after some hard fighting, turned out the late governor of the town, and had himself assumed the governorship of the district. He added, with a grin, that the late governor was both his father-in-law and his uncle, but that, notwithstanding this close relationship, he was out nearly every day with his followers, in the hopes of either catching him or shooting him! Upon our suggesting that such conduct on the part of a nephew was strange, he said, "*Che urz mi kunum!*"—"What can I do? it is the Shah's order! and *inshallah*, by the grace of God, his majesty's order shall be obeyed." The uncle, we learned, was wandering about the mountains with some hundred followers who had remained true to him. Our young friend had come across them once, and a fight had ensued. One man on each side having been killed, the combatants withdrew, and had not met since. Thus matters were on our arrival. On our inquiring as to who the late governor was, we learned he was the same man who had been a prisoner in Sir James Outram's camp. When the town was taken possession of by our troops, the governor gave himself up. On peace being declared, he was returned with the other prisoners, and finally reinstated in his former appointment as governor of

Boorasjoon. In course of time it came to the Shah's ears that the man was reputed wealthy. He was at once proclaimed a traitor, as having sold the town to the English. This was merely an excuse, that the poor man's goods might be confiscated, and the Shah possess himself of them.

3d.—We started at midnight, and, leaving the village, we passed through some large date-groves in pitchy darkness. A howling of dogs on the right told us we were passing the village of Kooshab, where the rout of the Persian army by the British forces had taken place. The first streaks of dawn showed us we were riding over a plain level as the ocean, on which neither tree nor shrub was visible for miles. At a distance of twenty-two miles we reached the small enclosure of Chagudduk. Here we rested the horses for half an hour, and made a light breakfast. We had still a ride of sixteen miles before us, across the salt marsh that lay between us and Bushire. The sun was high in the heavens ere we were in the saddle again. Leaving orders with the servants to follow with the mules, we made up our minds for a sweltering ride, and spurred away for Bushire. The heat was terrific, and the glare from the blistered, salt-encrusted soil so fierce and blinding, that we were obliged to drop the ends of our turbans over our faces, as a sort of veil. The marsh, without a single vestige of verdure, spread away like a glistening sea to the right and to the left. Any deviation from the beaten track, and one's horse broke through the thin salt crust, and floundered fetlock-deep in a spongy soft mud. As we urged on our tired horses at nearly the top of their speed, we seemed possessed of a feeling that any delay on this burning plain would be instant death. We knew that, till we were at the gates of the town, we should not find shelter from the death-dealing rays of the sun large enough to screen a mouse. Before we had ridden half the distance, the white walls of the residency gleamed in detached fragments through a hazy mirage; now far above the horizon of the plain, now again far below it, and apparently close to us. Then the hazy line of brown wall which surrounds the town and the several bastions gradually separated themselves from the wavy plain; some grotesquely elongated objects defined themselves into a string of camels approaching the town. And, finally, Bushire, that had seemed for the last hour but the "baseless fabric of a vision," became a reality, and in a few minutes we were clattering through the gateway, and charging a throng of half-naked Arabs, who were wrangling under its shade over a donkey-load of dates.

LIFE IN AN ISLAND.

BY MRS OLIPHANT.

[*MAGA.* JAN. 1865.]

THIS island is not a desolate island, nor far from the boundaries of civilisation; neither is it one of the insulated fortresses which are more of man's making than God's. No position under heaven can be more glorious than that in which this rock reposes —" like a vessel eternally at anchor "—regarding from its lofty heights that bay which once in a lifetime intoxicates every man who looks upon it, and rouses even the most languid soul into a sense of beauty ineffable and beyond description. It is Naples which lies in the depth of that wonderful bow, radiant in the sunshine. It is Vesuvius which rises in front of us, blue and splendid, now and then exhaling out of his burning bosom a deep breath that shows white against the sky like a man's breath in an English Christmas. That is Posilipo, the first break in the even arch of coast, which afterwards goes wavering out and in, as if, like the spectator, confused with so much loveliness, widening out at Baiæ, casting forth sweet headlands here and there to secure its possessions, finally stretching into the lower heaven of sea, the lingering Cape of Messina. Even there it seems the admiring earth cannot have enough of it, but, dropping Procida humbly by the shore, like an apology, goes out rejoicing to another mountain-head, and there breaks off in a climax, unable to exert herself further. All this we have in daily vision, uninterrupted, except by mists and clouds, which often add more beauty than they take away, from our island at the other arm of the bay. And not only this, but on the other side the noble Sorrento promontory, and the low shadowy coast yonder under Vesuvius, where Pompeii keeps funeral watch over her dead. If there is any nobler combination in the world, imagination, being overtasked, cannot conceive of it. This is what we contemplate from Capri in the blaze of the early summer, in its fresh morning tints, in its sunset splendours, in grand apparel of cloud and storm, in ineffable fulness of peace. So that it is no common lot to begin with, to live thus suspended midway between heaven and the sea on this divine island, from which, if one's ears were but sharp enough, one might still hear out to seaward the terrible sweetness of the Siren's song.

The holiday travellers who traverse Switzerland in crowds, or who make an annual rush through Germany, have, in most cases, a different kind of reminiscences to record from those who linger about Italy—sometimes, it is true, out of pure love of the country, but oftener from sadder motives, in the languor that follows a great calamity, or the acuter misery which precedes one. Even the artist in his wanderings is distinct from the tourist—so that there is some excuse for the readiness with which everybody who has crossed the Alps records his experiences. Life is more leisurely over that great boundary-line, if not among the awakened Italians, at least among the English visitors, to whom, even at the utmost stretch of speed, it is impossible to *do* the country of art in a few weeks. The difference, indeed, between the tranquil incidents of Italian journeys, and the breathless bustle into which an astonished traveller drops of a sudden who comes over one of the Alpine passes the wrong way, and drops without any preparation into Zurich, or Lucerne, or Geneva, is too remarkable not to strike the most casual observer. The crowd which rushed out of London yesterday, and has to rush back again to-morrow, is constantly thwarting its own endeavours to see everything by its universal rush and bustle; and even more enlightened and intelligent travellers so far put themselves at a disadvantage that their thoughts and minds are still wholly occupied with their own country, and its news and ways, while they snatch a hurried glimpse of another—especially as that other is for them almost exclusively a "geographical expression," a mass of mountains, passes, lakes, and glaciers, never made into recognisable human soil by any relationships between the inhabitants and the visitors beyond those of steady extortion on one side and violent objurgation on the other. Were it not that one is deterred from lively ridicule by a certain sense that one is liable in one's own person to comment of the same amusing description, there is scarcely any exhibition of modern life more absurd than the aspect of an English party in the act of *doing* a famous point of view. Any attempt at enthusiasm under such awful circumstances is enough to compromise the character of the unhappy individual who commits it for half his life—and indeed the orthodox rule of behaviour on such occasions seems to demand that each of the company should confidentially express to some other his sense of the utter bore to which he is being subjected, and his profound conviction that fine scenery is a delusion. These were thy sentiments, dear countryman, on the heights of the Gemmi, on the sweetest August morning—thou whose accent breathed of Edinburgh, and who carriedst "W.S." stamped all over thy substantial frame and jovial features. But the ineffable sickness which possessed thee for anything in the shape of a mountain by no means impaired thy relish for the distant glacier, which no one else of discreet years had ambition enough to scale; and the austere pathway grew pleasant when it became known to thee that ears not unacquainted with the gossip of thy beloved town were at hand to listen. And the fact is, that to the critic who writes, the liveliest impression which remains of that marvellous pass is not of the lovely woodland ways in which it commences, nor of the wonderful desolation of the loftier heights, nor even of the dizzy slope of the descent towards Leukerbad, bewildering to look at, and dangerous to tread, but of the two men who talked and walked and looked Edinburgh, who uttered gossip refreshing to hear, and were as easy to be identified as if they had carried the emblems of their profession, like the number of a regiment, on their dusty tourist-hats. Though the names of our dear compatriots are unknown to us, do not we cherish their cheerful recollection in our hearts? In fact, Switzerland is, as we have already said, a geographical expression to the wandering English—and, in addition, a place where people make acquaintance with their country-folks; for as for human features, unless Alpine horns, black velvet bodices, and wood-carvings may be regarded in that light, the country, as generally seen and understood, has none.

But it is otherwise on the other side of the Alps. There the *cortège* moves more slowly, the traveller lingers longer, and he is self-contained indeed who does not link himself somehow in human association with something Italian. This is all a long digression out of Capri, with which we started, but it is in accordance with the spirit of our argument to take time on the way. Capri lies in the blue Mediterranean, a kind of everlasting sentinel watching at the entrance of the Bay of Naples. The early sun rises upon us in the morning over the wild height of St Angelo, on the Sorrento side, and Ischia lies full in his way to the west, and arranges for him a magnificent foreground for his final ceremony. But Ischia, and St Angelo, and even the heights of our own island, though more imposing neighbours, are not nearly so ready names upon our lips as are the melodious names of a crowd of good-natured, handsome people, who came pouring down the steep roads to give us the *bon viaggio* when we said farewell to Capri; for did not farewell to Capri mean farewell to a host of Marias mainly to be distinguished by secondary names—to Rosina the alert and skilful, to Carminello and Carminello s mother, to ugly Raffael, and honest Luigi, and Feliciello handy and handsome? Such are the kindly ties that link even a passing visitor to the dear Italian soil; and indeed, even to the most careless eye, the race in these regions is worth looking at. Capri is famed for beautiful women; that is to say, a certain number of years ago several English gentlemen, of various degrees, making the plunge in common, abandoned the usages of society and married Capriote girls, possessed of nothing but beauty—not even of those universal faculties which, according to

Dogberry, come by nature. The result has been sufficiently successful in one case at least, where the hero has been rewarded by finding a notable and buxom housewife in the nymph of his choice. But since this holocaust of Englishmen occurred, it has been considered right to say that the Capri women are beautiful, an opinion enthusiastically indorsed by a recent traveller,[1] who describes the Capriote girls as resembling a procession of virgin queens. Such elevated expressions can scarcely be applied to our Marias, though among them ranks a family of three generations, as good an example of race and blood and handsome healthfulness as could be found in any class. Old Maria Frederica is seventy, she says. I fear—I very much fear—that Raffaelo, who is ugly as Satan, is the youngest of her sons; but the question has not been subjected to rigorous proof. She herself is as handsome an old witch as any painter could wish for; a witch benevolent—if such a thing could be—a benign sibyl, who has taken divination and prophecy in hand in order to wish with authority all manner of good things to her *clientele*. No tints that can be described by ink, and few that the richer palette boasts, could express the rich ruddy russet brown, all lighted up and sweetened with the crimson of pure blood and perfect health, of this old woman's face; and to see her rushing up the long steep stony stairs—which are the popular substitute for roads in

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[1] 'A Winter in the Two Sicilies,' by Julia Kavanagh.

Capri—by the side of her donkey, not sparing to urge that reluctant animal into a trot if the little signorino wills it, is a sight to fill with envy many a man half her age. Next to her comes her daughter Maria, with a baby in her arms, who is not Maria the third only because that name is already claimed by the smiling woman-girl, with heavy locks of black already twisted round the silver *spadella*, who holds the next place in the family, and wears, after a fresher and softer fashion, the same tints on her cheeks. The head-dress of the old Maria consists of a coloured handkerchief, tied on in a curious but most simple fashion, forming the tiniest twist of turban with three of its corners, and permitting the fourth to hang down behind, and veil her ancient parchment-coloured neck. Maria the second and Maria the third wear nothing but their hair, which is black as night, and reflects the blazing sunshine, of which neither seems to have any fear. This is the kind of beauty common in Capri—large black shining eyes, radiant with fun and good-humour, teeth a great deal whiter than pearls, and complexion such as it brightens one's pallor only to look at. But then such a glow, which is glorious in Capri against the living blue of the sea and the wonderful blaze of the sun, might make a different impression amid the subdued tones of an English drawing-room: and, on the whole, we fear the experiment of marriage is a doubtful one. But that great event of the past has not been without its effect upon public opinion and female ambition in our island. The girls of Capri, in distinction to those of Anacapri, the other village, which is a few thousand feet nearer heaven, and less liable to the incursions of the Franks and Goths, are *maliciosa*, Feliciello says, and doubtless he has means of knowing. *Maliciosa*—apt to conduct themselves with a mischievous unwarrantable haughtiness, remembering the triumphs of their predecessors over the Forestieri, and not unhopeful of such chances in their own persons. The maidens of Anacapri are of less ambitious thoughts; and there is to be seen a certain Chiara, Chiarina, little Clara, clearly notable among her peers, with hair of Titian's colour and a head like an antique Venus, who might in a year or two, granting what is within to resemble what is outside, be worth such a sacrifice, if any young beauty ever was—which is a proposition one may be permitted to doubt.

The Capri men are not all like Feliciello; but out of our affection for our trusty guide we will let him stand as their representative, though he comes from the Sorrento side. Feliciello's capital and stock-in-trade consists of three ponies and a wife. With the first he conducts the Forestieri all over the island; and by means of the latter, a shrill and nimble animal of burden, conveys the baggage of the Signori, and many another trifle, up and down the steep and stony ways. If she had not been singularly ill-favoured, it might have been possible to feel a certain pity for Mrs

Feliciello; but that softer feeling was lost in a sense of indignation to find the ugliest woman in the island, a creature so uninteresting that we never even learned her name, in lawful possession of our handsome guide. Alas! he was not perfect, though he was charming. It was an interested marriage, our host informed us gravely; not that the poor woman possessed anything—but then look at her arms! none of all her compeers could carry such weights; and Felice had done very well for himself. His other property was equally serviceable. A little white pony, the sturdiest of his race, who came from Ischia, and had doubtless spent his baby days in that cognate island, as he spends his maturity in Capri, going up-stairs and down-stairs, like the goose in the fable, was the pride of Feliciello's heart. Another of his steeds, whether by means of its saddle, or of something characteristic and individual in its physiognomy, bore the most curious resemblance to a dromedary which was ever seen out of the Zoological Gardens. The third was a fiery courser, which, when—as occurred at rare but precious intervals—a level bit of road of twenty paces or so was to be met with, could be stimulated out of his ordinary composed pace into a short and hard trot. It was to this spirited and majestic animal that Feliciello preferred his favourites, himself walking by the stirrup. Whether he helped himself up the steep bits of the road by means of the tail, I cannot affirm, but his assistant, Pascorello, certainly did; and indeed, as a general rule, preferred to direct the good old dromedary by means of that appendage. With this attendance how many hills have we climbed, and beguiled how many languid hours!—over roads narrow and stony, and of imperial date—the Roman roads that once went through the world—but here all interspersed with stairs, and mostly hemmed in by walls, over which came heavy and sweet the breath of the orange-blossoms which perfume the entire island; past cottages all white and windowless, with flat faintly-rounded roofs that spoke of the East, and out upon the free hillside, where all the slopes were bristling with fantastic apparitions of vegetation, the quaint and hideous prickly pear. But howsoever the road went, it led always to some mount of vision, from which the strangers could look again upon those unparalleled coasts, the landscape which no poet's imagination could surpass, and of which even the guides were to a certain extent sensible, but in a reasonable way. "*Vedi Napoli, e mori,*" in humble quotation of the proverb, said an English lady in a moment of enthusiasm. Feliciello stopped short by the stirrup, and Pascorello turned from his horse's tail. "But why, signora?" said the wondering Capriotes; perhaps because, seeing Naples every day, they felt no necessity for dying. With peasants, even when they are Italians, the sentimental stands but little chance. But they were not indifferent like the prosaic Swiss, to whom their mountains are a matter of trade. A gleam of triumph lighted up Feliciello's fine eyes, as he found out another and yet another point of view. He paused to look at it himself with a certain fondness, grateful, no doubt, to the loveliness of nature which got him his living; and the landscape was *morto bella* even to the least susceptible of the train.

It cannot be denied, however, that they speak very bad Italian in our island, if we may pause to say so, and change the *l* into *r* with ruthless roughness, not to speak of other barbarities. It would be vain to attempt to shake the popular conviction that Italian is the most musical and soft of languages, though practically our own opinion and experience go against this amiable fallacy; but the profoundest believer in its beauty would be startled to have a villanous "Bash!" thrown at him like a stone, instead of the gentle "Basta," which looks so well in print; and would find it hard to identify "Ashpett" with the liquid "Aspetta," which conveys its meaning in its very sound. Such eccentricities of popular diction are, however, common to all languages; but there is something especially characteristic in the Capriote affirmative, "Niursi," which combines respect and decision in one of the contractions dear to all Italians. "Si, Signore," sounds soft and yielding; but a woman who says "Niursi," is likely to know her mind and keep by her determination. The same abrupt affirmative is to be met with along the Sorrentine coast, but the Capriotes pique themselves a little on it as their own possession, and resent its use by any impertinent stranger. It is, as will be seen, a simple compound of the last syllable of *signor* with the universal *si*, according to the Italian usage of pronouncing the respectful title first; but the result is a response of the most distinct and uncompromising sound, more like a defiant negative than a soft and gentle Yes.

Those kind people of whom we have been speaking are not badly off in their way, though there are not above four or five families in the community, according to Feliciello, who have meat on their table except twice in the year—at Easter and Christmas. Even maccaroni is food for *festas*. The common fare is wholesome brown bread, polenta, beans, and vegetables; but a family table well supplied with these substantial *comestibili* satisfies bountifully the requirements of nature in Capri, where life exists under primitive conditions. Manufacture of any shape has not begun as yet; but there cannot be any doubt as to the patient and painstaking industry which has brought under cultivation, up to the very summits, the steep hillsides. To pass along those terraced heights, where corn and wine and oil are being produced upon tiny shelves of soil sometimes no broader than an ordinary table, gives an impression of cheerful, steady, well-rewarded labour, which I do not remember to have derived from agriculture on a grander scale. It is impossible to lose your way on these hills, for every little plateau has of necessity its thread of pathway, closely bordered by the bristling wheat or the heavy stalks of the Gran Turco—under which imposing title maize is grown in Italy—and its communications, more or less practicable, with the shelf above and the shelf below. Here and there precious olives give the sweetest shade—shade which is at once a particular and a general advantage—not only refreshing the wayfarer, but softening with tranquil tones of grey the brilliancy of the landscape; and vines run everywhere like the lizards; and dewy crops of flax, all starred with blue blossoms, wave softly about in the breeze. If anywhere an ambitious landholder covets a hedge for his possessions, he finds the prickly pear ready to his hand, standing about in all kinds of corners, like the grotesque but faithful dwarf of medieval story. And over homely cabbages and huge artichokes, and the heavy-blossomed spikes of the lupin, from which comes the large white *feve* so popular in these regions, fall abrupt blotches of shadow from the fig-trees, upon which the green figs push out, blunt and shapeless, among the half-developed leaves. As for the oranges, they have gardens to themselves, where they hang all the year round in delicious gradation—the blossoms on one bough, the ripe fruit on another, hanging like golden globes among the shady leaves. As you pull down the richest bough hanging heavy with oranges, you can make a long arm and reach, if you are so wanton, blossoms enough to crown a bride. And there are other perplexities of choice, since the tree at one side of you bears the compact little mandarins, with their peculiar fragrance and invariable sweetness; and on the other hang pale sweet lemons, which you must eat for the name of the thing, though the produce is less satisfactory; and then there is the citron, with the rind (which is the best of it) an inch thick, filled with a meaningless pulp, which does not count for much. These orange-gardens are walled in, and have careful appliances for irrigation, which indeed are common to all the cultivation of Capri; and some of them still preserve the reservoirs, built large and deep, of the everlasting Roman masonry, which are as old as Tiberius—whose name, by the way, reminds us, *lectore carissima*, that by dint of gossip about our friends and their mode of living, we have delayed as yet our lawful business as cicerone, and have not taken you to see the sights.

There are in Capri four lesser and one greater height, between which lies all the habitable and fertile part of the island. The highest mountain-head is Monte Solaro, a towering mass of limestone, on one side of which, on a larger shelf than usual, lies among the clouds the village of Anacapri, already mentioned; and under the shelter of this great hill, and defended east and west by the lesser heights, occurs the valley, if it can be so called, or rather the lower ridge, saddle-shaped, and sloping down to the sea on both sides, in which Capri proper, with its cathedral, its dismantled convent, and indefensible gates, occupies the centre of the landscape. Seaward, at both ends of the island, great precipices, 1800 feet or more of sheer ascent from the water, rise up in perpendicular austerity, communicating none of the secrets they hold in their bosom; although such secrets as the Blue Grotto, and the scarcely less beautiful Passagio Verde, might be worth bragging of. Between these mighty ramparts, looking towards Naples, appears the soft edge of the Marina, with its fringe of boats, with olives and orange-gardens opening upward to the white line of the village, which lies like a thread along the ridge. On the other side of the saddle, exactly opposite the Marina Grande, the Piccola Marina, a smaller but lovelier nook of accessible shore, defended by immense corners of rock, and populated by a lesser population of fishing-boats and fisher children, turns its face towards Sicily, opening up, like the other, its gardens and terraces towards the village. Thus the Capriotes can contemplate the sea on either side of them from their airy position. Of the hills which fence them from the east and the west, the one to which the stranger is first led is that called by the peasants Tiberio, upon which the most articulate relics of the terrible Emperor are to be found. These consist chiefly of certain majestic rounded arches, like those of the Temple of Venus at Rome, which look out from the masses of rubbish, gaunt and vacant, upon the new and alien world; and a careful antiquarian might follow out, if he would, to some extent the plan of the guilty palace, in which were once enacted wickednesses past thinking of. There is even a bit of pavement extant, perfect and clear mosaic, the floor apparently of a passage once leading to the sea, upon which unhappy paramours or trembling victims might have fluttered yesterday, for anything the obdurate perfection of the path can say against it. The topmost height has been consecrated by a little chapel to the glory of Our Lady of Succour —*Santa Maria del Soccorso*—which in its way, if one were disposed to take the world in a mythical aspect, and treat the religions and the vices of humanity as equally accidental, would look a very fit poetic justice and revenge of time. Here, where the weak were once ground to powder, to set up over the dead force of pagan Rome that meek image of the suffering woman, the mother pitiful and tender, marks a touching and wonderful revolution. One might even imagine, to carry fancy a little farther, that the Madonna-worship throughout Italy was intended as a kind of compensation to the ideal type of woman for all the hardship inflicted on her kind. The soft Italian is scarcely more chivalrous than was the hard-hearted Roman. It does not strike him as anomalous that his wife should fetch and carry up and down these flinty stairs like a beast of burden, while he walks unencumbered, or rides the patient donkey as far as the village piazza. Such a division of labour is counted natural—at all events, in Capri; but in compensation to the sex, it is to a deified woman that he addresses his prayers. It would be curious to observe whether the rule holds among the more devoted votaries of Mary throughout the world.

But there are better things to be seen on this Tiberian height. On the highest point in front of the chapel is a grassy platform, upon which the meek hermit who has charge of the little sanctuary places chairs for the accommodation of the Signori and the good of the eleemosina box which hangs against the wall. Niccolo is not by any means an austere or alarming anchorite, but a youth of two or three and twenty, a pensive soul, half frightened at his own temerity in dwelling up here among the winds; who cultivates meekly a little corn and a few vegetables in the ruined chambers of Tiberius, and gets his living painfully, like all the other peasants of Capri, from the produce of his little shelves and boxes of soil. This modest youth, who might almost, with a little idealisation and a fillet in his hair, stand for one of the deacon-angels in an old picture, wisely says nothing about the landscape, but leaves it to his visitors to enjoy for themselves. It is, with enlargements and appendices, the same beautiful vision which we have already described. All the curving lip of the bay is traced in sunshine with a continuous line of white towns and villages, broken here and there by vague promontories and stretches of shadowy beach—from Torre del Annunziata, which lies perilous on the dark skirts of Vesuvius, to the distant glimmer of human habitations towards Baiæ on the other side. And if the sun is verging towards the west, it is over the mountain-mass of Ischia, towering high out of the dazzling water, that he sends the mist of light which seems to weave itself into a changing tissue of gold and purple upon Mount Epomeneo, and over the low-lying hillocks of Procida. To the east, the eye, if it could ever tire of the bay before it, can escape to the open sea, and to the glorious coast towards Amalfi, which scarcely condescends to slope its mountainous sides towards the sea, but yet holds half-way up lines of inaccessible white towns perched among the cliffs and facing the south—or *mezzo-giorno*, as the Italians say, and it is a better word. Not the south, the mere quarter from which the winds blow, but noon in full impersonation, the blazing joyous mid-day, zenith and crown of all the hours. These same towns secure to the landscape here, as in most parts of Italy, that unfailing charm of human interest which, even when historical associations are wanting, gives an additional delight to the scene. The coast of the Gulf of Salerno could not be otherwise than grand under any circumstances, yet but for the glimmer of yonder inaccessible Positano on the further headland, and all the touches of light between which mark the line of human habitations, it would be but a gloomy and silent grandeur. And tragic and terrible are the memories that Poetry has woven about that coast; for yonder lie the tiny islets—detached rocks greened over with deceitful verdure—where the Sirens sang. A little personal experience of such storms as change the face of heaven in a moment, and make the skies darken and the sea rise, gives a reality to the tale, and makes one hold one's breath. In the sudden tumult, through the sudden gloom, with those vast cliffs looming in the blackness under the lee, it is not difficult to conjure up the broken notes of that song which tempted the mariner to his fate. But no imagination could be more utterly out of accord with the caressing sweetness of this daylight sea.

The humble hermit stands at his chapel door, and takes no heed of one's musings; and unless it were a weary ghost of Tiberius's day, or perhaps a more recent spectre of one's own, there is nothing here to interrupt the silence. The sea comes very softly to the foot of the precipice, sheer down eighteen hundred feet, and breathes upwards a compassionate hush, so soft and oft-repeated that one comes to feel as if he meant it, and had woven the observation of ages, the result of all his long spectatorship of human grief, into that one compassionate syllable. Hush! If you listen, you will find that the very air has caught the trick, and breathes it after him in keys as softly varied as the tones of a poet. It is not like the Sirens' song. This still ocean has no thrilling invitation to give, no secret pleasures to offer; but round the storied coasts, where he has seen so much, and where, perhaps, by times, a groan over human misery has rent his great bosom, and driven him to passion, he comes now in his milder mood with a dispassionate but tender pity. Has not he too seen nights of sadness and misery, days of tempest and tribulation, in which the sun went down at noon? But still the morning and the calm returned in their time. The moral is too vast for human life, in which there is neither time nor space for the everlasting renovations of which nature is capable; but there is a certain healing in the sound, impersonal though it is. Few human creatures could pause here on Tiberio without an access of thought. It was here, close by, that the victims of the wicked emperor were pitched headlong from the terrific *Salto* into the soft remorseful sea. And there, where Niccolo's innocent gourds are growing, the walls that confine the little plot are the walls of the Camarelli, infernal chambers, which even the Roman people, not too scrupulous, razed wellnigh to the ground for horror of the vice once practised there—which has all given place, as we have said, to the meek image of Our Lady of Succour and her lonely little chapel. And was it not yonder, on the cloudy skirts of Vesuvius, that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, a city passed from life to death? The worst of it is that from those big recollections that belong to the world, the solitary muser naturally turns to recollections of his own, which may, heaven knows, be as sad as Pompeii, but are not equally interesting to other men. Wherefore let us take into our heart, as best we may, that soft and abstract compassion of the sea, which is for us and for all. Hush! What more can anything mortal say?

And there are the boats skimming like birds towards Sicily, which lies yonder lost in the blue heavens; and here, at our left hand, the white skiffs from Sorrento linger underneath the cliffs waiting for the Forestieri, who have gone to the Blue Grotto, and stay there so long beyond anybody's patience, that the forlorn boatmen shout "*Maccaronii!*" to each other as they pass, by way of keeping up their spirits—for is not that a specific for all troubles? "*Coraggio a voi, maccaroni a noi,*" says Feliciello, showing a want of refinement in the use of the second person plural which wounds one's feelings. As we come down the hill, it will be worth your while to step aside to the *Salto*, and watch the quick seconds whirling round on your watch, while the attendant there makes the usual experiment on your behalf by pitching down a stone sufficiently heavy to be heard as it dashes on the rocks below. The seconds pass quickly, to be sure; but the sense of time which grows upon the listener watching that noiseless finger speed round its entire circuit while he waits for the crash below, has something awful in it. How many thoughts might have had time to rush through the doomed brain as it whirled down that awful abyss to be dashed on the hideous rocks!—and from that thought, somehow, one's mind leaps, I cannot tell why, to one of the liveliest of modern controversies, and wonders, in the matter of punishment, what does Lord Westbury think would be a long enough term for such a likely penitent as this same Tiberius—or what could be made of him, if he ever made his way out of the everlasting prisons? This is a matter in respect to which the untrained and arbitrary mind has an advantage over its superiors; but I cannot help thinking it would be a great satisfaction, in respect to the Tiberii of all ages and nations, if one could hope that their spiritual necks were broken over some grand Salto, and themselves made a summary end of at once and for ever—which, however, is an expedient which it is to be feared would please neither party in the polemical question. In case his victims by any happy chance should escape the rocks and plunge into the sea, thus gaining a possibility of escape, there were boats waiting underneath, under the awful upright gloom of those noble cliffs, with spears ready for the unfortunates, who surely, if Dante had regulated the business, would have been provided with a red-hot spear or two to receive their murderer upon when he came to join them. But these images are too gruesome for the Capri sunshine, which has nothing to do with murder; and the best thing we can do, when we have descended the hill, is to follow the level road—the only level road in the island—which leads through the heart of cultivation and civilisation, to the point of Tregara, where, in the full sea which throbs away from this sunny beach to Sicily and Africa and all the southern world, stand the gigantic rocks called the Faraglioni, three mighty limestone towers a stone's throw from the land. From this point all the amateur artists make their first sketches, and doubtless also many artists who are something more than amateurs. The water beats dazzling upon the everlasting foundation of these wonderful landmarks, and sweeps through the chill magnificent arch which pierces the heart of the biggest rock, and above them flutter white flocks of sea-birds, called *monachi* by the natives, which make their nests in the cliffs. Nothing could be more different than the aspect of affairs here and in the scene we have just quitted. On that side so much variety and so many associations; on this, only the absolute and arbitrary sea, with those three gigantic rocks standing out of it, and the quail-nets spread upon the solitary beach. The scene could not be more peaceful if the Faraglioni had been put in harness, as becomes their name, and had grown to be the Pharos of that waste of water, doing human service in the most noble and touching office which nature can hold for man. But the dark rocks are more congenial than any charitable beacon to the tragic coast of the Sirens, and there they stand, to warn if anybody could see them, to crush to powder if any hapless little vessel swung against their stony masses in the despair and blackness of a storm. And now let us go back along the flowery road, where the figs and the olives throw sweet patches of shadow, and all the hill below, and all the hill above, runs over with luxuriant growth, confusing the lines of the terraces by the profusion of vegetation, and mantling up all the walls and steps in emerald green; the sun has gone down behind Solaro, behind Ischia, if we could but see it; and before we are aware, the bell of the Ave Maria rings out from the old church, and darkness, swift and sudden, falls upon earth and sea.

Next day, with a calm sea and no wind to speak of, we will take you to the *Grotto Azzurro*, which hides round the dark cliffs yonder, in a secrecy so great that it is easy to believe that chance alone rediscovered that wonderful fairy vault. The Mediterranean is sweet, and sweeter still is the Bay of Naples; but that ideal sea, upon which ordinary persons can launch fairy skiffs and float about for ever without inconvenience, is still hidden in the clouds, like most other ideal things; and delicious as the blue water is to look at, it would be vain to disguise the fact that those long soft undulations are evidences of a swell anything but agreeable to un-practised travellers. When we have passed the cheerful Marina, and run, alarmingly close, along the base of the great precipices towards the west, it is bewildering to see the Sorrento boats lie waiting opposite a huge dead mass of rock, which looks as impenetrable as an Alp, and shows no opening, unless that tiny pigeon-hole on the level of the sea, three feet high, and not much more wide, should happen to be the gateway for which our boatman aims. There is just width enough for a little boat to pass, and you have to crouch down in the bottom, with your head on a level with the seat you have just been occupying, as we shoot through the narrow gloomy arch. Within you open your eyes upon a scene too solemnly and mysteriously beautiful to be adequately described by the wondering exclamation of "Fairyland!" which most people make on entering; denoting by that word that they are altogether perplexed and bewildered for the moment by something beyond what imagination has ever conceived. When you have recovered your senses after the first awe of that blue twilight, the outlines of this strange temple of nature grow clear—that is, as clear as anything can be through the azure mist, in which your neighbour's face is as the face of a spirit, and flesh and blood grow white and ethereal, sublimated out of all the tints of life. It is the light that never was on sea or land that dwells in this little sanctuary in the bosom of the seas; light not of the sun or the moon, but something mysterious between the two; blue daylight so changed and mysticised by its passage through the blue water, that there is no familiar feature left by which to recognise the well-known morning. It is not that the limestone arch is blue, but that the reflection from the marvellous tint of the water, which is like the blue of a forget-me-not or a child's eyes, floats about it in a magical haze of reflection, shrouding its austere proportions, and making the rugged grot into a mystic chapel. As the boat glides noiseless over the sapphire floor, the soft silence hushes out even the joyous voices that are hushed nowhere else. Nothing less lofty than a *Te Deum* should wake the echoes of that solemn vault. In the gloom at the upper end, the swart boatman, perched on a ledge of a rock, looks like a great white angel, fit to be there; and here, from where the altar should be, to look at the ever-brightening blue, as it opens to the narrow arch, is like looking into some blue doorway in the sky, such as must lead to heaven. Hush! here comes another boat, black and noiseless, with bowing heads, that sink to the level of the sea, and one solemn crouching figure at the prow, guiding the silent voyage. Is it Charon, with his fixed blank eyes and helpless passengers? or is it only a ruddy English party from Sorrento, with all the roses quenched out of their cheeks by what looks like awe, but is perhaps only atmosphere? Away before they recover themselves and begin to talk, for here comes another and another boat; and again we make our obeisances, and steal out like banished souls into the garish sunshine and the unveiled day.

One of the scenes in Hans Christian Andersen's novel of the 'Improvisatore,' a book in which the Swedish sentimentalist has made use of his travels, is laid in this Blue Grotto; and it is, if we recollect rightly, a scene of mystery and passion, in which the hero has a tantalising glimpse of the heroine, and everything ends in throbbing pulses, breaking hearts, and a climax of vague and wordy excitation. But anything less like passion or excitement of any kind than this vault of misty azure can scarcely be conceived. He would be a bold man, and yet a foolish one, who would try love-making in such a scene, much less flirtation. The only feeling in the least like its effect which we can remember, is that sense of subdued sensation, if one might use such an expression, the tranquillising awe that steals over a mind subject to such influences in a Gothic crypt, more especially one from which all the worship and the decoration has departed. If the Catholic Church, always so ready to note and profit by the accidental sanctities of locality, had consecrated the Grotto Azzurro, no one could have been surprised. Stoop down and hold your breath, as we shoot again all darkling through the arch which hangs heavy with salt sea-dew. "It is not true—it is not real—it is a dream," says some one, and Feliciello opens his brown eyes a little wider, and shows his white teeth through his beard. What next will they say, these incredible Forestieri? Not real! and yet how many honest fellows make their living by it, and but for this little stealthy archway and the scene to which it opens, could no more afford to marry and multiply than our guide himself could manage to live without Tiberio! But though Feliciello smiles, he does not condescend to any other notice of so ridiculous an exclamation. The Blue Grotto is part of his manor, and of the estate of Antonino of Sorrento, and many another; and as for the nonsense uttered by the Signori Inglesi in their bad Italian, who pays any attention? And now, as the swell has fallen a little, let us pluck up a heart and make our way round the island in Luigi's big boat, with four stout rowers, who take their business very quietly. These four lithe brown figures, who stand to their oars, propelling their boat, not in our English fashion, seated, but standing; and with their faces to the prow, in their red Phrygian caps and scanty white under-garment, bear a character more fitting the place than any decorous British boat's crew, though Luigi himself, in the blue coat he wears on Sundays, looks twenty times more like a Scotch elder than a Neapolitan marinaro. Past the softened cliffs, which form a bulwark to the high table-land on which Anacapri lies unseen among the clouds; past the little tower which commands the one accessible point on this iron-bound coast, the little rocky landing-place at

Limbo; past the wild bastion that confronts Ischia and the setting sun; and now again we sweep along by the foot of frightful precipices to the south, rocks rising into such a line of rocky needles, sharp and gigantic, as remind one of the Aiguilles farther north among the eternal snows. But it is rare indeed that the snow lies at Capri, and all those peaks of rock burn all day long in the full sun. Down below, at the base of those tremendous cliffs, lies the Grotto Verde, no secret and sacred place like the other, but a wonderful brief passage riven through the rocks, which glow inside with a sulphureous golden green, and throw upon the water deep emerald reflections, strange to behold in the midst of that blue sea; for blue and green are not comparative expressions in the Bay of Naples, but mean to the fullest extent the colour they represent: and the green of that marvellous opening, as our boat pushes cautiously through it, grinding on the rocks on either side, is greener than any verdure about Capri—green like nothing but the brilliant profound tint of the emerald; though it requires but one long sweep of the oars, one bend of the brown unanimous figures, to carry us over patches of deep indigo into the common heaven of blue, the universal Mediterranean colour. And here now comes the little Marina, and that lovely pool shut in by rocks, and sweet with such bewildering tints and gradations of colour as would drive any painter wild, which we have christened Diana's Bath. Most good things known in the world are to be had in England, but colour is one of the few, the wondrous few, that are wanting. It seems to develop a new sense when the sober British eye begins to take in all this inconceivable wealth. The water itself gradually lightening out of its blueness, as it steals along more and more shallow to the silver sand, coquetting through every charming subterfuge of azure and green and grey before it breaks at last upon the little pebbles, and owns itself only a limpid medium for all reflections, colourless in itself. And then the rocks that have tossed themselves about as if in sport to secure these coy and tender wavelets, throwing a stone or two into the shape of an arch, to be sure, as is the fashion of the island; what cool tones of brown and grey—what wild sulphureous touches—what russet stains that burn red in the sun! The recollections of this day's voyage might suffice to brighten up the leaden shadows for a whole lifetime at home.

It is just possible that on the face of the precipice, as we rounded the rocks this morning from the Marina, you might see some faint zigzag lines scratched with an air of meaning; and as the days are endless on paper, and fatigue an unknown accident, we will take another direction this time, and show you their signification. Here, for some reason which we cannot explain, perhaps because it lies too much under the shadow of Monte Solaro for great productiveness, the higher slope is left to nature, and has grown into a wild and sweet thicket of myrtle and arbutus, through which the path climbs and winds amid such a flush of cistus-blossoms as were never seen before. A little earlier the wood was starred all over with cyclamens, and earlier still perfumed the very world with violets. You may still have fragrance enough, if you crush under foot as you pass by a handful of those abundant myrtle-leaves. It is here our industrious friends, ever anxious to turn an honest penny, find the walking-sticks which kind Santella sells—but hereafter you shall hear about Santella. In the meantime, let us brush through the fragrant wood as far as the path will take us. All this time have you not been regarding with silent wonder and dismay the path which goes forward so boldly, as if it meant to lead to somewhere, and then all at once stops short before those scratches on the face of the precipice? But do not be afraid! To be sure, the Gemmi itself is less perpendicular; but you may be sure it is a practicable road, by which the Roman engineers of the imperial days scaled the inaccessible height. It is wrong, however, to call it a road, for it is, on the contrary, a great stair, five hundred steps and more, turning from right to left, and from left to right, in an endless series of sharp angles, up which the ponies (without their riders, however) clamber almost as nimbly as the women, who carry up and down all that Anacapri needs of provisions, and all the wood that is used in the lower village. Steadily up and down, without an additional shade of colour or a quickening respiration, they march with those great bundles on their heads, fagots of wood or bales of *roba*, underneath which the faces glance *maliciosa*, as Feliciello says; not beautiful faces in general, though sometimes a straight and sullen Grecian profile strikes out against the background of rock, perfect in form, though not so attractive as the commoner type, which, radiant in deep colour, bright eyes, crisp hair, and pearly teeth, goes into developments of nose and chin less regular than the classic ideal. When you have reached the top of the stair, here is the table-land of Anacapri, probably the most fertile part of the island, though, but for that stair, no traveller arriving in a legitimate manner at the Marina could so much as guess at the existence of the soft and fruitful slope which embosoms the white village in foliage more luxuriant than anything below. Here the corn, the wine, and oil grow together, emblems of plenty; and any wild bit of soil that the thrifty cultivators may have suffered to escape them, is blue with rough bright borage, dear to the bees. It is difficult to imagine anything more oriental than our Capri cottages, both above and below, which are almost without exception flat-roofed, and eschew windows to the best of their ability, standing mildly blank in a peaceful whiteness among their luxuriant terraces, admitting little light save by the open door; and the narrow village streets, where there is scarcely room for two people to stand abreast, have something of the same Eastern character. But Italy re-appears in the little piazza, the universal village centre, where stands the church and the Guardia Nationale, and the headquarters of the little municipality ; and where the entire population unite in directing the eyes of the strangers to a tablet in the wall, where one reads in English words the record of an English soldier's warfare and death—Major Hamel, if our memory serves, who had charge of the island and its defences the last time war came Capri-wards. The brave Englishman died for the island as used to be our English custom. One wonders what had he to do shedding honest blood for the wondering peasants, who are a great deal too much absorbed, even in this age of enlightenment, in their own primitive business, to care much, now that massacre and cruelty are no longer in fashion on one side or the other, what big kingdom takes little Capri in tow ! But, after all, a man with his hands in his pockets looking on at everything, is scarcely so dignified a national ideal as is even this nameless Major, dying like a hero in testimony of a certain wild idea, of which England was possessed once upon a time, that in the face of all big bullies and conquerors it was she against the world. Other ideas have dawned upon the present generation ; but still let us be excused if we love our island all the better, because for the sake of its scarce-regarded freedom an English soldier shed his blood.

This same question of freedom appears in a very prosaic light to our peasants, who have, on the whole, a limited understanding of the whole business, and speak with a grotesque familiarity of "Vittorio," whose identity seems altogether doubtful and uncertain to them. Even in Capri the people are aware what the name of Garibaldi means; but Vittorio is altogether an arbitrary sound. And liberty is dear, as somebody says — very dear, costing a great deal more than a paternal government; and its advantages are not so evident to the honest man whose affairs and interests are all limited by the precipices of Capri, as were the advantages of another exchange of government to the sober Savoyard in Chamouni, who explained that under French rule one could drink as much as one pleased and could pay for, without any tyrannical limit of communal law to stop one's liquor, as under the Italian *régime*—a sensible sign of liberation, which was plain to the most ordinary capacity. But no such relaxation of tyranny has been felt at Capri, where the only thing quite certain and apparent is that liberty, as we have said, is dear. Nothing can be more apparent indeed, throughout all this region of Italy, than that the political revolution is in no sense a peasant's question. The multitude on the lowest level has been mute except for Garibaldi; and it is only in the class which has attained at least to the beginnings of education, that any real comprehension of the matter is to be found. No distinction could have been more apparent than that between Feliciello's uninstructed peasant-estimate of this question, and the enlightened opinion of the eldest member of that brotherhood of talent which keeps the Cappucini Hotel at Amalfi.[1] No doubt Melloni, as a more responsible member of the community, paid twice as heavily for his new privileges as an Italian subject as our trusty Felice did. But Melloni belonged to the middle class, and had an eye beyond the present moment, and could see with unquestionable distinctness beyond the pictorial chivalrous figure of the Italian hero that altogether prosaic form of the Italian King, which means not only Victor Emmanuel, but many things unintelligible to the peasant intelligence. The Amalfi innkeeper stands at the lowest level of that class, which embraces all the intelligence and enterprise of Italy; and it is by this vast body, a body at once more picturesque and more real than the corresponding class in England, and not by the usual concomitants of revolution, the peasants and the nobles, that Italy has changed hands. Melloni's sentiments on the subject of taxation, the most difficult of all subjects to a people unaccustomed to personal sacrifices, were such as would have filled any Chancellor of the Exchequer with gratitude and admiration; whereas the poor Capriotes groan, not blaming "Vittorio"—rather, on the whole, feeling a kind of pride in him, as in some kind of unknown ogre, who has proved his right to the kingdom in the primitive way, by taking when he had the power—but quite unable to conceive why they should pay so much more for this new article, which, after all, at a level of life so primitive as theirs, is a question important enough to swallow up a good many more visionary considerations.

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[1] The youngest member of this brotherhood, Francesco, who is the cook of the establishment, is not only in that particular an *artiste* worthy of unqualified approbation, but is the possessor of a tenor voice such as one seldom hears, with which he does not refuse, on due solicitation, to charm his guests.

As we thread the village streets and stairs on our way home, passing various forlorn couples of old soldiers, invalids of the Italian army, who inhabit the lofty chambers of the old Certosa, or Carthusian convent, let us glance into the cathedral in passing, where at this moment, with voices that rend your ears, the village girls are singing the Ave Maria. This voluntary choir, which is huddled up on its knees in a corner of the church, and sings, or rather screams, the Virgin's litany in a voice something between that of a hoarse ballad-singer and a peacock, carries on its devotion unnoticed by any one; but in the body of the church are seated a few old people, principally old men, half at least old soldiers—passive, patient figures, who are always to be found here, as indeed in most Italian churches. The women who come in make their way to pray at some special shrine, and when they have made their reverence to the high altar go away again, having apparently relieved their minds and made their necessities known. But the old men sit still on chance benches, with their faces towards the altar, some glancing up with dim eyes as the strangers enter, but most keeping quite still. What can they be doing here day after day and hour after hour? Perhaps only taking shelter from the hot sun, and resting their weary old limbs on the convenient benches; but there are numberless seats outside, where there is something going on, and people to see and speak to. Here the dim old twilight souls say nothing to each other. They carry no rosaries or other implements of devotion, but sit in a kind of mild torpor, with their faces to the altar, perhaps going over and over the long lives which are now so near the ending, possibly making a feeble darkling attempt to trace God's guidance in them, and offering a mute thankfulness or a mute complaint to the sole eye which sees; but anyhow, there is something in the spectacle of this pale old age finding peaceful refuge unmolested in the open church, which is very touching to look at. In England, and above all in Scotland, the chances are that somebody would try to teach those torpid old souls, and disturb the unspeakable musings in which they spend their feeble remnants of life; but here they are left to themselves, and take what share they please, or, if they please, no share at all, in the services going on at the altar. And the Ave Maria shrills out from the corner chapel at the present moment, without eliciting the least response from these spectators. They are to be found throughout Italy, wherever one goes; and I cannot but think it a touching and tender office of the ever-open church to afford shelter and silence to these old worn-out souls.

The cathedral itself does not contain anything very remarkable, except a silver bust of St Costanzo, once bishop of Capri, which the other day was carried in procession to his chapel, attended by all the priests and half the women of the village. That was the great *festa* of the island; for St Costanzo (though some people think St Antonio of Padua a patron more generally useful) is in right and justice the protector of Capri, having arrested the Saracen boats in the old, old times, which were coming to sack and slaughter, by lifting his episcopal arm, and holding out his hand to ward off the visitation. The Saracens could not, with all their strivings, get a boat's length nearer Capri in face of that gesture, more potent than the uplifted arms of Moses, and were dispersed and dashed to pieces and driven to sea, as happens habitually to the oppressors of the saints. As for St Costanzo himself, he looks bland but helpless in his silver image, which, being cut short by the breast, conveys naturally an imperfect impression of the beatified bishop; but all the same, the spectators strewed flowers in his path, and crowded his chapel, and lighted up the piazza at night with fireworks in his honour, as is the duty of the faithful. Except these fireworks and the service in the chapel, which was thronged to the very door with kneeling worshippers, and much private performance upon the penny whistle, that most cherished of Italian toys, I am not aware that there were any other means of excitement at the *festa;* but such as it was, it answered all the requirements of our Capriotes, who are a contented race.

After saying so much, however, of the beauties of Capri, it may be well to warn the unwary traveller of the perils attending the arrival. When the slow little steamer which comes twice a-week from Naples (the *maladetto* Vapore, at which Feliciello swears all manner of picturesque oaths) steams into sight, a world of excited people, chiefly women, rush with their donkeys to the Marina. Feliciello comes but seldom, and by appointment, being a person of pretensions; but his wife, to whom we have already referred, is among the throng. When the little boat which lands the passengers approaches the beach, this crowd rushes upon it like a horde of furies. Nobody thinks twice in Capri of *kilting* such scanty trousers or petticoats as *it* may possess, and rushing with brown shapely limbs knee-deep into the water on any emergency; and it cannot be denied that it is a little alarming to be dragged headlong out of the boat and fought for by a crowd of nondescript creatures, naked and wet and shining to the knee, and with faces gleaming above these startling flesh-tints with eagerness that looks intent, not upon conveying you safely to the village, but upon tearing you piecemeal—you and your belongings. But there is not the least occasion for alarm. This contending mob has just been gathering, twenty strong, with glowing cheeks and crisp locks, and limbs veiled and decorous, round the two English ladies yonder in the corner of the rocks, who have been taking a lesson in spinning while they waited for the boat. Deft Rosina, who plucked you bodily out of Mrs Feliciello's hands, rushed with the same instinct of knowing how, like a capable soul as she is, to snatch out of the wondering owner's grasp the ready distaff and give the needful instruction; and the Furies closed around and applauded the learner's unsuccessful attempts to twirl the spindle, with shouts of good-humoured laughter. But I allow they are terrific when, twenty screaming like one, they catch at the prow of the boat and clutch at *you* before you have left that sanctuary. But all the same I think of thee with a certain regret, Rosina *mia*, swift and skilful and cheery—as of a lost opportunity; for in good hands what could not have been made of the bright capable creature who knew so well how to handle her tools? and it requires no such handy serviceable brains as those she carried under her auburn locks to convey blocks of stone up and down the Capri stairs—which was the last occupation we saw her in. It was she who called loudest out, of the benign crowd who watched our departing, the "*Felice viaggio, presto ritorno!*" of primitive kindness. Thus it is that in Capri the Furies, after the first assault, grow into the kindliest domestic sprites, genial and frolicsome, ready to enter into your humour, though not without a smile at the odd ideas of the Forestieri, who know no better. The day after your landing they will come round you with their little baskets of coral like old friends; and if you are worthy of visiting Capri, you will not be too particular about a franc or two, but keep the pink morsels of coral from the beach, and the round shells which they call the eyes of Santa Lucia, in memory of one of the loveliest little atoms of stone and space which God has planted in the sea.

Though, to be sure, you might find more substantial memorials—like that sturdy pilgrim-staff, for example, stout as an Irish bludgeon, though made of sentimental myrtle, which the stalwart Scottish Signor, whose length of limb and development of muscle made Feliciello forget his manners in admiration, carries with him across the seas. But these are the private *negozio* of Santella, who is our waiting-maid at the Villa Quisisana—a mild and gentle hunchback, whose face has such a light of goodness in it that it does one more good to look at her than even at little Chiara in Anacapri, the little beauty. Gentle deformed creature! noiseless and serviceable, good for everything in the house, how comes it that the common beauty has flowed around her like a perverse stream, and left her such an exception? It is hard to be the exception—to stand whipping-boy for the world, and teach the fair and glad to be thankful for their advantages by the spectacle of one's own deformity or sorrow. But thou and I, good Santella, will shake hands on that; and I wish we all bore our burdens half as meekly and sweetly as does that handmaiden of the good God. It is pleasant at the Villa Quisisana, *lectore carissima*, where our host speaks pure Italian with an Edinburgh accent, and knows everybody one knew in the early ages when one was young and lived among one's own people. Go there, and bring us word how the vines are growing, and be good to Santella; and look at the cottage on the hill under the sweetest shade of the olive-trees, from which you can see the sun set, as it were by stealth, in that unthought-of break round the lower shoulder of Monte Solaro. If I were ever rich and secure and happy, and had no longer any dread in my heart of this dearest, saddest, murderous Italy, it is there I would go and build my tower of vision: but that time can only be when Italy and Capri have celestial names, and the City of God has come down out of the skies, and that hard division is done away with which parts heaven and earth; for I cannot think the great Creator, even to outdo it, could destroy, clean out of knowledge, the loveliest labours of His almighty hands.

A RECENT RIDE TO HERAT.

[*MAGA.* AUG. 1885.]

WE were tired of Tirpul. Tirpul is the position to which, under stress of circumstances over which we had no control, the Afghan Boundary Commission had been driven from Badghis. A very good position too. In front of us was the Hari Rud, swollen by the late rains into a mighty brick-red torrent, whose surface, strewn with the wreckage of many a far-off forest, told its own tale of ruin and destruction. They said there had never been such a flood; and certainly there were no signs visible of anything like it in recent years. Spanning the river in front of us stood the one bridge which exists between Herat and Pul-i-Khatun; and though the bridge looked crazy enough to give way to a far less violent rush of water than that which then beset it, yet it finally stood up with its cracked arches and battered piers, and it answered our purpose and lasted our time. The seemingly endless winter had at last given way to spring. The bright spring hues of the Euphrates poplar and dwarf tamarisk fringed the river, red with the silt of distant hills, and furnished for it a brilliant setting when lighted by the last rays of the western sun. No one could call the scenery magnificent, but it was at least picturesque; and for a short time Tirpul proved a pleasant resting-place.

But the excitement of watching day by day for the first sign of the approaching Cossack gradually gave way to a feeling of vexation that he was taking things so easily. We knew that, after the fight at Panjdeh, 3000 Russian troops might have marched into Herat absolutely unopposed. Knowing their profound belief in the principle of *beati possidentes* (a belief which has been most fully justified), and having been told with great candour by the few Russian officers met by our explorers and surveyors that they were on their way to Herat, there was naturally an opinion current in camp that Panjdeh was but the beginning of the end,—and the end was Herat. Exactly how far they were prepared for such an advance, of course we did not know. Neither did we know exactly how far political considerations would allow them to proceed. But we *did* know that just at that juncture there was nothing to stop them, unless it was the escort of the British Commission, and consequently we watched for their next proceedings with interest. But the interest flagged, and the beauties of the surrounding scenery became familiar; and so an order for a small party of three to proceed as far as possible in the direction of Herat, and, if possible, to see the place itself, was hailed with thankfulness. The party consisted of Colonel Stewart and two engineer officers—Major Holdich, R.E., and Captain Peacocke, R.E. Once before much the same little party had tried to reach Herat, and had failed signally. Political reasons for not even approaching the neighbourhood were forcibly urged by the Governor, and the party returned to headquarters.

Glad as we all were to be off again over new ground, or rather to see old ground under new aspects, we none of us quite expected to reach Herat. The road for two marches was familiar, and we saw what we had seen before in November, only gilded and painted by the hand of spring. The change was marvellous. Instead of bare, brown, dusty plains, flanked by rugged hills equally bare and brown, there was a bright green stretch of prairie (it might have been prairie), besprinkled with flowers of every conceivable hue, amongst which the scarlet poppy was distinctly the most aggressive, gathering himself together with many other poppies in huge knots amongst the wormwood scrub, and covering great patches of country with brilliant red. The villages, too, had put on a clean and Sabbath-like appearance. Mud, under some aspects, is certainly clean and respectable. Perhaps it was the setting off of the fresh green mulberry-trees, or the brilliant emerald-coloured wheat-fields, or the primness of the ubiquitous poppies, here grown in rectangular beds, to make opium hereafter, but looking æsthetic and saintly at present with their spotless white heads bowing to the breeze. White poppies make the best opium, but for what reason I cannot tell. Anyhow, the effect of an Afghan village in the Herat valley in the month of May is not unlike what some of my friends may remember of the effects of an Afghan village in the month of May in the Logar and Wendak valleys, near Kabul. There are the same clean white mud walls, overlooked by a square mud fort with towers at the corners, set in the midst of the same brilliant green cultivation, in which blue-coated villagers with identical triangular spades are digging little water-courses to irrigate their fields. Also, there is the same absence of women about the place as is to be noticed about Kabul. The mountains east and south of Herat are high enough to be snow-capped. In May, Dawanda and the Saféd Koh were still white and glittering as we rode up the valley.

Although the valley of Herat is famous for its resources in cultivation, there is not much of it till the neighbourhood of the city is reached. It is true that all along the river there is a strip of well-cultivated ground, here and there widening out to almost the whole breadth of the valley; but it is only east of Ghorián that the wide stony *dasht* which forms a glacis at the foot of the flanking hills all along the valley is no longer the prevailing feature, and that the fields of cultivation develop from isolated patches into good wide stretches of land. The *dasht* is never annihilated. It is a flattish-surfaced, gravelly formation, produced by ages of detritus from the hills, rising in many places above irrigation level. Grass grows but very sparsely on the *dasht*. It is covered with wormwood scrub, which scents the air as it is crushed beneath the horses' feet, and a multitude of flowering plants, of the character of which the botanist of the expedition will no doubt inform the scientific world. A small yellow dwarf rose, with a dark centre, was very conspicuous. It grows in great profusion immediately round Herat.

After four very pleasant days' marching, during which nothing much was to be noted, except civility on the part of the villagers, and an utter absence of any attempt to interfere with our movements, we reached, on the morning of the 7th May, the village of Sakhsurmál. Sakhsurmál is a big village about four or five miles north-west of the city, but hidden from it by the rise of the intervening *dasht*. Only the tops of the minarets of the Masalla are visible from Sakhsurmál—not a yard of the walls. Here, then, was the critical point. We could go no further without the permission of the "Naib-ul-hukmat" or Governor of Herat. Would he let us proceed or not? The first sign was not promising. A solitary horseman, who was recognised to be a servant of the

Naib by the colonel, skirmished out from the village, armed apparently with a bunch of roses for a peace-offering, and said he was commissioned by the Naib to show us a halting-place there, beyond which we were not to proceed that day. He pointed out a rather extensive graveyard, through which meandered one of the dirtiest streams I have ever seen, and explained that we should find that an excellent place in which to pitch our tents. This was scarcely good enough, after coming all that distance.

The colonel thought there must be some mistake, and resolved to beard the Naib in his own den. Accordingly, a native *attaché*—Sirdar Mahomed Aslam Khan—was despatched with the hero of the roses to explain that we wished for a better halting-place than the one selected, although we were willing, of course, to go anywhere the Naib should direct. Meanwhile we sat over the remains of departed chiefs, and ate our breakfast, whilst we pondered on the situation, and awaited the result of the mission with more anxiety than any one of us cared to admit. It turned out that it *was* a mistake, due partly to the miscarriage of the letter announcing our arrival, and partly to what we believed to be the Governor's wish in making as little fuss about our proceedings as possible. A most courteous reply was given to the message. A brilliant collection of prancing horsemen were soon seen coming out to meet us. We were informed that we were to be conducted to a

State garden about a mile from the city walls; there we were to be received as the Amir's guests, and there we should find everything ready for us. The crisis was passed. From that moment we experienced nothing but frank courtesy and royal hospitality. Need I say with what alacrity we left our half-finished breakfast among the tombstones, and turned our faces to the point where the heads of the minarets above the plain showed us the first sign of that city we had come so far to see.

It was not far from the village to the garden on the east side of the city; but it took us along the rising ground to the north, within full view of the fortress, and the interest of it has left an ineffaceable memory. Past the tomb of Haji Baba, with its enclosure of stiff Scotch fir-trees, reminding me of some small bit of the outskirts of Florence; past a Masjid, with its blue-tiled dome, and the straight road from it to the north face of the fort (the only straight road in Herat); past the Masalla, whose minarets had been our landmark for two days previous; and behind all the solid-looking walls of Herat itself (they *are* solid for that matter), crowned by the old citadel, and telling the tale on their faces of many a struggle with the invader. After this panorama came the inevitable dive down off the high ground into the narrow ways of a high-walled village on the outskirts.

The chief feature of these villages is their extraordinary complexity. Every village is a labyrinth of passages and byways. Village street there is none; and the difficulty of solving the puzzle of how to get through is much enhanced by the fact that these byways serve the double purpose of road and ditch. The ditch is merely accessory to the universal irrigation: it is not meant as a drain, for that would be regarded as useless; but it has the effect of leading the traveller into the supposition that there is no road, when the ditch is the road, and the presence of water in it is a mere accident.

Arrived at the garden, we found a guard of the Highland regiment (Herati Highlanders wear kilt *and* trousers), with many political functionaries in waiting. We were conducted inside in due form, and found ourselves at once in most charming quarters. An oriental rose-garden is a perfect thing in its way. There is enough of jungle about it to leave a sense of freedom, and enough of order and arrangement to produce the requisite effects of colour and shade. Here the roses were in their full glory; and the deep thick carpet of grass which spread round the pools of water, and up the long alleys into vineyards and orchards beyond, was a luxury which we workers in India knew how to appreciate. Here, then, we pitched our tents, and presently received a visit from a colonel of Afghan cavalry, who was commissioned to tell us that he had instructions to conduct us anywhere we pleased, and show us all that we might desire to see *outside* the city walls, but that so far the Amir's orders against entering the city were strict. However, there was a great deal to be seen, and a great deal to be done, outside the city; so we congratulated ourselves on our success so far, and girded up our loins for what was to be done outside.

Early next morning we were off to the hills on the north and north-east, which command a very complete view of Herat and the plains about it. The walls and towers and gates of Herat stood up white and distinct out of a green sea of trees and cultivation, which fills up the valley from side to side. Only at the foot of the hills on each side a long sweeping glacis curves down to a distance of one or two miles, and leaves Herat in the somewhat unusual position, for a fortress, of occupying the lowest level in the valley. The river Hari Rud twists itself along a channel (or many channels) about four miles south of the city, and between the river and where we stood could be traced the lines of innumerable other channels intersecting the fields and orchards for cultivation. Here and there the bee-hived tops of village houses, close set, in long rows, peeped out from between the trees, but not nearly so many of them as we had expected to see. In front of all stood up the minarets of the Masalla, bent as if they too had had to recognise the force of the fierce north-western blasts with which Herat is assailed, like gigantic sentinels, broken, but unsubdued. Amongst other points of interest we visited the *ziarat* (or shrine) at

Gazargah, a place which is supposed to have been the site of a Persian encampment in the days of the Persian siege. Here Dost Mohammed is buried. It is a striking place, not so much from the magnificence of the shrine itself, which has been too much battered and ruined by long years of neglect to be impressive, as from the fine trees which surround it. This is one of the few places in Afghanistan where the Scotch fir is to be seen.

A courteous visit from the Naib, or Governor, was received during the afternoon. The Naib (who is a Ghilzai) is a model Afghan chief. His pleasant genial appearance and manners would secure him friends anywhere. The Naib is exactly the sort of man you would like to find in your host at a hospitable country house, or one of a small party at a dinner at your club. No English host could have been more English in his welcome, or more frankly pleasant in conversation. But though the Naib's reception of us was all that we could wish, we did not then know what we might meet with from the people. It must be remembered that the people of Herat are not one but two very distinct peoples. There are the ruling class and the ruled. The former are Kabulis, and comprise all the regular troops except a few Kandahar regiments; and they belong to the tribes of the north—Ghilzai, Logari, Kohistani, Paghmani, &c. The Heratis belong to the Durani tribes of the south and west; and between the north and the south—the rulers and the ruled—there is no great bond of love and sympathy. In fact the Heratis hate Kabul rule—they would prefer any other; so without entering into further particulars, it will be clear that the problem of inducing Herati and Kabuli to combine under one leader to defend the walls of their ancient city, is not one which can be seen through all at once.

Now the Heratis have always been exceedingly friendly to the British. Their friendship is no new thing. As a people they have never been otherwise. As regards the Kabuli (that is to say, the soldiery) we were not quite so clear. Some of them in Herat had been in the fight at Panjdeh, and had been badly beaten by the Russians; and we had not helped them with anything but excellent advice. At least that was all that they knew themselves about the matter—all that they could be expected to see from their limited point of view; and even that is assuming that they were duly impressed with the excellence of our advice. A little straw will show which way the wind blows, and consequently I was much pleased to find that some of the Kabuli soldiers on duty on our guard came forward and claimed the fact of old acquaintance in the Logar valley, or at Paghman, or elsewhere where my wanderings in North Afghanistan had taken me during the late war. They might have seen me there, or they might not—the claim was a friendly one, and they lost no time in explaining that they were glad to see me at Herat. Not the least emphatic amongst them was a man who had been at Panjdeh. This was a good sign anyhow, and we rode out that evening, passing by the east face of the city to the Kandahar gate, and southwards to the bridge over the Hari Rud on the Kandahar road, with the feeling that we really might enjoy ourselves for a day or two in utter security. The old bridge (the Pul-i-Malún) was worth the visit. Its present appearance is rather that of being stranded and left high and dry by the river; and it is in the same ruinous state that all else is in not immediately connected with the city itself. But it would be no great engineering feat to put it in its place again—or rather to put the river-channel once more under the bridge.

A very early ride next morning right round the city walls gave us a good idea of the strength of Herat. There is no room for argument about the statement that mud walls make very respectable defences. As for these mud walls, towering up to a height of 80 feet over our heads, I shall say nothing further than that they looked truly formidable.

The evening was a very appropriate one for a visit to the Masalla. Heavy clouds had come up, and there was a lurid look about the sky which was quite in keeping with the grandeur of desolate ruin that we rode out to see. These are the ruins of two distinct buildings (the Masjid and the Masalla) each with its central dome, flanked by high square-built wings, enclosing a gigantic court in front. The entrance to the court is below an arch, which forms by far the most prominent feature of the whole pile. These main arches must be at least 80 feet high; and as a high square wall is carried up above the crown to the height of another 40 feet or so, this arched entrance dwarfs by its enormous size both the dome and the delicate forms of the four minarets which guard the building at each corner, and which are in themselves marvellously beautiful in outline and symmetry. The face and interior of the Masalla (except the wings), as well as the exterior of the minarets, and of the domed Masjid which stands apart, covering the shrine of Shah Rukh, are all covered with enamel-work, illustrating the delicate beauty of an art which is lost. Shades of blue and green, from azure and emerald to the deep tones of indigo and of a lustrous peacock green (I don't know how else to describe it), varied with yellows from lemon to russet, including all the tints of dying and dead leaves in autumn, are blended in the devices of this *faïence.* It is not the coarse tile-work such as is common in India (though in general effect it resembles Multan pottery, which is very effective in its way), but all the delicate tracery of the design is carefully graven into the clay before the enamel is burnt on. This *faïence*, I think, constitutes the chief beauty of the Masalla. Yet the gigantic size of the whole hill, and the halo of history surrounding the slender stems of those broken minarets, were very impressive on that still May evening. And surrounding it, of course, were ever the same saintly-looking poppies, like deceiving angels, with delicate creamy-white complexions, beguiling the senses even as they stood, and making the air heavy, faint, and oppressive.

On reaching our garden camp, we were welcomed with the intelligence that the Amir had just sent orders that we were to be received into the city itself, and that everything we wished to see was to be shown to us. The next morning was the time fixed for our entry. Accordingly, on the morning of Sunday, the 10th May, when our gallant Afghan cicerone, with a glittering staff, rode up to say that the gates were open, he found three British officers ready, of whom one at least was arrayed in all the pomp of (nearly) full uniform, and each was doing his best to disguise from the other two the intense interest he felt in the day's proceedings. Indeed we were rather a silent party as we rode over the bridge, and through the great gates of the Kutub Chak entrance, and found ourselves inside the city walls at last. We were in happy ignorance of what was going on then, or had been going on in the great political world for the previous fortnight; and if our thoughts strayed into the regions of forecast, there was not one of us who would for a moment have anticipated the news which greeted us that evening—

that a temporary peace was to be purchased at the expense of full concession to the Russian demands. We believed that war was inevitable, and our thoughts were full not so much of concession as of what small contribution we ourselves might make towards rendering concession unnecessary. It seemed so easy to ride in, after all, and make a first acquaintance with Herat. If these were our first associations with the city, what would our last be, and how would they find us?

The walls were lined with people, who, after the fashion of orientals, welcomed us silently. Astonishment seemed at first their chief feeling on the subject. Guards were posted at close intervals in all open spaces and main streets, and the clash of salutes was incessant. We rode quickly through to the quarters assigned to us. These were in a large roomy building, with a square courtyard in front, but of no particular pretensions, architecturally or otherwise. Three magnificent rooms were painted bright purple, blue, and yellow respectively, for our occupation; and the gold-leaf was laid on the cornices so thickly, that it appeared in danger of peeling off from its very weight. The floors were thickly carpeted, but the furniture was scanty, for the reason that Herati folk never use furniture themselves, and are not in the habit of entertaining European visitors. From the roof of the house a magnificent view of the city and citadel was to be obtained.

We were anxious to see all we could, and our time was limited, so, after taking possession, we started again for the main bazaar and the Charsoo. The city is very nearly a mile square, and the bazaar intersects it from north to south, and from east to west. Thus two main thoroughfares cross about the centre of the city at the Charsoo—a sort of central domed arcade. The bazaar is roofed in from end to end, consequently it is rather dark. It is also very narrow — only about 12 feet wide, in parts extending perhaps to 18 or 20 at the utmost. These great covered streets were thronged with people; Heratis, Kabulis, Turcomans, with men of Scind and Hindustan, were there. And at every 100 or 150 yards was the inevitable guard (always on duty, we were told, and not at all there on our special behoof), whose attempts to present arms at the various words of command, given in English (amongst which I distinctly heard "Stand at ease"), resulted in a flourish of their weapons to the front, which still further narrowed the way. It was difficult to ride along two abreast.

I was not struck with the magnificence of the bazaar. There was none of the pretty colours and display of attractive goods in the shop-fronts that make Kabul picturesque, and the long uneven row of shops themselves, was an unbroken monotony of the commonest-looking little bazaar-shops that one can see in any second-rate town in India. Nevertheless our servants pronounced it a most magnificent place.

Perhaps hard marching and many long weary months away from their sunny homes in India had sharpened their appreciation. Excellent silk was obtainable, but it came from Mashad or Bokhara. I did not note one single indigenous product which could be distinctly called a specialty of Herat.

It is a mistake to suppose that Herat is in ruins. I should think that there is a great part of it uninhabited (it is impossible to tell from direct evidence), but Herat is not built of that material of which ruins are readily made; and it might all be inhabited from the look of it. Yet probably there are not more than from 12,000 to 15,000 inhabitants there at present. The view over the city from the walls, on which we walked in the evening, is that of endless rows of domed houses, like a gigantic apiary, above which rises in the centre the larger dome of the Charsoo, and the Jamma Masjid. But all the city looked in good repair; and I have the authority of Colonel Stewart, who was one of our party, for saying that, with the single exception of Mashad, it was a more habitable-looking city than any he had seen in Persia. The most remarkable feature about Herat (a feature which, all the same, it has in common with most large Afghan villages and towns), is the absence of open thoroughfares. The way about Herat must be perfectly inscrutable to any but an old inhabitant. Many of the principal passages are but arched ways, burrowing under the houses, twisting out into daylight—and high-walled lanes here and there, with dark offensive-looking offshoots diving away off from them, and leading into labyrinths of unfathomable filth. Street-fighting in Herat would indeed be a ghastly business!

A state visit from our excellent friend the Governor was received in the afternoon. He was attended by the Commander-in-Chief, the Assistant Commander-in-Chief, several generals, brigadiers, and other smaller folk. The uniform worn by these officers might be called fancy dress; but it is so in all oriental armies,—and there was nothing extravagant or unworkmanlike about the appearance of the Herat military chiefs. They spoke courteously and very plainly about their own immediate commands.

The next morning a return visit was paid to the Governor, during which valuable presents were offered, according to Afghan custom, but declined. The peculiar feature of this visit was the introduction of a gigantic bouquet of roses—a bouquet so large that it had to be carried by two men, and set on the floor! Then followed a visit to the Commander-in-Chief—a pleasant-mannered and most intelligent-looking man — who received us in a room so high above the level of ordinary rooms, that from the open window we could look down on a parade of all the troops in Herat, drawn up in columns on the open ground below. No one impressed me more with an air of real business than the Commander-in-Chief. Another look round at the arsenal, the citadel, the walls, and the defences, and our brief visit to Herat had come to an end.

We rode out again, back to our sunny rose-garden, merely to load up and march out for one short march together. For next day we lost our political companion, the gallant colonel, who had been ordered straight back from Herat to London. Was he sorry to leave Herat? Anyway we were sorry to lose him, though we knew well that, if the campaign is to be fought out in Downing Street, he would stand as true to his colours there as ever he would (had the necessity arisen) in Herat itself. Our visit had been an unqualified success. All had welcomed us, priests, soldiers, and people. The people had swarmed in from all the country-side to see us. Again and again had we been told by the soldiers that the presence of British officers was the one thing most desired in Herat. The priests had offered up prayers in the Masjid that our entrance might prove a happy omen for Herat. God grant that it may be so!

IN SEARCH OF THE EIRA.

BY H. SWIRE, R.N.

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FEW of those, perhaps, who have recently read of the rescue of the crew of the Eira, and of their safe return to their native land, after passing a winter on the inhospitable shores of Franz Josef Land, have considered what months of patient labour and inquiry, directed by intelligent forethought and practical Arctic experience, were requisite to set on foot and carry to such a rapid and successful conclusion a search after the missing crew, such as that recently undertaken by the steam-whaler Hope, under the command of Sir Allen Young.

With but vague knowledge of the intentions of Mr Leigh Smith; with but very meagre information of his actual movements during the summer of 1881; and with a vast area of polar sea and coast-line to deal with—over which the explorer might have taken his vessel — it is indeed a remarkable fact that the relief ship should have been able to appear at the right time at the exact spot where she was required, to pick up Mr Leigh Smith's boats on their emergence from the ice after their arduous and adventurous voyage of forty-one days amongst the floes. That an element of good fortune much assisted the relief expedition, no one can deny; but luck is a factor of the utmost importance in all polar expeditions, and he who best knows how to utilise his good luck and to neutralise his bad luck, possesses perhaps some of the most valuable qualities which go to make a successful Arctic navigator.

The Eira was specially built at Peterhead for Mr Leigh Smith, and was a steam-vessel of 350 tons burden, strengthened and otherwise fitted for voyaging in the Arctic seas. Mr Leigh Smith made in her a very successful summer voyage in 1880, during which he made important and interesting discoveries upon the coasts of Franz Josef Land and Spitzbergen.

Mr Leigh Smith sailed upon his second voyage in the Eira on the 13th June 1881, taking with him Dr Neale as surgeon, Mr Lofly as ice-master, and a crew of twenty-two men. He was provisioned for fourteen months, with further supplies of bread and flour enough to last two years.

To quote the words of the letter addressed by Mr Valentine Smith to the President of the Royal Geographical Society — "The explorer's intention is believed to have been to visit Franz Josef Land a second time, with a view of making further discoveries on its western side, and he wished, if possible, to push northward near the meridian of Wickes' Land. But he would on this occasion, as heretofore, have been guided by the state of the ice, using his best endeavours to enter upon new work, in that direction which appeared most open and promising."

Inquiries instituted during the winter of 1881-82 by Sir Henry Gore-Booth amongst those Norwegian walrus-hunters, who, his practical knowledge of the coast of Nova Zemla told him, might possibly have seen and communicated with the Eira, resulted in the information that she was last seen by the schooner Proven. The Proven first fell in with the Eira on June 30th off Matotchkin Sharr in Nova Zemla, and she was then steaming north; on the 2d July, however, they saw her steaming south, having evidently been turned by the ice; then, again, they met her off the south-west part of Nova Zemla on the 8th July steaming north, and supposed that Leigh Smith had tried to get round the south point of Nova Zemla, had been stopped by the ice, and was now going to force his way north.

The above facts and suppositions were carefully formulated and examined by Mr Valentine Smith's committee; all possible information was obtained as to the state of the ice in 1881-82 in the Barents Sea and on the coasts of Nova Zemla and Spitzbergen, and the opinion of the most eminent Arctic explorers of Europe was taken. Sir George Nares, who sat on the committee, drew up an exhaustive memorandum, thoroughly examining every eventuality which might have occurred to the explorers; and Sir Allen Young, having offered his services, was intrusted with the task of selecting, fitting out, manning, and commanding the relief vessel—Government so far co-operating as to contribute £5000 towards the expenses of the expedition, at the same time allowing any naval officers to serve under Sir Allen whom he might select; whilst the Royal Geographical Society contributed £1000—any further cost being undertaken solely by Mr Valentine Smith.

The Hope, a steam-whaler of 276 tons register, was chosen by Sir Allen Young as a vessel in all respects suitable for the work of the expedition. Strongly built, double-planked about the water-line, fortified within with iron frames, and shod with iron at the bow, she had a reputation even amongst whalers as being a ship of no ordinary capacities for encountering heavy ice; and those who sailed in her were fully persuaded that she was as good a ship for the purpose as could be procured. The crew whom Sir Allen Young engaged for the voyage, consisted in part of old whalers, some of whom had served previously in the Hope, and of ex-man-of-war's men, with a few trusted hands who had been with Sir Allen in his Arctic voyages in the Pandora. The vessel was brought round from Peterhead to London to be completed for sea, and lay in the West India Docks, taking in her two years' stores and engaging her crew, where she excited no little interest from the peculiarity of her appearance—the crow's nest at the maintop-gallant masthead being a novel feature in the low latitude of London.

All being at length ready, articles were signed and the blue ensign and burgee of the New Thames Yacht Club (the same to which the Eira belonged) hoisted on June 19th; and on the following day the relief ship steamed out of the docks and down to Gravesend. Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales evinced a lively and kindly interest in the enterprise, and sent as a present to the officers' mess a handsome silver inkstand and a silver bell for summoning the waiter. On Saturday, June 24th, the Hope finally left the shores of Old England, passing Flamborough Head towards evening, and thence steering due north on the meridian of Greenwich. On the following morning England had sunk below the horizon, and we continued our course towards the icy regions over the solitudes of the ocean. The paucity of bird-life in the North Seas is very marked, as compared with the great number and variety of sea-fowl in the Antarctic regions, where the great wandering albatross is a never-failing object of interest and admiration, and petrels of smaller size, down to the little "Mother Carey's chicken," are never absent from the neighbourhood of the ship. At a point

100 miles west of Stav Fiord in Norway, we chanced upon a Norwegian fishing-boat lying at anchor in 100 fathoms of water, and obtained a very welcome supply of fresh cod in exchange for tobacco, salt meat, and biscuit. The gradually lengthening days, the setting of the sun later evening after evening, and, finally, the emerging into the long summer's day of months' duration of the Arctic regions, brought home to all the fact that we were getting well into the region in which our work lay. Darkness had now vanished, and with it the stars; and the moon, shining with but a feeble reflection of the great illuminator, alone remained to remind us of such a thing as night. Busily employed in getting ready stores to land at depots, sledges and other travelling gear for use at a moment's notice, and serving out and altering the warm clothing to the various shapes and sizes of humanity on board, we passed up the North Sea and approached the coast of Norway in a thick fog on the morning of July 2d, and encountered a Russian barque, also groping her way in towards the land. About noon the mist lifted and enabled us to make out the precipitous cliffs of North Kvalo and its dangerous outlying rocks, and to continue on our course towards Hamerfest. Steaming across a broad bay, hemmed in by high and snow-flecked islands and by the mainland of Norway, we entered the narrow channel leading to Hamerfest towards midnight, the stern and forbidding scenery lighted up and

softened by the warm hues of the midnight sky, while the distant snow-peaks shone brilliantly in the rays of the sun, which was hidden from us by the high land to the north. Here we took a pilot, who conducted us without mishap to Hamerfest, enlarging the while upon the desirability of the barren land we saw as a place of residence, and on the grandeur of the city we were approaching. What a charming provision of Nature is it that the great majority of men, of whatsoever race they be, should be convinced that their own country and no other, is the very finest place in the world; and how pleasant it was to see our honest Norseman's face light up with pride and pleasure as we praised his bleak hillsides and wooden houses nestling beneath them! This town, the most northern in the world, is but 1160 miles from the North Pole, a distance over which an express train might pass in twenty-four hours, could the rails only be laid. It contains about 2000 inhabitants, who live on the products of the sea; for those who do not catch fish either cure them, trade in them, or keep stores for the supply of clothes, &c., to the fishing people. The little town is now pretty well known to the British tourist bent upon "doing" the midnight sun and doubling the North Cape; for it is the last port of call of the tourist steamers on their way north. The island of Varö, on the west side of which Hamerfest stands, is nearly circular, and about ten miles in diameter, rising in the interior to a height of over 2000 feet, and is devoid of vegetation except certain mosses and lichens, trees being represented by a stunted birch, which attains a height of 7 or 8 feet in the sheltered valleys near the sea, but on the hillsides grows horizontally along the ground, being only thus able to support life in face of the furious winter blasts. This scanty vegetation suffices, however, to nourish herds of semi-wild reindeer, the property of the mountain Lapps, which roam at pleasure over the interior, and are lassoed by their owners as they are required for food, clothing, or draught purposes. The interior of the island is cut up into numerous valleys and covered for the most part with snow, so that progress is rather slow. I succeeded, after four hours' trudging, in reaching the top of a hill overlooking the sea-coast, and from it walked along the central ridge of the island, from which the surrounding islands and fiords could be surveyed to advantage. The highest point I found to be 2180 feet, situated almost in the centre of the island and commanding an extensive view of its desolate snow-fields and rock-strewn valleys, down which the heat of the afternoon sun was now causing the snow-waters to dash towards the sea.

A lowering hill just to the south of Hamerfest is a standing grievance to the inhabitants, for it robs them of much of their dearly-prized sunshine, and has earned for itself the title of Tyd Fjeld (Thief Mountain). As the sun is altogether below their horizon for two months in the winter, and is then cut off from them for a further considerable time by this hill (which is 1420 feet high), the good people regard it with no friendly feelings. Of the inhabitants of the island, the Lapps are perhaps the most interesting. These are of two kinds — mountain Lapps, and sea or fisher Lapps. The mountain Lapps are very few in number, and depending as they do for every necessity of life upon their roaming herds of reindeer, their habits are necessarily nomadic. The reindeer supplies these diminutive mountaineers with food and clothing, and with all the weapons and utensils which are needed in their simple life, and is besides their beast of burden and sledge-drawer. The fisher Lapps are only met with on the coasts, and indeed seldom leave their boats. They are far more numerous than their brethren of the mountains, living as they do on the products of that Norwegian mine of wealth, the sea. They also are small people, and as miserable-looking as they are small. Whilst the mountain Lapps have the full use of their limbs, and are healthy and vigorous, the sea Lapps are doubled up in body, weak-legged, and sickly-looking, taking advantage, when on land, of every opportunity to support themselves against anything which may be at hand to relieve their legs of part of the weight of their bodies. An interesting speculation presents itself as to what manner of man will in future ages be developed from the fisher

Lapps if they continue their present mode of life.

The reason of the delay of one week at Hamerfest was to buy and fit out a second vessel to act as a tender to the Hope—the craft chosen being a Norwegian smack of about 45 tons, called the Martha, which had then to be double planked round the bow and water-line to fit her to meet ice. A Norwegian skipper and four hands were engaged to man her; and as soon as all was settled, we took her in tow, and left on 9th July, with great exchange of flag-dipping and handkerchief-waving between the Hope and the Martha on the one hand, and the town-people on the other. We now made for Porsanger Fiord, the great inlet on the east side of the North Cape, passing, however, to the southward of the Cape through Magarö Sund, the channel which separates Magarö from the mainland. The North Cape is, as is well known, one of the northern points of Magarö. The scenery in Magarö Sund is striking and impressive, on account of its extreme wildness and desolation; and the narrowness of the channel permits of both sides being closely scanned from the deck of the passing vessel. The scream of sea-birds, the swirl of contending tide-currents, and the splash of fish, with an occasional rolling accompaniment, as some boulder, with its attendant stone-shower, comes plunging down the steep slopes, are the parts in the song which Nature sings in this remote region of Finmarken.

We found the coal-hulk lying off Little Tamsö, an island well up Porsanger Fiord, and filled up our bunkers from her, besides putting forty tons into the hold of the Martha and taking a load on our own decks, and finally left Norway on our search for the Eira on July 11th, encountering a strong gale from the south-east the same night, which lasted two days, and drifted the Hope, with the Martha in tow, far north into the Arctic Ocean. July 14th turned out sunny and fine, with the remains of the gale blowing cold from the south-east—so cold, indeed, that ice was divined to be in that direction, and so probably to the northward as well. And this turned out to be the case; for a look-out man having been sent to the crow's nest, reported ice on the northern horizon in detached hummocks, and we ran into it about midday, finding it to be in loose streams lying north-west and south-east, the direction of the wind. Dodging the floes as we steamed on our course for Nova Zemla, we got clear of the ice again about 5 P.M., having evidently passed through the tail of the pack, which would probably be found compact twenty miles or so further north.

We now maintained a general easterly course across the Barents Sea, experiencing southerly winds, which, when they drew to the south-east, became extremely cold, which was afterwards found to be caused by the presence of large masses of ice in the sea to the south-west of Nova Zemla. Heavy mists were now frequent, so that caution was necessary to avoid running into the pack again. On the afternoon of Sunday, July 16th, we were twenty miles west of Cape Britwin, in Nova Zemla; and the weather still remaining thick, we lay to under steam waiting for a chance to make the land. It seemed inclined to clear off in the evening, when we just caught a glimpse of a band of snow on the land, but the mists then closed in again. On the afternoon of the next day it became rather clearer, and we steamed towards Möder Bay, and were able to make out the land vaguely, and presently saw a schooner standing out, which proved to be the Dutch surveying schooner Willem Barents, with which we communicated by boat. This schooner had also been trying to get to an anchorage, and had stood in to 17 fathoms, which must have been close to the land; but not being able to make out any signs of it, was now going north to Matotchkin Sharr to try to get through into the Kara Sea. They were three weeks out from Vardö in Norway, whence they had tried to reach Bear Island, but had been prevented by close pack-ice; they then tried to get round the south point of Nova Zemla, and were again stopped by the ice, being at one time actually beset, and having to cut their way out with considerable labour. The Willem Barents is sent annually to these seas by a Dutch scientific society, for the purpose of taking deep-sea temperatures and making general scientific observations, with a view to throwing light upon the course of the ocean-currents and movements of ice in the polar area, and is commanded by officers of the Dutch Royal Navy. One of their main objects was to reach Ice Haven, the harbour on the north-east coast of Nova Zemla in which Willem Barents wintered in 1596-97, and to place there a memorial-stone which they had brought with them from Holland. For several years past the Barents has tried to accomplish this object, hitherto without success, and it will be interesting to hear the results of their voyage this year. Having parted company with the Willem Barents, we again stood into Möder Bay, and made out the land dimly through a rift in the fog—a snow-patched, ghostly-looking land,—and then the mists closed in, and we stood off to sea again after sounding in 25 fathoms.

On the afternoon of the following day, having previously obtained an approximate position from rough shots at the sun, with no horizon to speak of to take his altitude to, we stood into Möder Bay again, and as the mist lifted a little, made out our position by the land fairly well, at the same time sighting a ketch ahead, with a crow's nest at her masthead, which saw us simultaneously, and tacked to approach us. She proved to be Sir Henry Gore-Booth's yacht, the Kara, which we fell in with at Hamerfest, and which left that place before us. She was also trying to get to an anchorage, and had been in rather dangerous proximity to a bad reef two miles south-west of Cape Britwin, on which we saw great masses of ice piled up, making it look like an island. Over this reef the northerly current, setting out of the bay, rushes with great velocity, making it a very dangerous place for a sailing vessel to get into in light winds. We tailed the Kara on astern of the Martha, Sir H. Gore-Booth and Mr Grant, his companion in adventure, coming on board the Hope to spend the night; and thus, in stately procession, the three vessels paraded Möder Bay all through the night, sometimes making the land, sometimes seeing nothing within fifty yards of us because of the fog, and unable to anchor because we found nothing but hard rock wherever we hove the lead. In the morning the fog suddenly lifted and rolled off up the hills, revealing an Arctic scene of snow-clad mountains and ice-dotted sea, bathed in warm sunshine. We were instructed to land a depot of provisions at the Russian settlement, known to be somewhere in the great bight called Möder or Möller Bay. After much examination of the inlets, we decided upon one as the likeliest for the settlement to be in, chiefly from seeing a vessel's masthead peeping over an intervening point of land, and finally steamed into Little Karmakula harbour, which turned out to be the right place,—there being here a few wooden-houses tenanted by Russians and Samoyedes, and several Russian schooners at anchor off them. The bay-ice was streaming out as we entered, and large pieces of the ice-foot, which runs round the base of the cliffs, frequently broke off with a mighty splash and floated away to sea. One of the Russian schooners was positively beset by the outward-going ice, and would have been carried out of the harbour had not her crew turned out and cut her free.

From one of the walrus-hunters we had news of the Eira—she having been seen and boarded off this coast on the 8th July last year—the same day as the Proven reported having seen her; so we thus had confirmation of previous intelligence, but nothing new. The settlement at Karmakula consists of a few wooden houses and a reindeer-skin tent or two; the inhabitants, when we were there, being a few families of Samoyedes and half-a-dozen shipwrecked Russian walrus-hunters, who were living with the Samoyedes. These people, who are akin to the Esquimaux, are natives of the Samoyede peninsula and neighbouring land along the coast of Siberia. The men are stoutly built, and very short, being only about five feet high; they have a strong Mongolian type of feature, and olive-coloured skin. The women are brighter-coloured in complexion than the men, and three or four inches shorter. Both sexes dress in seal or reindeer skin, trousers and boots in one, with the hair outside; and coat of the same material, with a hood to pull over the head. They stand about in clumsy attitudes, especially the women, who turn their toes in; the men, on the contrary, turn theirs out. They remind one of nothing so much as a group of wax-work figures. They have the reputation of being most kind and hospitable to sailors in distress; and, indeed, endless are the instances of their having befriended and saved the lives of castaways on their barren coasts. Hence Sir Allen Young distributed amongst them numerous small presents, impressing upon them that, should the crew of the Eira come among them, they would be expected to do all they could for them, and would be amply repaid for any expenditure. These people live on fish and reindeer in summer, with the addition of seals, walrus, and bears in winter, when the ice closes in. They are skilful hunters, and prepare skins for barter with the Russians. Their tents are made of two thicknesses of reindeer-skins spread on converging poles, with an aperture at the top for the escape of smoke; the outer skin has the hair outside, the inner one being turned inside, and the floor is carpeted in the same manner. The cooking is done in a separate tent, the hook-pot being then brought into the living tent and slung on the fire to keep hot. The interior of the tent into which I went was occupied by men, women, and children, a number of dogs, and a young polar bear, all lying about amongst a profusion of skins and rugs of various kinds. We had expected to find here a Russian officer, who pays an annual visit as governor, but he had not arrived.

After waiting for some days, as he was expected daily, Sir Allen Young decided to land a depot of provisions at once, and to leave it in charge of the head Samoyede. This depot would serve either for the use of the Eira's crew should they arrive here, or for ourselves, should we have to abandon the Hope and fall back on our depots; and it was carefully stored in the lifeboat-shed, which we were surprised to find here—and with a lifeboat in it too. I was unable to find out its history, as our interpreter was not very efficient, and if bored too much, would answer "yes" to everything. We had expeditions after reindeer and wild-fowl, and one day saw twenty-four white whales captured,—all agreeable and sometimes exciting experiences, but which, having no bearing upon the objects of the expedition, must be left undescribed here. I got one good bird's-eye view of Möder Bay from the top of a neighbouring mountain, and could see that the whole country was covered with large snow patches and drifts, with extensive snow-fields on the uplands, the heads of the bays and fiords still choked with ice, and an ice-foot running along the whole coast, under which the sea surging and murmuring could be heard from afar. After taking on board eight sledge-dogs for use in case of wintering in Franz Josef Land, and being delayed several days by thick fogs, we were able to get away on July 25th; and followed by the Kara, and with the Martha in tow, we started with a fresh breeze from the S.-W. for Suchoi Noss, where the next depot was to be placed; but the breeze increasing to a gale next day, it was deemed imprudent to approach such an unknown lee shore, and instead the ship's head was turned towards Matotchkin Sharr, the strait which separates Nova Zemla into two islands, and in which we were sure to find a secure harbour. From thence we might perhaps send the Martha on to Suchoi Noss to lay the depot down, as that promontory is but thirty miles or so to the north, and not convenient for a large ship to approach.

We found a good anchorage in a bight called Altglaubigen Bay, or the Bay of the Old Religion, so named long ago by a party of Germans who, like the "Pilgrim Fathers," hoped to find abroad the religious independence which was denied them at home, but who had very soon to give up their attempt to colonise barren Nova Zemla. As soon as possible I went up one of the mountains to look round, and was rewarded by a fine view of the strait and the snow-clad mountainous country about this part of Nova Zemla. I could see the schooner Willem Barents about six miles up the strait, and found out afterwards that she had been stopped by the ice a little further on, and was waiting for a chance to get through. Two Russian schooners were in the bay waiting for white whale and salmon, and picking up an occasional walrus or reindeer. We found geese and ducks here; and there are plenty of reindeer for those who can afford time to go after them. As it was, the only one we nearly got was hit by one of our men, who then dropped his rifle and ran up to finish the deer with a stick; but the animal promptly recovered and ran off, followed by a shower of uncomplimentary epithets in the Scotch language. Sir Henry Gore-Booth and Mr Grant, in the Kara, got plenty of deer; but they went further up the strait, where the animals had not been frightened.

As the weather cleared up again, and seemed settled, it was decided to take the Hope herself to Suchoi Noss, and with that intention we left after a very short stay, and commenced coasting as near the land as possible, in order that we might see the Eira's boats or their encampment, should they be on their way down. Whilst thus engaged—the sea being perfectly smooth, and no breakers visible over shoals—we unfortunately grounded on a rocky bank, lying two miles out at sea. This shoal is not marked on the Admiralty chart, but is on a Russian one; and in consequence of this, Sir Allen Young had made inquiries about it through our interpreter, who said the Russian skippers had found 18 feet over it. We found just half that depth.

The way in which the crew worked, without any rest during the twenty-six hours we spent on that shoal, was beyond all praise, and the assistance rendered by Sir Henry Gore-Booth's little craft contributed in no small degree to the happy result; so that when we escaped with only a sprung stern-post, we considered that we had got off very cheaply, and put back to Altglaubigen Bay to repair damages and start afresh. As soon as the Willem Barents heard of the accident she came down the strait, and with the assistance of her carpenter and one from the Kara, our own men were very soon able to rig a jury stern-post and rudder.

It really seemed as if all the vessels in these seas had agreed to rendezvous at Altglaubigen Bay; for whilst we were preparing for another start north, the Dutch Meteorological Expedition arrived in two steamers to try and get through the strait into the Kara Sea, and so on to Dickson's Haven, where they proposed to winter. When we came away they were still trying, and would not get through this year, I am sure. From them we heard of the war in Egypt, and many other items of interesting news.

All being at length ship-shape on August 3d, the Willem Barents took her carpenter back and got under way, intending now to try to get to Ice Haven round the north of Nova Zemla, whilst we prepared to make an immediate start, place the depot at Suchoi Noss, another at some point further north, and then make a dash for Franz Josef Land, taking the Martha with us or not, as circumstances might dictate. After the Barents left we watched the pretty little craft beating out of the strait, when she suddenly hove to about two miles from us, and some of us heard a sort of shout on board her: then she anchored and hoisted flags at her mastheads. Some said a boat had been seen to pull alongside her before she anchored—at any rate, here was a puzzle which no one could make out; and as the Barents seemed to be riding comfortably at her anchor, and not in want of assistance, no further notice except an occasional inquisitive inspection through a telescope was taken of her eccentric proceedings. In about an hour a boat was seen pulling from the Barents towards us with three men sitting in the stern-sheets, one holding a huge Dutch flag tied to a boat-hook; this again was extraordinary. "Why should Dutchmen pull against a strong head-wind with a large flag held up to make their work the harder?" A sort of glimmering of the truth began to prevail; and as the boat approached, Sir Allen leaning over the counter, the better to use the only eye which frost and snow have left him, shouted, "Who is that? who are you?" To which a voice replied, "Don't you know me? am I so altered then?" when instantly a tremendous yell and cheer broke out from every one on deck, which was taken up by the Dutch boat's crew, and re-echoed from the distant Barents, whose crew were watching everything that passed. Up tumbled all hands from below, into the rigging, anywhere they could see from and shout from, and a scene of the wildest enthusiasm prevailed as Mr

Leigh Smith was pulled, rather than walked, over the side, followed by Dr Neale, Mr Lofly, and then by Captain Hoffman of the Barents. In a few moments all was told, and the mystery we had been sent to solve was cleared up. The Eira was lost a year ago—having been nipped in the ice and sunk off Cape Flora, Franz Josef Land. The crew were now on shore here, close to us; that was enough for us. With one accord boats were manned, and a race began to reach them and bring them off. We found them soon—they were but three miles away; their boats, begrimed by blubber-soot, and jagged by ice-collisions, hauled up on a beach at the head of the very next bay—called henceforth Eira Bay. The men—who ran our boats up on the beach for us as we landed—were as healthy-looking as men could be, and they were actually arraying themselves in their best yachting clothes, which they had saved, when we surprised them. They had lived for a year on bears, walrus, and preserved vegetables, their only sorrow having been that there was not enough of such food to satisfy their enormous appetites. On a rising ground behind their present camp they had built a small cairn with a boat-hook staff surmounting it, and flying on it was the Eira's burgee of the New Thames Yacht Club. The boats, in which they had lived for forty-one days, and travelled over sea and ice from Franz Josef Land, were housed in by canvas awnings, and crowded with tools, weapons, and clothes, everything wet through from the gale of the day before, during which the Hope had been dragging her anchor all round Altglaubigen Bay. They had made straight for Admiralty Peninsula on leaving Franz Josef Land, but being stopped by the ice, had been obliged to keep more to the west—and after many adventures had cleared the ice ninety miles S.-W. of Matotchkin Sharr, and then had been driven by a gale of wind right into the arms of their deliverers, with but a few days' provisions left. Their ship was lost on August 21st; they lost the sun on October 21st; the sun returned on February 21st; they left Franz Josef Land on June 21st; and lastly, we landed the whole crew, officers and men complete, at Aberdeen on August 21st, on the anniversary of the loss of their ship.

ADVENTURES IN LOUISIANA.

[*MAGA.* July-Aug. 1843.]

I.

IT was a sultry September afternoon in the year 18—. My friend Carleton and myself had been three days wandering about the prairies, and had nearly filled our tin boxes and other receptacles with specimens of rare and curious plants. But we had not escaped paying the penalty of our zeal as naturalists, in the shape of a perfect roasting from the sun, which had shot down its rays during the whole time of our ramble, with an ardour only to be appreciated by those who have visited the Louisianian prairies. What made matters worse, our little store of wine had been early expended; some taffia, with which we had replenished our flasks, had also disappeared; and the water we met with, besides being rare, contained so much vegetable and animal matter as to be undrinkable unless qualified in some manner. In this dilemma we came to a halt under a clump of hickory trees, and despatched Martin, Carleton's Acadian servant, upon a voyage of discovery. He had assured us that we must ere long fall in with some party of Americans—or Cochon Yankees, as he called them—who, in spite of the hatred borne them by the Acadians and Creoles, were daily becoming more numerous in the country.

After waiting, in anxious expectation of Martin's return, for a full hour, during which the air seemed to get more and more sultry, my companion began to wax impatient. "What can the fellow be about?" cried he. "Give a blast on the horn," he added, handing me the instrument; "I cannot sound it myself, for my tongue cleaves to my palate from heat and drought."

I put the horn to my mouth and gave a blast; but the tones emitted were not the clear echo-awakening sounds that cheer and strengthen the hunter. They were dull and short, as though the air had lost all elasticity and vibration, and by its weight crushed back the sounds into the horn. It was a warning of some inscrutable danger. We gazed around us, and saw that others were not wanting.

The spot where we had halted was on the edge of one of those pine forests that extend, almost without interruption, from the hills of the Côte Gelée to the Opelousa mountains, and of a vast prairie, sprinkled here and there with palmetto fields, clumps of trees, and broad patches of brushwood, which appeared mere dark specks on the immense extent of plain that lay before us, covered with grass of the brightest green, and so long as to reach up to our horses' shoulders. To the right was a plantation of palmettos, half a mile wide, and bounded by a sort of creek or gully, the banks of which were covered with gigantic cypress-trees. Beyond this, more prairie and a wood of evergreen oak. To the east, an impenetrable thicket of magnolias, papaws, oak and bean trees; to the north, the pine wood before mentioned.

Such was the rich landscape we had been surrounded by a short hour before. But now, on looking around, we found the scene changed; and our horizon become far more limited by rising clouds of bluish grey vapour, which approached us rapidly from the wind quarter. Each moment this fog appeared to become thicker; the sun no longer dazzled our eyes when we gazed on it, but showed through the mist like a pale red moon; the outlines of the forest disappeared, veiled from our sight by masses of vapour; and the air, which during the morning had been light and elastic, although hot, became each moment heavier and more difficult to inhale. The part of the prairie that remained visible presented the appearance of a narrow misty valley, enclosed between two mighty ranges of grey mountains, which the fog represented. As we gazed around us and beheld these strange phenomena, our eyes met, and we read in each other's countenance that embarrassment which the bravest and most light-hearted are apt to feel when hemmed in by perils of which they cannot conjecture the nature.

"Fire off your gun," said I to Carleton. I started as I spoke at the alteration in my own voice. The gun went off, but the report was, as it were, stifled by the compressed atmosphere. It did not even alarm some water-fowl that were plashing and floundering in the creek a few hundred paces from us.

"Look at our horses!" exclaimed Carleton. "They are surely going mad." The animals were evidently uneasy at something. They pricked up their ears, turned half round, and gazed with startled eye behind them; then strained with their heads and necks in the opposite direction to the vapour, snorting violently, and at last trying to break away from the trees to which they were tied. A short time previously they had appeared much fatigued, but now they were all fire and impatience.

"It is impossible to remain here," said Carleton.

"But whither shall we go?"

"Wherever our horses choose to take us."

We untied the animals and sprang upon them. But scarcely were we in the saddle when they started off at a pace as frantic as if a pack of wolves had been at their heels; and taking the direction of the creek, which ran between the palmetto plantation and a cypress wood, continued along its banks at the same wild gallop. As we advanced the creek began to widen; in place of palmettos, clumps of marsh reeds and rushes showed themselves here and there. An unearthly stillness prevailed, only broken now and then by the cry of a wild-goose; and even that appeared strange and unnatural in its sound.

"What can be the meaning of this?" cried Carleton. "I am burning with heat, and yet I have not the slightest moisture on my skin. All these signs are incomprehensible. For God's sake, sound the horn again."

I did so; but this time the sound seemed to be forced back through the horn, and to die away upon my lips. The air was so hot and parching that our horses' coats, which a short time previously had been dripping with sweat, were now perfectly dry, and the hair plastered upon them; the animals' tongues hung out of their mouths, and they seemed panting for cooler air. "Look yonder!" cried Carleton; and he pointed to the line of the horizon, which had hitherto been of grey, lead-coloured vapour. It was now becoming reddish in the south-west quarter, and the vapour had taken the appearance of smoke. At the same time we heard a sort of distant crackling, like a heavy running fire of musketry, and which was repeated at short intervals. Each time it was heard our horses appeared scared and trembling.

The creek was getting rapidly wider, and the ground so swampy that it was impossible to proceed further. Seeing this, we agreed to return to the prairie, and to try if it were not cooler among the palmettos. But when we came to the place where we had crossed the creek, our horses refused to take the leap again, and it was with the greatest difficulty we at length forced them over. All this time the redness in the horizon was getting brighter, and the atmosphere hotter and drier; the smoke had spread itself over prairie, forest, and plantations. We continued retracing our steps as well as we could to the spot where we had halted. "See there," said Carleton; "not half an hour ago those reeds were as fresh and green as if they had just sprung out of the earth, and now look at them—the leaves are hanging down, parched and curled up by the heat."

The whole prairie, the whole horizon to the south-west, was now one mass of dense smoke, through which the sun's disc looked scarcely brighter than a paper-lantern. Behind the thick curtain which thus concealed everything from our view, we heard a loud hissing, like that of a multitude of snakes. The smoke was stifling and unbearable; our horses again turned panting round, and tore madly towards the creek. On reaching it we dismounted, but had the greatest difficulty to prevent them from leaping into the water. The streaks of red to our right became brighter and brighter, and gleamed through the huge dark trunks of the cypress-trees. The crackling and hissing grew louder than ever. Suddenly the frightful truth flashed upon us, and at the very same moment Carleton and I exclaimed, "The prairie is on fire!"

As we uttered the words, there was a loud rustling behind us, and a herd of deer broke headlong through a thicket of tall reeds and bulrushes, and dashed up to their necks into the water. There they remained, not fifty paces from us, little more than their heads above the surface, gazing at us, as though imploring our help and compassion. We fancied we could see tears in the poor beasts' eyes.

We looked behind us. On came the pillars of flame, flickering and threatening through the smoke, licking up all before them; and, at times, a gust of so hot and blasting a wind as seemed to dry the very marrow in our bones. The roaring of the fire was now distinctly audible, mingled with hissing, whistling sounds, and cracking noises, as of mighty trees falling. Suddenly a bright flame shot up through the stifling smoke, and immediately afterwards a sea of fire burst upon our aching eyeballs. The whole palmetto field was in flames.

The heat was so great that we every moment expected to see our clothes take fire. Our horses dragged us still nearer to the creek, sprang into the water, and drew us down the bank after them. Another rustling and noise in the thicket of reeds. A she-bear, with her cubs at her heels, came towards us; and at the same time a second herd of deer rushed into the water not twenty yards from where we were standing. We pointed our guns at the bears; they moved off towards the deer, who remained undisturbed at their approach; and there they stood, bears and deer, not five paces apart, but taking no more notice of each other than if they had been animals of the same species. More beasts now came flocking to the river. Deer, wolves, foxes, horses—all came in crowds to seek shelter in one element from the fury of another. Most of them, however, went further up the creek, where it took a north-easterly direction, and widened into a sort of lake. Those that had first arrived began to follow the new-comers, and we did the same.

Suddenly the baying of hounds was heard. "Hurrah! there are dogs; men must be near." A volley from a dozen rifles was the answer to our explanation. The shots were fired not two hundred yards from us, yet we saw nothing of the persons who fired them. The wild beasts around us trembled and crouched before this new danger, but did not attempt to move a step. We ourselves were standing in the midst of them up to our waists in water. "Who goes there?" we shouted. Another volley, and this time not one hundred yards off. We saw the flashes of the pieces, and heard voices talking in a dialect compounded of French and Indian. We perceived that we had to do with Acadians. A third volley, and the bullets whistled about our ears.

It was getting past a joke. "Halt!" shouted we; "stop firing till you see what you are firing at." There was a dead silence for a moment, then a burst of savage laughter. "Fire! fire!" cried two or three voices.

"If you fire," cried I, "look out for yourselves, for we shall do the same. Have a care what you are about."

"*Morbleu! Sacre!*" roared half-a-score of voices. "Who is that who dares to give us orders? Fire on the dogs!"

"If you do, we return it."

"*Sacre!*" screamed the savages. "They are gentlemen from the towns. Their speech betrays them. Shoot them—the dogs, the spies! What do they want in the prairie?"

"Your blood be on your own heads," cried I. And, with the feelings of desperate men, we levelled our guns in the direction in which we had seen the flashes of the last volley. At that moment—"Halt! What is here?" shouted a stentorian voice close to us.

"Stop firing, or you are dead men," cried five or six other voices.

"*Sacre! ce sont des Americains*," muttered the Acadians.

"Monsieur Carleton!" cried a voice.

"Here!" replied my friend. A boat shot out of the smoke, between us and our antagonists. Carleton's servant was in it. The next moment we were surrounded by a score of Acadians and half-a-dozen Americans.

It appeared that the Acadians, so soon as they perceived the prairie to be on fire, had got into a boat and descended a creek that flowed into the Chicot creek, on which we now were. The beasts of the forest and prairie, flying to the water, found themselves enclosed in the angle formed by the two creeks, and their retreat being cut off by the fire, they fell an easy prey to the Acadians, wild, half-savage fellows, who slaughtered them in a profusion, and with a brutality that excited our disgust, a feeling which the Americans seemed to share.

"Well, stranger!" said one of the latter, an old man, to Carleton, "do you go with them Acadians or come with us?"

"Who are you, my friends?"

"Friends!" repeated the Yankee, shaking his head, "your friendships are soon made. Friends, indeed! We ain't that yet; but if you be minded to come with us, well and good."

"I met these American gentlemen," now put in Martin, "and when they heard that you had lost your way, and were out of provisions, they were so good as to come and seek you."

"You be'n't much used to the prairie, I reckon?" observed the American who had spoken before.

"No, indeed, my friend," said I.

"I told you a'ready," replied the man with some degree of pride, "we ain't your friends; but if you choose to accept American hospitality, you're welcome."

We glanced at the Acadians, who were still firing, and dragging the beasts they slaughtered into their boat and to the shore. They appeared perfect savages, and there was little temptation to seek guidance or assistance at their hands.

"If it is agreeable to you, we will accompany you," said I to the American, making a step towards the boat. We were eager to be off, for the heat and smoke were unbearable. The Yankee answered neither yes nor no. His attention seemed taken up by the proceedings of the Acadians.

"They're worse than Injuns," said he to a young man standing by him. "They shoot more in an hour than they could eat in a year, in their tarnation French wastefulness."

"I've a notion o' makin' 'em leave off," replied the young man.

"The country's theirs, or their masters' at least," rejoined the other. "I reckon it's no business of ours."

This dialogue was carried on with the greatest possible degree of drawling deliberation, and under circumstances in which, certainly, none but a Yankee would have thought of wasting time in words. A prairie twenty miles long and ten broad, and a couple of miles of palmetto ground, all in a blaze — the flames drawing nearer every minute, and having, in some places, already reached up to the shores of the creek. On the other side a couple of dozen wild Acadians, firing right and left, without paying the least attention where or whom their bullets struck. Carleton and myself, up to our waists in water, and the Americans, chatting together as unconcernedly as if they had been sitting under the roofs of their own blockhouses.

"Do you live far from here?" said I at last to the Yankee, rather impatiently.

"Not so far as I sometimes wish," answered he, with a contemptuous glance at the Acadians, "but far enough to get you an appetite for your supper, if you ain't got one already." And taking a thin roll of tobacco out of his pocket, he bit off a piece of it, laid his hands upon the muzzle of his rifle, leant his chin upon his hands, and seemed to have forgotten all about us.

This apathy became intolerable to men in our situation.

"My good man," said I, "will you put your hospitable offer into execution, and take——"

I could not continue, for I was literally suffocated with the heat and smoke. The very water of the creek was getting warm.

"I've a notion," said the Yankee, with his usual drawl, and apparently only just perceiving our distress, "I've a notion we had better be movin' out o' the way o' the fire. Now, strangers, in with you." And he helped Carleton and myself into the boat, where we lay down, and became insensible from heat and exhaustion.

When we recovered our senses, we found ourselves in the bottom of the boat, and the old Yankee standing by us with a bottle of whisky in his hand, which he invited us to taste. We felt better for the cordial, and began to look around us.

Before us lay an apparently interminable cypress swamp, behind us a sheet of water, formed by the junction of the two creeks, and at present overhung by a mass of smoke that concealed the horizon from our view. From time to time there was a burst of flame that lit up the swamp, and caused the cypress-trees to appear as if they grew out of a sea of fire.

"Come," said the old Yankee, "we must get on. It is near sunset, and we have far to go."

"And which way does our road lie?" I asked.

"Across the cypress swamp, unless you'd rather go round it."

"The shortest road is the best," said Carleton.

"The shortest road is the best!" repeated the Yankee contemptuously, and turning to his companions. "Spoken like a Britisher. Well, he shall have his own way, and the more so as I believe it to be as good a one as the other. James," added he, turning to one of the men, "you go further down, through the Snapping Turtle swamp; we will cross here."

"And our horses?" said I.

"They are grazing in the rushes. They'll be took care of. We shall have rain to-night, and to-morrow they may come round without singeing a hoof."

I had found myself once or twice upon the borders of the swamp that now lay before us, but had always considered it impenetrable, and I did not understand, as I gazed into its gloomy depths, how we could possibly cross it.

"Is there any beaten path or road through the swamp?" inquired I of the old man.

"Path or road! Do you take it for a gentleman's park? There's the path that natur' has made." And he sprang upon the trunk of a tree covered with moss and creepers, which rose out of the vast depth of mud that formed the swamp.

"*Here's* the path," said he.

"Then we will wait and come round with our horses," I replied. "Where shall we find them?"

"As you please, stranger. *We* shall cross the swamp. Only, if you can't do like your horses, and sup off bulrushes, you are likely to fast for the next twenty-four hours."

"And why so? There is game and wild-fowl for the shooting."

"No doubt there is, if you can eat them raw, like the Injuns. Where will you find, within two miles round, a square foot of dry land to make your fire on?"

To say the truth, we did not altogether like the company we had fallen amongst. These Yankee squatters bore in general but an indifferent character. They were said to fear neither God nor man, to trust entirely to their axe and their rifle, and to be little scrupulous in questions of property; in short, to be scarce less wild and dangerous than the Indians themselves.

The Yankee who had hitherto acted as spokesman, and who seemed to be in some way or other the chief of the party, was a man apparently near sixty years of age, upwards of six feet high, thin in person, but with such bone and muscle as indicated great strength in the possessor. His features were keen and sharp; his eye like a falcon's; his bearing and manners bespoke an exalted opinion of himself, and (at least as far as we were concerned) a tolerable degree of contempt for others. His dress consisted of a jacket of skins, secured round the waist by a girdle, in which was stuck a long knife; leather breeches, a straw hat without a brim, and mocassins. His companion was similarly accoutred.

"Where is Martin?" cried Carleton.

"Do you mean the Acadian lad who brought us to you?"

"The same."

The Yankee pointed towards the smoke. "Yonder, no doubt, with his countrymen ; but I reckon their infernal hunt is over. I hear no more shots."

"Then we will go to him. But where are our horses?"

"I've a notion," said one of the younger men, "the stranger don't rightly know what he wants. Your horses are grazing half a mile off. You would not have had us make the poor beasts swim through the creek tied to the stern of the boat? 'Lijah is with them."

"And what will he do with them?"

"Joel is going back with the boat, and when the fire is out he will bring them round," said the elder Yankee. "You don't suppose—?" added he—— He left the sentence unfinished, but a smile of scornful meaning flitted over his features.

I looked at Carleton. He nodded. "We *will* go with you," said I, "and trust entirely to your guidance."

"You do well," was the brief reply. "Joel," added he, turning to one of the young men, "where are the torches? We shall want them."

"Torches!" exclaimed I.

The Yankee gave me a look as much as to say—You must meddle with everything. "Yes," replied he; "and if you had ten lives, it would be as much as they are all worth to enter this swamp without torches." So saying, he struck fire, and selecting a couple of pine splinters from several lying in the boat, he lighted them, doing everything with such extraordinary deliberation, and so oddly, that in spite of our unpleasant situation we could scarce help laughing. Meantime the boat pushed off with two men in it, leaving Carleton, myself, the old man, and another American, standing at the edge of the swamp.

"Follow me, step by step, and as if you were treading on eggs," said our leader; "and you, Jonathan, have an eye to the strangers, and don't wait till they are up to their necks in the mud to pick them out of it."

We did not feel much comforted by this speech; but, mustering all our courage, we strode on after our plain-spoken guide.

We had proceeded but a very short distance into the swamp before we found out the use of the torches. The huge trunks of the cypress-trees, which stood four or five yards asunder, shot up to a height of fifty feet, entirely free from branches, which then, however, spread out at right angles to the stem, making the trees appear like gigantic umbrellas, and covering the whole morass with an impenetrable roof, through which not even a sunbeam could find a passage. On looking behind us we saw the daylight at the entrance of the swamp as at the mouth of a vast cavern. The further we went the thicker became the air; and at last the effluvia was so stifling and pestilential, that the torches burnt pale and dim, and more than once threatened to go out.

"Yes, yes," muttered our guide to himself, "a night passed in this swamp would leave a man ague-struck for the rest of his days. A night—ay, an hour would do it, if your pores were ever so little open; but now there's no danger: the prairie fire's good for that, dries the sweat and closes the pores."

He went on conversing thus with himself, but still striding forward, throwing his torchlight on each log or tree-trunk, and trying its solidity with his foot before he trusted his weight upon it,—doing all this with a dexterity and speed that proved his familiarity with these dangerous paths.

"Keep close to me," said he to us, "but make yourselves light—as light at least as Britishers can make themselves. Hold your breath, and——ha! what is that log? Holloa, Nathan," continued he to himself, "what's come to you, man? Don't you know a sixteen foot alligator from a tree?"

He had stretched out his foot, but fortunately, before setting it down, he poked what he took for a log with the butt of his gun. The supposed block of wood gave way a little, and the old squatter, throwing himself back, was within an ace of pushing me into the swamp.

"Ah, friend!" said he, not in the least disconcerted, "you thought to sarcumvent honest folk with your devilry and cunning."

"What is the matter?" asked I.

"Not much the matter," he replied, drawing his knife from its sheath. "Only an alligator: there it is again."

And in the place of the log, which had disappeared, the jaws of a huge alligator gaped before us. I raised my gun to my shoulder. The Yankee seized my arm.

"Don't fire," whispered he; "don't fire so long as you can help it. We ain't alone here. This will do as well," he added, as he stooped down and drove his long knife into the alligator's eye. The monster gave a frightful howl, and lashed violently with its tail, besprinkling us with the black slimy mud of the swamp.

"Take that!" said the squatter with a grim smile, "and that, and that!" stabbing the brute repeatedly between the neck and the ribs, while it writhed and snapped furiously at him. Then wiping his knife, he stuck it in his belt, and looked keenly and cautiously around him.

"I've a notion there must be a tree-trunk hereaway; it ain't the first time I've followed this track. There it is, but a good six foot off." And so saying, he gave a spring, and alighted in safety on the stepping-place.

"Have a care, man," cried I. "There is water there. I see it glitter."

"Pho, water! What you call water is snakes. Come on."

I hesitated, and a shudder came over me. The leap, as regarded distance, was a trifling one, but it was over an almost bottomless chasm full of the foulest mud, on which the mocassin snakes, the deadliest of the American reptiles, were swarming.

"Come on!"

Necessity lent me strength, and pressing my left foot firmly against the log on which I was standing, and which was each moment sinking with our weight deeper into the soft slimy ground, I sprang across. Carleton followed me.

"Well done!" cried the old man. "Courage, and a couple more such leaps and we shall be getting over the worst of it."

We pushed on, steadily but slowly, never setting our foot on a log till we had ascertained its solidity with the butts of our guns. The cypress swamp extended four or five miles along the shores of the creek: it was a deep lake of black mud, covered over and disguised by a deceitful bright-green veil of creeping plants and mosses, which had spread themselves in their rank luxuriance over its whole surface, and over the branches and trunks of trees scattered about the swamp. These latter were not placed with any very great regularity, but had yet been evidently arranged by the hand of man.

"There seems to have been a sort of path made here," said I to our guide, "for——"

"Silence!" interrupted he, in a low tone; "silence, for your life, till we are on firm ground again. Don't mind the snakes," added he, as the torchlight revealed some enormous ones lying coiled up on the moss and lianas close to us. "Follow me closely."

But just as I stretched forward my foot, and was about to place it in the very print that his had left, the hideous jaw of an alligator was suddenly stretched over the tree-trunk, not six inches from my leg, and the creature snapped at me so suddenly, that I had but just time to fire my gun into his glittering lizard-like eye. The monster bounded back, uttered a sound between a bellow and a groan, and striking wildly about him in the morass, disappeared.

The American looked round when I fired, and an approving smile played about his mouth as he said something to me which I did not hear, owing to the infernal uproar that now arose on all sides of us, and at first completely deafened me.

Thousands, tens of thousands, of birds and reptiles, alligators, enormous bull-frogs, night-owls, ahingas, herons, whose dwellings were in the mud of the swamp, or on its leafy roof, now lifted up their voices, bellowing, hooting, shrieking, and groaning. Bursting forth from the obscene retreat in which they had hitherto lain hidden, the alligators raised their hideous snouts out of the green coating of the swamp, gnashing their teeth, and straining towards us, while the owls and other birds circled round our heads, flapping and striking us with their wings as they passed. We drew our knives and endeavoured to defend at least our heads and eyes; but all was in vain against the myriads of enemies that surrounded us; and the unequal combat could not possibly have lasted long, when suddenly a shot was fired, followed immediately by another. The effect they produced was magical. The growls and cries of rage and fury were exchanged for howls of fear and complaint; the alligators withdrew gradually into their native mud; the birds flew in wider circles around us; the unclean multitudes were in full retreat. By degrees the various noises died away; but our torches had gone out, and all around us was black as pitch.

"In God's name, are you there, old man?" asked I.

"What! still alive?" he replied, with a laugh that jarred unpleasantly upon my nerves, "and the other Britisher too? I told ye we were not alone. These brutes defend themselves if you attack them upon their own ground, and a single shot is sufficient to bring them about one's ears. But when they see you're in earnest, they soon get tired of it, and a couple more shots sent among them generally drive them away again; for they are but senseless squealin' creturs after all."

While the old man was speaking, he struck fire, and lit one of the torches.

"Luckily we have rather better footing here," continued he. "And now, forward quickly; for the sun is set, and we have still some way to go."

And again he led the march with a skill and confidence in himself which each moment increased our reliance on him. After proceeding in this manner for about half an hour, we saw a pale light glimmering in the distance.

"Five minutes more and your troubles are over; but now is the time to be cautious, for it is on the borders of these cursed swamps the alligators best love to lie."

In my eagerness to find myself once more on dry land, I scarcely heard the Yankee's words; and as the stepping-places were now near together, I hastened on, and got a little in front of the party. Suddenly I felt a log on which I had just placed my foot give way under me. I had scarcely time to call out "Halt!" when I was up to the armpits in the swamp, with every prospect of sinking still deeper.

"You *will* hurry on," said the old man with a laugh; and at the same time, springing forward, he caught me by the hair. "Take warning for the future," added he, as he helped me out of the mud; "and look there!"

I did look, and saw half-a-dozen alligators writhing and crawling in the noxious slime within a few feet of us. I felt a sickening sensation, and for a moment I could not utter a word: the Yankee produced his whisky-flask.

"Take a swallow of this," said he; "but no, better wait till we are out of the swamp. Stop a little till your heart beats quieter. So, you are better now. When you've made two or three such journeys with old Nathan, you'll be quite another man. Now—forward again."

A few minutes later we were out of the swamp, and looking over a field of palmettos that waved and rustled in the moonbeams. The air was fresh, and once more we breathed freely.

"Now then," said our guide, "a dram, and then in half an hour we are at the Salt Lick."

"Where?" asked I.

"At the Salt Lick, to shoot a deer or two for supper. Holloa! what is that?"

"A thunderclap."

"A thunderclap! You have heard but few of them in Louisiana, I guess, or you would know the difference betwixt thunder and the crack of a backwoodsman's rifle. To be sure, yonder oak wood has an almighty echo. That's James's rifle—he has shot a stag. There's another shot."

This time it was evidently a rifle-shot, but reechoed like thunder from the depths of the immense forest.

"We must let them know that we're still in whole skins, and not in the maw of an alligator," said the old man, who had been loading his rifle, and now fired it off.

In half an hour we were at the Salt Lick, where we found our guide's two sons busy disembowelling and cutting up a fine buck that they had killed, an occupation in which they were so engrossed that they scarce seemed to notice our arrival. We sat down, not a little glad to repose after the fatigues and dangers we had gone through. When hind and fore quarters, breast and back, were all divided in right huntsman-like style, the young men looked at their father. "Will you take a bite and a sup here?" said the latter, addressing Carleton and myself, "or will you wait till we get home?"

"How far is there still to go?"

"How far? With a good trotting horse, and a better road, three-quarters of an hour would bring you there. You may reckon it a couple of hours."

"Then we would prefer eating something here."

"As you will."

Without more words, or loss of time, a haunch was cut off one of the hind-quarters; dry leaves and branches collected; and in one minute a fire was blazing brightly, the joint turning before it on a wooden spit. In half an hour the party was collected round a roast haunch of venison, which, although eaten without bread or any of the usual condiments, certainly appeared to us to be the very best we had ever tasted.

II.

Supper over, and clenched by a pull at Nathan's whisky-flask, we prepared for departure. The Americans threw the choicest parts of the buck over their shoulders, and the old squatter again taking the lead, we resumed our march. The way led us first across a prairie, then through a wood, which was succeeded by a sort of thicket, upon the branches and thorny shrubs of which we left numerous fragments of our dress. We had walked several miles almost in silence, when Nathan suddenly made a pause, and let the butt-end of his rifle fall heavily on the ground. I took the opportunity to ask him where we were.

"In Louisiana," replied he, "between the Red River, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Mississippi; on French ground, and yet in a country where French power is worth little. Do you see that?" added he suddenly, seizing my arm, and pulling me a few paces aside, while he pointed to a dark object, that at the distance and in the moonlight had the appearance of an earthen wall. "Do you know what that is?" repeated the squatter.

"An Indian grave, perhaps," replied I.

"A grave it is," was the answer; "but not of the Redskins. As brave a backwoodsman as ever crossed the Mississippi lies buried there. You are not altogether wrong, though. I believe it was once an Indian mound."

While he spoke we were walking on, and I now distinguished a hillock or mound of earth, with nearly perpendicular sides, on which was erected a blockhouse, formed of unhewn cypress trunks, of a solidity and thickness upon which four-and-twenty pounders would have had some difficulty in making an impression. Its roof rose about ten feet above a palisade enclosing the building, and consisting of stout saplings sharpened at the top, and stuck in the ground, at a very short distance from each other, being moreover strengthened and bound together with wattles and branches. The building had evidently been constructed more for a refuge and place of defence than an habitual residence.

A ladder was now lowered, by which we ascended to the top of the mound. There was a small door in the palisades, which Nathan opened and passed through, we following.

The blockhouse was of equal length and breadth, about forty feet square. On entering it we found nothing but the bare walls, with the exception of a wide chimney of sun-baked brick, and in one corner a large wooden slab partly imbedded in the ground.

"Don't tread upon that board," said the old man solemnly, as we approached the slab to examine it; "it is holy ground."

"How holy ground?"

"There lies under it as brave a fellow as ever handled axe or rifle. He it was built this blockhouse, and christened it the Bloody Blockhouse—and bloody it proved to be to him. But you shall hear more of it if you like. You shall hear how six American rifles were too many for ninety French and Spanish muskets."

Carleton and I shook our heads incredulously. The Yankee took us both by the arm, led us out of the blockhouse, and through the stockade to a grassy projection of the hillock.

"Ninety French and Spanish muskets," repeated he in a firm voice, and weighing on each word. "Opposed to them were Asa Nolins, with his three brothers, his brother-in-law, a cousin, and their wives. He fell like a brave American as he was, but not alone, for the dead bodies of thirty foes were lying round the blockhouse when he died. They are buried there," added he, pointing to a row of cotton-trees a short distance off, that in the pale moonlight might have been taken for the spectres of the departed; "under those cotton-trees they fell, and there they are buried."

The old squatter remained for a short space in his favourite attitude, his hands crossed on his rifle, and his chin resting on them. He seemed to be calling together the recollections of a time long gone by. We did not care to interrupt him. The stillness of the night, the light of the moon and stars, that gave the prairie lying before us the appearance of a silvery sea, the sombre forest on either side of the block-house, of which the edges only were lighted up by the moonbeams, the vague allusions our guide had made to some fearful scene of strife and slaughter that had been enacted in this now peaceful glade—all these circumstances combined, worked upon our imaginations, and we felt unwilling to break the stillness which added to the impressive beauty of the forest scene.

"Did you ever float down the Mississippi?" asked Nathan abruptly. As he spoke he sat down upon the bank, and made sign to us to sit beside him. "Did you ever float down the Mississippi?"

"No; we came up it from New Orleans hither."

"That is nothing; the stream is not half so dangerous there as above Natchez. *We* came down, six men, four women, and twice as many children, all the way from the mouths of the Ohio to the Red River; and bad work we had of it, in a crazy old boat, to pass the rapids and avoid the sand-banks, and snakes, and sawyers, and whatever the devil they call them, that are met with. I calculate we weren't sorry when we left the river and took to dry land again. The first thing we did was to make a wigwam, Injun fashion, with branches of trees. This was to shelter the women and children. Two men remained to protect them, and the other four divided into two parties, and set off—one south and t'other west—to look for a good place for a settlement. I and Righteous, one of Asa's brothers, took the southerly track.

"It was no pleasuring party that journey, but a right-down hard and dangerous expedition, through cypress swamps, where snapping-turtles were plenty as mosquitoes, and at every step the congo and mocassin snakes twisted themselves round our ankles. We persevered, however. We had a few handfuls of corn in our hunting-pouches, and our calabashes well filled with whisky. With that and our rifles we did not want for provender.

"At length, on the fourth day, we came to an upland, or rolling prairie as we call it, from the top of which we had a view that made our hearts leap for joy. A lovely strip of land lay before us, bounded at the further end by a forest of evergreen oaks, honey locusts, and catalpas. Towards the north was a good ten mile of prairie; on the right hand a wood of cotton-trees, and on the left the forest in which you now are. We decided at once that we should find no better place than this to fix ourselves; and we went back to tell Asa and the others of our discovery, and to show them the way to it. Asa and one of his brothers returned with us, bringing part of our traps. They were as pleased with the place as we were, and we went back again to fetch the rest. But it was no easy matter to bring our plunder and the women and children through the forests and swamps. We had to cut paths through the thickets, and to make bridges and rafts to cross the creeks and marshes. After ten days' labour, however, and with the help of our axes, we were at our journey's end.

"We began directly clearing and cutting down trees, and in three weeks we had built a loghouse, and were able to lie down to rest without fear of being disturbed by the wolves or catamounts. We built two more houses, so as to have one for each two families, and then set to work to clear the land. We had soon shaped out a couple of fields, a ten-acre one for maize, and another half the size for tobacco. These we began to dig and hoe; but the ground was hard, and though we all worked like slaves, we saw there was nothing to be made of it without ploughing. A ploughshare we had, and a plough was easily made—but horses were wanting; so Asa and I took fifty dollars, which was all the money we had amongst us, and set out to explore the country forty miles round, and endeavour to meet with somebody who would sell us a couple of horses and two or three cows. Not a clearing or settlement did we find, however, and at last we returned discouraged, and again began digging. On the very first day after our return, as we were toiling away in the field, a trampling of horses was heard, and four men mounted, and followed by a couple of wolf-hounds, came cantering over the prairie. It struck us that this would be a famous chance for buying a pair of horses, and Asa went to meet them, and invited them to alight and refresh themselves. At the same time we took our rifles, which were always lying beside us when we worked in the fields, and advanced towards the strangers. But when they saw our guns, they put spurs to their horses and rode off to a greater distance. Asa called out to them not to fear, for our rifles were to use against bears and wolves and Redskins, and not against Christian men. Upon this, down they came again; we brought out a calabash of real Monongahela; and after they had taken a dram, they got off their horses, and came in and ate some venison, which the women set before them. They were Creoles — half Spanish, half French, with a streak of the Injun; and they spoke a sort of gibberish not easy to understand. But Asa, who had served in Lafayette's division in the time of the war, knew French well; and when they had eaten and drunk, he began to make a bargain with them for two of their horses.

"It was easy to see they were not the sort of men with whom decent folk could trade. First they would, then they wouldn't: which horses did we want, and what would we give? We offered them thirty-five dollars for their two best horses—and a heavy price it was, for at that time money was scarce in the settlements. They wanted forty, but at last took the thirty-five; and after getting three-parts drunk upon taffia, which they asked for to wet the bargain, as they said, they mounted two upon each of the remaining horses and rode away.

"We now got on famously with our fields, and soon sowed fifteen acres of maize and tobacco, and then began clearing another ten-acre field. We were one day hard at work at this, when one of my boys came running to us, crying out, 'Father! father!—the Redskins!' We snatched up our rifles and hastened to the top of the little rising ground on which our houses were built, and thence we saw, not Injuns, but fourteen or fifteen Creoles galloping towards our clearing, holloaing and huzzaing like mad. When they were within fifty yards of us, Asa stepped forward to meet them. As soon as they saw him one of them called out, 'There is the thief! There is the man who stole my brown horse!' Asa made no answer to this, but waited till they came nearer, when one of them rode up to him and asked who was the chief in the settlement. 'There is no chief here,' answered Asa; 'we are all equals and free citizens.'

"'You have stolen a horse from our friend Monsieur Croupier,' replied the other. 'You must give it up.'

"'Is that all?' said Asa quietly.

"'No; you must show us by what right you hunt on this territory.'

"'Yes,' cried half-a-dozen others, 'we'll have no strangers on our hunting-grounds; the bears and caguars are getting scarcer than ever, and as for buffaloes, they are clean exterminated.' And all the time they were talking, they kept leaping and galloping about like madmen.

"'The sooner the bears and caguars are killed the better,' said Asa. 'The land is not for dumb brutes, but for men.'

"The Creoles, however, persisted that we had no right to hunt where we were, and swore we should go away. Then Asa asked them what right they had to send us away. This seemed to embarrass them, and they muttered and talked together; so that it was easy to see there was no magistrate or person in authority amongst them, but that they were a party of fellows who had come in hopes to frighten us. At last they said they should inform the governor, and the commandant at Natchitoches, and the Lord knows who besides; that we had come and squatted ourselves down here, and built houses, and cleared fields, and all without right or permission; and that then we might look out. So Asa began to lose patience, and told them they might all go to the devil, and that, if they were not off soon, he should be apt to hasten their movements.

"'I must have my horse back,' screamed the Creole whom they called Croupier.

"'You shall,' replied Asa, 'both of them, if you return the five-and-thirty dollars.'

"'It was only fifteen dollars,' cried the lying Creole.

"Upon this Asa called to us, and we stepped out from amongst the cotton-trees, behind which we had been standing all the while; and when the Creoles saw us, each with his rifle on his arm, they seemed rather confused, and drew back a little.

"'Here are my comrades,' said Asa, 'who will all bear witness that the horses were sold at the prices of twenty dollars for the one and fifteen for the other. And if any one says the contrary, he says that which is not true.'

"'*Larifari!*' roared Croupier. 'You shan't stop here to call us liars, and spoil our hunting-ground, and build houses on our land. His excellency the governor shall be told of it, and the commandant at Natchitoches, and you shall be driven away.' And the other Creoles, who, while Asa was speaking, appeared to be getting more quiet and reasonable, now became madder than ever, and shrieked, and swore, and galloped backwards and forwards, brandishing their fowling-pieces like wild Injuns, and screaming out that we should leave the country, the game wasn't too plenty for them, and suchlike. At length Asa and the rest of us got angry, and called out to them to take themselves off or they would be sorry for it; and when they saw us bringing our rifles to our shoulders, they put spurs to their horses, and galloped away to a distance of some five hundred yards. There they halted, and set up such a screeching as almost deafened us, fired off some of their old rusty guns, and then rode away. We all laughed at their bragging and cowardice, except Asa, who looked thoughtful.

"'I fear some harm will come of this,' said he. 'Those fellows will go talking about us in their own country; and if it gets to the ears of the governors or commanding officers that we have settled down on their territory, they will be sending troops to dislodge us.'

"Asa's words made us reflect, and we held counsel together as to what was best to be done. I proposed that we should build a blockhouse on the Indian mound to defend ourselves in if we were attacked.

"'Yes,' said Asa; 'but we are only six, and they may send hundreds against us.'

"'Very true,' said I; 'but if we have a strong blockhouse on the top of the mound, that is as good as sixty, and we could hold out against a hundred Spanish musketeers. And it's my notion, that if we give up such a handsome bit of ground as we have cleared here without firing a shot, we deserve to have our rifles broken before our faces.'

"Asa, however, did not seem altogether satisfied. It was easy to see he was thinking of the women and children. Then said Asa's wife, Rachel, 'I calculate,' said she, 'that Nathan, although he is my brother, and I oughtn't to say it, has spoke like the son of his father, who would have let himself be scalped ten times over before he would have given up such an almighty beautiful piece of land. And what's more, Asa, I for one won't go back up the omnipotent dirty Mississippi ; and that's a fact.'

"'But if a hundred Spanish soldiers come?' said Asa, 'and I reckon they will come.'

"'Build the blockhouse, man, to defend yourselves ; and when our people up at Salt River and Cumberland hear that the Spaniards are quarrelling with us, I guess they won't keep their hands crossed before them.'

"So, seeing us all, even the women, so determined, Asa gave in to our way of thinking, and the very same day we began the blockhouse you see before you. The walls were all of young cypress-trees, and we would fain have roofed it with the same wood ; but the smallest of the cypresses were five or six feet thick, and it was no easy matter to split them. So we were obliged to use fir, which, when it is dried by a few days' sun, burns like tinder. But we little thought, when we did so, what sorrow those cursed fir planks would bring us.

"When all was ready, well and solidly nailed and hammered together, we made a chimney, so that the women might cook if necessary, and then laid in a good store of hams and dried bear's flesh, filled the meal and whisky tubs, and the water-casks, and brought our plough and what we had most valuable into the blockhouse. We then planted the palisades, securing them strongly in the ground, and to each other, so that it might not be easy to tear them up. We left, as you see, a space of five yards between the stockade and the house, so that we might have room to move about in. It would be necessary for an enemy to take the palisades before he could do any injury to the house itself, and we reckoned that with six good rifles in such hands as ours, it would require a pretty many Spanish musketeers to drive us from our outer defences.

"In six weeks all was ready; all our tools and rations, except what we wanted for daily use, carried into the fort, and we stood contemplating the work of our hands with much satisfaction. Asa was the only one who seemed cast down.

"'I've a notion,' said he, 'this blockhouse will be a bloody one before long; and what's more, I guess it will be the blood of one of us that'll redden it. I've a sort of feelin' of it, and of who it'll be.'

"'Pho! Asa, what notions be these? Keep a light heart, man.'

"And Asa seemed to cheer up again, and the next day we returned to working in the fields; but as we were not using the horses, one of us went every morning to patrol ten or twelve miles backwards and forwards, just for precaution's sake. At night two of us kept watch, relieving one another, and patrolling about the neighbourhood of our clearing.

"One morning we were working in the bush and circling trees, when Righteous rode up at full gallop.

"'They're coming!' cried he; 'a hundred of them at least.'

"'Are they are far off?' said Asa, quite quietly, and as if he had been talking of a herd of deer.

"'They are coming over the prairie. In less than half an hour they will be here.'

"'How are they marching? With van and rear guard? In what order?'

"'No order at all, but all of a heap together.'

"'Good!' said Asa; 'they can know little about bush-fighting or soldiering of any kind. Now then, the women into the blockhouse.'

"Righteous galloped up to our fort, to be there first in case the enemy should find it out. The women soon followed, carrying what they could with them. When we were all in the blockhouse, we pulled up the ladder, made the gate fast, and there we were.

"We felt strange at first when we found ourselves shut up inside the palisades, and only able to look out through the slits we had left for our rifles. We weren't used to be confined in a place, and it made us right-down wolfish. There we remained, however, as still as mice. Scarce a whisper was to be heard. Rachel tore up old shirts and greased them, for wadding for the guns; we changed our flints, and fixed everything about the rifles properly, while the women sharpened our knives and axes all in silence.

"Nearly an hour had passed in this way when we heard a shouting and screaming, and a few musket-shots; and we saw through our loopholes some Spanish soldiers running backwards and forwards on the crest of the slope on which our houses stood. Suddenly a great pillar of smoke arose, then a second, then a third.

"'God be good to us!' cried Rachel, 'they are burning our houses.' We were all trembling and quite pale with rage. Harkye, stranger, when men have been slaving and sweating for four or five months to build houses for their wives and for the poor worms of children, and then a parcel of devils from hell come and burn them down like maize-stalks in a stubble-field, it is no wonder that their teeth should grind together, and their fists clench of themselves. So it was with us; but we said nothing, for our rage would not let us speak. But presently as we strained our eyes through the loopholes, the Spaniards showed themselves at the opening of the forest yonder, coming towards the blockhouse. We tried to count them, but at first it was impossible, for they came on in a crowd without any order. They thought lightly enough of those they were seeking, or they would have been more prudent. However, when they came within five hundred paces, they formed ranks, and we were able to count them. There were eighty-two foot soldiers with muskets and carbines, and three officers on horseback, with drawn swords in their hands. The latter dismounted, and their example was followed by seven other horsemen, amongst whom we recognised three of the rascally Creoles who had brought all this trouble upon us. He they called Croupier was among them. The other four were also Creoles, Acadians or Canadians, a race whom we had already met with on the Upper Mississippi, fine hunters, but wild, drunken, debauched barbarians.

"The Acadians were coming on in front, and they set up a whoop when they saw the blockhouse and stockade; but finding that we were prepared to receive them, they retreated upon the main body. We saw them speaking to the officers as if advising them; but the latter shook their heads, and the soldiers continued moving on. They were in uniforms of all colours, blue, white, and brown, but each man dirtier than his neighbour. They marched in good order, nevertheless, the captain and officers coming on in front, and the Acadians keeping on the flanks. The latter, however, edged gradually off towards the cotton-trees, and presently disappeared amongst them.

"'Those are the first men to frick off,' said Asa, when he saw this manœuvre of the Creoles. 'They have steady hands and sharp eyes; but if we once get rid of them we need not mind the others.'

"The Spaniards were now within a hundred yards of us.

"'Shall I let fly at the thieving incendiaries?' said Righteous.

"'God forbid!' replied Asa. 'We will defend ourselves like men; but let us wait till we are attacked, and the blood that is shed will lie at the door of the aggressors.'

"The Spaniards now saw plainly that they would have to take the stockade before they could get at us, and the officers seemed consulting together.

"'Halt!' cried Asa, suddenly.

"'Messieurs les Americains,' said the captain, looking up at our loopholes.

"'What's your pleasure?' demanded Asa.

"Upon this the captain stuck a dirty pocket-handkerchief upon the point of his sword, and laughing with his officers, moved some twenty paces forward, followed by the troops. Thereupon Asa again shouted to him to halt.

"'This is not according to the customs of war,' said he. 'The flag of truce may advance, but if it is accompanied, we fire.'

"It was evident that the Spaniards never dreamed of our attempting to resist them; for there they stood in line before us, and if we had fired, every shot must have told. The Acadians, who kept themselves all this time snug behind the cotton-trees, called more than once to the captain to withdraw his men into the wood; but he only shook his head contemptuously. When, however, he heard Asa threaten to fire, he looked puzzled, and as if he thought it just possible we might do as we said. He ordered his men to halt, and called out to us not to fire till he had explained what they came for.

"'Then cut it short,' cried Asa, sternly. 'You'd have done better to explain before you burned down our houses, like a pack of Mohawks on the war-path.'

"As he spoke, three bullets whistled from the edge of the forest and struck the stockades within a few inches of the loophole at which he stood. They were fired by the Creoles, who, although they could not possibly distinguish Asa, had probably seen his rifle-barrel or one of his buttons glitter through the opening. As soon as they had fired they sprang behind their trees again, craning their heads forward to hear if there was a groan or a cry. They'd have done better to have kept quiet; for Righteous and I caught a sight of them, and let fly at the same moment. Two of them fell and rolled from behind the trees, and we saw that they were the Creole called Croupier, and another of our horse-dealing friends.

"When the Spanish officer heard the shots he ran back to his men, and shouted out, 'Forward! To the assault!' They came on like mad a distance of thirty paces, and then, as if they thought we were wild geese to be frightened by their noise, they fired a volley against the blockhouse.

"'Now, then!' cried Asa, 'are you loaded, Nathan and Righteous? I take the captain—you, Nathan, the lieutenant—Righteous, the third officer—James, the sergeant. Mark your men, and waste no powder.'

"The Spaniards were still some sixty yards off, but we were sure of our mark at a hundred and sixty, and that if they had been squirrels instead of men. We fired: the captain and lieutenant, the third officer, two sergeants, and another man writhed for an instant upon the grass. The next moment they stretched themselves out—dead.

"All was now confusion among the musketeers, who ran in every direction. Most of them took to the wood, but about a dozen remained and lifted up their officers to see if there was any spark of life left in them.

"'Load again, quick!' said Asa in a low voice. We did so, and six more Spaniards tumbled over. Those who still kept their legs now ran off as if the soles of their shoes had been of red-hot iron.

"We set to work to pick out our touch-holes and clean our rifles, knowing that we might not have time later, and that a single miss-fire might cost us all our lives. We then loaded, and began to calculate what the Spaniards would do next. It is true they had lost their officers; but there were five Acadians with them, and those were the men we had most cause to fear. Meantime the vultures and turkey-buzzards had already begun to assemble, and presently hundreds of them were circling and hovering over the carcasses, which they as yet, however, feared to touch.

"Just then Righteous, who had the sharpest eye amongst us all, pointed to the corner of the wood, yonder where it joins the brushwood thicket. I made a sign to Asa, and we all looked and saw there was something creeping and moving through the underwood. Presently we distinguished two Acadians heading a score of Spaniards, and endeavouring, under cover of the bushes, to steal across the open ground to the east side of the forest.

"'The Acadians for you, Nathan and Righteous, the Spaniards for us,' said Asa. The next moment two Acadians and four Spaniards lay bleeding in the brushwood. But the bullets were scarce out of our rifles when a third Acadian, whom we had not seen, started up. 'Now's the time,' shouted he, 'before they have loaded again. Follow me! we will have their blockhouse yet.' And he sprang across, followed by the Spaniards. We gnashed our teeth with rage at not having seen the Acadian.

"There were still three of these fellows alive, who had now taken command of the Spaniards. Although we had shot a score of our enemies, those who remained were more than ten to one of us, and we were even worse off than at first, for then they were all together, and now we had them on each side of us. But we did not let ourselves be discouraged, although we could not help feeling that the odds against us were fearfully great.

"We now had to keep a sharp look-out; for if one of us showed himself at a loophole, a dozen bullets rattled about his ears. There were many shot-holes through the palisades, which were covered with white streaks where the splinters had been torn off by the lead. The musketeers had spread themselves all along the edge of the forest, and had learned by experience to keep close to their cover. We now and then got a shot at them and killed four or five, but it was slow work, and the time seemed very long.

"Suddenly the Spaniards set up a loud shout. At first we could not make out what was the matter, but presently we heard a hissing and crackling on the roof of the blockhouse. They had wrapped tow round their cartridges, and one of the shots had set light to the fir-boards. Just as we found it out, they gave three more hurrahs, and we saw the dry planks beginning to flame, and the fire to spread.

"'We must put that out, and at once,' said Asa, 'if we don't wish to be roasted alive. Some one must get up the chimney with a bucket of water. I'll go myself.'

"'Let me go, Asa,' said Righteous.

"'You stop here. It don't matter who goes. The thing will be done in a minute.'

"He put a chair on a table and got upon it, and then seizing a bar which was fixed across the chimney to hang hams upon, he drew himself up by his arms, and Rachel handed him a pail of water. All this time the flame was burning brighter, and the Spaniards getting louder in their rejoicings and hurrahs. Asa stood upon the bar, and raising the pail above his head, poured the water out of the chimney upon the roof.

"'More to the left, Asa,' said Righteous; 'the fire is strongest more to the left."

"'Tarnation seize it!' cried Asa, 'I can't see. Hand me up another pailful.'

"We did so; and when he had got it, he put his head out at the top of the chimney to see where the fire was, and threw the water over the exact spot. But at the very moment that he did so the report of a dozen muskets was heard.

"'Ha!' cried Asa in an altered voice, 'I have it.' And the hams and bucket came tumbling down the chimney, and Asa after them all covered with blood.

"'In God's name, man, are you hurt?' cried Rachel.

"'Hush! wife,' replied Asa; 'keep quiet. I have enough for the rest of my life, which will not be long: but never mind, lads; defend yourselves well, and don't fire two at the same man. Save your lead, for you will want it all. Promise me that."

"'Asa! my beloved Asa!' shrieked Rachel; 'if you die, I shall die too.'

"'Silence! foolish woman; and our child, and the one yet unborn! Hark! I hear the Spaniards! Defend yourselves, and, Nathan, be a father to my children.'

I had barely time to press his hand and make him the promise he wished. The Spaniards, who had doubtless guessed our loss, rushed like mad wolves up to the mound, twenty on one side, and upwards of thirty on the other.

"'Steady!' cried I. 'Righteous, here with me; and you, Rachel, show yourself worthy to be Hiram Strong's daughter, and Asa's wife; load this rifle for me while I fire my own.'

"'O God! O God!' cried Rachel, 'the hell-hounds have murdered my Asa!'

"She clasped her husband's body in her arms, and there was no getting her away. I felt sad enough myself, but there was scanty time for grieving; for a party of Spaniards, headed by one of the Acadians, was close up to the mound on the side which I was defending. I shot the Acadian; but another, the sixth, and last but one, took his place. 'Rachel!' cried I, 'the rifle, for God's sake, the rifle! a single bullet may save all our lives.'

"But no Rachel came, and the Acadian and Spaniards, who, from the cessation of our fire, guessed that we were either unloaded, or had expended our ammunition, now sprang forward, and by climbing, and scrambling, and getting on one another's shoulders, managed to scale the side of the mound, almost perpendicular, as you see it is. And in a minute the Acadian and half-a-dozen Spaniards, with axes, were chopping away at the palisades, and severing the wattles which bound them together. To give the devil his due, if there had been only three like that Acadian, it would have been all up with us. He handled his axe like a real backwoodsman; but the Spaniards wanted either the skill or the strength of arm, and they made little impression. There were only Righteous and myself to oppose them; for on the other side a dozen more soldiers, with the seventh of those cursed Acadians, were attacking the stockade.

"Righteous shot down one of the Spaniards; but just as he had done so the Acadian tore up a palisade by the roots (how he did it I know not to this hour, there must have been a stump remaining on it), held it with the wattles and branches hanging round it like a shield before him, guarding off a blow I aimed at him, then hurled it against me with such force that I staggered backwards, and he sprang past me. I thought it was all over with us. It is true that Righteous, with the butt of his rifle, split the skull of the first Spaniard who entered, and drove his hunting-knife into the next; but the Acadian alone was man enough to give us abundant occupation, now he had got in our rear. Just then there was a crack of a rifle, the Acadian gave a leap into the air and fell dead, and at the same moment my son Godsend, a boy of ten years old, sprang forward, Asa's rifle in his hand still smoking from muzzle and touchhole. The glorious boy had loaded the piece when he saw that Rachel did not do it, and in the very nick of time had shot the Acadian through the heart. This brought me to myself again, and with axe in one hand and knife in the other, I rushed in among the Spaniards, hacking and hewing right and left. It was a real butchery, which lasted a good quarter of an hour; but then the Spaniards got sick of it, and would have done so sooner had they known that their leader was shot. At last they jumped off the mound and ran away, such of them as could. Righteous and I put the palisade in its place again, securing it as well as we could, and then, telling my boy to keep watch, ran over to the other side, where a desperate fight was going on.

"Three of our party, assisted by the women, were defending the stockade against a score of Spaniards, who kept poking their bayonets between the palisades, till all our people were wounded and bleeding. But Rachel had now recovered from her first grief at her husband's death, or rather it had turned to a feeling of revenge, and there she was, like a raging tigress, seizing the bayonets as they were thrust through the stockade, and wrenching them off the muskets, and sometimes pulling the muskets themselves out of the soldiers' hands. But all this struggling had loosened the palisades, and there were one or two openings in them through which the thin-bodied Spaniards, pushed on by their comrades, were able to pass. Just as we came up, two of these copper-coloured Dons had squeezed themselves through, without their muskets, but with their short sabres in their hands. They are active dangerous fellows those Spaniards in a hand-to-hand tussle. One of them sprang at me, and if it had not been for my hunting-knife, I was done for, for I had no room to swing my axe; but as he came on I hit him a blow with my fist, which knocked him down, and then ran my knife into him, and jumping over his body snatched a musket out of Rachel's hand, and began laying about me with the butt-end of it. I was sorry not to have my rifle, which was handier than those heavy Spanish muskets. The women were now in the way—we hadn't room for so many—so I called out to them to get into the blockhouse and load the rifles. There was still another Acadian alive, and I knew that the fight wouldn't end till he was done for. But while we were fighting, Godsend and the women loaded the rifles, and brought them out, and firing through the stockade, killed three or four, and as luck would have it, the Acadian was amongst them. So when the Spaniards, who are just like hounds, and only come on if led and encouraged, saw that their leader had fallen, they sprang off the mound, with a '*Carajo! Malditos!*' and ran away as if a shell had burst amongst them."

The old squatter paused and drew a deep breath. He had forgotten his usual drawl and deliberation, and had become animated and eager while describing the stirring incidents in which he had borne so active a part. When he had taken breath, he continued.

"I couldn't say how long the fight lasted; it seemed short, we were so busy, and yet long, deadly long. It is no joke to have to defend one's life, and the lives of those one loves best, against fourscore bloodthirsty Spaniards, and that with only half-a-dozen rifles for arms, and a few palisades for shelter. When it was over we were so dog-tired that we fell down where we were, like overdriven oxen, and without minding the blood which lay like water on the ground. Seven Spaniards and two Acadians were lying dead within the stockade. We ourselves were all wounded and hacked about, some with knife-stabs and sabre-cuts, others with musket-shots; ugly wounds enough, some of them, but none mortal. If the Spaniards had returned to the attack they would have made short work of us; for as soon as we left off fighting and our blood cooled, we became stiff and helpless. But now came the women with rags and bandages, and washed our wounds and bound them up, and we dragged ourselves into the blockhouse, and lay down upon our mattresses of dry leaves. And Godsend loaded the rifles and a dozen Spanish muskets that were lying about, to be in readiness for another attack, and the women kept watch while we slept. But the Spaniards had had enough, and we saw no more of them. Only the next morning, when Jonas went down the ladder to reconnoitre, he found thirty dead, and several others dying, and a few wounded, who begged hard for a drink of water, for that their comrades had deserted them. We got them up into the blockhouse, and had their wounds dressed, and after a time they were cured and left us."

"And were you never after attacked again?" said I. "I wonder at your courage in remaining here after becoming aware of the dangers you were exposed to."

"We reckoned we had more right than ever to the land after all the blood it had cost us, and then the news of the fight had got carried into the settlements, and up as far as Salt River; and some of our friends and kinsfolk came down to join us, and there were soon enough of us not to care for twice as many Spaniards as we had beaten off before."

While he was speaking the old squatter descended the ladder, and led us out of the forest, and over the ridge of a low hill, on the side of which stood a dozen loghouses, which cast their black shadows on the moonlit slope. We found a rough but kind welcome—few words, but plenty of good cheer—and we made acquaintance with the heroes and heroines of the blockhouse siege, and with their sons and daughters, buxom strapping damsels and fine manly lads, Yankees though they were. I have often enjoyed a softer bed, but never a sounder sleep than that night.

The next day our horses were brought round from the swamp, and we took our departure; but as hardships, however painful to endure, are pleasant to look back upon, so have I often thought with pleasure of our adventures in the prairies, and recurred with the strongest interest to old Nathan's thrilling narrative of the Bloody Blockhouse.

KASHMIR.

BY ANDREW WILSON.

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I.

ALMOST every one longs, and many hope, to see the beautiful Vale of Kashmir. Probably no region of the earth is so well known to the eye of imagination, or so readily suggests the idea of a terrestrial Paradise. So far from having been disappointed with the reality, or having experienced any cause for wishing that I had left Kashmir unvisited, I can most sincerely say that the beautiful reality excels the somewhat vague poetic vision which has been associated with the name. But Kashmir is rather a difficult country to get at, especially when you come down upon it from behind, by way of Zanskar and Súrú. According to tradition, it was formerly the Garden of Eden; and one is very well disposed to accept that theory when trying to get into it from the north or north-west. Most people go up to it from the plains of India by one of the four authorised routes; but I have a habit of getting into places by some quite unusual way, and did so in this instance.

From Súrú to Kartse and Sankú, a day's journey, the road was not bad, except at one place, where I had to ride high up the mountains in order to find a path possible for ponies, and at another where the path was so narrow, running athwart precipices and nearly precipitous slopes of shingle, that a man whom I met leading his pony along it, had to take his steed back for more than a mile before the two ponies could pass each other. At Sankú there was a fine grove of trees for a camping-ground, giving promise of a more genial clime, though there was snow lying under the trees; and the way from Sankú to Omba, up the valley of the Nakpo Chu, was tolerably easy; but after leaving Omba I did come upon some places which were "a little difficult to get over." Unfortunately I had no proper map of that part of the country; and starting early from Sankú, we reached the mountain village of Omba at half-past ten in the morning. That seemed rather a short day's journey, so I asked one of the coolies, who spoke a little Hindústhani, how far it was from Omba to Dras, and he said it was the same distance as we had come from Sankú to Omba, and farther illustrated his meaning by grasping my alpenstock by the middle, and indicating the two halfs of it as illustrations of the equal length of the two distances. When I afterwards reproached this man for the difficulty into which he had led us, he answered, with true Kashmirian effrontery, that he had said nothing of the kind; that it was a *Draswallah*, a fellow from Dras, who, he alleged, had passed at the time, that had said so. But no one objected to our going on, and all the *bigarries* showed a remarkable alacrity in starting. What in earth their motive was I cannot say positively. Perhaps they really wished to get on to Dras that day, from fear of being cut off from their homes by a fall of snow; but it is more probable that they were afraid of going there, and proposed to give me the slip among the mountains; for about this time the envoy of the Yarkand ruler was expected to be coming up the Dras Valley, on his return from a visit to Constantinople, and immense numbers of Kashmir coolies were being impressed in order to take his European purchases up to Leh. At all events there must have been some secret motive for their hurrying me into the injurious task of undertaking in one day what ought properly to have been a three days' journey. I was ignorant of the fact when among those mountains; but find now, that in 1822 Moorcroft went over the same road, and he took three days to it, though it was July, and he started from above Sankú, and on the third day did not reach Dras, but only the hamlet opposite it, which I reached in one day from Sankú; so it can be understood how tremendous was the day's journey, and how great the mistake into which I was led.

So we started from Omba, and began to ascend a hill. I do not say "a hill" sarcastically, because had I seen, soon after starting, what a mountain this hill was, I should immediately have turned back and camped at Omba; but, though immense mountains rose before us, they did so in such a manner as to make it appear likely that a low pass ran between them. It was not until we had laboured up steadily for about a couple of hours that the horrible truth began to dawn upon my mind that there was no pass, and that it was up the face of one of those gigantic mountains that we were now going by a corkscrew path. There really appeared to be no end either of the path or of the mountain, and we soon got involved in large patches of snow, though this was the south side of "the pass." It was like going up, not to Kashmir, but to heaven; and I should even then have returned to Omba but for the consideration that the *bigarries* were from Sankú, and that it might be difficult to supply their places or to get them to go on next day. Meanwhile they began to show symptoms of distress, and two or three attempted to leave their luggage and bolt. One man nearly effected his escape by getting leave to go down a little way to a snow rivulet to drink. Whenever he got there he took to his heels down the pass, but was cut off and forced to come back by one of my servants who had fallen behind and was coming up on horseback.

However, I ignorantly thought that if we got to the top of this tremendous Omba La, or Omba Pass (which was as steep, and must have been as high, as the Kúng-ma, which leads from Namgea over into Chinese Tibet), it would be all right; and so I encouraged the *bigarries* to labour upwards. There was deep snow at the summit; and looking down the northern side, an immense sheet of snow was seen stretching down into a desolate valley, and broken only by the track of a party of Baltis we met at the summit. One of these was crying bitterly, and on inquiring into the cause, I found he had been struck with snow-blindness by the reflection of the sun. I had scarcely time to look round, and the dazzling whiteness was too much for my eyes, even when protected by blue glass; but Moorcroft says that when he crossed it, and when there must have been much less snow, "the view from the crest presented a majestic line of snow-covered mountain-tops, very little above the level of the pass, extending round a circle of at least twenty miles in diameter. The uniformity of the ridges was very remarkable; for although broken with peak and gorge, yet there were no single mountains or mountain-chains that towered ambitiously above their fellows."

It took us a long time to get down that snow-slope, and for riders it was rather ticklish work. On reaching the desolate valley, where there were only a few stunted bushes, I thought it high time to refresh the inner man, fancying we had only to go down this valley a little way to come upon Dras and human habitations; but I had only taken a few mouthfuls when I learned that it led nowhere, that it had no human habitations, and that, in order to reach Dras, we should have to cross another snowy range, possibly higher than the one we had just got over with so much difficulty. The effect upon me of this piece of information was precisely like that of a hot potato. On inquiry, I found that the score of coolies had little more than a pound of flour among them, and that my servants were in almost as bad a predicament. I had told the latter always to be provided for such an emergency; but they excused themselves on the ground that they had supposed we had got out of the high mountains. I myself could have camped with perfect comfort, having plenty of provisions and clothing; but the *bigarries* had no sufficient means of protecting themselves from the cold, besides being destitute of provisions. The situation was an extremely difficult one, because by this time it was past three o'clock; the sun was completely shaded off the valley by the mountains around; an intense cold began to make us all shiver; and to attempt a snowy pass at that hour in the afternoon, after having been almost continuously travelling from before seven in the morning, was a distasteful and exceedingly hazardous thing to do.

On the other hand, it occurred to me very forcibly that if I did camp there I should find in the morning that all the coolies had disappeared. It could hardly be supposed that they had led me into this position merely for the pleasure of doing three days' journey in one, or of themselves spending a night unprotected from the cold and with empty stomachs, in the Twajeh valley. The most rational supposition was that they wanted to give me the slip, and so I determined to proceed at all risks. It was most fortunate I did so, because next day a tremendous snowstorm fell over these mountains. If we had remained in this elevated valley all night, we certainly could not have got over to Dras the next day, or for several days, and it is almost as certain that we could not have got back to Omba. The most of the party must have perished; and hence I really was indebted to the imaginary *Draswallah;* though, from the exposure of that evening, I suffered for months.

But having determined to proceed, it was absolutely necessary to secure that the bearers of my baggage should do so likewise. Fortunately all my servants were mounted, so I broke up our party into three divisions, in order that the coolies might more easily be kept in hand. I sent on my most valuable articles in front, carried by coolies under charge of the violent Chota Khan, and a *sowar*, or trooper, who had been sent with me by the Thanadar of Súrú. Keeping the sharp boy Nurdass with me, I took the most refractory of the men under my own charge, and made Thooleyram and Silas with his gun look after a small section in the rear. My servants saw as well as I did the necessity for the most decided action, and we soon reached the foot of the second range. Here the man who had before nearly succeeded in running away gave me some trouble by making a similar attempt, and afterwards by lying down and refusing to budge an inch further, so I had to show him that such conduct might involve worse evils than those of going on. I was not at all afraid of their running away once I got them well over the summit of this infernal second snowy range, because from that point they could hardly have reached Omba on empty stomachs; so my great anxiety was to get them over the brow of the range before dark, so long as there was light enough for us to keep them in hand. By various kinds of encouragement I managed to push them up that lofty mountain at really an astonishing rate, considering the ground they had got over that day; and when I saw men flagging really from want of strength, I made them hold on by our horses' tails, which, in making an ascent, is very nearly as good as riding on the animal itself.

The sun had disappeared, and the light on the snow we were crossing had become pale, when I got my party up to the summit of this great mountain-ridge. But instead of a descent to Dras, I saw before me, with dismay, a large valley of snow, athwart which ran the tracks of Chota Khan's party, rising up into a higher mountain-range beyond. It was, in fact, a sort of double pass we were on; and though the descent between the two ridges was not great, yet it was sufficiently formidable, and the distance between them was enough to alarm one in the circumstances. How weird that scene was in the grey fading light! The cold made me shiver to the bone; but there was something in the scene also to make one shiver, so cold-looking was it, so death-like. A crescent moon gleamed in the sky with exceeding brightness, and the whole disc of the moon was distinctly visible; but its light was insufficient to dispel the darkness which seemed to be creeping up from the valley over the wastes of snow. We had quite sufficient light, however, to take us over the second summit of the pass; but I suffered much from the cold, being insufficiently clad, having had no expectation whatever of being up about 16,000 feet at such an hour. It was with a feeling of great relief that I learned that we had now only to descend, and had no more snowy ridges to surmount on our terrible way to Dras.

But how to descend? That was the question which immediately forced itself upon me. I was inclined to stick to the pony so long as I did not find it upon the top of me; and fortunately it was a wonderful steed, equalled only by that of the Shigri valley; but by this time the night had become dark, the crescent moon was disappearing behind the mountains, and there were long slopes of snow to be traversed. Here the pony absolutely refused to move a step without my allowing it to put its nose down close to the snow; and though, when it was in such an attitude on a steep slope, there was considerable difficulty in keeping on its back, I found it could be trusted to go down safely in that way; and carry me down it did, until we got into a deep and excessively dark gorge, where it was impossible to ride. It was so dark here that we could hardly see a step before us, and I scrambled through in a manner that I could hardly have believed possible. Our way lay along the bed of a stream full of great stones, over which we often fell. Then we would break through ice into pools of ice-cold water, and come to falls where we had to let one man down and descend upon his shoulders. The pony meanwhile followed us, obedient to the voice of its owner; and it seemed to have more power of finding its way than we possessed, for it got round descents which it could hardly have jumped, and which we could find no way of avoiding.

After that frightful passage we came on more gentle and easy descents; but it was with intense relief that I saw the flames of a large fire of thorn-bushes which Chota Khan and the *sowar* had kindled for our guidance at a hamlet opposite to Dras, on our side of the river. We gladly turned our steps in that direction, and stayed there for the night, the men of the hamlet assisting in setting up my tent. It was past ten before I reached this place, so that we had been above fifteen hours almost continuously travelling. The party under Silas came in soon; but he himself did not turn up for nearly an hour, and when he arrived he was in a very excited state. After dark he got separated from his party, and came down that awful gorge in company with one old coolie, of whose language he understood only the single word *balú*, or "bear"; and no doubt there were likely enough to be bears about. This was clearly not treatment such as a Bombay butler had a right to expect; but a little cocoa had a beneficial effect upon him: and whenever my tent was set up I went to sleep in spite of the wind, which now began to blow violently, accompanied by rain—and was so worn out that I did not rise, or almost awake, till one o'clock next day.

The morning was wet and windy; thick clouds covered the mountains which we had descended, and, as they lifted occasionally, I saw that heavy snow had fallen. In such weather, and being in a fatigued condition, it was quite sufficient to move from our exposed camp only two miles, to the Thâna of Dras, where there was the shelter of trees and of walls. The Thanadar there spoke of the snow being forty feet deep in winter, though the height is little over

10,000 feet, and he seemed a highly respectable old officer. His quarters are detached some way from the large fort where the most of his troops are stationed; and I suppose these latter are not much needed now, unless for purposes of oppression. Dras is a dependency of Kashmir, being one of the provinces which have been added to it by Mohammedan force and Hindú fraud, which do not fail, in the long-run, to break the shield of the mountaineers. This valley is sometimes called Himbab, or the "Source of Snow," —which must be a very suitable name for it, if that prodigious story about the forty feet of snow be true.

There remains, however, another pass to be crossed before we get into the valleys of even Upper Kashmir. A very cold and wet day's journey took us up the Dras river to the miserable hamlet of Matáan, where, before getting out of my tent next morning, I learned that the Yarkand envoy could not be far off. I heard a loud voice crying out, *Caffé banao, cha banao*—"Make coffee, make tea,"—followed by whack, whack, as the blows of a stick descended upon a man's back. This turned out to be the Wuzeer's Wuzeer, or the envoy's *avant-courier*, who was pushing on ahead of his patron, and preparing the way. Like many gentlemen's gentlemen, he was extremely indignant at the comforts of life not being ready for him. I do not believe that this miserable hamlet of Matáan could have turned out a cup of tea or coffee to save the lives of all its inhabitants; and it seemed to me that the Wuzeer's Wuzeer administered the stick to the entire population of that unhappy village. When I came out of my tent, I had a momentary glimpse of a little man in something like a red dressing-gown, dancing furiously round a very big man, and hitting him with a long stick; but, on my appearance, he suddenly retired into his *dúli.* After that, on the six marches down to Srinagar, I never found myself clear of the retinue of the Yarkand envoy: for the whole road down was covered with men carrying his things; and tents, guarded by Kashmir soldiers, had been pitched for him at various places. There were said to be 3000 coolies employed in carrying up himself and the effects he had purchased in Europe. I cannot say as to the exact number; but really there seemed to be no end of them, and they came from all parts of Kashmir. They were to be met with at almost every turning, and in very various positions. At one moment I would find half-a-dozen of them resting to groan under the weight of a 24-pounder gun, wrapped in straw, while a sepoy of the Kashmir Maharajah threatened them with his stick, or even with his sword; half an hour after another party of them were pulling down walnuts from some grand old tree, while some grand-looking old dame (for the Kashmir women who survive to old age have an aristocratic appearance, which would attract attention in the Courts of Europe) was looking on the spoliation of her property, or on that of her grandchild, now with a melancholy dignity, which might have become the tragic muse, and anon with shrieks and imprecations which might have excited the envy of a mœnad. Again, I would come across three or four hundred of them at sundown, kneeling down at prayer, with their faces turned towards what was supposed to be the direction of Mecca, but which really was more in the direction of the North Pole star than of anything else. At another time a party of them would halt as I came by, support their burdens on the short poles which they carried for that purpose, and some Hindústhani spokesman among them would say to me: "O Protector of the Poor!" (*Gurib Parwár* pronounced *Guripur*), "you have been up among these snowy mountains—shall we ever see our house-roofs again?" They all had the same story as to their monetary position. Each man had got five rupees (I do not know whether small *chilki*, Kashmir rupees, or British, but should fancy the former) in order to purchase rice for the journey; but their further expectations on the subject of pay were of the most desponding kind, and the only anxiety they showed was, not as to how they were to get back again, but as to whether it would be at all possible for them ever to get back again. I must have missed the Yarkand envoy himself about Ganderbahl, a day's march from Srinagar; but shortly before getting to Ganderbahl I came across three of his retinue, who puzzled me a little. It was very wet and very muddy, when I suddenly came across three riders in black European waterproofs, one of whom said to me—"Bones sore, Múshú?" After being for months up in the Himáliya, one is unaccustomed to being accosted in a European language; and the matter was complicated by the fact that my bones were sore at the time, and most confoundedly so, from the combined effect of that evening on the Omba La and of a fall. Hence it was that I had fairly passed the three curious riders before it at all occurred to my mind that the salutation was "Bon soir, Monsieur." They were doubtless Frenchified Turks, whom the envoy had brought from Constantinople; but they had scarcely any ground to expect that their peculiar French would be recognised, on the moment, in one of the upper valleys of Kashmir.

But I have not quite yet got into even the outskirts of the Garden of Eden. The Zoji La had to be crossed; and though it is a very easy pass, and set down by the Trigonometrical Survey as only 11,300 feet high, yet I have heard, and suspect, that a mistake has been made there, and that nearly a thousand feet might have been added to it. Let Major Montgomerie's map be compared with the sheets of the Trigonometrical Survey on which it must be supposed to be based, and discrepancies will be found. The Trigonometrical Survey has achieved more than would allow of absolute accuracy in all its details; but, considering the means at its command, it has done wonders. Still, though the Zoji pass may be higher than it has been set down, yet it seems almost child's-play to the traveller from Zanskar and the Omba La. Though it seemed to me nothing after what I had gone through, yet this pass must have a formidable appearance to travellers coming upon it from below, judging from the following description of it by Dr Henderson, the ornithologist of the first of Sir Thomas Forsyth's missions to Yarkand: "The road we had ascended was in many places rather trying to the nerves, being very steep, and sometimes consisting merely of a platform of brushwood attached to the face of the precipice. This road, owing to its steepness, is quite impassable for baggage animals after a fall of snow, and it is then necessary to wait at Báltal until the snow has melted, or to follow the stream up a very narrow rocky gorge, with precipices of from 500 to 1000 feet on either side. This gorge, however, is only practicable when filled up by snow to about fifty feet in depth, as it usually is early in the season: it is then the usual route; and at that season, in order to avoid the avalanches, it is necessary to start at night and get over the pass before sunrise. Avalanches do not fall until late in the day, after the sun begins to melt the snow."[1]

I do not think the road has been improved since

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[1] 'Lahore to Yarkand.' London, 1873.

Dr Henderson passed over it; and now that I think of it, I remember that there was something like the brushwood platforms of which he speaks. The great interest of it is that it leads suddenly down upon the beautiful wooded scenery of Kashmir. After months of the sterile, almost treeless Tibetan provinces, the contrast was very striking, and I could not but revel in the beauty and glory of the vegetation; but even to one who had come up upon it from below the scene would have been very striking. There was a large and lively encampment at the foot of the pass, with tents prepared for the Yarkand envoy, and a number of Kashmir officers and soldiers; but I pushed on beyond that, and camped in solitude close to the Sind river, just beneath the Panjtarne valley, which leads up towards the caves of Ambernath, a celebrated place for Hindú pilgrimage. This place is called Báltal, but it has no human habitations. Smooth green meadows, carpet-like and embroidered with flowers, extended to the silvery stream, above which there was the most varied luxuriance of foliage, the lower mountains being most richly clothed with woods of many and beautiful colours. It was late autumn, and the trees were in their greatest variety of colour; but hardly a leaf seemed to have fallen. The dark green of the pines contrasted beautifully with the delicate orange of the birches, because there were intermingling tints of brown and saffron. Great masses of foliage were succeeded by solitary pines, which had found a footing high up the precipitous crags.

And all this was combined with peaks and slopes of pure white snow. *Aiguilles* of dark rock rose out of beds of snow, but their faces were powdered with the same element. Glaciers and long beds of snow ran down the valleys, and the upper vegetation had snow for its bed. The effect of sunset upon this scene was wonderful; for the colours it displayed were both heightened and more harmoniously blended. The golden light of eve brought out the warm tints of the forest; but the glow of the reddish-brown precipices, and the rosy light upon the snowy slopes and peaks, were too soon succeeded by the cold grey of evening. At first, however, the wondrous scene was still visible in a quarter-moon's silvery light, in which the Panjtarne valley was in truth—

> "A wild romantic chasm that slanted
> Down the sweet hill athwart a cedarn cover—
> A savage place, as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath the waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon lover."

The demon lovers to be met with in that wild valley are bears, which are in abundance; and a more delightful place for a hunter to spend a month in could hardly be invented; but he would have to depend on his rifle for supplies, or have them sent up from many miles down the Sind valley.

The remainder of my journey down this latter valley to the great valley or small plain of Kashmir was delightful. A good deal of rain fell, but that made one appreciate the great trees all the more, for the rain was not continuous, and was mingled with sunshine. At times, during the season when I saw it, this "inland depth" is "roaring like the sea;"

> "While trees, dim-seen, in frenzied numbers tear
> The lingering remnant of their yellow hair;"

but soon after it is bathed in perfect peace and mellow sunlight. The air was soft and balmy; but, at this transfer from September to October, it was agreeably cool even to a traveller from the abodes and sources of snow. As we descended, the pine-forests were confined to the mountain-slopes; but the lofty deodar began to appear in the valley, as afterwards the sycamore, the elm, and the horse-chestnut. Round the picturesque villages, and even forming considerable woods, there were fruit-trees—as the walnut, the chestnut, the peach, the apricot, the apple, and the pear. Large quantities of timber (said to be cut recklessly) was in course of being floated down the river; and where the path led across it there were curious wooden bridges for which it was not necessary to dismount. This Sind valley is about sixty miles long, and varies in breadth from a few hundred yards to about a mile, except at its base, where it opens out considerably. It is considered to afford the best idea of the mingled beauty and grandeur of Kashmir scenery; and when I passed through its appearance was greatly enhanced by the snow, which not only covered the mountain-tops, but also came down into the forests which clothed the mountain-sides. The path through it, being part of the great road from Kashmir to Central Asia, is kept in tolerable repair, and it is very rarely that the rider requires to dismount. Anything beyond a walking pace, however, is for the most part out of the question. Montgomerie divides the journey from Srinagar to Báltal (where I camped below the Zoji La) into six marches, making in all sixty-seven miles; and though two of these marches may be done in one day, yet if you are to travel easily and enjoy the scenery, one a-day is sufficient. The easiest double march is from Sonamarg to Gond, and I did it in a day with apparent ease on a very poor pony; but the consequence is that I beat my brains in vain in order to recall what sort of place Gond was, no distinct recollection of it having been left on my mind, except of a grove of large trees and a roaring fire in front of my tent at night. Sonamarg struck me as a very pleasant place; and I had there, in the person of a youthful captain from Abbotabad, the pleasure of meeting the first European I had seen since leaving Lahaul. We dined together, and I found he had come up from Srinagar to see Sonamarg, and he spoke with great enthusiasm of a view he had had, from another part of Kashmir, of the 26,000 feet mountain Nanga Parbat. *Marg* means a "meadow," and seems to be applied specially to elevated meadows; *sona* stands for "golden": and this place is a favourite resort, in the hot malarious months of July and August, both for the Europeans in Kashmir and for natives of rank. The village, being composed of four houses and three outlying ones, cannot produce much in the way of either coolies or supplies. Its commercial ideas may be gathered from the fact that I was here asked seven rupees for a pound of tea which was nothing but the refuse of tea-chests mixed with all sorts of dirt. In the matter of coolies I was independent, for the *bigarries* who had taken my effects over the Zoji La were so afraid of being impressed for the service of the Yarkand envoy, that they had entreated me to engage them as far as Ganderbahl, near the capital, hoping that by the time they reached that place the fierce demand for coolies might have ceased.

At Ganderbahl I was fairly in the great valley of Kashmir, and encamped under some enormous *chúnár* or sycamore trees; the girth of one was so great that its trunk kept my little mountain-tent quite sheltered from the furious blasts. Truly—

> "There was a roaring in the wind all night,
> The rain fell heavily, and fell in floods;"

but that gigantic *chúnár* kept off both wind and rain wonderfully. Next day a small but convenient and quaint Kashmir boat took me up to Srinagar; and it was delightful to glide up the backwaters of the Jhelam, which afforded a highway to the capital. It was the commencement and the promise of repose, which I very seriously needed, and in a beautiful land.

At Srinagar, where I stayed for a fortnight, I was the guest of the Resident, the amiable and accomplished Mr Le Poer Wynne, whose early death has disappointed many bright hopes. I had thus every opportunity of seeing all that could be seen about the capital, and of making myself acquainted with the state of affairs in Kashmir. I afterwards went up to Islamabad, Martand, Achibal, Vernag, the Rozlú valley, and finally went out of Kashmir by way of the Manas and Wúlar Lakes, and the lower valley of the Jhelam, so that I saw the most interesting places in the country, and all the varieties of scenery which it affords. That country has been so often visited and described, that, with one or two exceptions, I shall only touch generally upon its characteristics. It doubtless owes some of its charm to the character of the regions in its neighbourhood. As compared with the burning plains of India, the sterile steppes of Tibet, and the savage mountains of the Himáliya and of Afghanistan, it presents an astonishing and beautiful contrast. After such scenes even a much more commonplace country might have afforded a good deal of the enthusiasm which Kashmir has excited in Eastern poetry, and even in common rumour; but beyond that it has characteristics which give it a distinct place among the most pleasing regions of the earth. I said to the Maharajah, or ruling Prince of Kashmir, that the most beautiful countries I had seen were England, Italy, Japan, and Kashmir; and though he did not seem to like the remark much, probably from a fear that the beauty of the land he governed might make it too much an object of desire, yet there was no exaggeration in it. Here, at a height of nearly 6000 feet, in a temperate climate, with abundance of moisture, and yet protected by lofty mountains from the fierce continuous rains of the Indian south-west monsoon, we have the most splendid amphitheatre in the world. A flat oval valley about sixty miles long, and from forty in breadth, is surrounded by magnificent mountains, which, during the greater part of the year, are covered more than half-way down with snow, and present vast upland beds of pure white snow. This valley has fine lakes, is intersected with water-courses, and its land is covered with brilliant vegetation, including gigantic trees of the richest foliage. And out of this great central valley there rise innumerable, long, picturesque mountain-valleys, such as that of the Sind river, which I have just described; while above these there are great pine-forests, green slopes of grass, glaciers, and snow. Nothing could express the general effect better than Moore's famous lines on sainted Lebanon—

> "Whose head in wintry grandeur towers,
> And whitens with eternal sleet;
> While Summer, in a vale of flowers,
> Is sleeping rosy at his feet."

The great encircling walls of rock and snow contrast grandly with the soft beauty of the scene beneath. The snows have a wonderful effect as we look up to them through the leafy branches of the immense *chúnár*, elm, and poplar trees. They flash gloriously in the morning sunlight above the pink mist of the valley-plain; they have a rosy glow in the evening sunlight; and when the sunlight has departed, but ere darkness shrouds them, they gleam, afar off, with a cold and spectral light, as if they belonged to a region where man had never trod. The deep black gorges in the mountains have a mysterious look. The sun lights up some softer grassy ravine or green slope, and then displays splintered rocks rising in the wildest confusion. Often long lines of white clouds lie along the line of mountain-summits, while at other times every white peak and precipice-wall is distinctly marked against the deep-blue sky. The valley-plain is especially striking in clear mornings and evenings, when it lies partly in golden sunlight, partly in the shadow of its great hills.

The green mosaic of the level land is intersected by many streams, canals, and lakes, or beautiful reaches of river which look like small lakes. The lakes have floating islands composed of vegetation. Besides the immense *chúnárs* and elms, and the long lines of stately poplars, great part of the plain is a garden filled with fruits and flowers, and there is almost constant verdure.

> "There eternal summer dwells,
> And west winds, with musky wing,
> About the cedar'd alleys fling
> Nard and cassia's balmy smells."

It is a pity that so beautiful a country should not have a finer population. At the entrances of the valleys, looking at the forests, the rich uncultivated lands, and the unused water-power, I could not but think of the scenes in England,

> "Where lawns extend that scorn Arcadian pride,
> And brighter streams than famed Hydaspes[1] glide."

My mind reverted also to the flashing snows of the American Sierra Nevada, the dwarf oaks and rich fields of wheat, the chubby children, the comely, well-dressed women, and the strong stalwart men of California. For, though the *châlets* were picturesque enough at a little distance, they could not bear a close examination; and there was not much satisfaction to be had in contemplating the half-starved, half-naked children, and the thin, worn-out-looking women. One could not help thinking of the comfortable homes which an Anglo-Saxon population would rear in such a land.

The beauty of the Kashmir women has long been famous in the East, but if you want beautiful Kashmiris do not go to Kashmir to look for them. They have all fine eyes, and "the eyes of Kashmir" have been justly celebrated in Eastern poetry; but that is almost the only feminine attraction to be found in the country even among the dancing-girls and the boat-girls. As to the ordinary women, there is too much sad truth in Victor Jacquemont's outburst against them—"Know that I have never seen anywhere such hideous witches as in Kashmir. [He had not been in Tibet!] The female race is remarkably ugly. I speak of women of the common ranks—those one sees in the streets and fields—since those of a more elevated station pass all their lives shut up, and are never seen. It is true that all little girls who promise to turn out pretty are sold at eight years of age, and carried off into the Panjab and India." I am afraid a good deal of that traffic still goes on, notwithstanding the law which forbids women and mares to be taken out of the country; and as it has gone on for generations, it is easily explicable how the women of Kashmir should be so ugly. A continuous process of eliminating the pretty girls and leaving the ugly ones to continue the race must lower the standard of beauty. But the want of good condition strikes one more painfully in Kashmir than the want of beauty. The aquiline noses, long chins, and long faces of the women of Kashmir, would allow only of a peculiar and rather Jewish style of beauty; but even that is not brought out well by the state of their *physique;* and I don't suppose the most beautiful woman in the world would show to advantage if she were imperfectly washed and dressed in the ordinary feminine attire of Kashmir—a dirty, whitish cotton night-gown.

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[1] The Jhelam.

It is unfortunate for the reputation of Kashmir that a sudden death, not entirely free from suspicious circumstances, should have befallen three of our countrymen who had distinguished themselves by exposing the abuses existing in the country; and it is at least remarkable that suspicion on the subject should have been roused by the Kashmiris themselves—that is to say, by reports generally current in Srinagar. I allude to Lieutenant Thorpe, Dr Elmslie, and Mr Hayward. The first of these gentlemen had published a pamphlet entitled—'Kashmir Misgovernment;' and in November 1868, when almost all visitors except himself had left Kashmir for the season, he expired suddenly at Srinagar, after having walked up the Takht-i-Súliman, a hill which rises close to the city to the height of a thousand feet. Naturally the supposition was that he had been poisoned; but Surgeon Caley, who happened to be on his way down from Ladak, examined the body shortly after death, and reported that there had been "rupture of the heart." Dr Elmslie was a devoted medical missionary, who did an immense deal of good in Kashmir, and had published a valuable vocabulary of the Kashmiri language; but he had also published letters complaining of the carelessness of the Government in regard to a visitation of cholera which had carried off large numbers of the people, and pointing out that sanitary measures might save the lives of thousands every year from small-pox and other diseases. The Srinagar rumour was that his servants had been offered so much to poison him within the Kashmir territory, and so much more if they would do so after he got beyond. Unfortunately Dr Elmslie also died rather suddenly shortly after he had got beyond the Kashmir borders, and, it seems, also of heart disease. Mr Hayward had published letters in the Indian papers complaining of the conduct of the Kashmir troops in Gilgit, and on the borders of Yassin, and he somewhat injudiciously returned to that part of the world. But I do not attach any importance to the gossip of Eastern cities —or of any cities, for that matter; and there has appeared no ground to suppose that his death was planned by Kashmir officials, but what befell him was very sad. He was on his way to the Pamir Steppe, and somewhere about Yassin was in the territory of a chief who camped two hundred armed men in a wood near his tent. The next day's journey would have taken Hayward beyond this chief's border; and, suspecting mischief, he sat up all night writing with revolver in hand. Unfortunately, however, in the grey of the morning, he lay down to take half an hour's sleep before starting; and the chief with his people came down on him then, overpowered him, tied his hands behind his back and took him into the wood. Here, seeing preparations made for putting him to death, the unfortunate traveller offered a ransom for his life; but his captors would not hear of it. They made him kneel down, and, while he was offering up a prayer, they hacked off his head after the half-hacking half-sawing way they have of killing sheep in the Himáliya. How this story was gathered has been told in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, and tolerably correct accounts of such incidents get abroad in even the wildest parts of the East. The moral of it is that one ought to avoid Yassin rather than that it is dangerous to abuse the Kashmir Government; but it is no wonder that the three cases just mentioned should have given rise to suspicions when we consider the character of the people, and the powerful motives which the native officials have in preventing any outcry being raised against them.

Many hundred years ago the Chinese traveller Fa-Hian spoke of the people of Kashmir as being of a peculiarly bad character. Ranjít Singh said to Sir Alexander Burnes, "All the people I send into Kashmir turn out rascals (*haramzada*); there is too much pleasure and enjoyment in that country." Moorcroft described them as "selfish, superstitious, ignorant, supple, intriguing, dishonest, and false." A more recent traveller, Dr A. L. Adams the naturalist, says of them: "Everywhere in Cashmere you see the inhabitants indolent to a degree, filthy in their habits, mean, cowardly, shabby, irresolute, and indifferent to all ideas of reform or progress." Their name has become a by-word throughout a great part of Asia. Even where there are so many deceitful nations they have obtained a bad pre-eminence. According to a well-known Persian saying, "you will never experience anything but sorrow and anxiety from the Kashmiri." When these people got this bad name is lost in antiquity, and so is the period when they first passed into the unfortunate circumstances which have demoralised them. They are, however, not unattractive, being an intellectual people, and characterised by great ingenuity and sprightliness. I cannot deny the truth of the accusations brought against them, yet I could not but pity them and sympathise with them. I think also that they have the elements of what, in more fortunate circumstances, might be a very fine character; but dwelling in a fertile and beautiful valley, surrounded by hardy and warlike tribes, they have for ages been subject to that oppression which destroys national hope and virtue. Their population has hardly been large enough to afford effectual resistance to the opposing forces, though, unless there had been a large element of weakness in their character, they might surely have held their passes; and, at the same time, they were too many in numbers to retire, for a time, before invaders, from their fertile lands into their mountain fastnesses. As it is, they are abominably used and they use each other abominably. It seemed to me that every common soldier of the Maharajah of Kashmir felt himself entitled to beat and plunder the country people; but I noticed that my boatmen tried to do the same when they thought they were unobserved by me. The Maharajah himself holds an open court on one day every week, at which the meanest peasant is nominally free to make his complaint, even if it be against the highest officials; but I was told, by very good authority, that this source of redress was practically inoperative, not because the Maharajah was unwilling to do justice, but because there was such a system of terrorism that the common people dared not come forward to complain. Great improvements have already been made under the present ruler of Kashmir; but he is one man among many, and when a corrupt and oppressive officialdom has existed in a country for ages, it cannot be rooted out in one reign.

Our position in Kashmir is a very curious one, and reflects little credit upon the British name. By the Treaty of Amritsar, concluded in 1846 after the first Panjab war, we actually sold the country to Golab Singh, the father of the present Maharajah, for seventy-five lacs of rupees, or rather less than three-quarters of a million sterling; but so little welcome was he, that the first troops he sent up were driven out of the country, and he was enabled to establish himself in it only by claiming the assistance of the Indian Government, and getting from it an order that the existing Governor was to yield obedience to the new sovereign, or to consider himself an enemy of the British Government. No doubt we wanted the money very much at the time, miserable sum as it was, and only double the revenue which Ranjít Singh drew in one year from Kashmir. It is possible, too, that there may have been some policy in thus making a friend of one of the chiefs of the Khalsa; but the transaction was not an advisable one. Of all India and its adjacent countries Kashmir is the district best suited for Europeans, and it affords large room for English colonisation. It has now a population of about half a million; but it had formerly one of four millions, and it could easily support that number. It has an immense amount of fertile land lying waste in all the valleys, and it would have been just the place for the retirement of Anglo-Indians at the close of their periods of service. As it is, Kashmir is practically closed to us except as a place of resort for a few summer visitors. Probably the visitors would be a good deal worse off than they are at present if it were under British rule; but that is not a matter of much importance. The Maharajah acknowledges the supremacy of the British Government, and yet no Englishman can settle in the country or purchase a foot of land in it. We are not even allowed to stay there through the winter; for a recent relaxation of this rule has been much misunderstood, and simply amounts to a permission for British officers, who cannot get leave in summer, to visit Kashmir in winter. Visitors have to leave the country about the middle of October, and the Panjab Government has issued very strict rules for their guidance while they are in the Valley. After mentioning the four authorised routes for European visitors to Kashmir, the first rule goes on to say (the italics are its own): "*All other roads are positively forbidden;* and, in respect to the direct road from Jummoo (known as the Bunnihál route), the prohibition has been ordered at the special request of his Highness the Maharajah. The road branching from Rajáoree by Aknoor, which is used by the Maharajah's family and troops, is also expressly prohibited." Now this Jamú and Banihal route is by much the shortest and much the easiest route to Kashmir except for the small section of visitors who come from that part of the Panjab which lies to the west of the Jhelam; and yet it is kept closed, at the Maharajah's special request, though another route is set apart for the movements between Srinagar and Jamú of his family and troops! In fact, by this order, in order to get a tolerable route, the traveller has to cross great part of the Panjab and go up by Rawal Pindi and Mari, for neither the Pir Panjal nor the Punah routes are convenient. In Rule

II. we are told that every officer about to visit Kashmir "should engage, before proceeding, a sufficient number of ponies or mules for the conveyance of his baggage;" which is tantamount to saying that no one need put in a claim for getting any coolies, ponies, or mules by the way. In Rule VI. they are told to encamp only at the fixed stages and encamping-grounds. In Rule X. it is said that "when going out on shooting excursions, visitors are to take carriage and supplies with them." Rule XV. is amusing, considering the high moral tone of the British subaltern: "Officers are not allowed to take away with them, either in their service or with their camps, any subjects of the Maharajah, without obtaining permission and a passport from the authorities." I have heard of one visitor who tried to take away a Kashmiri damsel by putting her in a *kilta*, or wicker-basket used for carrying loads in, but the smuggling was detected. This rule does not prevent the bagnios all over India being filled with Kashmiri women; and a regular slave-traffic goes on, most of the good-looking girls being taken out of Kashmir at an early age; but of course, the morals of the British officer must be looked after. He is also by Rule XVI. made responsible for the debts incurred by his servants, which is rather hard, as most Indians make a rule of getting into debt up to the full amount of their credit. In Rule XVII., all visitors are told, in italics, "All presents to be refused. Presents of every description must be rigidly refused." This certainly is interfering in an extraordinary way with the liberty of the subject; but let the visitor beware how he violates any of these rules, because the Resident at Srinagar has the power of expelling him from the country. It is the Panjab, not the supreme Government, which is directly responsible for these extraordinary regulations; and I daresay English people will be rather surprised by them. The Maharajah of Kashmir is called in them "an independent sovereign;" but it is distinctly stated in Article X. of the Treaty which gave him his dominions, that he "acknowledges the supremacy of the British Government." Can the Panjab Government not understand that when the power of England guarantees the safety of the Maharajah and of his dominions, it is not for British officials to treat British visitors to Kashmir in so derogatory a manner, or to allow of their being turned out of the country every winter, and refused permission to purchase even waste land? This is only one of many subjects which may render it necessary to raise the questions,—In whose interest, on whose authority, and supported by what power, does Anglo-Indian officialdom exist? The imperial interests of Great Britain have been too much lost sight of, and it is on these that the real, the vital interests of the people of India depend.

The Resident procured me a private audience of the Maharajah Ranbir or Runbir Singh, which was given in a balcony, overhanging the river, of his city palace, within the precincts of which there is a temple with a large pagoda-like roof that is covered with thin plates of pure gold. His Highness is reputed to be somewhat serious and bigoted as regards his religion. It was mentioned in the Indian papers a few years ago, that the Brahmins having discovered that the soul of his father, Golab Singh, had migrated into the body of a fish, Ranbir Singh gave orders that no fish were to be killed in Kashmir, though fish is there one of the great staple articles of food among the poorer classes. The edict, however, was calculated to cause so much distress, that the Brahmins soon announced that the paternal spirit had taken some other form. I never heard this story contradicted; and it affords a curious instance of the reality of the belief in transmigration which exists in India. As the character of these transmigrations, and the amount of suffering and enjoyment which they involve, is considered to depend on the good or evil conduct of preceding lives, and especially of those which are passed in a human form, such a belief would be calculated to exercise an important influence for good, were it not for the sacrificial theory which attaches so much importance, as good works, to sacrifices to the gods, and to gifts to their priestly ministers; and its beneficial effect is also lessened by the tendency of the Indian mind to assign an undue value to indiscriminate acts of charity such as often do harm rather than good. It is curious to think of a Maharajah looking from his balcony beside his golden temple into the waters of the Jhelam, and wondering whether his royal father is one of the big or of the little fishes floating about in its stream or in some adjacent water.

Among the improvements introduced by Ranbir Singh are those in the administration of justice and the manufacture of silk. The Chief-Justice of the Court of Srinagar is an educated native, I think from Bengal, who was well spoken of—and, absurdly enough, is in charge of the silk department also. He has been at pains to make himself acquainted with the breeding of silk-worms and the spinning of their cocoons, as pursued in other countries, and has turned this knowledge to good account in Srinagar. One pleasing and extraordinary innovation which he has been able to introduce, is that of inducing children and others of the Brahmin caste to engage in the spinning of silk. Anything like such an occupation has hitherto been considered as degrading, and forbidden to Brahmins, and has not been entered on by those even in such advanced Indian cities as Calcutta and Bombay. It shows a curious way of managing matters that the Chief-Justice of Srinagar should also be the head of the silk department; but such is, or at least very lately was, the case; and under his management sericulture has been improved and developed. In 1871, the Maharajah set apart £30,000 for the development of this branch of industry, and part of the sum was expended on the construction of buildings in which an equal temperature could be maintained for the silk-worms. I saw the process of extracting and winding the silk in the factory beside Srinagar: it was skilfully conducted, and the threads produced were remarkably fine and perfect. The mulberry trees of Kashmir have hitherto enjoyed exemption from disease and injury from insects, so that the prospects of this production are very good, and a commencement has been made in weaving the silk into cloth. The whole production is a monopoly of Government; but it gives increasing employment to a considerable number of persons, on what, for Kashmir, are good wages. In 1872 the amount of dry cocoons produced amounted to 57,600 lb., and the resulting revenue was estimated at 124,000 *chilki* rupees, a portion of it, however, being required for the improvements which were made.

The famous shawls of Kashmir are now somewhat at a discount in the world, except in France, where they still form a portion of almost every bride's *trousseau*, and where, at least in novels, every lady of the *demi-monde* is described as wrapped in *un vrai Cachemere*, and wearing a pair of Turkish slippers. France alone takes about 80 per cent of the Kashmir shawls exported from Asia; the United States of America take 10, Italy 5, Russia 2, and Great Britain and Germany only 1 per cent each. Of course the late war almost entirely destroyed the shawl trade, but it has for the time being returned to its former state; and, at the period of collapse, the Maharajah humanely made enormous purchases on his own account. The revenue from this source has diminished to at least half what it was some years ago; but still a superior woven shawl will bring, even in Kashmir, as much as £300 sterling; and about £130,000 worth of shawls is annually exported, £90,000 worth going to Europe. The finest of the goat's wool employed in this manufacture comes from Turfán, in the Yarkand territory; and it is only on the wind-swept steppes of Central Asia that animals are found to produce so fine a wool. The shawl-weavers get miserable wages, and are allowed neither to leave Kashmir nor change their employment, so that they are nearly in the position of slaves; and their average wage is only about three-halfpence a-day.

Srinagar itself has a very fine appearance when one does not look closely into its details. As the Kashmiri has been called the Neapolitan of the East, so his capital has been compared to Florence, and his great river to the Arno. But there is no European town which has such a fine placid sweep of river through it. The capital dates from 59 A.D., and portions of it might be set down to any conceivable date. For the most part the houses either rise up from the Jhelam or from the canals with which the city is intersected, and are chiefly of thin brick walls supported in wooden frames. Being often three storeys high, and in a most ruinous condition, the walls present anything but straight lines, and it is a marvel that many of the houses continue standing at all. Some of the canals present deliciously picturesque scenes, such as even Venice cannot boast of, and the view from any of the five bridges across the Jhelam is very striking; but, as remarked, it is better to leave the interior unvisited beyond floating through the canals. The British Residency, and the bungalows provided free of charge for European visitors, are above the city, on the right bank of the river, which here presents a noble appearance, and in a splendid line of poplar-trees. A wooded island opposite them adds to the beauty of the scene. Almost every place about Srinagar that one wants to go to can be reached by boat, and the wearied traveller may enjoy a delicious repose.

II.

There is one excursion from Srinagar, which can easily be made in a day by boat, that is specially worthy of notice, and it takes through canals and through the apple-tree garden into the Dal-o City Lake, and to two of the gardens and summer-houses of the Mogul Emperors. I write on the shore of Ulleswater, at once the grandest and most beautiful of the English lakes: the mountains and sky are reflected with perfect distinctness in the deep unruffled water, and the renewed power of the earth is running up through the trees, and breaking out into a dim mist of buds and tiny leaves; but exquisite as the scene before me is, its beauty cannot dim or equal my remembrance of the lakes of Kashmir, though even to these the English scenery is superior as regards the quality, to use a phrase of Wordsworth's, of being "graduated by nature into soothing harmony."

The Dal is connected with the Jhelam by the Sont-i-Kol or Apple-tree Canal, which presents one of the finest combinations of wood and water in the world. The scene is English in character; but I do not know of any river scene in England which is equal to it—so calm is the water, so thickly is the stream covered with tame aquatic birds of very varied plumage, so abundant the fish, so magnificent, as well as beautiful, the trees which rise from its lotus-fringed, smooth, green banks. An Afghan conqueror of Kashmir proposed to cover this piece of water with a trellis-work of vines, supported from the trees on the one side to those on the other; but that would have shut out the view of the high, wild mountains which heighten, by their contrast, the beauty and peacefulness of the scene below. Many of the trees, and a whole line of them on one side, are enormous planes (*Platanus orientalis*), mountains of trees, and yet beautiful in shape and colour, with their vast masses of foliage reflected in the calm clear water.

From thence we pass into the Dal, a lake about five miles long, with half the distance in breadth, one side being bounded by great trees, or fading into a reedy waste, and the other encircled by lofty mountains. The most curious feature of this lake is the floating gardens upon the surface of its transparent water. The reeds, sedges, water-lilies, and other aquatic plants which grow together in tangled confusion, are, when they cluster together more thickly than usual, detached from their roots. The leaves of the plants are then spread out over the stems and covered with soil, on which melons and cucumbers are grown. These floating islands form a curious and picturesque feature in the landscape, and their economical uses are considerable. Moorcroft mentions having seen vines upon them, and has supplied the detailed information regarding them which has been made use of by succeeding travellers and statisticians. "A more economical method of raising cucumbers cannot be devised,"—and, he might have added, of melons also. According to Cowper,—

"No sordid fare,
A cucumber!"

But, thanks to these floating gardens, you don't require to ruin yourself in order to eat cucumbers in Kashmir; and the melons are as good as they are cheap, and must have valuable properties; for Captain Bates says, "those who live entirely on them soon become fat," which probably arises from the sugar they contain. Usually, in the fruit season, two or three watchers remain all night in a boat attached to these islands, in order to protect them from water-thieves. On the Dal I came across several boatmen fishing up the root of the lotus with iron hooks attached to long poles. This yellow root is not unpalatable raw, but is usually eaten boiled, along with condiments. Southey's lines, though strictly applicable only to the red-flowering lotus, yet suggest a fair idea of the lotus-leaves on this Kashmir lake, as they are moved by the wind or the undulations of the water.

> "Around the lotus stem
> It rippled, and the sacred flowers, that crown
> The lakelet with their roseate beauty, ride
> In gentlest waving, rocked from side to side.
> And as the wind upheaves
> Their broad and buoyant weight, the glossy leaves
> Flap on the twinkling waters up and down."

Still more useful for the people of Kashmir, as an article of diet, is the horned water-nut (*Traba bispinosa*), which is ground into flour, and made into bread. No less than 60,000 tons of it are said to be taken from the Wúlar Lake alone every season, or sufficient to supply about 13,000 people with food for the entire year. These nuts are to be distinguished from the nuts, or rather beans, of the lotus (*Nelumbium speciosum*), which are also used as an article of food, and prized as a delicacy. These, with the lotus-roots, and the immense quantity of fish, provide abundance of food for a much larger population than is to be found in the neighbourhood of the Kashmir lakes; but of what avail is such bounty of Providence and all the land lying round, when the first conditions of human prosperity are wanting?

Passing the Silver Island and the Island of Chúnárs, I went up to the Shalimar Bagh, or Garden of Delight, a garden and pleasure-house, the work of the Emperor Jehángír and of his spouse Núr Jahán; but fine as this place is, I preferred the Nishat Bagh, or Garden of Pleasure, which is more in a recess of the lake, and also was a retreat constructed by the same royal pair, and planned by the Empress herself. The Garden of Pleasure is more picturesquely situated, though shaded by not less magnificent trees. The mountains rise up close behind it, and suggest a safe retreat both from the the dangers and the cares of state; and its view of the lake, including the Sona Lank, or Golden Island, is more suggestive of seclusion and quiet enjoyment. Ten terraces, bounded by magnificent trees, and with a stream of water falling over them, lead up to the latticed pavilion at the end of this garden. Between the double storeys of this pavilion the stream flows through a marble, or, at least, a limestone tank, and the structure is shaded by great *chúnár* trees, while, through a vista of their splendid foliage, we look down the terraces and water-courses upon the lake below. This was, and still is, a fitting place in which a great, luxurious, pleasure-loving emperor might find repose, and gather strength for the more serious duties of power. Jehángír was a strange but intelligible character. One historian briefly says of him—"Himself a drunkard during his whole life, he punished all who used wine." And after the unsuccessful rebellion of his son Khusrú, he made that prince pass along a line of 700 of his friends who had assisted him in rebelling. These friends were all seated upon spikes—in fact, they were impaled; so we may see it was not without good reason that Jehángír occasionally sought for secluded places of retirement. But these characteristics, taken alone, give an unfair idea of this great ruler. Though he never entirely shook off the dipsomaniac habits which he had formed at an early age, yet it may have been an acute sense of the inconvenience of them which made him so anxious to prevent any of his subjects from falling into the snare; he hints an opinion that though his own head might stand liquor without much damage, it by no means followed that other people's heads could do so; and the severe punishment of the adherents of a rebellious son was, in his time, almost necessary to secure the throne. He did, in fact, love mercy as well as do justice, and was far from being a bad ruler. He was wont to say that he would rather lose all the rest of his empire than Kashmir;[1] and it is likely that in this and similar gardens he enjoyed the most pleasure which his life afforded. His companion there was Mihrunnisá Khanam, better known as Núr Jahán, "the Light of the World."[2] When a young prince he had seen and loved her, but they were separated by circumstances; and it was not until after the death of her husband, Sher Afgan, and he had overcome her dread of marrying one whom she supposed to have been her husband's murderer, that Mihrunnisá became Jehángír's wife, and received the name of the Light of the World. A great improvement in the Emperor's government resulted from this union: the story is a curious illustration of the abiding power of love, and it goes far to redeem the character of this dissipated emperor, who would allow nobody to get drunk except himself. I daresay, if the truth were known, the Light of the World must have had a sad time of it with her amorous lord; but she was at least devoted to him, and seriously risked her life for him when the audacious Mahabat Khan unexpectedly made him a prisoner. The memory of these faithful lovers seems still to linger about the Nishat Bagh, and to have transferred itself into the imperial splendour of the plane-trees, the grateful shadow of the mountains, and the soft dreamy vista over the placid lake.

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[1] Voyages de François Bernier, contenant la Description des Etats du Grand-Mogol. Amsterdam, 1699.

[2] She was also, for a time, called Nur Mahall, the Light of the Palace; and under this name must be distinguished from the queen of Jehángír's son, Shah Jahán, to whom was raised the wonderful Taj Mahál at Agra.

Nearly all the English visitors had left Kashmir before I reached that country, and this gave me more opportunity of enjoying the society of Mr Le Poer Wynne, of whom I may speak more freely than of other Indian officials who remain. Two or three officers, on their way out of the valley, appeared at the Residency, and a couple of young Englishmen, or Colonials, fresh from the antipodes, who could see little to admire in Kashmir; but the only resident society in Srinagar was a fine Frenchman, a shawl agent, and Colonel Gardiner, who commanded the Maharajah's artillery, a soldier of fortune ninety years of age. Colonel Gardiner was born on the shores of Lake Superior, and had wandered into Central Asia at an early period. There was something almost appalling to hear this ancient warrior discourse of what have now become almost prehistoric times, and relate his experiences in the service of Ranjít Singh, Shah Shúja, Dost Mohammed, and other kings and chiefs less known to fame. If (as I have no reason to believe) he occasionally confused hearsay with his own experience, it could scarcely be wondered at considering his years, and there is no doubt as to the general facts of his career. Listening to his graphic narrations, Central Asia vividly appeared as it was more than half a century ago, when Englishmen could traverse it not only with tolerable safety, but usually as honoured guests.

But most usually the Resident and myself spent our evenings *tête-à-tête*, no one coming in except an old Afghan *chuprassie*, whose business it was to place logs upon the fire. This Abdiel had been a sepoy, and was the only man in his regiment who had remained faithful at the time of the Mutiny—"among the faithless, faithful only he;" and the honesty of his character extended down into his smallest transactions. He took a paternal but respectful interest in us, clearly seeing that the fire must be kept up, though our conversation ought not to be disturbed; so he would steal into the room as quietly as possible, and place logs on the fire as gently as if we were dying warriors or Mogul emperors. Wynne himself was a man of very interesting mind and character, being at once gentle and firm, kindly and open, yet with much tact, and combining depth of thought with very wide culture. When a student he had employed his long vacations in attending universities of Germany and France, and was widely acquainted with the literature of these countries, as well as able to converse fluently in their languages. To the usual oriental studies of an Indian civilian, he had added a large acquaintance with Persian poetry, and really loved the country to which he had devoted himself chiefly from a desire to find a more satisfactory and useful career than is now open to young men at home with little or no fortune. Perhaps he was too much of a student, disposed to place too high a value on purely moral and intellectual influences, and too much given to expect that young officers should renounce all the follies of youth, and old fighting colonels conduct themselves as if they were children of light. That sprang, however, from perfect genuineness and beauty of character, to which all things evil, or even questionable, were naturally repulsive; and it was wholly unaccompanied by any tendency to condemn others, being simply a desire to encourage them towards good. There was not a little of the pure and chivalrous nature of Sir Philip Sidney in Le Poer Wynne; and he might also be compared in character to the late Frederick Robertson of Brighton, whose sermons he spoke to me of as having made quite an era in his life. European culture and thought had not taught him to undervalue either the methods or the results of "divine philosophy," nor had his mind been overwhelmed by the modern revelations of the physical universe, though he was well acquainted with them; and his departure from much of traditional theology had only led him to value more the abiding truths of religion. Our conversation related only in part to the East, and ranged over many fields of politics, philosophy, and literature. I cannot recall these nights at Srinagar without mingled sadness and pleasure. It never struck me then that we were in a house at all ; but rather as if we were by a camp-fire. My host had a way of reclining before the fire on the floor ; the flames of the wood shot up brilliantly ; brown Abdiel in his sheepskin coat suggested the Indian Caucasus ; and instead of the gaudily-painted woodwork of the Residency, I felt around us only the circle of snowy mountains, and above, the shining hosts of heaven. And to both of us this was a camp-fire, and an unexpected happy meeting in the wilderness of life. A few months afterwards, Mr Wynne, after a short run to Europe on privilege leave, returned to Calcutta, in order to take up the office of Foreign Secretary during the absence of Mr Aitchison, and died almost immediately after. He had not been many years in the Indian Civil Service, and the highest hopes were entertained of his future career. I had felt, however, instinctively that so fine an organisation, both mental and physical, must either "die or be degraded" ; and perhaps it was with some subtle, barely conscious precognition of his early doom that Wynne rose and made a note of the lines which I quoted to him one night when we were speaking of the early death of another young Indian civilian—

"But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,

Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. But not the praise."

But praise, or fame, as here used by Milton and some of our older writers, is not to be confounded with the notoriety of the world, which almost any eccentricity, vulgarity, self-assertion, or accidental success may command. It is even something more than the "good and honest report" of the multitude, or the approval of the better-minded of the human race, both of which judgments must often proceed on very imperfect and misleading grounds. Milton himself expressed the truest meaning of fame when Phœbus touched his trembling ears, and, immediately after the passage just quoted, he went on to say—

"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to th' world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."

It may be fancied that the poet is rather inconsistent here, because he begins by speaking of fame as "the last infirmity of noble minds;" and surely it can hardly be an infirmity to value the judgment which proceeds from the "perfect witness of all-judging Jove." But there is no inconsistency when the whole passage in Lycidas is considered, beginning, "Alas! what boots it with incessant care——?" The argument is that it must matter nothing, seeing that when we expect to find the guerdon and break out into sudden blaze, then comes Fate with the abhorred shears; but to this Phœbus answers reprovingly that fame is not of mortal growth, and only lives and spreads above. This suggests a double life even now, and identifies fame with our own better existence. There is no subject, however, on which men are so apt to deceive themselves as when appealing to a higher and unseen judgment: probably few criminals go to execution without a deceiving belief that Heaven will be more merciful to them than man has been, because they can shelter themselves under the truth that Heaven alone knows what their difficulties and temptations have been, forgetting that it alone also knows their opportunities and the full wickedness of their life. Every man should mistrust himself when he looks forward to that higher fame with any other feeling than one of having been an unprofitable servant; and even this feeling should be mistrusted when it goes into words rather than to the springs of action. It is in the general idea, and as regards others rather than ourselves, that the consolation of Milton's noble lines may be found. The dread severance of the abhorred shears extends not merely to the lives of the young and promising, but to all in human life which is beautiful and good. What avails the closest companionship, the fondest love, before the presence of Death the separator? In even an ordinary life how many bright promises have been destroyed, how many dearest ties severed, and how many dark regrets remain! For that there is no consolation worth speaking of except the faith that all which was good and beautiful here below still lives and blooms above.

There are several very beautiful or striking places about the sources of the Jhelam which no visitor to Kashmir should omit to see. Islamabad can be reached in two days by boat, if the river is not in flood; and the mat awning of the boats lets down close to the gunwale, so as to form a comfortable closed apartment for night. In late autumn at least, the waters of Kashmir are so warm, as compared with the evening and night air, that towards afternoon an extraordinary amount of steam begins to rise from them. But the air is exceedingly dry notwithstanding the immense amount of water in the valley, and the frequent showers of rain which fall; and there is very little wind in Kashmir, which is an immense comfort, especially for dwellers in tents. There is now no difficulty in obtaining information in regard to Kashmir amply sufficient to guide the visitor. The older books on that country are well enough known, such as those of Bernier, Jacquemont, Moorcroft, Hügel, and Vigne; and it is curious how much information we owe to them, and how repeatedly that information has been produced by later writers, apparently without any attempt to verify it, or to correct it up to date. Three books on Kashmir, however, which have been published very recently, will be found of great use to the traveller of our day. First and foremost of these is 'A Vocabulary of the Kashmiri Language,' by the late lamented medical missionary, Dr W. J. Elmslie, published by the Church Missionary House in London in 1872. It is a small volume, and gives the Kashmiri for a great number of English words, as well as the English for Kashmiri ones; and he has managed to compress into it a large amount of valuable and accurate information in regard to the valley, its products and its inhabitants. To any one who has a talent for languages, or who has had a good deal of experience in acquiring them, it will be found a very easy matter to learn to speak a little modern Kashmiri, which is nearly altogether a colloquial language; and for this purpose Dr Elmslie's vocabularies—the fruit of six laborious seasons spent in the country—will be found invaluable. The acquisition of this language is also rendered easy by its relationship to those of India and Persia. The largest number of its words, or about 40 per cent, are said to be Persian; Sanscrit gives 25; Hindústhani, 15; Arabic, 10; and the Turanian dialects of Central Asia, 15. The letters of ancient Kashmiri closely resemble those of Sanscrit, and are read only by a very few of the Hindú priests in Kashmir; and it is from these that the Tibetan characters appear to have been taken. The second important work to which I allude has not been published at all, having been prepared "for political and military reference" for the use of the Government of India. It is 'A Gazetteer of Kashmir and the adjacent districts of Kishtwár, Badrawár, Jamú, Naoshera, Púnch, and the Valley of the Kishen Ganga, by Captain Ellison Bates, Bengal Staff Corps.' This volume was printed in 1873, and will be found very useful to those who can get hold of it. The principal places in the valley, and in the districts mentioned above, are enumerated alphabetically and described; and there are nearly 150 pages in which routes are detailed in such a manner that the traveller will know what he has to expect upon them. It has also an introduction which contains much information in regard to the country generally, but a great deal of this has been taken from the older writers, and some of it does not appear to have been verified. In this respect Dr Elmslie's 'Kashmiri Vocabulary' affords more original information than Captain Bates's 'Gazetteer,' but the latter will be found a very valuable work of reference. The third volume I speak of is of a less learned description, and is 'The Kashmir Handbook: a Guide for Visitors, with Map and Routes. By John Ince, M.D., Bengal Medical Service;' and was published at Calcutta in 1872. This work is not free from errors, as notably in its rendering of the Persian inscriptions on the Takht-i-Súliman, and it indiscriminately heaps together a good deal of information from various sources: it is also very costly for its size; and the arrangement is not very good; but, nevertheless, it is a useful guide-book. Armed with these three recently published volumes, the visitor to Kashmir is supplied with all the information which an ordinary traveller requires in going through a strange country; but their maps are not satisfactory, and he will do well to supply himself with the five mile to the inch sheets of the 'Trigonometrical Survey.' The antiquarian may consult Cunningham's 'Ancient Geography of India,' published in London in 1871, and Lieutenant Cole's 'Illustrations of Ancient Buildings in Kashmir.' For the sportsman there are 'Brinkman's Rifle in Kashmir,' and several other books, more or less of a light character. Bernier, the first of all the European travellers in Kashmir since possibly Marco Polo, is exceedingly good; Jacquemont's Letters are graphic and amusing, though full of insane vanity; and Moorcroft gathered himself much more information regarding the country than almost any other traveller has done, for Elmslie may almost be regarded as having been a resident.

At Pándrathan, not far up the Jhelam from Srinagar, we came upon the site of an ancient capital of the Kashmir valley, and on a very ruinous old temple situated in the middle of a tank, or rather pond. The name of this place affords an excellent example of the present state of our knowledge of Kashmir antiquities; Dr Ince, Captain Bates, and Lieut. Cole, following General Cunningham, deriving it from Puranadhisthana, or "the old chief city"—while Dr Elmslie, adopting its Kashmir sound Pandrenton, derives it from Darendun and his five sons the famous Pandus. Hügel, again, made the mistake of calling it a Búdhist temple, though it is clearly Hindú, and associated with the Naga or snake worship. The water round this temple makes an examination of the interior difficult; but Captain Bates says that the roof is covered with sculpture of such purely classic design, that any uninitiated person who saw it on paper would at once take it for a sketch from a Greek or Roman original. This suggests actual Greek influence; and Cunningham says, in connection with the fluted columns, porches, and pediments of Mártand,—"I feel convinced myself that several of the Kashmirian forms, and many of the details, were borrowed from the temples of the Kabulian Greeks, while the arrangements of the interior and the relative proportions of the different parts were of Hindú origin." It is not improbable, however, that these Kashmir ruins may have belonged to an earlier age, and have had an influence upon Greek architecture instead of having been influenced by it; but, be that as it may, this beautiful little temple, with its profusion of decoration, and grey with antiquity, stands alone, a curious remnant of a lost city and a bygone age—the city, according to tradition, having been burned by King Abhimanu in the tenth century of the Christian era.

Camping for the night some way above this, and on the opposite side of the river, I saw some magnificent hunting-dogs of the Maharajah, which bounded on their chains, and could hardly be held by their keepers on the appearance of an unaccustomed figure. They were longer and higher than Tibetan mastiffs, and had some resemblance in hair and shape to Newfoundlands, but were mostly of a brown and yellow colour. The men in charge said these dogs were used for hunting down large game, especially leopards and wolves, and they were certainly formidable creatures; but the ordinary dogs of Kashmir are very poor animals, even excluding the pariahs. Bates says that the wild dog exists in some parts of this country, as Lár and Maru Wardwan, hunts in packs, and, when pressed by hunger, will destroy children, and even grown persons.

At Bijbehara, immediately above which the Jhelam begins to narrow considerably, there is one of those numerous and exquisitely picturesque-looking Kashmir bridges, resting on large square supports formed of logs of wood laid transversely, with trees growing out of them and overshadowing the bridge itself. This town has 400 houses; and the following analysis, given by Captain Bates, of the inhabitants of these houses, affords a very fair idea of the occupations of a Kashmir town or large village: Mohammedan zemin-

dars or proprietors, 80 houses; Mohammedan shopkeepers, 65; Hindú shopkeepers, 15; Brahmins, 8; pundits, 20; goldsmiths, 10; bakers, 5; washermen, 5; cloth-weavers, 9; blacksmiths, 5; carpenters, 4; toy-makers, 1; surgeons (query, phlebotomists), 2; physicians, 3; leather-workers, 5; milk-sellers, 7; cow-keepers, 2; fishermen, 10; fish-sellers, 7; butchers, 8; musicians, 2; carpet-makers, 2; blanket-makers, 3; Syud (descendant of the prophet), 1; Múllas (Mohammedan clergymen), 12; Pir Zadas (saints!), 40; Fakírs, 20. It will thus be seen that about a fourth of the 400 houses are occupied by the so-called ministers of religion; and that the landed gentry are almost all Mohammedan, though the people of that religion complain of their diminished position under the present Hindú (Sikh) Raj in Kashmir. For these 400 houses there are 10 mosques, besides 8 smaller shrines, and several Hindú temples, yet the Kashmiris are far from being a religious people as compared with the races of India generally. Let us consider how an English village of 4000 or 6000 people would flourish if it were burdened in this way by a fourth of its population being ministers of religion, and in great part ruffians without family ties.

It is a very rough and uncertain calculation which sets down the population of Kashmir at half a million. The whole population of the dominions of the Maharajah is said to be a million and a half, but that includes

Jamú, which is much more populous than Kashmir. Captain Bates says that the estimate of the Maharajah's Government, founded on a partial census taken in 1869, gave only 475,000; but that is better than the population of the year 1835, when oppression, pestilence, and famine had reduced it so low as 200,000. It is, however, not for want of producing that the population is small; for, according to the same authority, "it is said that every woman has, at an average, ten to fourteen children." I do not quite understand this kind of average; but it seems to mean that, on an average every woman has twelve children. That shows a prodigious fecundity, and is the more remarkable when we learn that the proportion of men to women is as three to one. This disproportion is produced by the infamous export of young girls to which I have already alluded; and it is impossible that such a traffic could be carried on without the connivance of the Government, or, at least, of a very large number of the Government officials. Dr Elmslie's estimate of the population of Kashmir, including the surrounding countries and the inhabitants of the mountains, was 402,700—of these 75,000 being Hindús, 312,700 being Súrí Mohammedans, and 15,000 Shias. His estimate of the population of Srinagar was 127,000; but the census of the Government in 1869 gave 135,000 for that city.

At night our boatmen used to catch fish by holding a light over the water in shallow places and transfixing the fish with short spears. So plentiful are these creatures, that between two and three dozen were caught in about half an hour, and many of them above a pound weight. I cannot say much of them, however, as articles of diet. The flesh was insipid and soft as putty, and they were as full of bones as a serpent. Vigne acutely observed that the common Himáliyan trout varies so much in colour and appearance, according to its age, season, and feeding-ground, that the Kashmiris have no difficulty in making out that there are several species of it instead of one. Bates mentions eleven kinds of fish as existent in the waters of Kashmir; but, with one exception, all the fish I had the fortune to see seemed of one species, and were the same in appearance as those which abound in prodigious quantities in the sacred tanks and the ponds in the gardens of the Mogul emperors. The exception was a large fish, of which my servants partook on our way to the Wúlar Lake, and which made them violently sick. Elmslie agrees with Vigne in mentioning only six varieties, and says that the Hindús of Kashmir as well as the Mohammedans, eat fish. Fly-fishing is pursued by the visitors to this country, but the fish do not rise readily to the fly, and Vigne says he found that kind of fishing to be an unprofitable employment. Much, however, depends on the streams selected for this purpose, and an Angler's Guide to Kashmir is still a desideratum.

Dr Ince mentions several places where good casts are to be had, but otherwise he affords Piscator no information.

Islamabad is a fine name, and the town which it denotes is the terminus of the navigation of the upper Jhelam. Boats do not go quite up to it, but within two or three miles of it, and there are a number of highly interesting places round it within a radius of thirty miles. Though the second town in the province, it has only about 1500 houses, and its population is a little doubtful, as the statistician leaves us at liberty to calculate from ten to thirty inhabitants to the house. It lies beneath the apex of the table-land, about 400 feet higher, on which the ruins of Mártand are situated. By the Hindús it is called Anat Nag; and it is of importance to notice the number of Nags there are in Kashmir in general, and in this part of the country in particular, as the name relates to the old serpent-worship of the country. The present town of Islamabad is a miserable place, though it supports no less than fifteen Mohammedan temples, and its productions are shawls, saddle-cloths, and rugs. At the Anat Nag, where the sacred tanks are alive with thousands of tame fish, there are fine plane-trees and a large double-storeyed building for respectable travellers. I only stopped for breakfast; but a very short experience of the interior of that building drove me out into a summer-house in the garden. There is no doubt that if the fleas in the larger edifice were at all unanimous, they could easily push the traveller out of bed. The water of the sacred tanks proceeds from springs, and is slightly sulphureous in character, which does not appear to affect the health of the fish; but it is strictly forbidden to kill these fish.

At Islamabad, when I visited it, a good many newly-plucked crocus-flowers were in course of being dried in order to make saffron, though the great beds of this plant are farther down the Jhelam. I entirely agree with the Emperor Jehángír—the man who would let nobody get drunk except himself—when he says, in his journal, of these crocus-flowers, "Their appearance is best at a distance, and when plucked they emit a strong smell." With some humour Jehángír goes on to say—"My attendants were all seized with a headache; and although I myself was intoxicated with liquor at the time, I also felt my head affected." One would like to know how the Light of the World was affected on this occasion, but history is silent; and, so far as I know, only Tmolus loved to adorn his head with crocus-flowers, as we learn from the first Georgic of Virgil, 56—

"Nonne vides, croceos ut Tmolus odores,
India mittet ebur, molles sua thura Sabæi."

Notwithstanding their odious smell when fresh, these saffron-flowers, when dried, are much valued as condiment for food, as medicine, and as supplying one of the colours with which Hindús make some of their caste-marks. The saffron is called *kóng* in the Kashmiri language; and, according to Elmslie, 180 grains of saffron—the dried stigmata of the *Crocus sativus*—bring nearly a shilling in the valley itself. In good seasons about 2000 *traks* of it are annually produced in the valley, and a *trak* seems to be equal to nearly 10 lb. English. October is the season for collecting the flowers. A dry soil is said to be necessary to the growth of them; and in from eight to twelve years they exhaust the soil so much that eight years are often allowed to elapse before growing it again on the exhausted ground.

The garden at Islamabad was full of soldiers, priests, and beggars; and I was glad to move on five miles to Bawan, on the Liddar, where there is a similar grove and fish-ponds, but far more secluded and with more magnificent trees. This is a delightful place, and almost no one was to be found in the enclosure round the tanks, which are held specially sacred. On the way thither I passed large flocks of ponies on graze, this part of Kashmir being famous for its breed. They are not in any respect, except size, to be compared with the ponies of Tibet; but they are tolerably sure-footed, and can continue pretty long daily journeys. At Srinagar I had purchased, for my own use, a Khiva horse from a Panjabi colonel and well-known sportsman. It had been brought down to India in the year 1872 by the envoy whom the Khan of Khiva sent to Lord Northbrook to ask for assistance against the Russians—a request which was politely but firmly declined. This animal was of an iron-grey colour, with immensely thick, soft, short hair, and was of extraordinary thickness and length in the body, and so shaped that a crupper was required to keep the saddle from slipping on its shoulders. Nothing startled it; it was perfectly sure-footed, and could go long journeys among the mountains; but, though it had been shod, its feet soon got sore when I rode it with any rapidity along the plains. Its favourite pace was an artificially produced one, which consisted chiefly in moving the two feet on one side simultaneously, and in that way, which was rather an easy pace, it went almost as fast as it could trot or canter.

The caves of Bhúmjú, in a limestone cliff near to Bawan, do not present very much of interest. One of them penetrates indefinitely into the mountain, and the belief is that it goes on for twenty miles at least; but it gets so narrow and low that I was fain to come to a stop after going about 200 paces with lighted torches. Dr Ince, in his Kashmir Handbook, calls it the *Long Cave*, and says that it "may be traversed for about 210 feet; beyond this the passage becomes too small to admit a man, even when crawling, so that its total length cannot be ascertained; the natives, however, believe it to be interminable.

It is the abode of numerous bats, and the rock in many places is beautifully honeycombed by the action of water, which is constantly trickling from the higher portions of the roof." The water does trickle down upon one beautifully, but the honeycombing of the rock is the deposits of lime made by the water; and even within the 200 feet a sense of pressure is experienced from the rock-walls. Of course I was told all sorts of stories as to what lies beyond, such as great galleries, halls, sculptures, inscriptions, rivers, waterfalls, evil demons, gods, goddesses, and so forth. All this sounded very interesting and enticing; but worming along a small aperture is by no means suited to my constitution or tastes, so I resisted the temptation, and said to myself, "Let General Cunningham creep up it: he is paid for looking after the archæology of India." About fifty feet from the entrance of this passage, and opening from the left of it, there is a small cave-temple. In a still smaller excavated room nearer the entrance there are the bones of a human being; but skeletons are not scarce in Kashmir, and no particular antiquarian interest attaches to these remains. Another cave in the immediate neighbourhood, which is reached by ladders and very steep stone steps, shows more traces of human workmanship. This is called the *Temple Cave.* At its entrance there is a fine trefoil arch, and on one of the platforms inside there is what Ince speaks of as "a Hindú temple built of stone, of pyramidal shape, about $11\frac{1}{4}$ feet square, and one of the most perfect specimens of this style of architecture to be seen in any part of the country." I examined this cave rather hurriedly, and took no notes concerning it, so I cannot speak with absolute certainty; but my recollection of this Hindú temple and perfect specimen of architecture is, that it was a somewhat ordinary but large *Lingam*, an emblem which need not be explained to polite readers.

On the sides of the bridle-path from these caves to the table-land above, successive lake-beaches were distinctly visible. Geology leaves no doubt as to the truth of the old tradition that the great valley of Kashmir was once a magnificent lake, which has now subsided, leaving only remnants of itself here and there. The name of this ancient lake was Sahtísar, and the mountains surrounding it were thickly peopled. The tradition goes on to say that the lake became the abode of a terrible monster called Yaldeo, who, after devouring all the fish there were in the great water, proceeded to appease his hunger by devouring the inhabitants of the surrounding hills, who, in consequence, had to fly into the higher mountains above. At this stage the traditional Rishi, or holy man, makes his appearance on the field: his name was Kashaf, and his great sanctity had given him the power of working miracles. This holy man proceeded to the north-west end of the lake, where the Jhelam now issues from the valley at Baramúla, struck the ground with his trident, and the opening earth caused the waters of the lake to disappear, which soon brought about the death of the monster Yaldeo. Hence the name Kashmir, which is made out to be a contraction of Kashafmar, the place or country of Kashaf, the Rishi, who may thus be said to have made it. As to the truth or probability of this story about Kashaf, I need say nothing. The Hindú may turn round upon us and argue: "You say the age of miracles is over, and you can show no modern ones in support of your religion more probable or less puerile in appearance than those which the masses of this country believe that our devotees still accomplish. As the age of miracles is past for you, so, unhappily, is for us the age for the incarnation and appearance on earth of our gods, otherwise you would not be here. This we have long been taught, and see abundant reason to believe, is the *Kala Yogi*, or Black Age, when the gods have retired from the earth; but that does not prove they have never been here before. We find that even the rationalistic Socrates did not deny the actual existence of the gods of Greece; and that, in an age of culture and criticism, the historian Plutarch thoroughly believed in them. Is the universal belief of whole nations and of hundreds of millions of people for tens of centuries, to go for nothing in elucidation and proof of the past history of the human race? If so, what importance, what value, can we attach to the reasoning and conclusions of a few Western scientific men and critical historians who have formed a school within the last century? The probability would be that they, too, have fallen into delusion, and are blindly leading the blind. It is more rational to believe that the gods of ancient Greece and India really existed, as at the time they were universally believed to exist, and that they have now, alas! passed away from this portion of the universe, or have ceased to display themselves to the degraded human race."

Some way up on the table-land, in a now lonely and desolate position, which commands the great valley of Kashmir, I found the wonderful ruin of the great temple of Mártand. Vigne was quite justified in saying that, "as an isolated ruin, this deserves, on account of its solitary and massive grandeur, to be ranked, not only as the first ruin of the kind in Kashmir, but as one of the noblest amongst the architectural relics of antiquity that are to be seen in any country." According to tradition, a large city once stood round it—and there are indications that such may have been the case; but now this wonderful ruin stands alone in solitary unrelieved glory. It is strange, in this secluded Eastern country, where the works of man are generally so mean, and surrounded by these lofty snowy mountains, to come upon a ruin which, though so different in character, might yet vie with the finest remains of Greek and

Roman architecture, in its noble dimensions, in its striking and beautiful form, in the gigantic stones of which it is composed, in its imposing position, and by the manner in which gloom and grandeur are softened by its exquisite pillars, and its delicate though now half-defaced ornamentation.

This temple is situated within an oblong colonnade, composed of fluted pillars and decaying trefoil arches and walls. It rises above these in such perfect majesty that one can hardly believe its present height is only about forty feet. Its majestic outlines are combined with rich and elaborate details; but a description of these, or even of its outlines, would give no idea of its grand general effect, while desolation and silence are around. Moreover, as Captain Bates remarks, "It overlooks the finest view in Kashmir, and perhaps in the known world. Beneath it lies the paradise of the East, with its sacred streams and glens, its brown orchards and green fields, surrounded on all sides by vast snowy mountains, whose lofty peaks seem to smile upon the beautiful valley below."

Baron Hügel asserts of this ancient ruin, which he calls by its name of Korau Pandau, or, more usually, Pandu-Koru, that it "owes its existence and name to the most ancient dynasty of Kashmir. The great antiquity of the ruin will be acknowledged, therefore, when I remind the reader that the Pandu dynasty ended 2500 years before Christ, after governing

Kashmir, according to their historians, nearly 1300 years." That would give an antiquity of nearly 5000 years to this temple: later archæologists, however, are more moderate in their demands upon our belief, and set it down as erected between A.D. 370 and 500; but the reasons for this are by no means conclusive. When one knows nothing about the history of an ancient temple, it is always safe to call it a temple of the sun; but in this case there is some support for the supposition in the Sanscrit meaning of the word Mártand. That, however, does not throw any light upon its age; and we may as well ascribe it to the Pandu dynasty as to any other period of ancient history. Kashmir may have been the mountain-retreat where Pandu himself died before his five sons began to enact the scenes of the Mahabharata; but modern Indian archæologists have got into a way of constructing serious history out of very slight and dubious references. This is not to be wondered at, because the first synthetical inquiries, as conducted by Lassen in particular, yielded such magnificent historical results, that later antiquaries have been under a natural temptation to raise startling edifices out of much more slender and dubious material. Hügel's date is quite as good as that of A.D. 370; and where all is pretty much speculation, we are not called upon to decide.

But sufficient is dimly seen in the mists of antiquity to reveal something of the past, as we stand by this ancient temple and gaze over the Valley of Roses. A temple such as Mártand, and the city which once stood in its neighbourhood, would not, in all probability, have found a place on this plateau, except at a period when the valley was a great lake. Hence we may presume that this temple and city of the Pandus belonged to a very ancient period when the inhabitants of Kashmir were located on the slopes of the mountains round a great beautiful lake, more picturesquely surrounded than any sheet of water now existing upon the earth. The people were Indo-Aryans, retaining much of the simplicity and rich, powerful naturalness of the Vedic period, but civilised in a very high degree, and able to erect splendid temples to the Sun-god. Associated with their Aryan religion they indulged in the serpent-worship which they had adopted from more primitive races, and perhaps from the rude Turanians of the neighbouring abodes of snow. In these ancient times the people and rulers of Kashmir would be very effectually secluded from aggressive forces. No rapacious neighbours would be strong enough to disturb their family nationality; and in their splendid climate, with a beautiful lake connecting their various settlements, it is far from unlikely that the Aryans in Kashmir may have presented a powerful, natural, and art-loving development, analogous to that which, about the same period, they were beginning to obtain in the favoured Isles of Greece. But, whether produced by natural or artificial causes—whether due to Fate or to a short-sighted desire for land—the disappearance of the lake and the desiccation of the valley, which tradition assigns to the year 266 B.C., must have wrought a great change in their circumstances, associated as it was with the increase of the warlike mountain-tribes around. Gradually the valley-plain would afford a more fertile and easily worked soil than the slopes of the mountains, which were soon forsaken for it. The primitive serpent-worship and the natural Vedic religion would be affected by the evil Brahminism of the plains of India; and this, again, had to struggle against the rising influence of Búdhism, which is unfavourable to warlike qualities. Tartar chiefs began to dispute the kingdom with Hindú dynasties; fierce mountaineers in the Hindú Kúsh would greedily listen to rumours about the terrestrial paradise; and there would be the commencement of that state of hopeless vassalage which has condemned the Kashmiri to centuries of misery, and developed in his character its falsity and feebleness. Nothing more definite can be discerned of that early period except that the Kashmiris were a brave and warlike people; and that, even then, its women were famous for their beauty, as illustrated by the legend of the two angels Hárat and Márat, who were sent on earth by God to reform men by their example, but were ensnared by the beauty of a fair Kashmiri. Other countries are not without stories of the kind;

but to Kashmir it was reserved to corrupt the reforming angels by means of a simple courtesan. Mermaids, too, there appear to have been in the lake—the beautiful daughters of the serpent-gods, before whom even Brahmins trembled and were powerless. With the Mohammedans there comes a more troubled era. After an ineffectual attempt in the end of the tenth century, Mohammed of Ghuzni conquered Kashmir in the beginning of the eleventh century; chiefs of Dardistan and kings of Tibet make incursions into it, and forcibly marry the daughters of its tottering Hindú monarchs; even distant Turkistan sends vultures to the prey; and the only heroism is displayed by Queen Rajpútani, the last of its Hindú sovereigns, who, rather than marry an usurping prime minister, upbraided him for his ingratitude and treachery, and stabbed herself before him. The sixth of the Moslem monarchs who succeeded and who reigned in 1396 A.D., was the ignorant zealot Sikander, nicknamed Bhútshikan or the Image-breaker, who devoted his energies to destroying the ancient architecture and sculpture of Kashmir, and succeeded only too well in his endeavours. In the next century reigned the Badshah or Great King, Zein-ul-abdin, who gave Kashmir its most celebrated manufacture, by introducing wool from Tibet and weavers from Turkistan, as also *papier-maché* work and the manufacture of paper. This extraordinary man reigned fifty-three years; he was a patron of literature, a poet, and a lover of field-sports, as well as a most practical ruler, and he gave the country a great impetus. This vantage-ground, however, was lost almost immediately after his death, and, as he had foreseen, by the growing power of the native class of the Cháks, who soon rose to supreme power in Kashmir by placing themselves at the head of the national party. Under one of their chiefs the valley asserted itself nobly and victoriously against its external enemies; but this advantage was soon lost, through internal jealousies, enmities, and treachery; and a request for assistance offered by one of the Chák chiefs afforded Akbar the pretext for conquering the country and making it a part of the great Mogul Empire.

On the way from Mártand to Achibal I saw the only serpent which appeared before me in Kashmir; but, before I could get hold of it, the wily creature had disappeared in the grass; and those who have closely observed serpents know how readily they do disappear, and how wonderfully the more innocuous ones, even the large rock-snakes, manage to conceal themselves from the human eye in short grass, where it might be thought that even a small snake could easily be detected. I have been instructed by Indian snake-charmers, who are rather averse to parting with their peculiar knowledge, and have tried my hand successfully on a small wild cobra, between three and four feet in length, so I speak with knowledge and experience on this subject; but this Kashmir snake I refer to eluded my grasp. It was only about two and a-half or three feet long, and had the appearance of a viper; but I do not know what it was. The *ganus*, or *aphia*, is a species of viper which is said to be very dangerous, and is most dreaded by the people of the country. The latter name has suggested, and very properly suggests, the ὄφις of the Greeks. Serpents are scarce in Kashmir, and do not at all interfere with the great pleasure of camping-out in that country. There is more annoyance from leopards, especially for people who have small dogs with them; for the leopard has quite a mania for that sort of diet, and will not hesitate to penetrate into your tent at night in quest of his game.

Achibal and Vernag are two delightful places, such as no other country in the world can present; but their general characteristics are so similar that I shall not attempt to describe them separately. They resemble the Shalimar and Nishat Gardens, to which I have already alluded, but are more secluded, more beautiful, and more poetic. *Bal* means a place, and *Ash* is the satyr of Kashmir traditions. *Ver*, according to Elmslie, is the name of the district in which the summer palace is situated; but it is properly *vir*, which may be either the Kashmir word for the weeping willow (which would suit it well enough), or an old Aryan form for the Latin *vir*. On the latter supposition it would be the haunt of the man-serpents, and it is exactly the place that would have suited them in ancient or any times.

Both Achibal and Vernag were favourite haunts of our friend Jehángír, and of his wife Núr Jahán, the Light of the World. If that immortal pair required any proof of their superiority, it would be found in the retreats which they chose for themselves, and which mark them out as above the level of ordinary and even royal humanity. At Achibal, a spring of water, the largest in Kashmir, rises at the head of the beautiful pleasure-garden, underneath an overshadowing cliff, and this is supposed to be the reappearance of a river which disappears in the mountains some miles above. At Vernag, also, a large spring bubbles up in almost icy coldness beneath a gigantic cliff, fringed with birch and light ash that

> "Pendent from the brow
> Of yon dim cave in seeming silence make
> A soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs.'

It is more specially interesting, however, as the source of the Jhelam or Hydaspes; and as I sat beside it on an evening of delicious repose, an old schoolboy recollection came to mind, and it was pleasant to find that if I could not venture to claim entirely the

> "Integer vitæ scelerisque purus,"

yet I had escaped the Maurian darts, and had been enabled to travel in safety—

> "Sive per Syrtes iter æstuosas,
> Sive facturus per inhospitalem
> Caucasum, vel quæ loca fabulosus
> Lambit Hydaspes."

SALMO-HUCHO FISHING IN BAVARIA.

BY GILFRID W. HARTLEY.

[*MAGA.* MARCH 1884.]

A RAPID river passes at the foot of the little town of Tölz in Bavaria, on its way to the Black Sea *viâ* the Danube,—of a deep blue-green colour in fine weather, and white and yeasty-looking in spate. It is but a small river compared with the Danube, yet probably most English children have its name impressed upon their minds long before they hear of the great stream in which its waters are lost. For if you ask them about the Isar, they will tell you of the fiery Huns and furious Franks, the waving banners of Munich, the white graves of the soldiers, and—most of all—how it "rolls rapidly." But it was by poetical licence that Campbell coupled Hohenlinden and the Isar, for the quiet meadows on which the chivalry of Munich charged are some distance from the latter. The Englishman who, at the end of last September, drove through the steep streets of Tölz, and climbed laboriously up towards the mountains in a diligence, forgot all about the dead warriors and their quarrels, and looked at its blue waters solely from a fisherman's point of view. In ordinary weather it runs swiftly within well-defined banks—no rocks stand up perpetually fretting and fighting with its waves; and if the huge rafts of silver fir, which float down in great numbers, shoot the lashers in safety, they have nothing to fear from running aground on its shingly banks except delay. But in bad weather, after heavy rains, it loses its bright transparent colour, and becomes a furious milky-coloured torrent, carrying down an immense body of sand, with quantities of chips, and logs, and trees, and anything it can get the grip of, when it encroaches on the land. It spreads out to a breadth of a quarter of a mile, or more, when it can; and the worn grey shingle it has deposited, and the stunted, smothered-looking alders it invades and prevents from flourishing, form rather dreary objects at low water in an otherwise beautiful valley. The shingle runs out in spits, sometimes forming a bar almost across the stream, and so helps to make many fine pools of all sizes, which have generally a rapid, sometimes, alas! a too rapid "tail." Below the principal dams also there are generally large pools, deep, and often with a strong backwater. The Englishman was on his way to Lenggries, a little village a few miles up the valley, to join a friend, and, in company with him, to wage war on a species of salmon which inhabits these waters. In the still pools, and in the quieter runs, swims a fish called in German *huchen*, the classical name being *Salmo hucho.* He prowls about below the lashers, seeking in the froth for unwary trout, or dace, or insects; and indeed, judging by the reports which were given of him, he might be considered capable of devouring anything under a good-sized child. Our fishermen, casting about for information as to what was to them an entirely new kind of fish, were told that he ran up to 90 lb. in weight. Now a 90-lb. fish, combining the fierceness and voracity of a pike with the strength of a salmon, in a rapid stream with deep shelving banks, might fairly be considered an ugly customer, capable of drowning a man who was unfortunate enough to get in over his waders; and perhaps some little credit is due to the pair who voluntarily went to attack him in his stronghold, for no one obliged them to do it. That the *huchen* proved not to be of such dimensions was not their fault, and should not be brought against them: they were prepared to tackle the 90-pounder if he turned up.

At Lenggries the traveller found his friend waiting the arrival of the "Post." He was an English admiral, and we will give him his title in our paper; whilst the former will, for the sake of euphony, be referred to hereafter by the letter G. The Admiral, who had been fishing for a few days, had killed one *huchen* of about 7 lb., and lost several more in a very provoking way: they had broken, not the gut or line, but the hooks of the Steward tackle he used. Three times had he got hold of a fish in a certain pool, and the creatures had invariably retired with the greatest rapidity to a part of it where the current was very strong, quickly gone through some performance or other there, and then disappeared, taking with them, probably as a memento of their visit, a bit of steel. It is not every day that Bavarian *huchen* meet an English admiral, and they acted in much the same way as Mr Calverley's maiden did, when she secured her precious cherry-stones. G. listened with great attention to this account, and declared that no fish could break any of his tackle; but there are other ways of killing a cat than drowning her, and it is a foolish thing to boast when a *huchen* has anything to say in the matter. The Admiral soon went off to the river, G. shortly afterwards following him, but they missed one another, and did not meet till night.

The latter, left to his own devices, put on a salmon-fly, found his way over the river, and ran promptly into the arms of two big men, who seemed to look on him as rather an intruder. Under the shelter of umbrellas they were smoking cigars and watching a third man, who was also smoking, and fishing with an implement and tackle which needs a more eloquent pen than ours to do justice to. He was the biggest of the lot—a great, stout, fine-looking old Bavarian, with a thick white moustache and a ruddy face; and he was spinning, what in courtesy might be called a minnow, but in reality was a good-sized trout. It was not the length of his rod, or its weight, which were so astonishing—it was the inordinate thickness of its top, the stupendous hook, and the cable which connected the two, which was similar to that used by the ancient "who sat upon a rock and bobbed for whale." There was a good deal of lead hanging about the line near the swivels, and when the apparatus was pitched into the water, it made a splash which could be heard a long way off, and if it had alighted on the head of any *huchen* it would certainly have hurt him very much. But lest it should be thought that we are poking fun at this gentleman, or affecting to despise his proceedings, we hasten to say that he was a master of his craft, and needed no lessons from any one as to spinning his trout. He was the Oberförster of the Duke of Nassau, the head of the woodmen and keepers, and we got to know him and like him very much. Possibly no one, after reading this paper, will feel inclined to start off for the Bavarian Oberland for the sake of the sport we describe, but it is as well to say here that the river is strictly preserved, and not open to strangers. The Oberförster span his pool without anything appearing, and then G. tried another with his "thunder and lightning." The three men were interested in the performance, but evidently did not think a fly likely to do any good, whilst the long salmon-rod seemed to them rather a slim weapon for its work. It was an Irish greenheart, and, in reality, stronger than the giant's pole; but they judged by bulk, and did not make allowance for the difference in the wood. But that pole must be of good stuff too. It was popularly supposed that when the Oberförster hooked anything under 10 lb. he threw it over his shoulder—as a boy does a small trout or parr. At any rate, in that rapid river, often with tree-covered or broken banks, and with such a short line, the fish must be dealt with very summarily. We would have given good money to have seen him ram his great hook into the inside of a 20-pounder, and watch how he played him. The interior arrangement might give way — that would be the only chance for the *huchen* — none of the tackle would: there were about thirty yards of a kind of window-blind cord on the reel. Presently it began to drizzle, and then to pour, and the two spectators went home, but G. and the Oberförster sat in the shelter of the eaves of a little toll-house on the bridge, and discussed fishing in England, Scotland, and Bavaria, and chamois-shooting, and the price of wood, and many other things — the natural courtesy of this forester preventing him from even smiling at the ludicrous blunders and idiotic mistakes of his companion. After the Admiral had been given up as drowned, he appeared, and reported having lost a *huchen*, a good one, on natural bait.

That evening G. was introduced to the society at the Post. The men were a fine-looking lot. There was only one lady, and she was fine-looking too. The landlord had a particularly handsome face. He was a silent, unemotional individual, who drank his own good beer all day long and all night long with his friends and guests, but never seemed the worse for it; and his eye and skin were as clear as if he were dieted regularly for the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race. Then there was a burly baron, such as one reads of in books, clad in the green-trimmed garments in which sporting Germans take delight. Also the doctor, the inspector of taxes, the schoolmaster, a retired priest, an artist, an individual who acted as paymaster to the duke, and a lieutenant of a cavalry regiment from Munich. This officer had married the landlord's sister, and though we mention her last she deserves the first place, for she had a beautiful face, and a stature and figure verging on the gigantic. A few years ago there can have been few women between Lenggries and Munich whom that Frau Lieutenant need have looked on as rivals in good looks. This couple had a daughter called Josephine; and G. being the fortunate possessor of a very long Pharaoh's serpent cut in horn, and living in a carved bone box, gave it to her, and won her small heart. All these people, except the baron and the lieutenant, lived permanently in the village, and they came with unfailing regularity each night to the inn, sometimes to eat their supper, but always to drink beer, play cards, and then drink beer again: when they were not drinking they were smoking. None of them were what we in England would call "gentlemen"; but I fancy if the question of condescension ever came into their minds with reference to mixing with the foreigners—they considered that it lay on their side. They held their little nightly club at the inn: if a stranger was well behaved to them, they would be civil to him. But that could not well be perfect equality—so they would have said—between wandering tourists, who might be anybodies, and established residents always to be found at their posts. Probably G., if he had been there by himself, would never have advanced further in intimacy with them than to be politely saluted on entering or leaving a room, or have some casual remark made to him about the weather. But the Admiral could talk German as well as any one in Lenggries. He had none of the pride which most Englishmen are supposed to have; and before he had been there many days, he was on intimate terms with the whole club, and G., being his friend, shared the intimacy. After supper they always joined the circle at the large table, and G. would sit one night between the priest and the baron, another between the doctor and the artist, and on a third was able to discuss—to a very limited extent—the advantages of horse-breeding establishments with the cavalry lieutenant. At first the presence of strangers made a little awkwardness at this big table—but it soon wore off; and after a short time an outsider peeping in and surveying the noisy talkers, might have thought that they had all run about and played with one another in petticoats.

So the first day passed, and G. went to bed and dreamed partly of *huchen* catching, and partly of going in the morning to pay his formal call in dress clothes at the Schloss, the idea of which rather frightened him.

The two friends were down by the river in good time the next day, and they went straight to a pool where the Admiral said he knew there was a *huchen*. It was a niceish pool to look at, with two or three big stones in it, suitable for fish to sit under, and a rapid and strong stream at its head, tail, and further side, for the pool only stretched half over the river. The first portion of it could be commanded from the bank, and the Admiral began operations, throwing his trout up stream and bringing it very quickly down with the current, and then as quickly up. He had not made a dozen casts when the water opened a little, a head appeared, there was a good splash, and G. saw his first *huchen*. The fish seemed a heavy one, he made the rod bend well, and took out line freely. There was some anxiety felt as to whether he would run out into the stream or pass down to the awkward corner at the bottom of the pool; but he left no one in suspense long. He got the trout and its hook out of his mouth somehow, and quickly went off—to Tölz, probably, to tell his friends about the foreign devils who had come to Lenggries. Great was the disgust of the two he left behind: with a rueful countenance the Admiral rearranged his trout, which had been sorely doubled up by what it had gone through. There were teeth-marks on the shoulder, but the big hook had somehow missed its hold. Wading was now necessary. G. went into the water and essayed to do battle with its inhabitants. He was not so good a hand at spinning as his friend, and his bait made a fearful splash; but, nevertheless, in three minutes he too was fast in a *huchen.* And this creature also, finding that what he had got was not what he had wanted, spat it out, and went away shaking his tail. Then for half an hour the men sat and groaned in chorus on the bank, the while, with trembling fingers, they put on a fresh bait, added more hooks, and then G. once more waded in, and he had not fished more than half-a-dozen yards when up came a third *huchen*, seized the trout, and made off as if he meant to stick to it for life. This time he had, or ought to have had, four hooks in his mouth. "Aha! the third time for luck; we shall have him now." But will our readers believe that in five minutes this fish also got off? We are not writing a romance, or an account of an ideal day's fishing, but stern facts; and that fish got away. It does not seem as if it was a thing likely to happen in real life, but it did. Those left behind almost wept. The wretched trout came back empty, blobbing and jumping on the stream, tied up in a kind of knot, and spinning in a way that was enough to frighten a shark. We draw a veil over the next half-hour's conversation.

G. viciously stripped off the curly trout, and swore it was no good trying any more till they had got the Admiral's gaff-hook stuck in it as a weapon of offence. (Now the Admiral used a small click manufactured by himself out of a large corrugated-iron dolphin-hook.) It was plainly no use going on in that fashion; and besides, they had to pay their call at the Schloss, so they left the pool and went growling home to change. "We must yack it into them," said the Admiral; "we shall never do any good till we yack it into them." The visit to the Hochburg was pleasant, and not formidable. The ladies showed the strangers over the large stables, and were much distressed at the bad behaviour of their *huchen.*

Then there came a broiling day with a bright sun, —"good for fishing," said the Oberförster. It might have been, but somehow nothing was done. The Englishmen, the Oberförster and his rod, drove a few miles up the river. They had some beer at a snug little *wirtschaft*, and then they all fished. They tried trout and worm and minnow, and flailed away diligently, but with no result. The Admiral lost his worm-tackle, G. got over the tops of his waders, and the Oberförster was so exhausted at the end of the day that he had to be left at another *wirtschaft* to recruit himself. Hearty maledictions were bestowed on the *huchen*, and on the great dolphin-hook. G. cut this off the gaff, and buried as much of it as he could in a trout of gigantic size, from which an inch or two stuck out like the fluke of an anchor. It was so heavy that it sank the bait without the need of lead, and was always catching in the bottom. "Ah! if I could *only* get it well into a big one," said the disconsolate owner, fondly eyeing it.

There was a sweet simplicity about the domestic arrangements and commissariat at Lenggries, and surely never since the days of Dick Swiveller's Marchioness had men so queer a little handmaiden to look after them. The inn was full, but for the sum of four shillings per head per week, large bedrooms were secured over the principal shop in the place. The small lassie, aged about ten, was the only servant: she was a bright, queer, barefooted little thing, exactly like the Marchioness, except in being better fed. For coffee in the morning and three rolls, threepence was charged. At the Post it was customary to pay for one's food directly it was eaten, and dinner seldom cost less than 90 *pfennigs*, or about elevenpence; though it was indeed possible, by indulging one's appetite in beetroot or some such luxury, to bring it up to fifteenpence or so. The very plain food was served up hot, and everything was clean, so no one grumbled at the absence of a tablecloth. After supper and a cigar and some beer with the club, the Englishmen used to retire to their own quarters. There the Admiral generally produced his tackle and overhauled and tested it, and tied various hooks which would hold the 90-pounder himself if he got into them. He discoursed, too, eloquently of his travels. He had been all over the world, had met many distinguished people and seen many strange sights; and he had had the yellow fever, the small-pox, and the cholera, and yet lived to catch *huchen* in Bavaria. So G. listened to tales of fishing for infernal machines in the Baltic, and for salmon in Newfoundland, and queer doings in the tropics, and the nights never seemed long.

After the hot day came a very wet one, and the beautiful blue of the water disappeared. No one seems to account very satisfactorily for this colour. It is to be seen in little pools, and crevasses, and moulins on glaciers, and high up in the Alps where every footstep leaves a delicately tinted hollow in the white snow, and in rivers where the glacier-mud has settled, and in rivers also which rise at a comparatively low elevation. It cannot be the sky which causes it, for clouds and rain do not drive it away. It is sometimes seen on high mountains in Scotland, when the snow is fresh. It is sometimes too blue, and looks artificial, as if a tank in some works had burst, and the dye which was meant for Bavarian soldiers' uniforms had escaped into the stream. The peat-stained burns of the Highlands fit far better with mountain scenery, or the black waters of such loch-fed rivers as the Awe and Ness. G. often thought of the Argyleshire stream, for he had been fishing there a few weeks before. Considering that the Awe and the Isar are both rivers flowing through a hilly country, there are wonderfully few points of resemblance between them,—unless, indeed, the Highlanders who have been sleeping for 500 years under their many cairns just below the rock of Brander, can be compared to the warriors who fell at Hohenlinden. Five miles of rocky bed carries the dark waters of the one into Loch Etive, and the other rolls swiftly and smoothly to the Danube, and then travels for weeks across Europe to the Black Sea.

The next day was G.'s last at Lenggries, and the Admiral, to give his friend a better chance, unselfishly refused to take a rod, contenting himself with a gaff. The water had cleared a little, though it was still loaded with sand. The men walked up the valley to a place where a smaller stream, called the Jäche, joined the Isar. The place where the rivers met was very beautiful; the hills were densely wooded with fir, but their dark masses were brightened up here and there by tiny bits of gorgeous colouring from beech and birch and plane tree which had caught the first touch of frost. It was too early for uniform autumn tints, but the reds and yellows and crimsons were the more striking for their being so widely scattered. On the barer hills narrow strips of plantation had been made in regular order for the sake of shelter. A number of men were working on the rivers at their rafts,—picturesquely clad, wild-looking fellows, deft workers with the axe, and, if report does them no wrong, with the gun also. There are many chamois on the mountains, and hares and roe. In the wilder parts of the Tyrol the peasants are often great poachers, and wage a desperate and sometimes bloody war with the keepers. The work of the river-raftsmen must be often dangerous. One evening in the dusk G. was startled by seeing what he thought was a woman's figure standing on a narrow plank over a foaming lasher. But it was only an image of the Virgin, and was so contrived that, whilst one side represented her, the other gave the artist's idea of some masculine saint; and no doubt many a hearty prayer is sent up to the quiet figures as the rafts begin to feel the force of the current which is to carry them over the fall.

About a mile from the junction there is a dam, with the usual pool below. G. fished one side, and then cautiously waded across and commenced operations from the other, just where a heavy beam lay over part of the channel. Here he threw his trout.

From the dark shadow cast by the beam a huge fish shot out, showing a yard-long brown back, in striking contrast to the clear green water in which he moved. He seemed to hesitate a second, and then ran at the dead trout and seized it, and retreated hastily to his lurking-place. Clearly and indisputably this was the time to follow the Admiral's advice, and yack it into him, and G. struck at the *huchen* as if he had been a crocodile, and the tackle adapted for the capture of such an animal. Nothing gave.

"By George!" said G. to himself (it was no good shouting his views across the stream to his friend), "I believe I have you now."

Directly the great *huchen* felt the unpleasant accompaniment carried by the trout, he gave up all idea of going back to his own dwelling, and bolted out with a fierce rush right into the middle of the stream. He took out twenty yards of line, and then it was the old, old story—as old as love or anything else,—*he* got away. It was a horrid exhibition of brute force, quite calculated to make one sick. There was no skill about it—no science; an armchair or a hen-coop could have done what he did just as well, if they had been lightly hooked. The Admiral, on the other bank, had just got his gaff ready—he laid it aside and lit a cigar. It is possible he said something, but if he did, the roar of the stream prevented it being heard. G. cut off his useless minnow and threw it away, putting on a

Loch Tay phantom,—and he went back to a bridge which crosses the Jäche. In a pool under it he got a pull from something—it might have been a stone, but it was uncommon like a fish. A friend of ours, when he has been fishing some time without doing any good, is in the habit of thrashing the water for a few minutes with his rod—thrashing it till it foams. He says it is good for soothing the mind, and also calling the attention of the fish. Under that bridge G., out of sight of the Admiral, relieved his outraged feelings in the same way. Presently the latter sauntered up, placidly smoking.

"Well, was he a good one?"

"Good one! Didn't you see him? But I did drive it into him that time!"

"Ah! but you didn't drive it in hard enough."

Then they tramped sulkily over a horrid wilderness of shingle and rubbishy trees, till they came to another dam on the larger river again. Here the water was still thick, and the work seemed hopeless. But the longest lane has a turn; the most weary night must end. The despised and much-abused artificial minnow, which had been declared by the collective wisdom of the whole club to be an absurdity, was taken possession of by a *huchen,* and this time really appreciated. He expressed a strong desire to rub himself under the wood-work of the dam, and then evinced a remarkable attraction for a post whose top was just visible under water. "He say he 'bliged" to run round that post. But there was more true nobleness about this *huchen* than any of the others, and when this pleasure was denied him, he gave in, came to the side, and was whipped out by the Admiral before he had quite made up his mind as to the proper course to pursue. He was a handsome, well-fed 5-lb. fish, with a dark back and grey sides, set off with the tiniest red spots. But G., as he looked at him, thought—"Ah, if I hadn't lost that other fellow!"

Later on a suspicious old *huchen* came out of his quarters into a rapid stream to look at the bait He made a run at it. It is difficult, when one sees a fish do this, to prevent jerking the bait a little, or else staying its motion. After two or three minutes' delay it was shown him again. He made another rush at it, but did not touch. Another wait, and a third time the same performance was gone through. The fourth time the bait was left to itself; the ghostly-looking, shadowy form did not appear. G. did not now want to catch such a horrid, ill-bred, and evil-minded old fish, and—after trying him once more—left him. Soon after, however, another came up—a lively gentleman. He took the fisherman a merry run for 150 yards down a very rapid stream, and was well gaffed by the Admiral before he was half done. He weighed about 6 lb.

The shades of evening found the men once more at the ill-omened pool where the three fish were lost the first day. G. tried it carefully down, but just before finishing got his bait stuck on a stone deep in the water. Something had to go, and as the stone declined to move, it was the gut: the good brown minnow was left behind. G. reeled up and landed, and prepared to take his rod down.

"You have another minnow?" said the Admiral.

"Yes; but it's not worth while trying it."

But the indefatigable Admiral got it out.

"There's always," he said, slowly, "another *huchen* in that pool;" and he was right — for in three minutes the blue minnow was inside him (the fish). He was a big one. He ran madly out into the middle of the river, and set out for Tölz as hard as he could go. G. had to scramble up an awkward bank, for the water grew too deep to follow in; but the *huchen* was still on. He raced along the firm ground, and then had to jump into the stream again, to avoid some trees; but still the *huchen* was on. He got out fifty yards of line, however, whilst he had a chance; and as the powerful current aided his own energetic exertions, it was not easy to get a pull on him. A long sandy spit let the fisherman gain a little; and then, just as the latter made up his mind that it would be necessary to give the fish the butt at the end of the spit, owing to the wooded banks which followed, the fish also made up his mind and—broke his hold.

The Admiral arrived in a great hurry, just in time not to see the last of him.

"How," said G., "can one yack a hook into a brute like that? and what is the good of trying it, when they have mouths made of china or cast steel?" It was a disastrous finish to a not altogether unsuccessful day.

The next day G. left Lenggries and went to Munich. There at the exhibition he wandered through acres of pictures, many beautiful, many most miserable, and some ghastly and horrible and hideous to a degree. One small painting he coveted, called "The Poacher's Grave,"—a man lying on his face in the snow in a chasm between steep rocks from which he had fallen,—a wild picture of an open grave in which he might lie for ever and not be seen again by mortal eyes. Then he began the long journey back to Argyleshire. He left the Admiral behind; and that gentleman, after contending with noble obstinacy against heavy spates, which occurred when he was well, and bad colds, which kept him to his room when the river was in order, and moreover, against vicious and wicked *huchen*, succeeded in capturing a 12-pounder and an 8-pounder, besides smaller fry. These men had to encounter many difficulties. They had to find out where, in many miles of water, the fish lay, and what they would take, and how they would take it; and they had to teach themselves to use strange tackle. But if ever they fish again in the Isar, they flatter themselves that they will be able to render a better account of the Salmonidæ which inhabit its blue waters.

We can fancy some one throwing down this book and saying, "Why, confound the fellow! he never got the 90-pounder at all, or anything like it." We take credit for the omission. It would have been just as easy to have made out that we got,—not the 90-pounder, for that would have attracted attention, and might have led to inquiry—but say a dozen, running from 50 to 75 lb. Then a little judicious reticence as to names would have made all safe. Our paper is a full, true, and faithful recital of what really happened, and we think that such an account of a fishing expedition is very rare. And if the reader does not believe us now, we hope he will go to Lenggries to find out for himself, and fish (without leave) in the Isar. There, whether he meets with *huchen* or not, he would soon make the acquaintance of the Herr Oberförster, and of his stalwart, heavy-shoed, green-footless-stocking-wearing subordinates.

TRAVELS IN CIRCASSIA.

BY LAURENCE OLIPHANT.

[*MAGA.* JUNE-JULY 1856.]

I.

THE object of this sketch is to give some account, from personal observation, of Abkhasia and its neighbouring province of Circassia.

The capital town of Abkhasia is Souchoum Kaleh. Here it was that a large Russian force was permanently garrisoned in the war with Russia, and it was hoped that the troops of the Czar, supported by the powerful influence of Prince Michael, would eventually lead to the subjugation of those wild mountaineers who professed to own allegiance to their prince, and to the annexation of the entire province to the Muscovite Empire. That anticipation had not been realised when the war broke out. Notwithstanding the exertions of Prince Michael in favour of Russia, the greater portion of his subjects could not be induced to relinquish that independence which he (perhaps compelled by the force of circumstances) had already forfeited. Secure in their mountain strongholds, they bade defiance to the imperial troops, who dared not penetrate beyond a few miles into the interior. A line of Russian forts along the coast, however, ensured the obedience of those of the inhabitants who preferred their worldly possessions to their liberty; while, as the plains which extend in a south-easterly direction from Souchoum Kaleh increase in breadth as the mountains recede from the sea-shore, the population which inhabits them found any attempt at opposition hopeless, and have long since resigned themselves to their fate, to which they have been the more easily reconciled, as they are opposed in religion to the Mahometan mountaineers in the north, and sympathise in their Christian worship with their wily conquerors. These have sedulously fostered that disunion in the country which a difference of faith was likely to engender; and there can be little doubt that, if the old *régime* be restored, this policy will be at last successful.

Prince Michael, called by the Turks Hamid Bey, is himself a Christian; but his father was a Mahometan, and most of his family still profess that faith. He has two country residences, one situated at Shemsherrai, about thirty-six miles to the south-east of Souchoum Kaleh; the other at Souksou, about fifteen miles to the north-west of that place. The former of these I had already visited. A large wooden mansion it was, with elaborately carved overhanging eaves, and gaunt unfurnished rooms, looking doubly desolate in the absence of the owner, with nothing but a couch in one, and two or three rickety chairs and a table in another, and a heap of suspicious-looking bedding piled in a corner of a third, and a quantity of noble antlers, the spoils of many a hard day's chase in the mountains, ornamenting a fourth. Prince Michael had often asked me to pay him a visit, and I was not sorry to find that he was away from home on this occasion, as it involved an expedition to his northern residence at Souksou, and an opportunity would thus be afforded of visiting a new part of his territory. Meantime Abkhasia was becoming a place of considerable resort. On my first arrival I had found it an unvisited and almost unknown country; now English and Turkish men-of-war lay at anchor in the beautiful bay of Souchoum, and English travellers and Turkish soldiers encountered one another in its formerly deserted streets. It was with a party of the former that, in the beginning of last October, I undertook the expedition to Souksou, with a view of afterwards extending our wanderings, and penetrating, as far as time and circumstances would permit, into some of the hitherto totally unknown and unexplored valleys of Circassia.

Souksou is situated at a distance of about five miles in the interior, and we proceeded in two men-of-war steamers to a little village upon the coast, not far from the dismantled Russian fortress of Bambor. The arrival and disembarkation of so formidable a party at this remote harbour caused no small sensation. A Turkish flag, of minute dimensions, was hoisted upon the steep bank which overhung the water, and the houses were soon emptied of their inmates, collecting in wondering groups on the beach. The singular attire and handsome figures of Caucasian mountaineers render such assemblages doubly interesting; and whether in Circassia, Abkhasia, or Mingrelia, I always thought that their picturesque inhabitants formed their most characteristic feature. The scenery is indeed probably unequalled in the world ; but if those rocky gorges and smiling lovely valleys were not inhabited by such a peasantry, they would lose their highest charm.

There was a steep little street, composed of wooden houses, leading up to the top of the rugged and precipitous bank, where a winter torrent had rendered the ascent easier; and there were quaint old houses perched upon the edge of the cliff, with deep verandahs, where the old men of the village sit and smoke their pipes, and no doubt discuss Abkhasian politics. Dogs and children were playing together upon the short green grass in front of one of these as we approached, and broke off the game abruptly to bark and cry at the strangers. An old patriarch, whose more elaborate costume betokened a man in authority, advanced to offer us horses on which to ride up to Prince Michael's; and while they were getting ready we sat down in chairs of a civilised construction at the edge of the cliff, and became the centre of a group of admiring Abkhasians.

At length a number of diminutive but wiry ponies made their appearance, with slippery, impossible-looking saddles, upon which we perched ourselves with difficulty. It requires a short residence in Circassia before one becomes thoroughly reconciled to the seat of the country. The saddle-bow is about six inches high, and terminates in a sharp point. There is a corresponding elevation similarly shaped behind, so that one has very much the sensation of being jammed down between two perpendicular hunting-knives. As the stirrups are so short as to throw the knees considerably above the withers of the horse, there is a natural tendency to rise in them; and when one is thus thrown above the saddle, an anxiety suggests itself about getting safe back again. However, we were in an impatient humour, and, reckless of consequences, dashed off at a gallop with our knees up to our chins, and our arms extended to assist in preserving our balance.

We did not visit Bambor, as there was nothing to distinguish it from the other forts on the coast; nor had we time for a diversion to the ruined castles of Anakopi or Psirste, distant four or five miles to the right. After crossing the undulating plain of

Bambor, covered only with fern, holly, and butcher's broom, we entered a noble forest, composed of trees the dimensions of which were gigantic, even in Abkhasia. Their magnificent proportions could be the better appreciated because they were not crowded in such a way as to impede their growth. There was no underwood to prevent us from galloping under the wide-spreading branches of majestic beech or linden trees, while from their topmost boughs drooped in sweeping festoons the graceful tendrils of the wild vine, waving softly above our heads their luscious burdens of purple grapes. Here and there the darker green of the box-tree contrasted with the surrounding foliage, while the unusual size of its growth almost entitled it to a position among forest-trees. The grateful shelter afforded by such luxuriance of vegetation was taken advantage of by the peasants, and we cantered along grassy glades to a little village composed of neat wooden cottages embowered among trees, in the twisted branches of which the people had stacked their newly-gathered maize. Its golden hue, sparkling out from under green leaves at a height of twenty or thirty feet above the ground, produced a most singular and uncommon effect. All the male inhabitants of this village were collected upon the smooth green lawn on which Prince Michael's house was situated. It was a large massive building, constructed partly of roughly-hewn stone, and partly of wood; and, consigning our steeds to the charge of the country-people who clustered round and contended for the honour of assisting us to dismount, we followed our guide up a narrow stair to the apartment of the Prince, who, surrounded by plenty of attendants and very little furniture, received us with much urbanity, and a polish which plainly indicated a familiarity with St Petersburg saloons. I was surprised to find that one who had lived in the Russian capital, and enjoyed the comforts of civilisation, should not have introduced more of them into his own residence. Nothing could be more cold and cheerless than the interior of this princely habitation; and, with the exception of the chairs we sat on, and a spittoon, I did not observe any furniture in his reception-room.

Though we could not compliment our host upon the comfort of his apartment, we could conscientiously congratulate him upon the magnificence of his territory, and especially upon the charming situation of his house. The lovely country through which we had been riding stretched away seaward in rich luxuriance, and bore completely the character of an English park, except that the trees which dotted its undulating slopes were more imposing, and the effect of their beauty was enhanced by the constant intermingling of vine-leaves with their own foliage; for all these forest giants were united in one loving embrace by the lusty arms of this noble creeper. Inland the country was more thickly wooded; the undulations swelled into hills; the park was converted into forest; from its tone of exquisite softness the scenery gradually changed to one of majestic grandeur; deep gorges cleft the precipitous ranges of the lower Caucasus—hitherto untrodden by the foot of the western traveller—and gave rise to a longing desire to penetrate into the mysteries of their gloomy recesses. Sweeping down the rugged side of the lofty range beyond, enormous glaciers descended into dark-blue haze, and, towering over all, a chain of glittering snowy peaks, round which hovered a multitude of fleecy clouds, shot into the sky.

There was a picturesque old church within a few yards of the house, which we went to inspect. It is of Byzantine architecture, and probably dates from the eighth or ninth century. The walls, built of a freestone, are in the shape of a square, and surmounted by an octagonal dome. The interior is ornamented with numerous rough frescoes; while slabs, inscribed with Georgian characters, mark the burial-places of some of the former rulers of Abkhasia. An intelligent young priest, with locks flowing over his shoulders, did the honours of the church, and showed some curious illuminated Bibles in Georgian character. It is said that the emperor had intended to form this church into a monastery, and the seat of a colony of priests for Abkhasia.

While one of our party, whose Crimean sketches have gained for him a world-wide notoriety, was engaged in immortalising the scene, we strolled through a rough, ill-tended garden, and regaled ourselves on pomegranates, and then, not without reluctance, once more inserted ourselves into our saddles, and bidding adieu to the Prince and his enchanting domain, galloped down to the boats, and pursued our northward course.

After rounding the low promontory of Pitzounda, we found ourselves approaching the northern frontier of Abkhasia. The undulating plains which separate the lower range from the sea gradually narrow, and through them numerous streams take their winding course. The gorges by which these issue from the mountains become more clearly discernible—dark and gloomy portals to unknown and mysterious valleys beyond. Above all towered the stupendous Ochetène, rearing its snow-crowned summit to a height of about 13,000 feet. Distant scarcely twenty-five miles from our ship, its altitude seemed even greater, and it reduced to insignificance the intervening range, which, though from 7000 to 8000 feet in height, was free from snow, and presented that rugged and precipitous aspect which characterises the limestone formation generally. From the Ochetène to the Djoumantau, the main chain is composed of a series of peaks of an almost uniform elevation. It forms the north-eastern frontier of Abkhasia, and separates that province from the Circassian tribes of the north, serving as a barrier which, except at one or two points, is insurmountable. We were assured that the only practicable pass from Abkhasia across these mountains, for horses, was from Souchoum Kaleh to Karachai, a province situate upon the western shoulder of Mount Elbruz. We had indeed at one time entertained the idea of attempting this pass in company with some of the chiefs of Karachai, who were about to return to their homes. As it turned out, however, it was fortunate that circumstances obliged us to change our plans, as a few weeks afterwards our friends returned to Souchoum, having found their province in the hands of the Russians, who had pushed their successes over the Naib, farther into the mountains than they had ever before ventured to do. The people of Karachai, leaving their homes at the mercy of the conquerors, had taken refuge in the more inaccessible parts of the mountains, knowing that the approach of winter would compel the enemy to evacuate the valleys. Never before had that remote district been visited by Russian soldiers, and the utmost terror and dismay had been inspired in consequence.

The pass by which these men had traversed the range will henceforward be blocked up, and the day is in all probability far distant when such an opportunity will again be afforded to Europeans of penetrating into these mountains. The Russians themselves are unable to go beyond five or six miles from Souchoum Kaleh into the interior. The journey to

Karachai, although the distance is not very great, occupies about a week, in consequence of the impracticable nature of the road: during the few summer months, however, it is reported to be free from snow.

A convulsion of nature, more remarkable for its violence than any we had as yet observed, marks the western limit of Abkhasia. At this point the mountains come precipitously down to the sea, and are cleft by a gorge so long, and deep, and narrow, that it looks like a sharp cut from some gigantic sword. There are tall poplars growing in this pent-up Valley of Gagra, but the sun rarely glints through their topmost leaves; and a stream which, issuing from its gloomy recesses, only sparkles for an instant in the light of day as it crosses the narrow beach, and then loses itself in the sea. At this point has been built the massive Fort of Gagra, to guard the only entrance into Circassia which exists in this direction. It is considered the most disagreeable station on the coast by the unfortunate Russian soldiers, who are doomed to a choice of such evils. Completely shut in by the rocks which form the sides of the gorge, not a breath of air ever circulates through their wretched quarters. Unable to venture beyond the walls of the fort, they are limited to a few yards of shingle for exercise. Before them is the endless breaking sea; behind them the enormous chasm, into which they dare not enter, and into whose black mysteries their curious eyes cannot penetrate. On each side rise precipitous walls of limestone, on the summits of which hostile Circassians often congregate and fire down into the very houses of the fort below. They are dependent for supplies upon ships from Souchoum, and are sometimes exposed to famine—always to war and pestilence. To such an existence are doomed more especially those regiments of the Russian army whose fidelity is doubted; and, singular as it may appear, the great majority of those men who fall by the hands of Circassians fighting for their independence, are themselves martyrs for the cause of liberty. Thus does the Russian Government consummate a twofold vengeance, and to the horrors of political exile add a service which forces its victims to fight for the extension of that tyranny by which they are themselves oppressed. The consequence is that the mountains of Circassia swarm with Russian soldiers, generally Poles, who prefer abject servitude amongst these barbarians to service in the Russian army.

We had fixed upon Vardan as the point from which to start upon our expedition into the interior, as the principal chief in the district was an old friend. Vardan is situated about sixty miles farther up the coast than Gagra, and is a somewhat important place among Circassians, as it boasts an apology for a bay, and there is no Russian fort on either side for some miles: it is therefore a favourite place for that trade which Russians are pleased to call contraband, because, in order to be carried on, the blockade must be broken which they have established in the prosecution of their nefarious war against these tribes. But few houses, however, are apparent from the sea. The hills are not so precipitous as they are nearer Gagra, and the gorges have widened out into fertile valleys. Immediately on our dropping anchor, the shore, which at first seemed deserted, became thickly dotted with human forms, and we were received upon landing with profound demonstrations of respect. Our friend Ismail Bey, however, was ill at his house, and in his absence no great encouragement was manifested when we explained the object of our visit. However, we sent messengers to inform him of our arrival, and strolled up to three or four houses hidden among trees, which composed the village; here we soon became the centre of attraction to numbers of natives, who, seeing from their hill-tops the ships anchored in their bay, flocked down to inspect us. There was an elaborate little rest-house, of a form and construction common at all Circassian villages, open at the sides; its roof supported by pillars of carved wood, and with seats for tired travellers inside, not unlike a summer-house. Here we held a *levée*, and discussed the chances of the expedition with chiefs of various degrees of importance and magnificence of attire. There was an evident indisposition on the part of these gentry to assist us in our desire of penetrating into their country, and they looked with perhaps a pardonable suspicion at so large a party demanding admittance into regions hitherto unvisited by Europeans. Moreover, we could assign no other motive for our journey than curiosity, and they seemed incredulous of this being a sufficiently powerful stimulant for so novel a proceeding, more particularly when they saw two men-of-war lying in their bay, also there from curiosity. They therefore depicted, in the strongest terms, the difficulties of travelling in the interior, the impossibility of procuring horses, guides, &c. However, we determined to await the result of our mission to Ismail Bey, and meantime I went with an exploratory expedition up the valley.

We followed the banks of a clear sparkling stream, full of trout, to a village where the female inhabitants peered curiously out of chinks in their doors at us, and then ascended the side of a steep hill, through fields of millet and Indian corn, until we reached a ridge from whence we had an extensive view: here we stayed to rest, and our Circassian guide, who spoke Turkish, sent a boy to a village to bring us something to eat. While we were basking in the sun, watching the blue smoke ascend from the clumps of trees which here and there marked a hamlet, a ragged figure approached, carrying a load of wood, and almost naked, and throwing his bundle at our feet sat down to rest. Upon looking at his features I scarcely needed the information of our guide that he was a Russian. He said he had been eleven years a slave in Circassia, a hewer of wood and drawer of water—condemned all those long years to the most servile offices, and yet he manifested no desire for change. He looked at us with dull leaden eyes, and what little expression his face still retained was one of resigned melancholy.

We lunched off walnuts and hard-boiled eggs, and prevailed upon a pretty Circassian girl to give us a light for our cigars, which she did with much grace and modesty, holding just enough of the thin white handkerchief over her face to satisfy her conscience, and at the same time to exhibit her charms. Her mother scolded her from within for such barefaced behaviour, and appeared to the rescue with only one eye visible. We did not regret the loss of the rest of the countenance so much as the result of her indignant reproaches to her daughter, who flung her veil back over her shoulders, and throwing a glance of defiance at her mother, and of farewell at us, disappeared into the house, and we walked down the hill smoking thoughtfully.

We found the rest of the party mounting their ponies to go to Ismail Bey's house, as that distinguished personage was too unwell to come to us. Our way led up another valley very like the first, also with a clear stream, which was continually to be crossed, through green meadows, fields, and woods, and past cottages. Following it for about two miles from the shore, we reached a substantial-looking mansion, the residence of Ismail Bey, who was visited in his room, where he was confined to his bed, by some of the members of our party, and arrangements were made for our departure on the morrow. He was public-spirited enough to turn out his harem for our inspection, and his wives and daughters came trooping out, much to their and our satisfaction.

At first they kept at a respectful distance, and tittered immensely among themselves, and got behind one another with a great affectation of coyness. When, however, they saw that presents were to be obtained by nearer advances, they crept forward, sending the little children on as pioneers, who advanced timidly, keeping their fingers in their mouths like civilised infants, until within reach of the prize, when they clutched it ravenously, and rushed back triumphant. At last we were surrounded by a galaxy of beauty, and showed them their own lovely countenances in looking-glasses, and explained the mysteries of intricate housewives, or taught them to look through opera-glasses. One of our party who had come well provided with such articles soon became immensely popular. At last the shades of evening, and our sense of what was due to the owner of so much charming property, warned us to terminate the scene; and after many expressions of unbounded admiration, we parted with mutual regret. One or two of these girls were very beautiful; their soft dark eyes, fringed with long black lashes, luxuriant hair, regular features, brilliant complexions, as purely pink and white as that of any European, combined to render their countenances peculiarly attractive, while they had a sweet and refined expression, which was scarcely to be expected among savages.

We returned to the ships well satisfied with the result of our visit to Ismail Bey; he had promised us four guides, and as many horses, and these, in addition to ten of our own, sufficed for our somewhat formidable party. Notwithstanding the early hour at which we were astir on the following morning, considerable delay was necessarily involved by the landing of the horses, the loading of the pack-saddles, and the minor preparations for the start. The beach presented a scene of picturesque confusion. Sailors and Circassians united their efforts in the loading of the nags; servants of various nationalities, and in diverse costumes, from that of the Albanian to that of the Yorkshireman, bustled about; while their masters superintended operations, clad in the shooting-jacket characteristic of Englishmen, and long jack-boots, and with girdles sufficiently well provided with revolvers. At last every load was adjusted—every man in his saddle; the more prudent amongst us had provided ourselves with English ones, and the welcome order was given to start. Our way at first lay along the beach; and as we jogged over the sand and shingle, we saw the Highflyer and Cyclops get up their steam and leave us to the mercy of our Circassian friends. The former was bound for Souchoum ; the latter was to return for us to Trebizond. Our cavalcade, numbering fifteen, presented quite an imposing appearance. We were obliged to devote three horses to the transport of baggage, the greater portion of which was composed of presents for the native chiefs at whose houses we expected to lodge, as a currency is unknown in the country ; and the only way of returning hospitality is by the donation of small articles of European fabrication. The animals we bestrode were mere ponies, ragged and miserable in appearance, but, as our experience proved, possessing great pluck and powers of endurance. The verdant hillsides came almost down to the sea, leaving only a narrow strip of beach to serve as a road. Owing, however, to the inaccessible nature of their country, the sea-shore forms by far the most frequented route for Circassians, whenever they can manage to avail themselves of it ; and in spite of our energetically expressed wishes to proceed inland, the guides evidently manifested some reluctance to leave the shingle beach for the mountain-pass. Nor is the sea itself altogether neglected as a means of communication by the Circassians, although unable to trade upon it. We observed a method of making it available for purposes of water-carriage, which has never yet occurred to the islanders of Great Britain. It was perfectly calm, the breakers of a few days before had subsided with a series of living ripples murmuring on the sand; and as we rounded a point, we observed a large object, at a distance of not many yards from the shore, which was towed by two men. As we got nearer, we discovered that it was a raft, steered by a third individual, and upon which had been placed a small wooden habitation. We were informed that this was a process by which a family, in Yankee phraseology, sometimes changed their "location," and in this primitive manner transported bodily all their worldly substance to some more favoured vale. At last, where another stream sparkled between green meadows down to the sea, we turned inwards, resting for a while at a charming little rest-house, more highly finished and ornamented than the one we had seen at Vardan. Then, climbing the steep sides of the valley, our path became more rugged, and led us amid the most luxuriant vegetation to a high shoulder, from whence we had a panoramic view over the broad bed of the Soubachi, up which our path was now to lead us, never before, so far as we knew, explored by Europeans. At the mouth of the river we observed a substantial Russian fort, now deserted, as the group of Circassians clustered beneath its walls plainly indicated.

We were soon afterwards stumbling along the stony bed of the Soubachi, at this time of year shrunk within its proper limits, and leaving a broad margin of rocks and stones to denote its winter character. The beds of the numerous rivers which descend from the western slopes of the Caucasus to the sea form indeed the only means of communication with the interior, and, when these are flooded, the Circassians stay at home. For months at a time all communication between the opposite sides of the valley is suspended. We were compelled to cross this stream twice, and as the current was excessively rapid, and reached to the saddle-straps, the operation was by no means agreeable. As evening was drawing in we reached the *konak* of the Bey with whom we were destined to pass the night, situated upon the hillside on the right bank. His habitation consisted of a group of single rooms standing separately upon a green lawn, and overshadowed by noble beech and chestnut trees, the whole enclosed by a neat paling. In the neighbourhood were numerous other cottages surrounded by fields of maze and millet, sloping down to the stream. The situation of the village was charming, and commanded a lovely view of the fertile valley and lofty mountain-range beyond. Our arrival, of course, created a great sensation. The Bey received us with the utmost warmth and cordiality, placing two cottages at our disposal. Every man of influence in Circassia has one or two rooms which are called guest-houses, and are devoted to the reception of strangers, for the Circassians themselves are always gadding about, like the Tartars of the Crimea or the gentry of England, paying visits and staying at each other's country-houses. There is no such thing as a single house containing a number of rooms. Each room is separate, standing ten or fifteen yards from its neighbour; the walls are composed of wattle-and-daub, the thatch of Indian corn. There is generally a door swung upon a hinge of primitive construction, but seldom any other aperture for the admission of light. The most characteristic feature of these habitations is the chimney. It is a huge semicircular projection about four feet above the ground, occupying about nearly half the room; it consequently possesses the immense advantage of never smoking—a most unusual peculiarity for a savage habitation, where the smoke is generally allowed to discover its own exit, and revenges itself on the eyes of those who have not provided one for it. The lower border of the chimney is generally ornamented with rude painting, while it is carried up through the roof in a circular form, and thatched or boarded over at the top. The furniture sometimes consists of a low wooden stretcher; more frequently the sleeping-place is indicated by a low bank of earth raised a few inches above the floor. Immediately on our arrival, numerous coverlets and quilts of soft luxurious texture, and downy cushions, were brought in and spread upon the floor. Nothing could be more acceptable than the repose which is thus afforded to the tired traveller immediately on his arrival at his journey's end. Here he stretches his weary limbs, and watches the crackling blaze, towards which he has turned the soles of his feet, while his head is pillowed upon a tower of cushions. At first our suspicions were naturally excited at the appearance of so much comfort, and we feared that our enjoyment of it was destined to be short-lived when we saw what delightful receptacles our beds formed for various descriptions of animals which generally monopolise all the sleeping accommodation of a savage country. In this respect, however, we were most agreeably disappointed, and during the whole period of our trip, with an experience of a great variety of bedding, I never once discovered any that contained another animal in it besides myself. But the traveller in Circassia needs more than ordinary consolation in the shape of comfort to reconcile him to the long period which must elapse between the time of his arrival and the appearance of his dinner. The process is trying to one's powers of philosophical endurance. When the host has seen that his guests are all comfortably squatted on their quilts round the fire, and has interchanged with them a few expressions of civility, he makes a dignified exit, and we well know that he has only then gone to order the sheep to be caught, which must be killed and cooked before we can expect to have those ardent cravings satisfied which a long mountain ride has engendered. Gradually the company relapse into a mood of sullen discontent. It is an occasion on which the most imperturbable amiability is vanquished. The only legitimate expression of its wrongs which an insulted stomach in a state of collapse possesses, is in that hatred of one's species which one entertains under such circumstances; and it is almost a compensation to feel the genial glow of a returning love to your neighbours stealing over you, as the appetite becomes gradually satisfied. Your whole moral nature is elevated, until at last the very cook is forgiven, and you love your enemy.

It was long ere we were destined on this occasion to experience this charming revulsion of sentiment. While dinner was being prepared our host came and talked to us. He was a fine old man, and had been so severely wounded in a skirmish with the Russians that he was deprived of the use of one leg. His green turban indicated a pilgrimage to Mecca, but he was by no means a bigoted Mussulman, to judge by the disapprobation he expressed of the Naib, who owes his influence to his rigid fanaticism and the affectation of superior sanctity. This old Bey evidently had a most exalted opinion of the prowess of the English. He had seen that nation whose power was looked upon as so vast; who had for so many years expended thousands of men and millions of roubles in the Circassian war; who had established a line of forts in his own valleys, in spite of the most determined opposition, and under most adverse circumstances; whose fleet had swept the sea and blockaded the coasts;—he had seen that nation evacuate their forts on the mere appearance of a couple of English men-of-war, and his country freed of its invaders as if by magic. No wonder he was profuse in his professions of civility to the representatives of such a nation, upon whom depended, he verily believed, the future independence of his beloved country. If the motives for that civility which we universally met with in the interior of Circassia proceeded from a desire to conciliate those in whose hands the people believed the destinies of their country to be placed, we can hardly regard them as mercenary, since they were the result of patriotism. No doubt, in addition to this sentiment, were added feelings of genuine hospitality, and a natural hope of being presented with a revolver as a token of regard. Circassians, like their neighbours, are actuated by mixed motives. The Bey told us that the Russians had never been able to penetrate so far up the valley as his house, and that the natives of that country were determined never to submit to the Muscovite yoke. We could of course offer him no assurance as to the point upon which he was chiefly anxious—viz., the future fate of his country. While the interest of our conversation was beguiling the weary moments, our servants had hit upon another device for filling up the time, and having made a huge fire in front of the *konak*, were busily engaged preparing tea. We adjourned to the cheerful blaze; and as it threw its bright light upon the wild countenances, manly figures, and romantic costumes of the Circassians standing gazing at our proceedings, and over the surrounding group of recumbent horses, and bustling servants and tired travellers reclining amid baggage and pack-saddles, smoking, or sleeping, or lazily sipping their tea, I thought the scene one well worthy a place in the memory. It has since been portrayed in a vivid and graphic water-colour drawing by Mr S——. At last, about half an hour before midnight, a tin basin and water was brought round, and we washed our hands with the utmost despatch, preparatory to the arrival of dinner, of which that ceremony was the indication. The sheep made its appearance in a state of elaborate dissection upon a round table, about eighteen inches in diameter and as many above the ground. Upon this were piled the junks of plain boiled mutton, and from their midst rose a pyramid of *pasta*, a sort of consistent porridge made of millet seed, and by no means disagreeable when one is accustomed to it. Of course plates, forks, chairs, &c., are unknown in Circassia; and it was with the utmost difficulty that our large party of seven could squeeze ourselves round the little table which sustained the precious burden on which our desires were centred. When we had satisfactorily arranged ourselves, our attitudes were sufficiently grotesque: one squatted on both heels, another on one, and rested his chin on his knee; a third knelt, and a fourth seated himself uncompromisingly on the floor, and stuck out his legs in other people's way; another ate moodily in a corner, and only approached to make plunges at junks with his knife, and carry them off triumphantly on its point. Knowing individuals explored amid the pile for tender bits; generous ones gratified their neighbours by sharing their discoveries with them; rash ones alarmed them by flourishing their knives in the air in a reckless manner; fastidious ones retired satisfied with a hurried repast, to allow their imagination to wander back to London dinner-parties, under the influence of tobacco. Soup followed meat, of a greasy suspicious character; it was contained in a large bowl, and into it we all dipped promiscuously the wooden spoons with which we were provided; and then stretching ourselves once more on our downy couches, we resigned ourselves to the somniferous effects of fatigue, dinner, and midnight. Although well disposed to do justice to my bed, I was not permitted to enjoy its luxury without disturbance, for I was awoke out of a sound sleep by the strangest combination of sounds I ever heard from human throats. The Circassians who were watching our horses were keeping themselves awake by singing, and they certainly performed the same kind office for me; though, as I lay and listened to the singular cadences and fitful tones, now sinking to a low plaintive wail, now swelling almost to a yell of defiance, I considered myself more than compensated for the temporary loss of rest by so novel a serenade.

On the following day we had again to wait an interminable time for breakfast. When it made its appearance it was a far more elaborate repast than dinner; six or seven of the little round tables followed one another; the meat and soup were succeeded by a sort of cheese-cake and honey, a most delectable mixture; then chicken, curried with a sauce of remarkable and indescribable flavour, but by no means unpalatable; then rice and milk, and then *yoghourt*, or curds-and-whey, the invariable finale. After we had done justice to each successive table, it was handed over to the servants, who did not fail to clear it of the *débris.* These breakfasts by no means conduced to a long day's ride, and our late hours involved short journeys; still, it would have been considered an unpardonable breach of hospitality to start without breakfast, or to suggest a dinner which did not involve the slaughter of a sheep; and as we were the first specimens of English our entertainers had ever seen, we did not wish to give them an unfavourable impression of the race by any conduct which should *brusquer* their prejudices. The consequence was, that we kept most fashionable hours: breakfast at ten, luncheon at half-past two, a cup of tea after our ride on arrival about six, and dinner at nine or ten. Our host accompanied us during the first part of the day's journey. The path again descended to the bed of the Soubachi, and crossed and recrossed that impetuous stream perpetually. In some places it was with the utmost difficulty that our ponies managed to keep their legs as they stembled over the large stones, and at the same time stemmed the torrent. Occasionally the Circassians themselves were at fault, and made two or three vain efforts to find the ford. Then we all splashed in together, and the moment was exciting as we urged our steeds, with heads well directed up stream, to the opposite bank. Once our interpreter got out of the line into a hole; his pony fell; the rider incontinently rolled off, but clutched his nag frantically round the neck. They were swept down the stream for some yards together in this affectionate embrace; the terrified countenance of L——, who had by this time swallowed an immense quantity of water, surmounted by his red fez cap, giving a ludicrous effect to the scene, except that we were not without apprehension of its terminating tragically; and he had repeatedly informed us that he could not swim, and had moreover been most anxious in his inquiries from the Circassians as to the frequency of deaths by drowning among themselves. Fortunately, by dint of severe struggling, and a friendly bend of the stream, he got ashore, dripping and dejected, and it was some time before he recovered those conversational powers with which he contributed largely to the amusement of the party. L—— was a Georgian by birth, but he had lived for some time in Circassia with Messrs Bell and Longworth, and had come to England with the former a perfect Mezzofanti. He spoke twelve languages fluently, and his knowledge of Circassian rendered him invaluable; indeed, he is the only man I know who can speak Circassian and any other civilised language except Turkish or Arabic. Many of the Circassians have picked up a smattering of the former in the course of their visits to Constantinople, or their intercourse with slave-dealers; and Arabic is the medium of communication between Schamyl the Naib and those few individuals among the tribes who are well-educated and learned Mahometans. Circassian itself is the most impracticable dialect that ever unfortunate travellers attempted to acquire. It consists of sounds which bear a greater resemblance to a succession of sneezes and coughs than to words. It is not a written language; there is consequently no alphabet, grammar, or mechanical assistance to the tyro, who has to trust entirely to ear; and then—even however correct that organ may be—it requires long practice before it catches the peculiar intonation. I attempted to make a vocabulary, but no allocation of our own letters could form the faintest approximation to the words they were intended to express; so I gave up the attempt in despair, and tried to learn phrases. It was a disheartening process, however, for although the man from whom I learnt them understood me whenever I repeated over my lesson, not another soul could; and yet I was not aware myself of any difference between his pronunciation and my imitation of it. There are said to be thirty different languages in the Caucasus. Of these I heard six, nor could I trace any affinity in the sounds. The natives themselves said they were totally distinct. It may easily be supposed that, with such practice, Circassians easily acquire Turkish or Arabic.

I was struck by the scanty population in the Valley of the Soubachi; the hills were only partially cultivated; and I observed, with some surprise, that the northern side was better settled than the southern, and the greater part of the cultivation confined to the most elevated portion. We only passed through one village of any extent, perched upon a bold spur of a hill, round which the stream swept with a graceful bend; from thence we looked forward into the blue mountain-gorges from which it issued, and back over the stony track we had followed. The houses of the village were all neatly fenced round, and the female portion of the population gaily attired in loose trousers, tight at the ankle, and a long tunic, the colours of both generally bright and in good harmony. We had not, however, much opportunity of inspecting them, as they were very shy; and we could only catch transient glimpses of them as they flitted from one house to another, changing their posts of observation as we passed through. When we once more descended to the stream we saw them all collected on the brow of the hill, to gaze at us, in a picturesque group.

Although the Circassians are a restless race, we did not meet many travellers in the course of our day's journey. We found two, however, resting under a clump of magnificent horse-chestnuts, who attracted our attention. One was attired in the costume of a prosperous *usden*, or gentleman; the other was holding a loaded horse, and had the dingy ragged coat of the serf. He was a man of ill-favoured countenance, with a short red beard, and sinister expression. Our guide rode up and addressed the master. He was the only specimen of a travelling pedlar we saw in the country, and indeed there is not much encouragement for such gentry, as the inhabitants have nothing to give in exchange for their merchandise. The slave was a Russian, and, despite his forbidding countenance, C—— became seized with a sudden desire to become his purchaser. To our remonstrances upon the illegality of this proceeding, he replied that he intended to free his purchase; and against so laudable an object nothing more was to be urged, so the bargain began in earnest. The Circassian at first valued his serf at £30, saying that he had become used to the country, could speak the language, was of a hardy constitution, and otherwise a valuable piece of property. Our interpreter looked contemptuously upon the object of barter, and denied that he was worth £5. The man himself was by no means offended at this depreciation of his merits. He was evidently anxious to change owners, but was afraid to manifest much feeling in the matter. The Circassian, seeing that we were not to be taken in, at once reduced his price £10, upon which C—— raised his bid £5, and stated his determination not to gratify his generous propensities by any further outlay. The Circassian said he could not possibly part with the article for less than £15, and the transaction in consequence terminated unsatisfactorily. This man had been a deserter from the Russian service, and, like the one before mentioned, preferred his present to his former mode of life.

In the afternoon we left the valley, and followed the course of a mountain tributary, the bed of which was more rugged and impracticable than the one we had just left. Compressed between overhanging banks, the stream up which we had to struggle fretted and foamed within its narrow limits; lofty trees met overhead, and flung their broad dark shadows on the turbid water, their giant roots hanging from the undermined bank, or twisted and contorted like writhing snakes in the clayey soil. Sometimes a rocky barrier stretched across, and formed a small cascade, and a few scattered sun-rays struggled in and played upon the glittering spray. Pools lay dark and silent, and looked so deep and still that we were obliged to clamber up the bank to avoid them. Occasionally the valley widened somewhat, and we found relief upon little islands flooded by winter torrents, but generally it was a mere gorge, densely wooded, and with but a strip of sky overhead. At last, to my satisfaction, we left these gloomy recesses, where the rushing water confused one's senses, and the projecting rocks scarified and bruised one's shins, and commenced boldly to scale the steep hillside. But our former experience was mere child's play to what we now underwent. No sooner had we, by dint of most frantic exertion, succeeded in driving or pulling the horses after us, to a height of about a hundred feet, than one who carried the baggage, thinking he had done enough, incontinently pitched head-over-heels down the precipice, his laden sides thumping roundly against the bank as he rolled to the bottom. Fortunately it was not very steep, so that his velocity was not great, and the baggage, in some measure, protected him; still it was a work of toil and difficulty to reinstate him on his legs, when he looked considerably humiliated and bruised, and came limping after, with his pack in somewhat the same shattered condition as himself.

These adventures now became common, and our unfortunate horses had one or two more tumbles in the course of the day, but not from any serious height. At last we had acquired so great an elevation that the stream we had left looked like a silver thread, and still the path kept winding up, seldom more than eighteen inches broad, very slippery from recent rains, often rounding promontories which projected unpleasantly, and left nothing visible between us and eternity. Generally, however, there was sufficient wood on the steep bank to stop any rolling body. Sometimes the hill sloped back a little more, and advantage was taken of some little valley in its side to erect a cottage, and cultivate a few acres of ground. These were always carefully fenced in, and the path was thus blocked; but the owner never hesitated to rush out, and in the most obliging manner removed all obstacles. The cultivation never varied from millet and Indian corn. Once we passed through a mulberry plantation, and the whole country is covered with fruit-trees and vines, some wild and some planted. In these parts, however, the latter were not in the same luxuriance as we afterwards saw them. Towards evening we found we had almost reached the head of the valley, and rested in a grove of walnut-trees, while one of our Circassians went on to prepare the Bey, at whose house we were to lodge, for our arrival. Here, too, we collected our forces, a good deal scattered by the terrible path along which we had journeyed. As one by one they wearily approached, it was amusing to hear of the different adventures and the narrow escapes that each had to recount. The poor baggage-horse had tottered over another precipice, and there evidently was not above one more day's work in him. Our artist, in sticking too pertinaciously to his saddle, while ascending a bit of almost perpendicular cliff, had been left behind, saddle and all, having disappeared from the scene over the pony's tail, while that sagacious animal performed the rest of the ascent unencumbered by anything but his primitive bridle. His rider, whose devotion to his pencil was inextinguishable by any event short of absolute annihilation, had never relinquished his grasp of his portfolio, and took advantage of his seat in the mud to sketch the romantic scene of his disaster, and recover from the smart of his bruises. C—— was too much absorbed in a novel of "Alexander Dumas fils" to take heed to his pony's steps, and, lost in admiration of the heroine of his story, is to this day profoundly ignorant of the magnificence of the scenery, the dangers he miraculously escaped, and the debt of gratitude he owes to his intelligent steed. His domestic, an exact representative of Methley's Yorkshire servant, who looked out for gentlemen's seats on his ride through Bulgaria, obediently followed in a Circassian saddle, and a state of general abrasion and misery.

The interpreter L——, who had secured the attentions of a Circassian, brought up the rear; in that position he had undergone several remarkable adventures, unseen by the rest of the party. In fact, his own account of his hairbreadth escapes was far more marvellous than the whole of the others united, and we only regretted that no one was present to witness them. He proposed instantly returning to more civilised regions, and urged in forcible and moving language the folly of our thus perilling our valuable lives through mere curiosity. For his part, he said, he had seen already far more of the detestable country than was at all agreeable. He declared that no pecuniary considerations justified the risk he was now running of depriving Mrs L—— of her better half. If it were any comfort to him, we assured him we should be as much distressed at his untimely end as Mrs L——, for there never was a more amusing and serviceable fellow. During those long pauses before dinner, he poured forth in quaint and glowing language the varied information he had acquired from Circassians during the day, with a running commentary of his own, full of shrewd common-sense and originality. He had an insatiable curiosity, unflagging energy in the acquisition of knowledge, an eager readiness to impart it, an intense love of the marvellous, unbounded good temper, and anxiety to oblige ; nothing short of a ducking in a river, or a roll down a precipice, damped his ardour ; and now that he had undergone both, he was but temporarily subdued. He appealed to the old Circassian who was taking care of him, whether the route we were to pursue on the morrow was not even more dangerous than the one we had already traversed, and was overcome by hearing us express a determination to proceed, in spite of an answer in the affirmative.

This old man was the patriarch of the party, a venerable-looking Hadji with a long grey beard, and something Jewish and sinister in his countenance. Having made the pilgrimage, he was too good a Mahometan, and had seen too much of the world, to be as agreeable a companion as a more unsophisticated native would have been. To the last I feel convinced, he suspected us of some secret motives, and did his utmost to show us as little of the country as possible. Indeed, it was very difficult to make our guides understand that we simply wished to make a tour through their country, which should last a certain number of days, without naming any one point. It seemed to them incomprehensible that we should not wish to go anywhere in particular, but merely clamber over their mountains. Had time permitted, we should have endeavoured to cross Abbasack, and reach the plains of the Kuban by continuing our present route, which would have become a highly interesting expedition; but it was impossible to rely upon the statements of the natives for time and distance, and we were ultimately compelled to limit our explorations; still there can be no doubt that we might have gone farther, had our guides been really anxious to show us as much of the country as possible.

The nephews and companions of the old man were three brothers, extremely handsome young men, of a thoroughly Anglo-Saxon type of countenance. They were so refined and distinguished in their whole bearing and manner, and so remarkably good-looking, that had they been attired in long overcoats of black cloth reaching almost to their ankles, instead of a drab woollen garment; if their parti-coloured gaiters had been replaced by loose trousers with a broad stripe, their neat red-leather slippers by patent-leather boots; had their necks been surrounded by a rigid piece of linen of surpassing whiteness, instead of exposed in all their fine proportions to the public gaze; had their hair been well greased and parted accurately down the middle, instead of closely cropped; had a well-brushed hat reposed upon the curls, and not a tall woollen kalpak; had a gold-headed cane taken the place of the silver-mounted kamur, or short sword, and a gigantic pin ornamented their breasts, instead of those rows of ammunition-tubes which form the most striking feature in their costume;—had all these changes been effected, and my three friends sent to saunter arm-in-arm down Regent Street, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that their appearance would have filled the male portion of the community who display their elaborate persons upon that much-frequented pavement with envy and dismay, and inspired the rest of the society with very different sentiments. At last the youngest of the Adonises returned with the welcome news that we might push on; and accordingly we remounted, and again followed him up dry water-courses and over rocky paths to a village situated at the head of the valley, and embowered amid gigantic trees, a little beyond which we emerged upon a large green meadow surrounded by a paling, in the centre of which stood a group of cottages, and at the gate the stalwart and venerable person of our host.

The process of the evening before was repeated: the beds were spread and the sheep killed, and conversation carried on with our entertainer. Fortunately the sun had not yet set, and nothing could exceed the beauty of the scene as we sat at the door of the *konak.* We had attained an elevation of between four and five thousand feet above the sea, and from our lofty point of view looked over the intervening ranges to the level horizon-line of the ocean. As the sun descended, lights and shadows played over the vast extent of mountain country which lay heaped in a confused mass before us. In wonderful and rapid variety we could watch the night creeping slowly over valley after valley; the bright tints upon the hill-tops became gradually circumscribed until they disappeared altogether, and the golden path upon the distant ocean vanished; but on the fantastic outline of the clouds was still painted a bright record of its departed glory, until at last that too melted away, and the long and eventful day was over. It was a worthy recompense for all our toil to revel in such a scene, and then to wait until the moon appeared above the highest mountain-peak, and to watch its silvery rays glancing into the dark recesses of the valleys at our feet, into which no traveller had ever penetrated; and to think how many curious nooks and crannies in this world of ours there are which have been illuminated for centuries by its calm, cold light, but which will remain for centuries to come unknown and unexplored. How long will it be before another party of Englishmen watch a sunset from that spot, or cross the range behind which the moon has just risen? And yet there is not a country in the world more full of attractions to the traveller; every steps he takes is over untrodden ground. Every village he passes through has remained heretofore unvisited. Almost every man he meets gazes with wonder for the first time in his life upon a stranger from the West. The hammer of the geologist has never tapped the rocky mountain-sides; its luxuriant vegetation has never been subject to the scrutiny of the botanist. Its vegetable and mineral resources are alike unknown, and its inhabitants uncared for. They know indeed more of us than we do of them; for the more enterprising among them occasionally undertake journeys to Mecca, or go to Constantinople upon visits to their wives or daughters who are luxuriating in the harems of that city. There they often stay for some time, and become familiar with the appearance of Franks, and come to their highland villages with wonderful stories of the race that never visits them, and of which they know nothing more than that they are

Giaours, and are for the most part called Anglia, and Frances, and that they hate the "Muscovs," and that therefore something is to be expected of them; and so they were not astonished when they saw our steamers upon the coast, though they may not have anticipated so rapid a result. That only inspired them with the more ardent hopes and notion of our prowess. But with the desire of freedom is mixed up a little suspicion of the purity of our motives in thus espousing their cause; and now that we have deserted it, the probable opinion in Circassia will be, that the English, after destroying the Russian forts, sent a party into Circassia to explore it, and see whether it was worth possessing; but finding it only a rocky and impracticable country, containing a very independent set of savages, they have relinquished the idea, and have no objection to Russia's expending her resources in the acquisition of this strip of mountains. Among many of the Circassians the idea exists, which is also common in Turkey, that the Sultan is the kingmaker-general throughout the world, and that the origin of this last war has been the contumacious conduct of one of his vassals, to wit, the Emperor of Russia, who has attempted to throw off the authority of the Padisha. In order to punish this powerful rebel Turkey has called in her liege subjects the Emperor of France and Queen of England, who are bound to maintain "the integrity and independence of the Ottoman empire," of which Russia forms part, and they have in consequence been spending themselves in the good cause. The Circassians, who entertain the highest reverence for the head of their religion at Constantinople, would desire nothing better than to owe him that nominal allegiance which they suppose is professed by other nations, for then they think they would be protected. At present they regard themselves at the mercy of Russia, England, or any other voracious Power who may manifest a desire to annex them. In order, therefore, to travel comfortably in Circassia, it is necessary to be provided with a firman from the Sultan, which always commands the highest possible respect; while, on the other hand, a traveller without being thus accredited is always an object of suspicion and distrust.

The more bigoted the Mahometan the more unwilling he is to receive him, and the Naib has behaved ungraciously to those who have visited him even though provided with a Sultan's firman. This feeling of antipathy to Giaours generally has been increasing a good deal lately under the influence of this man. In future it is not to be expected that Englishmen attempting to travel in Circassia will be received even as we were, for not only is the power of the Naib spreading, but our conduct in having allowed the Russians to re-establish their blockade will make us unpopular, while the difficulty of breaking through it will remain the same as it was before the war. Meantime the night air is getting chill, and the sounds of animated conversation which proceed from the *konak* warn me not to remain speculating any longer upon the neglected condition of the interior of Circassia, if I have any regard for the equally neglected condition of my own.

I have, indeed, allowed myself a sufficiently long digression; since sunset the sheep has been caught, killed, and cooked, and there is absolutely the little round table even now being carried into the *konak*. So *revenons à nos moutons.*

II.

One of the most severe trials of patience to which the traveller in a wild country is subjected, is invariably to be found in the impracticability of his guides. Circassia, I regret to say, did not prove a bright exception to this rule.

We had, before starting from Vardan, distinctly explained to Ismail Bey the length of time and the line of country over which we wished our travels to extend. He assured us that our guides should be given explicit directions upon this head; and therefore, when we found ourselves in a remote valley of a province which had never before been entered by a European, it was with no little dismay that we listened to their query, of where we wished to go to next. We had followed them with the blindest confidence over precipitous mountains, through impetuous streams, along narrow rocky valleys, and by dangerous paths, for two days; and had, by dint of extreme exertion and no little peril of our necks, at last almost attained the summit of a lofty range, only to be asked, when we got there, to inform them as to our future destination. The guides insinuated (and their suggestions were strongly supported by L——), that having only reached our present position with much toil and risk, we had better retrace our steps, and not tempt our fate any more upon the wild mountain-sides of Circassia. We held a very different opinion. Having got so far, we voted that it would be unworthy in the extreme to be daunted by the perils of the road or the vagueness of our destination. We declared that, in spite of the precipices, we had not seen enough of Circassia, and that it was a matter of perfect indifference to us in which direction we went, seeing that on every side it was new and hitherto untrodden ground. It was perfectly clear that our escort had received instructions to lead us to the inaccessible residence of the Bey with whom we were now lodged, and who was a half-brother of Ismail's, under the belief that we should have had enough of journeying by that time, and be glad to return: they had not, therefore, received instructions as to the course to be pursued in the event of our persisting in extending our tour. The main objection seemed to be in the difficulty of procuring us our night's lodging. Ismail

Bey had only a certain number of friends in the country, and his influence only extended over a limited district, beyond which it was doubtful whether, as his *protégés*, we should receive that hospitality which had hitherto been so freely accorded to us.

The province in which his influence, though not paramount, was principally felt, is called Ubooch, and lies between Abkhasia and Shapsugh, the latter forming at present part of the government of Sefer Pasha, who has just headed the Circassian deputation to Constantinople, praying for independence and a protectorate.

The village at which we passed the night of the 17th October, is one of the most remote in this district of Ubooch, and is situated upon the western slope of the range which divides it from Abbasack: we were, in fact, at this point, not above five or six miles from the boundary of this latter province, and consequently the same distance from the head-waters of those streams which flow into the Kuban. We had, however, determined not to attempt to cross this range, which becomes more precipitous and impracticable near its summit; and as we were equally decided against turning back, the only alternative remained of following along its western slopes, until we thought fit to bend our steps towards the coast. This intention we accordingly announced, and declared, moreover, that we should trust to chance for our night's lodging. This weighty matter having been settled, we held some interesting discourse with our host, who, like our last, was a pilgrim or Hadji, and who also professed a decided antipathy for the Naib. He considered that gentleman a great deal too much addicted to forms and ceremonies—a sort of Puseyite, in fact, and consequently an object of aversion in his low-church eyes. He said that he was introducing fanatical customs, which were destroying the simplicity of the Circassian character, and which had for their ultimate aim and object his own self-aggrandisement. He had an infinitely higher respect for Schamyl, but then Schamyl lived two hundred miles off, and he could afford to respect him; the Naib was his nearest neighbour, and constantly threatening his influence in his own country. Moreover, he expressed a very low opinion of the military capacity of the lieutenant of Schamyl, and remarked with a sneer upon the singular custom which prevailed with respect to him in time of war. The Naib, he said, had so great a reputation for prowess in battle, that wherever he was likely to meet the enemy in the field, he was always accompanied by four men, whose business it was to hold him back.

We had reason afterwards to congratulate ourselves upon the liberal religious sentiments of our host, who despised that narrow-minded injunction of the Prophet, which commands the women to veil their faces. I happened after dinner to stroll into one of the neighbouring rooms, and there found S—— surrounded by a bevy of damsels, with whom he had already succeeded in establishing friendly relations. Conversation was of course somewhat limited, as we had no interpreter, and were obliged to convey our sentiments of admiration and respect by the most expressive signs which occurred to us. The young ladies, however, did not depend upon our conversational powers for their amusement. They were quite satisfied with staring at us in amazement, and giggling among themselves, while we found food for contemplation in speculating whether their remarks were likely to be complimentary or not. Gradually, as they found we were quite tame, the group increased; one damsel after another crept in, and squatted upon her heels round the little *konak*—and one bolder than the rest offered us a quantity of roasted chestnuts, which we skinned and handed to one another with profound civility. At last the group became so noisy that the sounds of merriment reached the ears of the rest of our party, who did not linger over their flesh-pots under such inviting circumstances. Soon the room was crammed full of Englishmen and Circassian girls, the male portion of the native community being collected at the door, and manifesting the most intense interest and amusement in our proceedings. Then, by means of L——, we held a little conversation, but they became shy again under so formal a ceremony as interpretation, and indeed were evidently a little overwhelmed by the rapid increase to our party, and the general attention they were attracting. So we thought it time to create a diversion by the introduction of a few presents, and a great many yards of printed calico were extended before their glistening and admiring eyes. This, we informed them, we should divide equally and impartially. At the same time I inwardly resolved to secure as large a portion as possible for a charming little creature who had been feeding me with chestnuts, and whose soft lustrous eyes and long jet lashes I had compared deliberately with every other in the room, and had arrived at the conclusion that they were unrivalled. In virtue of this superiority, therefore, it was clear that she was entitled to the largest share; and I was just debating within myself how this was to be managed, when she settled the matter for herself in the most off-hand way, by making a vigorous snatch at the tempting prize, evidently with an idea of appropriating the whole. A beauty on the other side resented so strong a measure, and firmly grasped the other end. Each one now saw that it would become the property of the stoutest arm, and the whole of the party threw themselves into the contest with frantic ardour. Not even in the most excited game of hunt-the-slipper could more scrambling, screaming, pulling, and romping have been displayed. It was utterly hopeless to attempt to interfere; crack went the calico in every direction.

First one and then another would flourish a fragment of the crumpled trophy in the air, and then pass it through the window to her mother or some of the old beldames who were looking greedily on, and then plunge into the ring again for more. I had the satisfaction of seeing my little *protégée*, with flushed face, and eyes that flashed with a fire somewhat at variance with their former deep repose, come out of the strife victorious. I took charge of at least two yards of the precious article for her while she recovered her breath and smoothed her ruffled feathers.

Gradually order was once more restored, and those whose dejected countenances and swimming eyes betrayed the ill-success with which they had come out of the conflict, were presented with some new pieces of patterns so bright and gaudy that they were more than recompensed. The young ladies of that hamlet will flaunt about, for years to come, in such trousers as never before graced the limbs of fair Circassians, except in the harems of Stamboul. And, doubtless, swains from neighbouring villages will be attracted by their brilliant plumage to pay their devotions to the maidens who captivated the Anglia. Assuredly, never can Manchester calico be converted to nobler use than when, cut into the shape of a short tunic, it shall adorn their graceful figures; and the sun-flower pattern cannot be more highly honoured than when, in the form of loose trousers, tight at the ankle, it shows to advantage the tiny little white foot peering out from beneath.

On the following morning we bade a tender adieu to all these lovely damsels, who were paraded upon the green by our host for that purpose. They formed a most fascinating array. In front stood the two daughters of the Bey in their richest attire, and perched upon curiously-shaped pattens, which raised the wearers five or six inches above the ground, and which were richly mounted in silver. Behind them a row of handmaidens waited in respectful attendance, the children of serfs belonging to the great man, and the humble companions of his own daughters. He pointed with a dolorous expression to all this valuable property rendered utterly worthless by the recent firman, which forbids the exportation of slaves, and which he knew perfectly well emanated from the English. Here was an extensive stock-in-trade thrown upon his hands; and their proprietor found himself deprived of his entire income, for girls have hitherto been the only raw material of Circassia which could be converted into money. The only currency which ever found its way into the country was in exchange for the female part of the population; and now that this source of revenue is cut off, the owners will be compelled to barter them amongst themselves for horses. Girls and horses are almost convertible terms in Circassia, and are valued as nearly as possible alike, though I am bound to say that in any other country the former would fetch a far higher price than the latter. It is very seldom that a Circassian will give two horses for one girl. We laughingly asked some of these young ladies if they would come with us to Stamboul, and their eyes sparkled with delight at the idea, as they unhesitatingly expressed their willingness to do so. A Circassian young lady anticipates with as much relish the time when she shall arrive at a marketable age as an English young lady does the prospect of her first London season. But we have prevented the possibility of their forming any more of those brilliant alliances which made the young ladies of Circassia the envy of Turkeydom. The effect is, in fact, very much the same as that which an Act of Parliament would have in this country forbidding any squire's daughter to marry out of her own parish, thus limiting her choice to the curate, the doctor, and the attorney; and the result, in all probability, will be anything but beneficial to the morality of the community. Hitherto the female portion of society was influenced by a powerful, though perhaps an unworthy motive, to maintain that propriety of conduct, a violation of which would seriously have depreciated their value in the market. Now that restraint (and among a savage people it is difficult to substitute a more efficient one than interest) is withdrawn,—in the absence of any moral principle no motive exists to induce them to cherish that virtue which the suppression of slavery appears to them to have deprived of its value.

We were half tempted to put off our departure for a day, for the purpose of visiting a cave and some ruins which our host described as the wonder of the neighbourhood. It so often happens, however, that the traveller is misled by the extravagant description by savages of the marvels of their country, that we were scarcely disposed to risk the expenditure of our valuable time upon the word of the Bey, though it is possible we may have missed a discovery which may rejoice the heart of some future traveller. It was late before we were *en route* toiling up the steep side of the range, which rose abruptly in rear of our quarters of the previous night. We had replaced our shattered baggage-pony by a fresh animal, and were progressing prosperously, when the other pack-horse tumbled over a precipice. It was fortunately not above fifty feet in height, and his velocity was checked by the brushwood, which cracked under him as he gently revolved to the bottom, and was brought up on his back in the bed of a stream. The process of hauling him up again to the path caused some delay, and the extreme difficulty of our way rendered our progress necessarily slow. As we attained a higher elevation the character of the vegetation underwent its usual change, and here and there a pine-tree mingled its dark-green with the more vivid foliage of the beech. These were already beginning to assume autumnal tints, and at the top of the range to drop their yellow leaves. We estimated our elevation at the highest point at about 6000 feet above the sea-level, and it was no small relief to exchange the upward scramble for the downward rush. The Circassian ponies retain their centre of gravity on these occasions with wonderful instinct, and they are by no means to be supposed to lack sure-footedness because they occasionally tumble over precipices. In no other country that I have ever been in are horses expected to perform such extravagant feats. Indeed, except in Nepaul, I have never seen such dangerous roads, and there men carry the passengers, and sheep the merchandise. The wonder in Circassia is, not that the horses fall over the precipices, but that they do it with so much impunity. It is singular also that in a highland country a horse should be as indispensable a possession to a mountaineer as his wife. No Circassian is without one or two horses, and yet, except upon the occasional stony bed of a river, or along the sea-shore, there is not fifty yards of level ground in the country. Even the natives are obliged frequently to dismount, though they fearlessly ride over ledges of slippery rock, over hanging dizzy heights, which make one shudder to think of, past which it requires some nerve even for a man trusting to his own stout legs and careful steps to carry him, and to attempt which on horseback seems little short of insanity. As we descended towards the valley of the

Schacho, our guides pointed out to us amongst the bushes the leaves of a plant resembling as nearly as possible the tea-plant of China, and from which they assured us the natives were accustomed to infuse a similar beverage. We never had an opportunity of tasting Circassian tea. The valley of the Schacho was prettily cultivated, and the scenery assumed a somewhat softer tone as we descended from the higher elevation. We stopped to rest in a grove of magnificent trees, where some singular monuments arrested our attention. Large masses of rock, which protruded here and there from the hillside, had been smoothed by the hand of man, and presented an almost perpendicular plain surface about six feet square. On each side the rock had been shaped into somewhat the form of a buttress, so as to give a sort of finish to the work, and in the centre was a circular aperture about eighteen inches in diameter. Upon looking through this, we perceived an excavation in the solid rock, of about six feet square and four in height. The roof was formed by a single slab of stone, which had apparently been hewn for the purpose, and placed upon the top. The hypothesis which most immediately presented itself to our minds, upon inspecting these singular cavities, was, that they were sarcophagi, although it was difficult to divine the object of the circular aperture in front. We asked the guides their explanation of the mystery, and they said that in former times their country was inhabited by a race of dwarfs, who were served by a race of giants; that one great use to which the dwarfs put the obedient giants, was the construction of durable and substantial habitations, and that the excavations we were inspecting were the result of their labours. The circular apertures were the entrances, and as the little people used to ride on hares, their dimensions were most appropriate. While L—— was delivering this marvellous history with great unction, we were sketching the subject of his discourse. Their whole aspect and position invested them with an air of solemnity and mystery. The gnarled trunks of gigantic oaks rested heavily upon the rude architecture, or twisted their giant roots into the crevices of the sculptured rocks. The dense foliage overhead drooped sometimes over the whole, so as almost to conceal it; rank grass and ferns grew in dark moist corners, and mosses and lichens clung to the weather-beaten surface. It was a silent hidden spot, at the bottom of a deep valley, from which no view was visible, seldom visited even by the natives, for the path we were travelling was so little frequented that it was often nearly invisible, and never seen before by a European. We were the first to discover its secrets, and speculate upon their origin; doubtless, for years to come the majestic grove in which lie concealed these monuments of a bygone race will remain untrodden and unknown.

Shortly after leaving this interesting spot, we found ourselves in the valley of the Schacho. We had accomplished the descent from the top of the ridge with immense rapidity, and our host of the previous evening, who had politely accompanied us thus far, here bade us adieu. The crossing of the tumultuous Schacho was the most perilous undertaking of the kind which we had attempted. The horses could barely keep their footing upon the stony slippery bottom, while the rushing stream reached to the holsters. After one or two unsuccessful attempts we found a ford, and, with the exception of the baggage getting drenched, suffered no other inconvenience. We now saw, to our dismay, a range before us quite equal in height to the one we had just traversed. The guides informed us that, if we did not stop where we were for the night, there was a great risk of our failing to accomplish the ascent, and thus being compelled to camp out, as there were no houses until we reached the other side. This was a most disagreeeble prospect. At the same time the day was still young; we had four good hours of daylight before us, and we determined to push vigorously on, and risk the chance of a night in the woods. Our start was not auspicious. The path, more narrow than ever, was at one place so unpleasant-looking that some of the party dismounted; among others L——, whose chestnut horse was a proverbial fool at picking his way. I did not think the same precaution necessary with the clever little beast I bestrode; but the chestnut, though left entirely to himself, slipped his hind foot, lost his balance, and went clean over thirty feet perpendicular, performing a somersault in the air, and landing upon a quantity of sharp rocks. Of course we expected to find that his back was broken—for although the height was not great, there had been nothing whatever to check his fall. To our amazement, however, he got upon his feet, and though he was evidently much bruised, and bled a good deal from the mouth, he managed to scramble through the remainder of that tremendous day's journey, and lived to undergo the horrors of Omer Pasha's campaign. A few yards after this, and even the Circassians were obliged to dismount. Recent rains had made the path so sticky and muddy that the ponies were soon utterly exhausted, and we plodded up beside them, our progress being much retarded by long jack-boots reaching to our thighs, and to which adhered many pounds of pertinacious clay—indeed, during the whole of this day's journey, some of our party scarcely ever mounted their horses at all. We must have ascended, in the course of three hours, about three thousand feet, and as this was the second range we had crossed since the morning, we arrived at the top thoroughly exhausted. But we were amply compensated for our toils, by one of the most magnificent views it was ever my good fortune to behold.

Upon our left rose in majestic grandeur the snowy peaks of the towering Caucasus, and a flood of golden light bordered their irregular outline. Lower down, the glaciers met the dark green of the pine-forest; and the contrast was the more striking, because the rays of the declining sun fell only on the glittering snow, while the shades of evening were settling fast upon the sombre woods of the lower mountains. From these gushed boiling torrents, and forced their way through narrow gorges, which expanded at our feet into winding valleys, where the hills had exchanged their dark-green mantle for one in which the many hues of autumn were combined; and hamlets were embowered amid fruit-trees and orchards; and the streams, like threads of silver, no longer swept seething beneath overhanging rocks, but rippled calmly under the drooping foliage which kissed the water. Farther to the right the country opened still more, and so they meandered to the sea between variegated margins, formed of patches of yellow corn, brown millet, and verdant meadow.

We revelled for some time in this glorious prospect, for our path kept along the ridge of the hill for some distance, and crossed a saddle before it thought of once more descending into the long-wished-for valley, where we expected to find food and lodging for the night. Meantime the sun had set; and as we turned our backs sharply upon the view we had been admiring, and, rounding a shoulder of the mountain, expected to have another and not less interesting panorama at our feet, our surprise and dismay were great when we burst suddenly upon an immense expanse of dense fog, which lay like a white shroud upon the earth, concealing it from us entirely, except where two or three hill-tops still showed their wooded summits. Gradually the mist rose, and one by one they disappeared, as though submerged by some mighty flood. We could scarcely regret the loss of the view as we gazed upon a phenomenon so singular and striking, until at last we were ourselves enveloped in its chill embrace. There was a warning sound in the cold damp gusts that swept over the mountain-side, which was anything but pleasant, as, wearied and jaded, we commenced the arduous descent. Our horses, with drooping heads, followed their plodding masters down dry water-courses and steep slippery banks. A general recklessness seemed to pervade the party, as though life was momentarily becoming less valuable as the chance of passing a rainy night in the woods increased. At length, when the last glimmer of twilight had almost disappeared, the bark of a dog sounded cheerily on our ears, and soon after human voices inspired us with hope. Their owners promptly answered our shouts, and directed us, in a bewildered manner, to the chief man of the village, furnishing us with a guide to his residence, which we reached at last, utterly worn out and exhausted.

Our host was a perfect specimen of a Circassian, who had never travelled beyond his native valley;

but though wrapt in amazement at our appearance, he did not allow his feelings of astonishment to get the better of his hospitality. He at once commenced the most active preparations for our comfort; and though he evidently was not so well off as our former host, he seemed determined to make up by activity for his want of means. We ventured, despite L——'s remonstrances to the effect that we should only give offence, to hint our ravenous condition, and to express a wish that the ceremony of the sheep should be dispensed with for once, and that we should be supplied with a turkey, or something less sumptuous, but more rapidly prepared. Our host received this intimation with a somewhat dissatisfied expression of countenance, and left the room without deigning a remark. A few minutes after he returned, and, with a grin of triumph, informed us that, in revenge for the serious reflection we had cast upon his hospitality, he had ordered a bullock, instead of a sheep, to be killed for our benefit. It was already nearly eight o'clock, and we had had nothing to eat since breakfast, and during the interval had been sustaining almost without intermission the most severe exercise. This announcement, then, was received with a murmur of profound despair, and we flung ourselves in our quilts in a state of sullen discontent. It was no consolation to us to know that our wretched horses were as badly off as ourselves; for it is the custom in Circassia never even to take the saddle off a horse for an hour or two after his arrival, much less to feed him. There is always a post like a hat-stand before the house of the great man, to which visitors fasten their ponies, and there they are left to stand until thoroughly cool. Our poor brutes could have found no great difficulty in arriving at this latter state of body, for shortly after our arrival came a most tremendous thunderstorm. The thunder seemed to burst almost inside the *konak*, and then went echoing and crashing through the narrow valleys as though it would rend the very mountains. The sluice-gates of heaven seemed open, and the rain swept in through the chinks and crevices of our miserable abode in spite of our utmost efforts to keep it out. We could not, however, be sufficiently thankful for the shelter we enjoyed, when we remembered how nearly we had been destined to pass the night in the woods, and how deplorable would have been our condition had we done so. As it was, we were only suffering from a heated atmosphere and voracious appetites, being confined in a small room with a blazing fire, and deprived of our dinner until half an hour after midnight. One was almost tempted to believe that Bolingbroke must have been a Circassian traveller, and spoke feelingly when he said—

> "Oh, who can hold a fire in his hand
> By thinking on the frosty Caucasus ;
> Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite
> By bare imagination of a feast ?"

It was late on the following morning before we roused ourselves from the heavy slumbers consequent upon our midnight meal, and we occupied the hour before breakfast in paying our respects to the daughter of our host, a ladylike-looking girl, who sat to Mr S—— for her portrait with great satisfaction. Her brother, a stalwart young fellow, who stood near, had not long before been taken prisoner by the Russians. He had, however, managed to shoot the officer on guard, and effected his escape. This was the most unsophisticated family we had met. They had never been out of their native valleys; neither father nor daughter had ever before seen any Europeans, and they were evidently genuinely anxious to show us kindness and hospitality. As we parted from them, and one of our party recompensed our host for his entertainment of us by a handsome present, the old man embraced the donor with much fervour, and many professions of eternal friendship and regard. The violent rain of the night before had swelled the mountain torrents, always rapid—greased the narrow paths, always dangerous—and rendered travelling in Circassia, always difficult, almost hopeless. We made up our minds to walk nearly the whole of our day's journey, and found it difficult to keep our footing upon the slippery path, not broader than a Highland sheep-walk, which led along the edge of a hill some eight or nine hundred feet above the brawling stream at its base. Downwards, however, our steps were now directed, and we at last reached it, after a great deal of trouble with our baggage-animals, whose packs were continually tumbling off. Fortunately there was nothing of any value contained in them, or the combined effects of soaking in the rivers and rolling over precipices would have been fatal. We were amply repaid by the beauty of the valley of the Tecumseh, for the difficulty we had experienced in scrambling down to it. The path led through the wood by the river-bank, sometimes diving into a glen, and crossing gushing tributaries by rustic wooden bridges; sometimes, descending to the level of the stream, it was shut in by rocks and overhanging trees; at others, where the channel became compressed, and the banks rugged and precipitous, it ascended to a height of a hundred feet, and, rounding the projecting rock, afforded romantic glimpses of roaring cascades and boiling rapids; then through the open smiling valley, where hedges of gigantic box were covered with the wild clematis, and azaleas and rhododendrons mingled their glowing blossoms.

Surely nature has lavished an undue share of her gifts upon the lovely valley of Tecumseh. Never was there such a combination of the sublime and the beautiful. As we followed its course, we seemed to pass from one to the other: we left behind us the snowy peaks, and journeyed onward towards gently swelling hills; issuing from deep narrow gorges re-echoing with the hoarse murmur of flooded torrents, we entered silent, peaceful dells, where tiny rills trickled between moss-grown stones; and passed from forests of grand majestic trees, dark and gloomy, into summer gardens of wild flowers, bright and cheerful; and so on through green meadows and orchards of fruitful trees, where bunches of purple grapes hung side by side with walnuts or chestnuts, as the tree was covered by the tenacious creeper, and apples and figs presented themselves temptingly to our grasp, and half-ripe medlars suggested the idea of a second visit. There was some little excitement going on in the valley of Tecumseh as we passed down it, for a message had been sent by Omer Pasha calling upon the inhabitants for a cavalry contingent; and a grand meeting of the young men was appointed to take place, in order that the district of Ubooch might be properly represented in the Turkish army.

Our young men were very full of the anticipated pleasures of campaigning, but I afterwards saw them in Mingrelia, considerably disenchanted. Many of them had lost their horses from starvation, and they were returning in a miserable plight. Meantime they were great gossips, and what between the excitement of being our guides, and of going to the wars, they were extremely communicative to everybody they met. The old Hadji told the same story over, of who we were, where we had been, where we were going, &c., for the edification of every passenger; and these roadside chats, though no doubt very full of interest to the parties concerned, were very tiresome to us, whose only object was to push on without losing any unnecessary time. We crossed over a low range a little before nightfall, passing a large and populous village charmingly situated, and looked out for quarters among the numerous *konaks* with which the valley we had now entered was dotted. For the first time we applied in vain; the family informed us that, the master of the house being away, we could not be allowed admittance. We somewhat questioned the truth of this excuse, but had no alternative but to prosecute our search for some more friendly householder.

At last we reached a village where the inhabitants gladly placed two little cottages at our disposal, and where we were permitted to dine off turkeys instead of sheep. After dinner, a rough-looking Circassian came into our *konak*, and informed us that he was anxious to enter into the service of a European. He was a native of Abbasack, and had fought against the Russians; he had also been the pilgrimage to Mecca, and picked up a smattering of Turkish. Altogether, though wild and uncouth in appearance, there was something so amiable and prepossessing in his face, that I at once offered to engage him and his horse at the monthly stipend of thirty shillings. Salary, however, was evidently "no consideration" with my friend Hadji Mustapha, who only desired the novelty of the employment with a European, and thenceforward took me under his patronising care.

Nor would it have been possible to find a more good-humoured, affectionate, and hard-working slave than this faithful creature afterwards proved. Thoroughly unsophisticated, his service was rather that of a devoted friend than a paid domestic. It was refreshing to be waited upon by one utterly ignorant of the ordinary relations subsisting between master and servant—to receive from him good advice when well, and the most unremitting attention when ill. He united in his person the functions of groom, for he took care of five horses; cook upon emergencies; valet after he had been initiated into the mysteries of the toilet, which at first amazed him exceedingly; nurse when, unfortunately, the occasion offered, and tutor and guardian always. He was the only servant I had throughout the Transcaucasian campaign of the Turkish army, and subsequently accompanied me to Constantinople, where I parted from him with regret, and where he astonished the world upon the quay at Tophanè by straining me to his bosom. His costume by that time had become a curious mixture of English and Circassian, for he had a great weakness for civilised apparel, and, though thoroughly honest, was a little covetous of his master's goods. It was impossible to resist his insinuating appeal when he admiringly contemplated a pair of thick shooting-boots of mine, and then glanced ruefully at his own worn-out *tsuaka* or moccasins. In fact, if the truth must be told, Hadji Mustapha was an incorrigible beggar, and kept himself supplied with clothes very cleverly. His wardrobe gradually expanded during our residence in camp, and I used constantly to see garments transferred from the backs of other servants to his own. He was such a universal favourite, and so ready to do good-natured things, and take any amount of trouble, that he deserved all he got. Poor Hadji! I gave him a character, in which I endeavoured to describe his merits, and recommended him to Misserie's good offices at Constantinople, but I fear he will not again find an English master. There is a difficulty in communicating with him, which will operate as a serious objection. Nor could any bystander have understood the jargon of Turkish, English, and Circassian, which formed a sort of language of our own invention, and by which we held communion.

We had now reached the south-eastern frontier of Ubooch. There is a narrow district intervening between this province and Abkhasia called Djikethie, inhabited by a tribe who speak the Asgar language, and who were reported by our guides to have Russian sympathies. They decidedly objected to the idea of our travelling through the interior of this province, and indeed we had had quite enough of clambering over successive ranges; so we bent our steps seaward, and, passing the Russian fort of Mamai, followed the coast to Ardiller. At Soucha, another

Russian fort, now dismantled, we found a number of brass guns in a perfectly good state of preservation. The Circassians were revelling in the domain of their old enemies, little dreaming that the day would soon come when the barrier would again be established which should cut them off from intercourse with the whole civilised world. We, too, as we rode along the shingly beach, under shelter of gigantic forest-trees, speculated upon the happy future which seemed now in store for this devoted land—when its resources should be developed, and intercourse with Europe produce its beneficial influence upon the benighted population.

We found practical evidence of the truth of the assertion of our guides as to the alteration which existed in the sentiments of the people among whom we were now journeying, when we arrived at our night's quarters at Ardiller. Some of the villagers came in to inspect us, and, accustomed as they were to Russians, manifested no curiosity, and very little interest in us. One of these, a fine stalwart fellow, with a disagreeable sneer upon his countenance, informed us, without circumlocution, that he was heart and soul a Russian. He said he regretted their departure exceedingly, and hoped soon to see them back again ; whereupon one of our Circassian guides, of an impetuous disposition, applied an epithet to the speaker which has its equivalent in civilised, but not in polite society, accompanying the same with a gesture so menacing that we feared for the public peace. As we wished to have some more conversation with our new acquaintance, we persuaded all the Circassians to leave the room. He then said that it was by no means to be wondered at that he should regret the departure of the Russians, as their presence always secured a profitable market for corn and vegetables; for the garrison had orders to buy the produce of the country at exorbitant prices. But this was not the only method resorted to for obtaining the goodwill of the people. Our informant assured us that he received a monthly salary of seven roubles, on condition that he maintained friendly relations with the Russians, and exercised his influence in their behalf among the natives.

It was therefore most natural that the people of Ubooch, who voluntarily deprived themselves of these advantages for the sake of freedom, and suffered all the inconveniences resulting from a determined hostility to Russia, should have felt doubly indignant with the base conduct of these Djikethians, who were ready to sell their independence for a wretched pecuniary advantage, and then boasted of their treachery in their very faces. We were amused at the hesitation which this fine gentleman displayed when we informed him that he might retire, and he contemplated the hostile party who were waiting to receive him outside. We felt very little pity for him, and were not surprised to hear the sounds of strife proceed from the yard. It was perfectly dark, and we could only speculate upon what was probably passing. Nor did we think it wise to interfere; but L—— rushed out with his usual impetuous curiosity, and came back with an excited account of an affray. However, quiet was gradually restored, and our Circassians came dropping in after a little, with satisfied countenances, like dogs who lick their lips after feasting on the produce of the chase. It was clear, however, that the locality was by no means congenial to our friends, and they informed us of their intention to return on the following day to Ubooch. To this we made no objection, as we hourly expected the return of the Cyclops to the coast, and had agreed that she was to look in for us at this point. We were, moreover, gainers by the intimate relations which had been maintained between the inhabitants of the village and the garrison of the fort, situated on the coast about a mile and a half distant. There were all sorts of evidences of civilisation apparent about our habitation. It was a large wooden building, containing two rooms, constructed of planks, and with a shingle roof, a most comfortable fireplace, a couple of couches, and various other articles of furniture unknown in Circassia, the whole belonging to an old lady, who overwhelmed us with civility, and entertained us most sumptuously. We were detained at Ardiller for three days, during which time we were dependent entirely upon the hospitality of this exemplary person. It is true that we received a pressing invitation from a neighbouring great man to honour his *konak* with our presence, and we were very much disposed to do so; but we were assured that it would give such mortal offence to our kind hostess, and cast so dire a reflection upon her hospitality in the eyes of the surrounding population, that the move was given up. Meantime we rode about the country exploring the neighbourhood, and sketching its beauties. The fort, as usual, consisted of four walls, enclosing a number of tall poplars and a great deal of rubbish. All the forts to the north of Souchoum were dismantled by the Russians prior to their evacuation; but Souchoum itself was left untouched, as Prince Michael assured the Russians that, if they damaged the place in any way, the people of the country would rise and cut off their retreat. As the weather was by no means propitious, we congratulated ourselves upon our good quarters, and did not regret the abrupt conclusion of our tour. The Circassians, too, lingered on in spite of their hostile feelings towards the country-people, and seemed disposed to be somewhat intractable when the important duty of recompensing them for their trouble was to be entered upon.

Like thorough savages, they resorted to all sorts of manœuvres to screw more out of us than they were entitled to. First, they disputed the terms of the agreement collectively; then one of them adopted a conciliatory tone, while the others departed in high dudgeon. Finding he could not coax a present out of us, he too left indignantly, and then one of the others returned with a long face, and still longer story, of his having lost all his wages, and tried to work upon our compassion. When he found this hopeless (like Mr Montague Tigg when Pecksniff refused to lend him the ridiculously small sum of eighteenpence), he swore eternal friendship, in which he was joined by all the others, who now reappeared, after having absented themselves in a fit of disgust for twenty-four hours, and who remained with us until we left the coast, when we parted on the best possible terms.

It was indeed difficult to be angry with these men on the very ground which their gallant countrymen had rendered sacred by many a deed of noble daring; and we were ready to forget that acquisitiveness, which is so often the mark of barbarians, amid scenes with which so much that was heroic was associated. We could not turn our backs upon Ubooch without regret. Of all the tribes of Circassians who have so long and steadily resisted the Russian arms, none have shown a more indomitable spirit than the inhabitants of this district. Their enterprises have been as bold as the execution of them has been skilful; they have produced warriors whose deeds have rendered both themselves and their tribe famous throughout the mountains; and the name of Hadji Dokum Oku is one which is painfully familiar to

Russian ears. Their country has always been a region of terror to the Muscovites, who have never succeeded in penetrating it; and with the exception of a Baron Turnau, an officer who had been taken prisoner, and kept in confinement amongst them for some time, it was, prior to our visit, a complete *terra incognita.* Indeed, as this gentleman was kept a close prisoner, his description of the country was very meagre. The best account of the episodes in which the Uboochians have figured is to be gathered from Russian sources; for though by no means trustworthy, they are more to be relied upon than the fables of the mountaineers. Dr Wagner, who visited Ardiller in 1843, gives some interesting details which he obtained from the officer then in command. Three years before, this tribe, together with some of the Shapsugh warriors, stormed four Russian forts sword in hand. Out of the five hundred soldiers composing the garrisons, only eleven survived, and these were made prisoners. An enormous number of Circassians, however, fell in the assault, and perished in one of the forts, which was ultimately blown up by a Russian soldier. In the following year, the Czar determined to avenge this disaster, and sent a mixed force of about three thousand men to Ardiller, who attempted to penetrate into Ubooch, between that fort and Soucha. They no sooner turned inwards, however, than they were attacked furiously by the Uboochians under Ali Oku, the grandson of the old chief just mentioned, and driven back, after a determined struggle, in which that young chieftain was shot cheering on his men, and his place taken by the venerable Hadji, who more than avenged the death of his gallant grandson. The Russians admitted to a loss of five hundred men on this occasion, and gave up any further idea of punishing the Uboochians, or entering their country. We passed over the scene of this bloody conflict on our ride from Soucha to Ardiller. There is unfortunately now no great Ubooch warrior. The most dashing young man of the tribe, and a descendant of the Hadji, was, at the period of our visit, only burning for an opportunity of maintaining the credit of the family, and with this view put himself at the head of the cavalry contingent which was supplied by the district to Omer Pasha. Izak Bey was indeed one of the handsomest and most gallant young fellows I ever saw; he was in the thickest of the fight on the eventful day of the Ingour, and we lay together under the same cloak by the bivouac-fire that night on the bloody battle-field. Poor fellow, he succumbed under the hardships of the retreat, and died of typhus fever at Choloni the day before I left the army.

In the course of my journeys upon the Circassian coast, I had now visited some eight or nine of these abandoned Russian forts, and always with sensations very different from those which usually accompany the contemplation of scenes of ruin and desolation.

Here the sight of dismantled walls, and tottering towers, and heaps of rubbish, gave rise, not to feelings of melancholy, but of satisfaction and of triumph; —of satisfaction that a noble and free-hearted people should be relieved of the presence of foreign invaders; and of triumph, that this result had been due entirely to our navy. It was pleasant, then, to see Circassians cultivating gardens which formerly supplied their enemies with vegetables, and building their cottages within gunshot of those loopholed walls, then so harmless; and melancholy is it now to think that Russian cannon will soon again fill up the empty embrasures, and Russian soldiers reconstruct and re-occupy the ruined and deserted barracks; that the gardens will again be abandoned by their rightful owners, and their cottages destroyed. The effect of any clause in the late treaty preventing the reconstruction of these forts, is more important than people in this country have been disposed to allow. It has been contended that the Circassians had no claim to our sympathies on the score of co-operation, and that therefore any stipulation in their favour was uncalled for. In the first place, it is easy to show that they co-operated with us whenever they were asked, and could do so; and, in the second, it is not because the Circassians deserve their independence that we should endeavour to secure it for them, any more than it was the purity of the Sultan's government which induced us to undertake a war which had for its object "the integrity and independence of his empire." We acted in this from self-interested motives, and we have only neglected to stipulate against the reconstruction of the Circassian forts, because we did not see that our interest demanded it; or if perchance we did, France did not, and we were not in a position to insist upon it. The future will show that her policy in this was as short-sighted as was ours in concurring in it. The whole question of Eastern aggression by Russia hinges upon the existence of this line of forts. Without them, Russia can never hope to subdue Circassia, any more than she could have taken Kars if she had left one gate open. The success of the Russian war in the Caucasus depends upon the efficacy of the blockade; that can only be secured by the reconstruction of these forts. When these are rebuilt, and Circassia will be again thrown upon its own limited resources, the latter will at last be exhausted, the besieged country will capitulate, and the only barrier to Russian aggression in the East will thus be swept away. So long as a strip of independent country remains to separate Russia from her Transcaucasian provinces, their value is not only depreciated, but the difficulty of extending her frontier in that direction is increased, as her armies are in danger of being cut off, and reinforcements can only be brought up with risk.

Thus at this moment she hesitates to annex those provinces of Ghilan and Mazenderan to the south of the Caspian, which have been mortgaged to her by Persia. If, therefore, Russia intends to relinquish her Eastern policy, she need not care for the subjugation of Circassia, as the country itself is too impracticable to be of any intrinsic value; but if, as will undoubtedly be the case, Russia recommences her war with Circassia and the reconstruction of these forts, then we may infer that she has not relinquished that policy, but that she intends again to threaten Turkey when a convenient season offers—not this time upon the banks of the Danube, but on those of the Araxes. It is supposed that the rectification of the Bessarabian frontier will secure us against a repetition of the siege of Silistria. The non-reconstruction of the Circassian forts was the only guarantee we could have had against the recurrence of the siege of Kars. It is a pity that the work was left half done. But this is not all. If these forts are rebuilt, that clause of the treaty which announces that the coasts of the Black Sea are for the future opened to the commercial enterprise of all nations will be remarkably restricted. The coast from Anaklea to Anapa will be hermetically sealed against the enterprise of all nations. The Russian troops, posted at short intervals along it, will no more allow a bale of Manchester calicoes to be carried into the country, than they would have allowed a bag of biscuits to be taken into Kars. They will, at all events, bring their blockade within the terms of that clause of the treaty which says, "A blockade, in order to be binding, must be effective." Thus, unless Russia relinquishes her cherished policy in Asia, and admits the independence of Circassia—a most improbable event—the resources of that country will remain undeveloped,—its mineral wealth will never be explored,—its magnificent forests, teeming with valuable timber, will never ring with the sound of the axe; and the box-trees, unequalled in the world, will decay where they stand. The small patches of cultivation in the fertile valleys will never be enlarged beyond what is necessary for a scanty population. The grapes will wither upon the vine-stems, and the fruit which loads the trees rot where it falls. And yet the nation does not exist who would appreciate more thoroughly the advantages of a free and unrestricted commerce. Whenever the opportunity has offered, they have manifested a spirit of mercantile enterprise which only proves how anxious they are for intercourse with other nations, and how speedily civilisation would exercise over them its benign influences; but, like ourselves, they are ready to sacrifice their internal prosperity to their liberty, and would rather be annihilated as a nation, savage but free, than purchase that degraded civilisation which Russia offers them, at the price of their independence.

With respect to the absence of any co-operation on the part of the Circassians, that is easily accounted for with regard to the eastern part of the range. There are two reasons which doubtless operated with

Schamyl: one was, that his assistance was never asked; and another, that he had no army—and it is universally admitted that it is impossible for a general to carry on a campaign in an enemy's country without one. Nevertheless our statesmen expected this of Schamyl, and of all the other chieftains in the range; the fact being that Circassians are guerillas without either land-transport or commissariat corps, or artillery, or infantry, or anything, in fact, but ponies, and are indomitable upon their own mountain-tops. If, therefore, we had expected their co-operation, we should have asked them to do something in their own country—block up the Russian passes, for instance—and had we sent them a few regular soldiers and some money, we should have had their co-operation most cordially offered. As it was, when we asked the Naib to attack the Russians, he did, and got well beaten in Karachai; and when we asked the people of Ubooch to raise a contingent, they did, and their irregular horse accompanied Omer Pasha on the campaign, until all the horses died of starvation, as they were allowed neither pay nor rations, and were forbidden to plunder, and the men returned on foot to their own valleys, to praise the generosity of the Allies, and, after losing their property, to hear from Constantinople that they did nothing to deserve sympathy, and that the forts are all to be rebuilt, which are to exclude them for ever from intercourse with the rest of their species.

At last, just when we had given up the Cyclops, and had determined upon riding down the coast to Souchoum, we observed the line of smoke upon the distant horizon, and soon after were actively engaged in the process of embarkation, leaving our Circassians collected in a group upon the beach, shouting "*Oagmaff*," or farewell.

It would have been interesting, could we have spared the time, to have visited the church of Pitzounda, celebrated as the oldest Christian church in the Caucasus, and situated upon a remarkable promontory, which we steamed past the morning after leaving Ardiller. It is almost exactly similar to that of Souksou, but upon the scale of a cathedral instead of a church. It has been described at length in the elaborate work of Mons. Dubois de Montpereux, whose extensive researches into the history and antiquities of the Caucasian province are a most valuable source of reference. Founded by the Emperor Justinian about the middle of the sixth century, it embraced within its patriarchate nearly all the Caucasian countries. The invasions of the neighbouring Circassians, however, forced the bishops to abandon it, and its importance declined, until under Muscovite auspices there appeared some prospect of its old position being assigned to it. As in former times it was the repository of many valuable documents, which have since been removed to the monastery of Ghelathi, and from which a history of the Caucasian provinces was compiled by a Georgian chronicler, and translated by Klaproth, it may not be uninteresting, in conclusion, to glance cursorily at the history of this part of the coast of Circassia and Abkhasia, as gathered from that record and the pages of Montpereux.

It is satisfactory to find that, according to these traditions, no obscurity hangs over the early portion of the history of these countries. They carry us boldly back to the Flood, and decide that Togarmah, who, it will be remembered, was a great-grandson of Noah, after the confusion of tongues consequent on the building of the Tower of Babel, established himself in Armenia, but whose possessions extended to the banks of the Kuban. He divided his territory between his eight sons, and Abkhasia was included in the portion of the eighth, Egros. These princes owed allegiance to Nimrod, then, in the language of the chronicle, "the first king among the inhabitants of the earth." At the instigation of the elder brother they revolted, and the mighty hunter fell by his hand. This prince, whose name was Hhaos, then became king over his brothers, and his rule was paramount in Caucasia and Armenia.

It is precisely at this epoch that the Argonautic expedition is placed by the Greeks, the reputed origin of those colonies which sprung up along the eastern shores of the Black Sea, in the country then called Colchis, and which includes Mingrelia and the greater part of Abkhasia. In the subsequent wars between the Persians and Georgians, these colonies took part with the latter, who, according to the chronicle, were only ultimately conquered by the first Artaxerxes. This veracious history then proceeds to describe the invasion of Georgia by the armies of Alexander the Great. After subduing the country, the conqueror is said to have left as its governor a Macedonian named Ason, who united, under his rule in Georgia, the province of Abkhasia. The tyranny of this man, however, roused the spirit of an enterprising young Georgian, who traced his descent to Ouplos, the grandson of the great-grandson of Noah, by name Pharnavaz, and who, in conjunction with a certain Koudji, lord of Abkhasia, conspired to overthrow the Greek oppressor. They collected a large army in Abkhasia, crossed the Ingour, as better men have done since, in the face of the enemy, and utterly routing Ason, Pharnavaz became king of Georgia, giving his sister in marriage to his faithful ally, Koudji, prince of Abkhasia, who thenceforward owned his suzerainty. The Greek colonies at the mouths of the Ingour, Kodor, Rhion, and other places upon the coast, and who had sided with Ason, managed, however, still to preserve their independence, although surrounded by a hostile population. Such was the condition of Abkhasia about two hundred and forty years before the Christian era, and so it remained until included within the limits of the vast empire of Mithridates.

To those who know the country, the march of this monarch, after his defeat by Pompey, from the Ingour to Anapa, seems an achievement worthy of his great reputation. The glory of the ancient Greek colonies had now departed, and the far-famed shores of Colchis and lovely valleys of Abkhasia became a Roman province under the rule of a governor appointed by Pompey. Not long after, it was incorporated into the kingdom of Bosphorus, under Polemon I., who had married a granddaughter of Mithridates. During the reign of Polemon II., or about forty years after Christ, the apostles Simon and Andrew arrived, according to the Georgian chronicle, in Abkhasia and Mingrelia, to publish those truths which have never since been altogether extinguished. The Emperors of Rome continued to arrogate to themselves the right of naming the rulers of these provinces, which were, nevertheless, practically independent. When, however, war broke out between the Persians and the people of the Caucasus, Justinian was obliged to send his armies to the assistance of the latter, for the Persians meditated the conquest of Mingrelia and Gouriel, then united into one province, from which they could threaten Constantinople itself. The Abkhasians took this opportunity of withdrawing themselves from their allegiance to the neighbouring province, which had assumed the right of naming their kings. They succeeded in this attempt, and appointed two kings of their own. Justinian determined to punish them for such contumacious conduct, and sent a picked force to Souchoum Kaleh. The Abkhasians took refuge in a strong castle which crowned a hill overlooking a steep gorge which issues from the mountains a little to the right of Souksou, and which still partially exists under the name of Anakopi. Had we known, when we saw it in the distance, what interesting associations have attached to it, we might have attempted to visit it. The Abkhasians, however, notwithstanding the strength of the place, did not hold out against the military tact of the Roman general, and the castle was taken and burned; but this spot owes its chief celebrity throughout the country to the still older tradition which attaches to it; for here, it is said, are laid the bones of Simon the Canaanite.

The result of the war between Justinian and Khosroes was to place more decidedly than ever the Transcaucasian provinces under the suzerainty of the Byzantine Empire.

Abkhasia, as well as the other provinces, felt this influence, and between the fifth and tenth centuries made considerable progress in civilisation. The greater part of those churches and forts, the ruins of which add so much to the picturesque character of the scenery, date from this period. Hitherto the princes of Abkhasia, though owning allegiance to the Greek emperors, were independent of the neighbouring provinces. Towards the close of the tenth century, however, the crowns of Georgia and Abkhasia became united in the family of the Bagrats. Its history is, therefore, identical with that of Georgia until 1442, when the reigning king (Alexander) died, leaving his kingdom divided between his three sons. Abkhasia and the rest of the seaboard provinces fell to the share of one of these, but his successors failed to preserve the allegiance of several of the principal families, who, finding their influence almost as great as that of their sovereign, successively threw off his yoke, so that very soon the kings ceased to exist, and their former territory was divided amongst themselves by the most influential families, whose authority is to this day recognised by Russia in the different provinces which resulted from this separation. Meantime these petty principalities became once more the theatre of war between Persia and the empire of which Constantinople was the capital, now no longer Christian. Abkhasia with its neighbours was placed finally under the suzerainty of the Porte; and, in 1578, Souchoum Kaleh and Poti at the mouth of the Rhion were built and garrisoned by Turkish troops. For the next two hundred years Abkhasia was a Turkish province, but about the middle of the last century the Abkhasians revolted, and the Turks abandoned Souchoum Kaleh, still, however, retaining the suzerainty. Keliche Bey, the Prince of Abkhasia, then living at Souchoum Kaleh, soon after, by refusing to give up a Turkish refugee, brought matters to a crisis, and called in the protection of Russia, at the same time professing himself a Christian convert. From that moment Russia never relinquished the hold which she was thus enabled to secure; and at the close of that war with Turkey which terminated in the treaty of Yassy, she acquired Abkhasia, together with the neighbouring provinces to the south. Shortly afterwards Russian troops were quartered at Souchoum Kaleh and other forts on the coast, and the princes of Abkhasia became Muscovite vassals. Their subjects, however, were by no means disposed to concur in this transfer of allegiance, and the Mahometan portion of the population have steadily refused to recognise the sovereignty of their new masters. The Christians, indeed, remain docile subjects of their prince. They remember with abhorrence the barbarities of their Turkish rulers, and even exaggerate those atrocities which unfortunately but too often characterised their dominion. The population of the north and interior, on the other hand, have conceived an inveterate hatred to the Russians, enhanced no doubt by the perpetual struggle with them in which they have been engaged, while they have forgotten the oppression of their former masters, from whom they doubtless suffered less than their Christian compatriots; and regarding them only as co-religionists, they hailed with joy the arrival of a Turkish Pasha, shortly after the evacuation of Souchoum Kaleh, as an earnest of that change from the Christian to the Mahometan rule which they so ardently desire. The consequence was, that when the Turkish army arrived at Souchoum Kaleh, Prince Michael found himself compelled to receive them with the utmost friendship and cordiality, for he was as unable to change the sympathies of the greater portion of his own subjects as he was to prevent the landing of Omer Pasha and his forces. Like the Uboochians, they too contributed their quota to the Turkish army, but, like them, they will gain nothing by the war in return for their co-operation. Had a condition prohibiting Russia from rebuilding the forts on the eastern coast of the Black Sea been inserted, that alone would have sufficed to secure their independence. For although she might have reserved to herself the right of garrisoning troops in the interior of Abkhasia, that attempt would have been found perfectly impracticable, except in the low country, where, as has already been shown, the population is not so strongly opposed to her rule. The evacuation of Souchoum Kaleh by Russian troops, and the residence there of foreign consuls, would have opened up the whole of the Mahometan part of the country to the commercial enterprise of the world. So far from that being the case, in consequence of those hostilities which must inevitably be resumed between the Mahometan Abkhasians and Russians, as soon as Souchoum Kaleh is regarrisoned, the country will revert to the condition in which it was before the war, and which is precisely similar to that of Ubooch. The chances of their ultimate civilisation are more remote than ever; they will be cut off again from intercourse with humanity. Their villages and fields will be burnt and destroyed as of old by rapacious soldiery, and war, incessant war, will be their only occupation, until at last, determined never to submit, they will become exterminated as a race, savage, but free to the end.

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