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PATRIOTS AND FILIBUSTERS

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the original

PATRIOTS AND FILIBUSTERS

OR

INCIDENTS OF POLITICAL AND
EXPLORATORY TRAVEL

BY

LAURENCE OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF

"LORD ELGIN'S MISSION TO CHINA AND JAPAN," "MINNESOTA
AND THE FAR WEST," ETC.

174845.

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all barren.'"—*STERNE'S Sentimental Journey.*

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PATRIOTS AND FILIBUSTERS.



PART I.—PATRIOTS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the most important and interesting episodes of the Russian war, though it attracted comparatively little attention at the time, was the destruction, by British ships, of the Russian forts upon the Circassian shore of the Black Sea. The statesman who had watched the progress and policy of Russia in the East, saw in this event an available pretext for checking the designs of the formidable and aggressive power with which we were then at war; while to the traveller an opportunity was thus afforded, which might never again occur, of exploring scenes hitherto unvisited by any European. Unfortunately, the great political advantages, to which I shall hereafter allude, which might have been derived from the success of our arms on this coast, were completely thrown away by the treaty which prematurely concluded the war, and which, so far from definitively and finally settling the much-

vexed Eastern question, out of which it sprung, has only stirred the turbid waters of that very noxious pool, and laid the foundations for those fresh complications which are destined before long to trouble the peace of Europe. It would be inexpedient now to discuss the present state of Eastern politics. A very short time must disclose the new combinations which are being formed; and where so much depends upon individual intrigue in high places, all speculation upon the subject must be more or less vague. Inasmuch, however, as public attention is likely to be attracted once more in the same direction, it may not be uninteresting to give some account of that little-known Caucasian chain, which has so long presented an insurmountable barrier to Russian aggression upon Persia and Turkey, and a very inconvenient political obstacle.

Unfortunately, the importance which attaches to it in this latter respect has considerably diminished since the period of my visit; while, on other accounts, this romantic district is invested with a deeper, though more melancholy interest, from the fact that the wild tribes which inhabited it are partially subdued, or, unwilling to submit themselves to the hated yoke of their traditional foe, have abandoned their native valleys, and migrated to the Ottoman Empire, where the national religion and institutions have attracted them to take refuge. Almost the only part which still remains quasi-independent, though held with much difficulty, is that province, a portion of which formed the scene of our explorations; and it is melancholy to think that it, too, is destined ultimately to be absorbed by the insatiate power which on all sides surrounds it.

The almost entire subjugation of the Eastern Caucasus which followed the capture of Schamyl, and the disposition lately manifested by his lieutenant the Naib to yield to Russia, must inevitably lead either to the extermination or conquest of the few tribes who still defy the Muscovite arms ; and, doubtless, the day is not far distant when those wild valleys and rocky gorges, which we explored under Circassian guidance, and under the auspices of a Sultan's firman, will be visited by the traveller whose passport will be a Russian pada-roshna, and whose guide a Russian courier.

The visitor wandering through these mountains under such altered conditions may perhaps find some interest in the following short narrative of our experiences in the province of Ubooch, a very wild and heretofore untravelled part of the range. I had already been cruising in one of her Majesty's ships for some weeks upon the coast of Circassia ; and early in October 1854, on my return to Souchoum Kaleh, after a trip into the interior of Abkhasia, of which province that town is the capital, I was glad to avail myself of an opportunity which was presented of accompanying an expedition into a more remote part of the country.

Abkhasia itself was at that time a frontier province of Russia, lying between Mingrelia and the independent tribes of the Caucasus. With a population partly Mohammedan and partly Christian, its allegiance was little more than nominal. At its capital town, Souchoum Kaleh, a large Russian force had for many years past been permanently garrisoned ; 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, insured the obedience of those of the inhabitants who preferred their worldly possessions to their liberty; while, as the plains which extend in a southeasterly 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 had long since resigned themselves to their fate, to which they had been the more easily reconciled, as they were opposed in religion to the Mohammedan mountaineers in the north, and sympathise in their Christian worship with their wily conquerors.

Prince Michael, called by the Turks Hamid Bey, is himself a Christian; but his father was a Mohammedan, 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 ricketty 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. Among the former were the Duke of Newcastle, Mr Calthorpe, and Mr Simpson, whose Crimean sketches have so justly won for him a high reputation. Never before had so favourable an occasion been offered for exploring that unknown mountain region, on which I had often gazed with longing eyes as we coasted along its margin ; and a party was soon formed, which included Captain Moore of the Highflyer, Mr Longworth, then civil commis-

sioner in Circassia, his secretary Mr Sandison, and myself, to pay a visit to Prince Michael at Souksou, in the first instance, and afterwards to extend our wanderings, and penetrate, as far as time and circumstances would permit, into some of the hitherto totally unknown and unexplored valleys of Circassia.

CHAPTER II.

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, gleaming 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, con-

structed 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 free-stone, 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 Mr Simpson 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. I had 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 me to change my plan, 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 journey from Souchoum Kaleh 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 circu-

lates 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 Sou-choum, 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.

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 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. Mr Longworth's friend, Ismail Bey, was unfortunately 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 to 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 levee, 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 tra-

velling 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 our mutual 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. The Duke, 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 from 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 hill-sides 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 into a series of 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 hill-side 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 maize 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 dab, 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 semi-circular projection about four feet above the ground, occupying 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 usually 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 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 had a most exalted opinion of the prowess of the English. He had seen that nation whose power was looked upon as so vast; which had for so many years expended thousands of men and millions of rubles in the Circassian war; which 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 large 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 Simpson.

At last, about half an hour before midnight, a tin basin and water were 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 ravenously 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. Al-

though 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.

CHAPTER III.

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 "youghourt," 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 debris. 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 stumbled 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 the Duke's 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 Leuka, 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, as 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. Leuka 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 Mohammedans. 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—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 were 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, Calthorpe 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 Calthorpe 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 hill-side. 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. Calthorpe, divided between his admiration for the scenery and his devotion to a novel by "Alexander Dumas, fils," I believe to be to this day profoundly ignorant of 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 Leuka, who had secured the atten-

tions 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 Leuka 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 Leuka, 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 Mohammedan, 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 bear-

ing and manner, and so remarkably good-looking, that had they been attired in frock-coats, instead of drab woollen garments ; if their parti-coloured gaiters had been replaced by loose trousers (checks or stripes), 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 siver-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 along Rotten Row, 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 lounge 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 illumined 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 step 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 king-maker-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 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 have desired 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. Heretofore they have regarded themselves at the mercy of Russia, England, or any other voracious power who may have manifested a desire to annex them. In order, therefore, to travel comfortably in those parts of Circassia which are not yet Russian, 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 Mohammedan 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 those parts of Circassia which are still independent will be received even as we were; for our conduct in having allowed the Russians to re-establish their blockade has made us unpopular, while, until the whole country is conquered, 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.*"

CHAPTER IV.

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 Leuka), 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 part of the government of Sefer Pasha, who was at this time endeavouring to establish an in-

dependent state under the Ottoman protectorate, in opposition to his rival the Naib.

The village at which we passed the night was 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 one of our party 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 Leuka, 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 the Duke 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, he informed them, should be divided 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, 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 protégé, 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 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, and 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 of 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 six thousand 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 are 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, and along overhanging 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 nearly resembling 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 hill-side, 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 Leuka 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. 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 disagreeable 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 Longworth, 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 trials of Omer Pasha's campaign. A very few yards farther, 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 jackboots 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 last entertainer, he seemed determined to make up by activity for his want of means. We ventured, despite Leuka'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, 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 on 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 thunder-storm. 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 opened, 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 Circasian 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 ? ”

CHAPTER V.

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 lady-like looking girl, who sat to Mr Simpson 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 the Duke 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 then lost their horses from starvation, and were returning home 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 road-

side 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 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 my 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 my thick shooting-boots, 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 de-

veloped, 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 good-will of the people. Our informant assured us that he received a monthly salary of seven rubles, 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 Leuka rushed out with his usual impetuous curiosity, and came back with an excited account of an affray. Ultimately, however, quiet was 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, nevertheless, 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 deter-

mined 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 passage of the Ingour, and we lay together under the same cloak by the bivouac-fire that night on the 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 several visits to the Circassian coast, I had now inspected 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 freehearted people should be relieved of the presence of foreign invaders; and of tri-

umph, 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 ; but melancholy is it now to think that Russian cannon have again filled up the empty embrasures, and Russian soldiers reconstructed and reoccupied the ruined and deserted barracks ; that the gardens are again abandoned by their rightful owners, and their cottages destroyed.

The effect of any clause in the treaty of Paris which should have prevented 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 merely 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, so also did France, and we were not in a position to resist her opposition in a matter which affected exclusively

our Eastern policy. The whole question of Eastern aggression by Russia hinges upon the existence of this line of forts. Without them Russia could never have hoped 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 depended upon the efficacy of the blockade that could only be secured by the reconstruction of these forts. Now that these are rebuilt, Schamyl has been captured, and Circassia has been again thrown upon its own limited resources, the latter must soon be exhausted; and when the besieged country has entirely capitulated, the only barrier to Russian aggression in the East will have been 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.

When she has thoroughly incorporated Circassia into her dominions, she will in all probability proceed to annex those provinces of Ghilan and Mazanderan to the south of the Caspian, which have been mortgaged to her by Persia. If she had intended to relinquish her Eastern policy, she would not have cared for the subjugation of Circassia, as the country itself is too impracticable to be of any intrinsic value; but the continuance of the Circassian war leads us to infer that she has not relinquished that policy, and that she intends again to threaten Turkey when a convenient season offers—not only 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.

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 were all to be rebuilt, which were 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 "Oag-maff," or farewell.

It would have been interesting, could we have spared the time, to have visited the church of Pit-zounda, 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 Souk-sou, 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 grand-daughter 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 Gouriél, 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 them-

selves 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 Mohammedan 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 Mohammedan 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 gained 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 asserted, 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 évacuation of Souchoum Kaleh by Russian troops, and the residence there of foreign consuls, would have opened up the whole of the Mohammedan part of the country to the commercial enterprise of the world. So far from that being the case, the country has reverted to the condition in which it was before the war. The chances of its ultimate civilisation are more remote than ever; the people 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 either migrate *en masse* or become exterminated as a race, savage, but free to the end.

Such is the prospect of the mountaineers among whom we had just travelled, and it is melancholy to think that the unhappy fate to which these brave men are now doomed, might have been averted by a stipulation forbidding the reoccupation of that town which, after having been taken from Russia and permanently garrisoned by Turkish troops for more than a year, might surely have been regarded as a very legitimate conquest. In addition to this, the establishment of Abkhasian independence would have been attended with far less difficulty than that of any province of Circassia. It had a Prince whose right was universally acknowledged, and whose close alliance with the Princess Dadianie of Mingrelia, his only neighbour, would have secured for both a peaceful frontier. Surrounded on all other sides by Circassians, nothing was to be feared from the depredations of the more lawless of his subjects upon any Russian province; and it is

therefore difficult to conceive how any inconvenience could have arisen from such a measure, while its advantages are apparent.

The population of the province is not above 50,000, and is yearly diminishing, owing partly to the constant warfare, and partly to the exportation of slaves. This latter traffic is carried on surreptitiously in spite of the Russian occupation of the seaboard. In fact, that blockade which prevents the ingress of civilised merchants and travellers, protects a traffic which owes its existence to the ignorant and degraded state of the population among whom it is carried on; and firmans issued at Constantinople to forbid it will be utterly useless, so long as the light of civilisation is never allowed to shine into the dark mountains of the Caucasus.

In a word, the result of this war with respect to Abkhasia and Circassia has been to exclude the benighted populations of those countries from all chance of any civilisation except that which Russia can offer, more completely than ever—to extinguish in their breasts any hope of their ultimate independence—to render inevitable the continuance of that traffic by which the women are now made the slaves of Turks, until that period arrives when the whole country is subdued, and both men and women will become the slaves of Russians.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROGRESS AND POLICY OF RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA.

It is one of the happiest peculiarities in the construction of the human mind, that it acquires knowledge so gradually that it cannot realise the extent of that ignorance by which it was once clouded ; and forms its opinions so imperceptibly, that no precise period can be attached to their origin. It is about seven years since Prince Menschikoff visited Constantinople upon a mission which subsequent events have proved to have been fraught with the most portentous consequences to Europe. If it were possible now to convey to the public any adequate notion of the lamentable want of information which then prevailed upon all matters connected with the Eastern Question, people would be inclined indignantly to deny its accuracy, if they did not go so far as to maintain stoutly that they had always penetrated into the true character of the policy of Russia, and anticipated her schemes of aggression ; and, certainly, considering the prominence which this topic afterwards acquired, it is not to be wondered at if familiarity with it should lead us into so natural

an error. Nobody now doubts that the occupation of the Principalities formed part of that system of territorial aggrandisement which is the very essence of Russian policy, and which had not the less been successfully at work, because its operations, prior to the war, had been so silently conducted as not to excite the alarm of the great powers of Europe.

The results of that policy were always apparent, no less in the history than on the map of Europe ; and if they have only been forced upon our attention by events which have recently occurred, it has not been because the facts themselves were wanting which should have taught us what to expect, and have prepared us to meet that contingency which was inevitable ; but unfortunately, even now, our inquiries and our discoveries end ; here we are content with recognising the leading principle of Muscovite diplomacy, without looking more narrowly into its workings, and thus acquiring the very knowledge and experience best adapted to enable us to cope successfully with the wily and ambitious power which then defied Europe. For it is a fair inference, that if success has uniformly attended the aggressive schemes of Russia, nothing else than a departure from her established policy could lead to a different result ; and therefore it is interesting to investigate the system of frontier extension which she has hitherto pursued, so that, if it has been altered, we may not only be able to account for so important a change, but show how it may be taken advantage of by the powers opposed to her in any future struggle.

Peter the Great devised a scheme of territorial annexation, which during his own splendid career he

practised with the greatest success upon neighbouring countries, which he bequeathed to his successors, and which a very slight knowledge of Russian history will enable us to recognise as the formula since adhered to by the successive occupants of the Muscovite throne. In an able pamphlet published some years since, upon the *Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East*, the process is thus described: "It invariably begins with disorganisation, by means of corruption and secret agency, pushed to the extent of disorder and civil contention. Next in order comes military occupation to restore tranquillity; and in every instance the result has been, PROTECTION FOLLOWED BY INCORPORATION." This process could only be illustrated by detailed accounts of some of the acquisitions of the last century; but it is interesting to observe why the system of Peter the Great was the only one calculated to attain the object for which it was designed. That object was to extend the frontier of the empire in *every* direction, and to continue to do so to an unlimited amount. There was no single especially-coveted province, which, once gained, was sufficient to satisfy the ambition of the Czars. It was a never-ending process, and one which depended for its successful working entirely upon a strict adherence to the formula; for it is evident, that in proportion as the frontier became extended did the difficulty of guarding it increase, and that caution upon which the whole policy was built became more necessary with every new outpost which was established, in order that the jealousy of neighbouring States might not be awakened, or the tranquillity of the newly-acquired provinces disturbed. Where

an influence so destructive to independence and so blighting to prosperity was at work, it could not steal over the doomed country too imperceptibly ; and, therefore, not until it was thoroughly established was the disguise under which it had been acquired thrown aside, and the protecting hand of the friend was now recognised to be the iron grasp of an insatiable giant.

Hence it is no longer a matter of surprise if we find that, from Norway to China, the Russian frontier is composed entirely of provinces which have been added to the empire since the accession of Peter the Great. But with the principles of annexation which he inculcated, there were also rules laid down for the guidance of his successors in the administration of new territory ; and the success which has attended every scheme of aggression, only renders a strict adherence to these maxims the more indispensable, since the empire is now encircled with a belt of conquered provinces five thousand miles in length, and varying in breadth from three hundred to one thousand miles—a barrier not to be depended upon, and formed of very combustible materials ; indeed, in time of war, a source of weakness rather than of strength, and from which much is to be apprehended. It is easy, then, to see why war formed no part of the policy of the Great Peter. He did not recommend coming Czars to surround themselves with gunpowder and then to thrust in the match, but rather by a slow process to decompose and absorb the combustible particles—and this in many provinces has almost been effected. It is a work of time, which requires both external and internal tranquillity, and to engage in a general war is to undo all that has been

going on during some of the quieter years of the last century. Energies which a long course of oppression have now almost crushed, may again develop themselves ; and when the work of retribution once begins, there will be a heavy reckoning to be paid.

In all his diplomatic relations, the Emperor Nicholas had proved himself a worthy disciple of his great ancestor. He never made a treaty without obtaining fresh territory, or acquiring the exercise of rights over new provinces which have ever proved the inevitable precursors of annexation. His attempts at negotiation in 1853, indeed, have not terminated in conformity with the uniform policy of the Czars ; and we may venture to assert that the history of Russia affords no precedent for any such treaty as that which was concluded in Paris in 1856—and yet the Emperor had nothing to reproach himself with. Everything combined to lead him to suppose that the time had arrived to justify him in entering upon another step of the annexing process in the direction of Turkey. There had been comparatively little difficulty in appropriating Turkish provinces hitherto, and he is going through the customary formalities when his proceedings are most unexpectedly nipped in the bud, by a most untoward alliance between two powers who were not only traditional enemies, but were both equally interested with himself in the partition of the Ottoman territory. With the foresight of a statesman he perceived that this partition was inevitable, and gave us credit for equal discrimination ; for, looking at the present state of European politics, we can have little hope that, when it does take place, it will be under circumstances so favourable to

this country as when, in the spring of 1853, his Imperial Majesty proposed the dissection of the sick man to the representatives of the great Powers. The next combination of Powers which will form itself upon the Eastern question will be very different from that which arose out of it upon the last occasion, and we may then find Russia in a position which will enable her to carry out the traditional policy to which I have alluded with greater safety to herself and inconvenience to us. I have already adverted to the important political results which she must derive from the success of her arms in the Caucasus, and more fully explained elsewhere the facilities which must be afforded to her by the removal of the Circassian barrier in the prosecution of her aggressive designs upon Persia and Turkey.*

The position of Russia and the present condition of her frontier to the east of the Caspian is, however, in some respects more important to us, as affecting our Asiatic possessions, than is her progress to the west of that sea; and I venture to hope that some of the information which I have derived from various sources during my travels in the eastern part of European Russia and at other times, may be sufficiently interesting to insert here, as being the adjoining frontier territory to that mountain district of which I have already given some account from personal experience. The most recent acquisition to the Russian territory was that large tract of country enclosed between the old

* See *The Transcaucasian Campaign under Omer Pasha*; and *The Transcaucasus, the Proper Field of Operation for a Christian Army*, 2d Edition. (Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh.)

frontier line and the Amour, and which also extends to the 48th parallel of latitude upon the Sea of Tartary. This accession, wrung from China in 1858 by the united exertions of Poutiatine and Mouravieff, forms a very important addition to the Russian empire, securing it various excellent harbours on its eastern coast, and increasing the influence it has already acquired over the Imperial Government at Pekin. It is, however, to the tract of country lying between the western frontier of Chinese Tartary and the Caspian Sea that the following remarks refer.

At the same time, the information which we possess upon this remote quarter of the globe is so meagre as to render any very full account of the Kirghiz Steppes and their inhabitants impossible—and the historical records are so uncertain as to make it somewhat difficult to follow every step of the process by which Russia gradually exerted her influence over those nomadic hordes who wander between China and the Caspian, between Siberia and Khiva. Nor would there be much use in pursuing the inquiry, did it not derive its interest from the extreme anxiety Russia has manifested for a century past to advance and consolidate her power in this direction—incurring vast expense and sparing no efforts to carry out the apparently insane project of subduing two millions of the most impracticable savages that ever defied civilisation, and annexing a more uninhabitable series of deserts than are to be found in the whole continent of Asia. It is not to be wondered at, if an attempt so long and earnestly persisted in, and apparently so little in accordance with the sagacity which usually characterises

Muscovite diplomacy, should attract attention, more especially since the motives ostensibly assigned by Russia are by no means sufficient to account for her course of procedure. The necessity of protecting and encouraging her Eastern trade has been put very prominently forward as the principal ground of interference with independent barbarians ; and, in so far as her commercial intercourse with Khiva and Boukhara are likely to promote her ulterior designs, this is doubtless the case. The trade of the East once passed through the Caucasian provinces ; but when those provinces fell into the hands of Russia, it was diverted into another channel by the establishment of a restrictive system which proved that the encouragement of commerce was merely the pretext used to acquire a territory, the prosperity of which was a matter of indifference to the Government. Had the same energies been expended in the formation of roads or the construction of canals throughout the empire, which have been devoted to the protection of trade on the Kirghiz Steppes, the best interests of commerce would have been immeasurably further advanced ; and therefore, so far as they are concerned, we are fairly entitled to assume that they did not furnish the real motives for any such expenditure. Perhaps a more plausible excuse is to be found in the annual captures by the Kirghiz of Russians who were sold to the Khivans as slaves. But the number of these was very trifling, and the sums spent in a year, for political purposes, would have sufficed to repurchase ten times over those who were thus unfortunately kidnapped.

We have had, indeed, sufficient experience of the

intrigues of Russia in the East, to enable us to perceive at once, that the object which she has in view in subjugating Tartary is none other than that which she betrayed in her secret intercourse with Persia ; and it is important to inquire how far her designs in the East have been attended with success, in order that we may be able to appreciate at their proper value those rumours respecting the advance of her armies in this direction, which find a ready circulation among those whom ignorance disposes to credulity, and an exaggerated estimate of the power and resources of our enemy excites to alarm. Thus we had it regularly communicated to us as a fact from India during the Crimean war, that a Russian army was at Oorjunge, two marches distant from Khiva, with an occasional intimation, received from good authority, that it was prepared to invade India, reinforced by levies of indomitable cavalry, supposed to have been raised upon the Steppes of Tartary. Alluding to such reports as these, the *Journal de St Petersburg* inquired naturally enough whether the English press had correspondents in the little states of Upper Asia, and recorded with much amusement some of the most glaring inconsistencies which were gravely listened to, and credited by the British public. Thus, although Russia was said to have formed a quadruple alliance with the Khans of Khiva and Boukhara, and Dost Mahomed, it was nevertheless necessary to seize the town of Khiva, which succumbed after an energetic resistance of thirty-two days—certainly a most improbable mode this of cementing the alliance. At the same time, it is due to another portion of the home community to give

them the benefit of holding views of a very different character. They utterly ignore the influence of Russia in the East—treat her possible advance in that direction as a chimera, and the power which she has already acquired as a bugbear from which nothing is to be apprehended. The fact that views so diametrically opposed to one another are very generally entertained in this country, induces me to hope that any information which may be afforded upon a subject which has hitherto been scarcely investigated, may prove both useful and interesting.

Among the vast and varied schemes formed by Peter the Great for increasing his dominions and influence in the East, he early conceived the design of opening up a trade with those nations to which, of all European powers, Russia was the most contiguous, and whose riches at that period found their outlet by different overland routes to the great markets of the West. In 1717 he sent a mission to the Khan of Khiva, under Prince Bekevitch, to negotiate a commercial treaty. The attempt, however, proved abortive, and Prince Bekevitch and his whole troop were assassinated. This catastrophe served its purpose, in so far as it proved that the really effective way of attaining the desired end would ultimately be by coercion, rather than by alliance. But as the vast tract of intervening country was inhabited by wandering tribes of savages, their subjugation was involved in any scheme of extended conquest. The motives which stimulated and encouraged Russia in the accomplishment of this primary object, have increased in proportion as the possessions and influence of Great Britain

in India have been extended, and that trade monopolised by the enterprise and capital of this country, which Peter the Great had destined to flow in a very different direction. The task, however, has proved one which for a century has demanded the exercise of a more than usual share of Muscovite cunning and perseverance; nor has it yet been so perfectly completed as to render the conquest of Khiva a matter of certain practicability.

It fortunately is not necessary here to enter into any dissertation upon the origin of the Kirghiz Cossacks, or to attempt to chronicle the early history of these tribes, which is as vague and uncertain as records of barbarism usually are. It appears that the country now inhabited by the Kirghiz Cossacks was formerly occupied by the Black Kirghiz or Bouroutes, nomades who attained to some degree of civilisation by reason of the commercial relations which they maintained with the Arabs, Boukharians, and above all, with the Khazars, who, inhabiting the Steppes of Southern Russia, kept up a constant intercourse with Constantinople. Towards the close of the seventeenth century, the Bouroutes were compelled finally to emigrate to the neighbourhood of Kashgar, thus relieving the southern provinces of Siberia from the presence of a tribe whose warlike and predatory habits had proved a constant source of annoyance and irritation. The tranquillity of these provinces, however, was of short duration. The Kirghiz Cossacks, who now extended their wanderings to the borders of Siberia, claimed to be of Turkish origin, and had formed a portion of the subjects of the celebrated Gengiz Khan. They were originally called Cossacks, and the prenomén of Kirghiz

was merely used as a distinctive appellation. Spreading over the Steppes of Tartary, they made frequent inroads upon the Russian territory, and in 1717 penetrated as far as Kazan. Surrounded, however, by tribes of Bashkirs, Calmucks, Zungars, and Nogais, the Kirghiz were continually attacking or being attacked, while their division into three hordes, the reason of which has never been fully accounted for, did not increase their warlike capabilities. Thus it happened that the great horde was completely subjugated by the powerful tribe of the Zungars, whose territory extended to the Chinese frontier; and it soon after became apparent that the middle and little hordes could not much longer continue to make a successful stand against the western tribes. In this emergency, Aboulkhair, the most celebrated of Kirghiz Khans, perceived the advantage of obtaining the protection of Russia. As, however, both hordes were excessively averse to any such proposal, the negotiations were carried on with great tact and secrecy by Tevkelef, a Russian agent, who guaranteed to Aboulkhair the assistance of Russia, in order to enable him to carry his designs into execution. This, however, did not become necessary; the consent of the Kirghiz was ultimately obtained, partly through the persuasive eloquence of Tevkelef, and partly by the influence of Aboulkhair; and in 1734, the middle and little hordes were formally enrolled as subjects of the Empress Ann.

The submission thus obtained was not of any very permanent character, and Kirilof was sent with a small body of troops into the Kirghiz Steppes to take measures, which should insure the permanent sub-

jection of these tribes. His instructions afford us the first glimpse of the ulterior designs of Russia, and the means proposed for their execution. Kirilof was commanded at once to build a town and fort at the embouchure of the Ori ; to assemble the Khans and ancients of the two hordes, and obtain from them, in the presence of their subjects, the oath of allegiance, and having succeeded in this, he was to preserve the obedience of the Kirghiz by gentleness or by force, by presents or by menaces, according to circumstances. The Ural was to be considered the boundary of the empire, and the newly-acquired subjects were strictly prohibited from crossing it. A caravan was to be despatched across the Steppes to Boukhara, with the least possible delay, and every effort was to be used in order to attract merchandise from every part of Asia. Kirilof was himself to examine the annexed country, in the hope of discovering mines. A port was to be established upon the Sea of Aral, and ships built upon the Ural, and kept ready to be transported thither as soon as the town should be built, and such terms made with the Kirghiz as would facilitate their conveyance, and that of the artillery with which they were to be provided.

Among his diplomatic instructions Kirilof was told to avail himself of the animosity which existed between the Kirghiz and Bashkirs, to restrain it as much as possible so long as they continued subservient to the designs of Russia ; but, in case of disaffection being exhibited on either side, he was to excite their mutual jealousies and thus save the expenditure of Russian troops. The exportation of

ammunition was strictly prohibited, nor was Aboulkhair to be supplied with pecuniary assistance to carry on war with the Khivans, or to be encouraged in it. It was considered peculiarly desirable that as much information as possible should be acquired relative to the more distant frontier tribes, and more particularly the Zungars, who possessed Turkestan, and who ranked amongst the most powerful of these. Kirilof, however, had scarcely commenced to carry out these instructions, and had just founded the town of Orenburg, which has since risen to a position of such importance as the emporium of the Eastern trade of Russia, when he died. Thus had it been reserved for the Empress Ann to take the first step towards accomplishing what Peter the Great had meditated, and was about to attempt after the Swedish war, when death terminated his career.

It was not long after Kirilof's death before a revolt among the Bashkirs and Calmucks rendered it necessary for his successor to stimulate Aboulkhair to attack the rebellious tribes. Indeed the subjects of the Khan, unaccustomed to so much tranquillity, desired nothing better than to be let loose upon their old foes, and entered upon the war with such good-will that they not only speedily succeeded in suppressing the rebellion, but created some anxiety to Russia lest a portion of her subjects might be altogether extirpated, and the counter-irritation, which she desired to preserve to keep Aboulkhair in check, destroyed; for it was evidently essential to the success of the system that no one tribe should acquire such a preponderance over the others as no longer to dread them, or require

the protection of Russia. The ambition of Aboulkhair, however, was sufficiently restrained by the fear of endangering the life of his son, who was retained at St Petersburg as a hostage. Indeed, without these pledges of the good faith of the border tribes, there was no means of insuring their submission longer than it was consistent with their own convenience; and throughout the later history of the Kirghiz, we find them continually intriguing for assistance with their powerful neighbours, sending hostages to Peking as often as to St Petersburg, and endeavouring so to bring to bear the influence of their protectors as to secure their own ends, without permanently compromising their independence. Thus the allegiance of the Kirghiz to Russia was in a great degree nominal, and was resumed and cast off at pleasure. The advantages, however, which Russia derived from her uncertain dominion over her inconstant neighbours, and the hopes she entertained of rendering it permanent, were so great as to make it expedient to deal leniently with such troublesome conduct; and she soon learnt to discern how far she might extort obedience and make her will felt, without driving those whom she desired to rule to seek some less exacting protector.

Thus it will appear that the governor of Orenburg was in a good school for diplomatic training, and after a successful administration here, was competent to officiate as minister at any capital in Europe. To know how best to profit by the distresses of his neighbours was the sum and substance of his policy, and just in proportion as they were desirous of propitiating

Russia, did Russia refuse to be easily propitiated. So it happened that, after the plunder and massacre of the Calmucks and Bashkirs, Aboulkhair humbly sued for pardon,—for a new bugbear had risen in the person of the warlike Galdane Tsyrene, Khan of the Zungars, who held hostages both from the great and middle hordes; and the governor of Orenburg, of course, pretended to hesitate before receiving the renewed allegiance of the little horde. This conjuncture of circumstances was deemed favourable to the project of a town on the Sea of Aral, which, at Aboulkhair's request, was to be built at the mouth of the Syr (Jaxartes), and an engineer officer was despatched to carry it into execution: the difficulties in the way, however, proved insurmountable, and the scheme fell to the ground. An attempt to carry out another article of Kirilof's instructions was equally unfortunate, and the first caravan ever despatched from Orenburg to Boukhara was plundered on the steppes.

Shortly after this, Aboulkhair, who, profiting by the protection of Russia, if not by her assistance, had possessed himself of Khiva, was driven out of that country by the formidable Nadir Shah. From this period his power gradually declined, and he was assassinated not long after the death of his enemy, the Khan of the Zungars. Russia obtained the election of Nourali, his son, as his successor, and offered him the use of a thousand men for fifteen days to erect a tomb to his father, on the condition that it should be four days' march on the direct road to Khiva, and that a town should be built near it. Engineering and every other assistance was afforded, in the hope that fixed

habitations might be established at least at one spot upon the steppes ; but the suspicions of the Kirghiz were roused, and they positively refused to permit the attempt, reminding the engineer officer, who endeavoured to overcome their objections, of the conquest of Astrakhan and Kazan, and assuring him that if those nomades had not fixed themselves where they did, their descendants would have been free still.

Nourali had not long held the dignity of Khan before he offered to retake Khiva if Russia would furnish him with 10,000 men, and the necessary artillery. This was declined, as it was apparent that the conquest of Khiva by tribes who wished to strengthen themselves against the authority of Russia, would only retard her own views of conquest in the same direction, which could never be accomplished until the Kirghiz themselves were thoroughly reduced to subjection. One of the most striking illustrations of the method by which Russia hoped to arrive at so desirable a consummation, is afforded by an act of singular perfidy, of which Neplouieff, then governor of Orenburg, was the perpetrator. The Bashkirs who inhabited what is now the province of Orenburg, although they had been subject to Russia ever since the reign of Ivan Groznoi, had always been most insubordinate. In 1755 they originated a revolt in which the Kazan Tartars took part. It soon spread so widely as to cause the government much alarm, since the possibility of a junction being formed with the Kirghiz to the south rendered the position of the Russian line extremely critical. Neplouieff, however, who was a man of resource, devised a notable plan for extricating himself from his dan-

gerous situation. Raising an army, chiefly composed of Don Cossacks and Calmucks, he succeeded in intimidating the insurgents, and, by promising pardon to those who would submit, he for the time put down the rebellion: those who did not trust his offer sought refuge with the Kirghiz. Fearing that the lull was merely temporary, Neplouieff perceived that the only real safety lay in sowing the seeds of irreconcilable enmity between the Bashkirs and Kirghiz. He determined, therefore, to deliver into the hands of the latter the wives and children of those of the Bashkirs who had trusted in his offers of pardon; upon two conditions—first, that the Kirghiz should come into the province of Orenburg, and forcibly carry off their prizes; secondly, that they should give up the Bashkir refugees to the Russian government. He communicated this happy thought to St Petersburg, where it met with the royal approval, and an intimation was received by the Kirghiz, to the effect that the Empress in her bounty had made them a present of the wives and children of the Bashkirs. The voluptuous Kirghiz rushed to the spoil. Their unfortunate victims, confiding in the promise of Neplouieff, were taken by surprise; and although they fought well for everything that was most dear to them, those of the men who did not escape were brutally massacred, and the Kirghiz returned triumphantly laden with their living booty.

The Bashkirs no sooner came back to their homes than they vowed vengeance, and applied to the Russian government to be allowed to cross the border to obtain satisfaction for such deep injuries. Neplouieff publicly proclaimed that the Empress could not permit so

bloodthirsty a proceeding ; and when he had thereby thrown the Kirghiz off their guard, he gave secret orders to the commanders of the garrisons on the line, not to stop the transit of armed Bashkirs. When these latter learnt that the way to the Kirghiz steppes was thus open to them, large bands poured across the frontier line, pounced upon the unsuspecting Kirghiz—who, trusting in the promised protection of Russia, were enjoying the possession of their prizes in fancied security—returned with interest the pillage and massacre their own tribe had suffered, and, regaining most of those whom they had supposed lost for ever, conveyed them in safety to their own homes. Nourali complained bitterly of so flagrant a breach of good faith. Neplouieff answered that the Kirghiz had given up all the Bashkir refugees, contrary to agreement ; that the bargain was therefore at an end ; and that he might shortly expect another inroad of Bashkirs. The Kirghiz prepared for their reception, and the two tribes continued mutually to slaughter one another, until Neplouieff, judging that they were so much weakened as no longer to be formidable separately, and hated each other too cordially ever to be united, prohibited the Bashkirs from crossing the frontier, and thus put a stop to the war.

About this period the empire of the Zungars was overturned by the Chinese, and the Kirghiz grand horde delivered from their conquerors. They increased and spread rapidly under a powerful and enterprising Khan, vanquishing the Calmucks on the east, and extending their incursions to Tashkend. One of the most remarkable events, however, in the history of

these steppes, was the Calmuck emigration from the shores of the Volga to join their brethren on the frontiers of China who had at the same time been freed from the yoke of the Zungars. This migration has been ascribed to various causes. Whatever may have originated it, the Russian government exerted all its energies to overtake the fugitives. The cupidity of all the tribes of Central Asia was roused to check the advance of more than twenty-eight thousand tents of Calmucks, who, with their flocks and families, performed this wonderful journey ; and, in spite of the most incredible natural obstacles, encountered, with more or less success, the attacks of the three hordes of Kirghiz, fairly distancing a Russian army that was sent in pursuit from the lines of Orenburg. The Black Kirghiz or Bouroutes, however, made such terrible havoc among these unfortunate adventurers, that they lost about half their number before arriving at their destination.

During the reign of the Empress Catherine, the relations of Russia with the Kirghiz tended more than ever to two results which it had mainly in view : the first was to establish fixed habitations in the two hordes ; the second, to secure the inviolability of caravans. The forts of Troisk and Semipalatinsk were built as trading stations, and a town was projected upon the banks of the Emba nearly one-third of the way to Khiva. This, however, was not then carried out. Indeed, notwithstanding the efforts made to tame and civilise the Kirghiz, they ever proved most pertinacious barbarians. The mosques built here and there for their use upon the steppe were allowed to fall

into decay ; and although caravans were no longer so invariably plundered as formerly, the attempt to erect caravanserais on the road to Khiva for their accommodation failed signally. Agriculturists were sent to their encampments from Russia ; but the art of cultivation has scarcely improved to this day, nor has the extent of cultivated ground increased. Nourali, in spite of many protestations of loyalty, was always most insubordinate ; and, as alleged by Russia, he encouraged his tribe in the capture of Russian slaves for the Khivan market, so as ultimately to incur the vengeance of the government, and render an expedition to the sources of the Emba necessary to recover the captives. These, however, had been transferred to Khiva before the arrival of the Russian troops, who compensated themselves for their trouble and disappointment by retaliating on their enemies after their own fashion, and capturing two hundred and thirteen Kirghiz, women and children.

Not long afterwards, the power of Nourali was much shaken by the growing popularity of an adventurer named Syrym, whose terrible and successful inroads into Russia soon procured him the support of the greater portion of the tribe. The policy of Russia on this occasion is worthy of notice. Perceiving that the ability of the usurper would render him a formidable neighbour, she offered to withdraw her protection from Nourali, and place him at the head of the tribe under another title than that of Khan. Syrym seized the opportunity thus presented of getting rid of his rival. Nourali was for no ostensible reason deposed, a new constitution formed, and Syrym was placed as repre-

sentative of the assembly of the Kirghiz little horde. The middle horde had some time previous to this increased in importance under an enterprising chief, who consolidated his power so successfully, by maintaining relations with China, that he was enabled to throw off the Muscovite yoke. Meantime Catherine directed her attention more exclusively than ever to the internal organisation of the little horde. She constituted tribunals in three of the tribes, the heads of which were salaried by Russia ; presents of land were made to those of the Kirghiz who would establish themselves in the empire, and permission was given them to settle wherever they pleased within the frontier ; in consequence of which forty-five thousand tents wintered in Russia the same year. Syrym, however, proved faithless. He was discovered to be tampering with the Turks, who were then at war with Russia, and finally threw off his allegiance.

The Empress had now gained a sort of prescriptive right to the election of the chief of the horde ; her influence assumed a permanent character, and she was enabled to enforce the regulations she had imposed. It is adduced as an evidence of the improved state of things, that no less than twenty-two thousand tents, at their own request, established themselves inside the Russian frontier, where they have remained peaceable subjects ever since. The real fact that this emigration was compulsory does not alter the value of the testimony.

During all this while the grand horde, whose remote position rendered them less amenable to Russia, had not been enjoying independence. It seemed essential

to the existence of these wandering tribes that they should be protected by the countries on whose frontiers they occasionally encamped—and the grand horde had been subjects successively of the Khan of Kokan and the Emperor of China. About this time, however, a large portion of it under the Khan transferred their allegiance to the Empress, who now found her influence extending more rapidly than ever. The middle horde was shortly after compelled to follow the example. This horde had, indeed, enjoyed greater tranquillity and independence than either of the others; it had neither been exposed to such repeated attacks from without, nor suffered, except for short intervals, from the protection of Russia. Now, however, tribunals of justice similar to those in the little horde were constituted; and not long after, it was thought necessary to draw out rules for the internal administration of such of the Kirghiz tribes as were definitely comprised in the category of Inorodtsï. The Inorodtsï are defined by Russia to be “subjects of Russia, without being Russians, or being confounded with the general population of the empire;—colonists, constituting colonies of their own, with their own regulations. They are half-savage nations, to whom the empire, interested, no doubt, but always benevolent, allows the advantage of its enlightened protection.” A few extracts from the regulations drawn up for the government of the Kirghiz may not be uninteresting, as illustrating the mode in which Russia proposed to exercise over these remote tribes that protectorate which has now become so proverbial as the distinguishing feature of her aggressive policy.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Kirghiz are divided into volostes; these volostes into aouls. An aoul is generally composed of one hundred and seventy tents, and a voloste of ten or twelve aouls. A division contains fifteen or twenty volostes. The people of these divisions may communicate with one another without permission, but the limits are fixed by the officers of the quartermaster's department attached to the superior authority of the line. The divisions are separated into those which border with countries not dependent on Russia—the numbers of which should be as few as possible—and those which abut upon the Russian frontier, which should be as numerous as possible.

The aouls are governed by starchines publicly elected every three years. The volostes are governed by sultans; the office of sultan is hereditary. In each division there is a chamber of administration (Prikaz), constituted by a president or starchi-sultan, who is the highest authority in the division, and is elected for three years by the starchines, and receives 1200 rubles annually; two Russian members, who are named by the superior authority of the province, and

receive 1000 rubles annually; and two grandees, who are also elected by the starchines for two years. Should the Prikaz disapprove of the popular election of a starchine, it cannot reject him, but refers the matter to the superior authority. None of the members of the chamber can resign without permission from the same source. The starchi-sultan ranks with a major in the Russian army. If he is twice elected, he is raised to the rank of a nobleman of the empire. The other members rank as Russian employés of the 9th class; the sultans of volostes as of the 12th. The starchines and grandees rank with mayors of communities. From this it would appear that, though all the members of the government are nominally elected, there is not one of the offices, from the starchi-sultan downwards, that is not under the control of the superior Russian authority of the province.

There is another tribunal presided over by the starchi-sultan, the functions of which are to make arrangements for the safety of the people in time of trouble; to watch over the domestic interests of the community, and encourage industry; to allow none to take the law into their own hands, no plundering of caravans; and, after due trial, to punish the offenders with death if necessary. There is a commanda or company of soldiers quartered near the Prikaz to keep the peace and protect caravans, and sentinels must be kept upon the boundaries of each division. Permission may be given to trade, but Chinese merchants found in the divisions are to be sent back to the frontier. Migrations into Russia by Kirghiz are not allowed without permission, and the sultans are personally responsible for the

observance of the prescribed rules, and for the public peace and security. Houses for the members and officials connected with the Prikaz are to be built, together with hospitals in each division, and a barrack for the Cossacks. For the first five years no taxes are levied; and after that the Issak, or a contribution of one animal out of every hundred, becomes due—except in the case of camels. Horses must be supplied gratuitously for Cossack regiments; and the line of communication must be maintained between each division and the frontier. Intercourse must be carried on daily between the aoul and the sultan, and the latter is ordered to keep up a weekly communication with the Russian authority by a courier on horseback. The corn trade is to be encouraged, and government granaries instituted; but the importation of corn-brandy, or the distillation of it in the divisions, is prohibited.

The cultivation of land is to be encouraged in every way. Five or six square versts round the Prikaz is the exclusive perquisite of the starchi-sultan; the other members are entitled to different proportions, as well as every domiciled Cossack or agriculturally disposed Kirghiz, provided he steadily perseveres in his new occupation. The land then becomes hereditary. The Russian members and Cossacks are especially enjoined to set the example, and show to the ignorant Kirghiz the use of hedges and ditches. Implements of husbandry, and other assistance, will be supplied by government. Missions and schools are to be established, and the Kirghiz to be permitted to send their children to Russia for their education. The superior

Russian authority is commanded to make a tour of the divisions once a-year. Slavery is prohibited. During the introduction of these rules, it is to be proclaimed as publicly as possible that the whole middle horde is under the Russian rule, and that faithful subjects on either side of the frontier shall enjoy the same rights. They must also be translated, and those volostes who do not submit to them are to be rigorously excluded from contact with those who do. So long, therefore, as the little horde will not conform to these rules, they are to be regarded as strangers. The lines of Siberia and the forts along it are to be considered as fixed establishments ; but the frontier is to be gradually extended as the new regime is propagated and embraces more distant portions of the tribe.

The effective movement of the frontier line is only to take place upon the decision of the supreme authority,—when a detailed and circumstantial plan is to be presented, showing a favourable conjuncture of circumstances, and taking into consideration the interests of the frontier posts and local situations. Hence it appears that “the effective movement of the frontier line” into their territory is one of those privileges which Russia, “interested, no doubt, but always benevolent,” allows to the Inorodtsi or frontier nations to whom she accords her protection. The savage character of the Kirghiz, however, has proved their chief protection ; for these rules for an improved system of internal organisation, so skilfully designed to destroy their nationality, have never been fully carried into effect, and the larger proportion of the Kirghiz have maintained their independence more

entirely than the inhabitants of the more civilised countries of the west.

From this account of the policy of Russia with respect to these hordes, it is plain that, while she professes to encourage and protect their advances towards civilisation, her real object is their total subjugation ; and the only possible way of accounting for her efforts to make an acquisition intrinsically so undesirable, is by the fact that it is necessary to her ulterior designs upon Khiva ; and therefore it is that our inquiries should be more especially directed to that part of the Kirghiz steppe through which a Russian army advancing upon Khiva would be compelled to march. So few travellers have recently visited these remote countries, and the information which we can obtain from Russian sources is so very meagre, and liable to so much suspicion, that it would be impossible here to enter into a detailed or minute analysis of the state of feeling towards Russia which prevails among the tribes of the little horde, or describe the facilities for moving large bodies of troops which Russia may recently have established upon the line of march. We know that ostensibly her influence extends over all the Kirghiz inhabiting the country between the Sea of Aral and the Caspian, and that the boundary line between the Kirghiz and the Turcomans, in this direction, is merely imaginary, following as nearly as possible the 44th parallel of latitude. On the east of the Sea of Aral the Syr is the limit of Russian influence ; and to the south of that, the Oozbegs and Karakalpaks extend to Khiva, forming a portion of the subjects of that government.

There are four routes by which a Russian army could cross the steppes of Tartary to Khiva. That which is best known is identical with the great caravan route from Orenburg to Boukhara, as far as the south-east corner of the Sea of Aral, where it branches off to Khiva. The country has been accurately described by Meyendorff and Eversmann, who made the journey by separate routes to Boukhara in 1820. Meyendorff was attached to a mission, under M. de Negri, sent to negotiate a commercial treaty with the Khan of Boukhara ; and as he travelled with a heavy caravan and some troops, his journey gives us some idea of the difficulties which would be opposed to an army following the same line. For the first three hundred miles these would not be very serious. The country, though partially desert and hilly, is well supplied with water. Numerous rivulets, frozen in winter, dry in summer, and abundant in spring and autumn, run down the valleys ; and upon their banks enough verdure is found to satisfy the wants of the camels. The aouls of the Kirghiz are frequent where the pasture is good ; and at this short distance from the frontier they are comparatively submissive, and their assistance in transporting the artillery and heavy baggage would be indispensable to the Russians. The camels, though enduring, and of a good breed, are not accustomed to heavy loads, and are excessively slow as compared with those of the Arabian deserts. Tombs are the only buildings to be seen upon the whole route, which is of the most cheerless character imaginable. The Ileik and the Emba are the most considerable streams. Beyond the latter river, the road,

by a rocky pass, crosses the hills of Moughodjar, which are accounted important in the steppe country, above which they rise to a height of nearly a thousand feet.

The southern slopes of these hills are utterly devoid of vegetation ; and here the real hardships of the way commence. The desert of Borzouk, which intervenes between this range and the Sea of Aral, furnishes a most scanty supply of water, and is composed of deep moving sand, rendering the carriage of artillery very arduous. Many of the carts accompanying Meyendorff's expedition were burnt for fuel, and the cattle suffered severely from want of water, which, when it was procurable at all, was generally very bitter or brackish. It was often found at a depth of five feet from the surface. Fodder was equally scarce, camel-thorn and wormwood scrub forming the entire means of subsistence for the camels. To add to the dreary aspect of the country, extensive saline deposits are crossed frequently, while occasionally the track skirts a salt lake ; but few inhabitants are met with on these desolate wastes, and those not to be depended upon. The expedition was upwards of a month in reaching the Sea of Aral from Orenburg, and, travelling along its desert shores, arrived at last at the mouths of the Syr or Jaxartes. It is now reported that a line of Cossacks has been established along the whole of this route. But I am almost inclined to doubt the practicability of permanent posts being maintained across the great Borzouk sands, which extend from the Moughodjar mountains to the Sea of Aral. Between Orenburg and these moun-

tains we know that Cossack posts do exist ; and it is said that a garrison has been placed upon the Emba, which would serve as a cantonment for reserves. This station was first established here at the time of Peroffsky's expedition. This general succeeded, with ten thousand men, in reaching an intrenched camp halfway between the Emba and the Sea of Aral ; but here (his journey having been undertaken in the dead of winter) he was stopped by the snow-drifts ; and although he successfully defended himself from the attacks of the Oozbeg and Turcoman troops, sent from Khiva to arrest his further progress, he was compelled to retreat from his critical position, after suffering the loss of more than three-fourths of his men—thus proving that the obstacles which nature interposed to prevent his invading Khiva were more formidable than those which were to be encountered from Khivan troops.

The failure of this expedition has been held to establish the fact that the transport of an army across the Kirghiz steppes is utterly impracticable. This is a point, however, which does not deserve to be thus summarily decided upon. Russia has evidently not abandoned the idea of invading Khiva ; and in spite of our assertions of its non-feasibility, she may prove some day that her endeavours to improve the means of communication with the shores of the Sea of Aral have not been unavailing. She has established a port at the mouth of the Jaxartes, and launched several iron steamers upon waters skimmed heretofore only by the reed canoe of the savage Kirghiz. And the determination displayed, in arrangements such as

these, to make this route available, should teach us not to treat too lightly the efforts of a powerful and ambitious nation to subvert the existing political organisation of the states of Central Asia, and direct their resources against the single European power which has hitherto monopolised the lion's share of their commerce. At the same time, it must not be supposed that the nature of the country to be traversed is the only impediment to the transport of troops. The southern Kirghiz are sufficiently far removed from the frontier of Russia not to dread its punishment ; and as voluntary allegiance is never to be depended upon to the same extent as that which has been enforced, so the insubordinate tribes of the little horde, tempted by the prospect of plunder which the camp of the invading army would offer to them, might, by judiciously planned night assaults, inconceivably harass its movements ; while, should they desire altogether to check the further advance of the army into their territory, burning the dry shrubs which form the only pasturage, or poisoning the few scattered wells upon which the army is dependent, are devices with which such savages are familiar. Moreover, they alone could supply the camels necessary for the transport of commissariat and artillery ; and were they to desert the army in these sandy wastes, pursuit would be impossible.

Hence it follows that the co-operation of the Kirghiz is essential to the success of an expedition through their country ; and we gather from the universal testimony of travellers, that such co-operation is not to be depended upon. They are avaricious, treacherous, and

indolent, yet possessing violent passions. For a century they have professed allegiance to Russia, during which period she has endeavoured to coax them into a state of permanent obedience by a lavish expenditure and the gentlest treatment ; by the building of mosques, houses, schools, and courts of justice ; by the appointment of khans, and by the encouragement of agriculture ; and she has succeeded no better than China, who uses threats instead of entreaties, force instead of presents, and who, by the most excessive cruelty, has fruitlessly endeavoured to force her commands upon the grand horde. The Russian Kirghiz still continue to misbehave and apologise as usual : they still sell slaves to Khiva, and deny their guilt ; and Russia, unable to punish them, accords them her gracious protection, because she hopes to march, by their help, some day to Khiva to—recapture her slaves ! Indeed, it is not to be expected that Kirghiz will respect Russians when they sell their own children to Russians themselves, and, in spite of the professed prohibition upon this traffic, continue to receive, on an average, three bags of corn for a boy, and two for a girl. No wonder the Russian trader finds this a profitable investment. The general trade, which consists of the exchange of horses, cows, sheep, and goats, for grain and some of the simple luxuries of life, has decreased within the last few years. The population of the grand horde, partly subject to China, and partly independent, is estimated at four hundred thousand. The middle horde, the northern portion of which is *really* subject to Russia, and the whole nominally so, numbers about a million ; and the little horde, whose allegiance is

similarly divided, contains only two hundred thousand souls.

Hitherto we have only described the route to Khiva as far as the Jaxartes, because it is probable that a Russian army would embark there for Khiva. The Jaxartes divides into numerous channels near its mouth, forming an extensive delta, covered with reeds so tall that, although Meyendorff and Eversmann visited the embouchure for the purpose, they could not catch a glimpse of the waters of the lake. These reeds, matted together, form floating islands; and the natives construct rafts and canoes with them, upon which to cross the deep broad stream of the Syr. Forests of rushes fringe the southern and eastern coasts of the Sea of Aral, which is reported to be shallow throughout its whole extent. The banks of the Syr are considered the most favoured region in the globe by the Kirghiz, who there find trees occasionally six feet high, and rejoice in vegetation of a corresponding luxuriance. Upon some islands there are singular ruins of tombs and temples. It occupies a caravan five days of incessant marching through tall rushes to cross the delta. The principal arm of the river is said by Eversmann to be eight hundred yards broad. To the south of the Jaxartes, the route passes through a wood of saxsaal, a species of tamarisk, and then crosses the worst desert in this part of Asia—the Kisil Koum, or Red Sand Desert. A loaded caravan is obliged to carry with it a five days' supply of water, and is exposed to the attacks of the Kirghiz and Oozbegs who are subject to Khiva, and who inhabit the eastern shores of the Sea of Aral. It would be madness for

a Russian army to attempt this route, and therefore the port has been wisely established at the mouth of the Syr. On the arrival of Meyendorff at Boukhara, after a journey of seventy-one days from Orenburg, fifty of the horses which formed part of the escort died of fatigue.

The second route to which I have referred, passes along the western shores of the Sea of Aral. It was traversed in 1842 by a Russian mission to Khiva, and has been described by Basiner, a German, who accompanied the expedition. He left Orenburg in August, the most trying time of the year, but found pasture abundant as far as the Ileik; it becomes scarcer between that river and the Emba. The route followed the line of Cossack posts at first; then crossing the Moughodjar hills, it enters upon the desert of the Oust Ourt, at a distance of about six hundred versts from Orenburg. This plateau, elevated more than a thousand feet above the sea, is perfectly level, and is composed of deep sand. For days not a hill was visible, and our traveller records passing a mound three feet high as a curiosity. Cliffs overhang the Sea of Aral, and occasionally rivulets trickle into it, but water is sometimes not met with for two or three days at a time. For three weeks not even a wandering Kirghiz was seen; and then, at the south-western corner of the Sea of Aral, only the most savage specimens were met with. Still this is the route which, if there be any truth in the rumour of a Russian army having been at Oorjunge, it most probably must have taken; unless they had been conveyed across the Sea of Aral by steam, as, if they had followed its eastern shores, they would have marched

direct upon Khiva. Altogether, Basiner's journey lasted seven weeks, and the description here given of the route does not lead us to suppose for a moment that it would be practicable for troops, more especially if their passage was disputed by the natives.

The third route, which has ever been regarded by Russia with a more favourable eye, crosses from Mung Ishlak, on the Caspian, to Khiva, over the southern portion of this same plateau, and has been accurately described by Captain Abbott. He estimates the highest point of the Oust Ourt steppe at two thousand feet above the sea-level, and gives a picture of the route, calculated to appal the most determined general that ever led an army. Although it is only four hundred and eighty miles, or about half as far from the Russian fort of Alexandrofski, on the eastern shores of the Caspian, to Khiva, as from Orenburg to the same place, the difficulties of the traject would be far greater. Not even the tent of a Kirghiz was seen by Abbott during an interval of eight days: herbage was always scarce; and on one occasion the wells were one hundred and sixty miles apart. But the most serious objection to this route lay in the fact, that the greater part of it passes through the country inhabited by the tribes of Turcomans, which are subjects of Khiva, and a far more courageous and enterprising people than the Kirghiz. For a lengthened period the troops would be obliged to sustain the attacks of a most pertinacious foe, in addition to the frightful hardships incidental to the route. Caravans, no doubt, prefer coming from Russia by Astrakhan and Mung Ishlak, to going round by Orenburg; but the requirements of a caravan are

very different from those of an army, and not until every soldier is supplied with a camel can the same rules be made applicable to both.

The fourth and last route is that which Mouraviev followed, in an expedition which he made to the country of the Turcomans, and afterwards to Khiva, at the desire of the Russian government, in 1819–20. The objects of this mission, undertaken a very short time before that of M. de Negri to Boukhara, throws considerable light upon the policy of Russia in these states. After the fatal termination of Prince Bekevitch's expedition, it became evident that, without propitiating the Turcomans, it would be impossible to maintain friendly relations with the countries lying beyond them; and in 1813, M. Rtichichev, the general then commanding in Georgia, sent into Turcomania Jean Mouratov, an Armenian merchant of Derbend, who, carrying on commercial transactions at Astrabad, had preserved relations with that country. At this period the Turcomans were an independent race, at war with Persia, and their alliance with Russia would prove a most opportune assistance to this latter power, who would thus command the whole northern Persian frontier. The proposal made by the Russian envoy for such an alliance, was eagerly received by the Khan of the Turcomans, and deputies sent to treat with Rtichichev. They found him at Gulistan, in Karabagh, concluding peace with Aboul Hhussein Khan. The Persian plenipotentiary, perceiving at once the danger of the proposed alliance between the Russians and Turcomans, objected to treat unless it were abandoned. This was agreed to by Russia; and many of the unfor-

fortunate Turcomans, feeling they were no longer able to resist Persia, submitted to that power, giving hostages to insure their future good behaviour. The Khan, however, with many followers, retired to Khiva for shelter; while another portion of the tribe took refuge upon the shores of the Caspian, in the Bay of Balkhan, where they were beyond the reach of a Persian army—and they have ever since not only maintained their independence, but have become the most successful slave-dealers in this part of the world.

Five years after the treaty of Gulistan, and while still at peace with Persia, Russia, anxious to secure the alliance of a tribe whose hostility to that power would materially affect the existing state of their mutual political relations, deliberately, and in defiance of an express stipulation to the contrary, reopened communications with the independent portion of the Turcoman nation, and Major Ponomarev and Mouraviev were sent to negotiate the act of treachery. The following passage from Major Ponomarev's instructions may serve to illustrate their general character: "From address in your conduct, the most favourable results may be anticipated; and upon this point the knowledge which you have of the Tartar language will be most useful. In your character of European, do not consider that flattery is a means which you cannot employ. It is very common among Asiatic nations; and although it may cost you something, you will find it to your advantage not to fear being too lavish of it. Your residence among a people who are almost altogether unknown to us, will furnish you, better than my instructions can, with light suffi-

cient to guide you. As I believe in your capacity and zeal, I flatter myself that this attempt to form amicable alliances with the Turcomans will not be without success, and that the knowledge you will acquire of the country will facilitate the ulterior designs of government." The first Turcoman camp visited was at the south-east corner of the Caspian, near Cape Serebrenoi. The Turcomans were delighted at the prospect of a Russian alliance, and of seeing a fort built on Cape Serebrenoi. "We will have revenge," they said, "on the Persians for their robberies. We do not know how to construct a fort; but when we make a general call to arms, we can bring ten thousand men into the field, and beat the Persians. Only five years ago we cut their Sardars to pieces near here, and carried away their cattle." It is clear that if Major Ponomarev was prone to be too sparing of flattery, he did not scruple to betray to the Turcomans the ultimate designs of his government upon its allies the Persians.

The Turcomans are agriculturists; they also possess large flocks and herds, and, from their proximity to the Persian frontier, have attained some little degree of civilisation. They dress like Persians, and have adopted many of their manners and customs; but they are easily impressed by superior intelligence and civilisation, and Mouraviev anticipates no obstacles, so far as they are concerned, to the movements of troops. The route to Khiva is tolerably well supplied with pasture and water for the first few days after leaving Krasnavodsk; but then the same terrible desert must be crossed that in every direction divides Khiva from Russia, and for five or six days water is unprocurable.

The nature of the country is similar to that already described; but this is the shortest of the four routes, Mouraviev having accomplished it in seventeen days. At Krasnavodsk, as at Alexandrofski, the Russians have built a fort; thus having a starting-point for each of the routes to Khiva. The ostensible motive for building the two forts on the Caspian, was to protect the Russian fishermen from their Turcoman allies, who occasionally sell them at Khiva as slaves.

So long, indeed, as stray Russians continue to be kidnapped by the frontier tribes, will the Czar have a fair excuse for waging war, not only with those tribes themselves, but with the nations to whom his subjects are sold as slaves. He will continue desirous to extend the frontier of his empire, simply because he cannot set at liberty these unfortunates without doing so. Such was the object of Peroffsky's expedition; the origin of which, as told to Abbott by the Khan of Khiva, is illustrative of what we have been saying. It was to the following effect: During the war between Khiva and Boukhara, about thirty years ago, a rich caravan, escorted by two hundred infantry and two guns, was sent by Russia to the latter state. To reach its destination, however, it was compelled to pass through part of Khiva, or Khaurism, as the whole country is called. The Khan, fearing that so desirable an acquisition might be used by his enemy against him, politely intimated to the Russian commander his objection to the further advance of the caravan. In spite of this prohibition, the latter attempted to force a passage. Khivan troops were sent to oppose him in the Kisil Koum, where they inflicted serious loss,

compelling the troops to retreat to the Russian frontier, and plundered the caravan. Fifteen years afterwards the Russians built the fort of Alexandrofski, in what was really Khivan territory, and soon after seized some Khivan caravans trading in Russia, and retained five hundred and fifty merchants as prisoners. Upon her ambassador being sent to demand their release, the Khan was informed that he must first release all the Russian slaves. As an earnest of his intention to do so, he sent six to Russia, demanding an equal number of Khivans. The Russians were retained, and the ambassador's brother imprisoned, but no Khivans were released. Upon this a third ambassador, with a hundred and twenty captives, were surrendered, but no answer was returned. "I therefore," said the Khan, "perceived that Russia was only playing upon my credulity. It is six months since the return of my last ambassador." At this very time there was an intrenched camp on the Emba, and an advanced post half-way between that river and the Sea of Aral. As we before remarked, the snows, and not the Khivans, rendered that expedition fruitless; and further attempts of a similar nature were put a stop to by the gallant exploit of Sir Richmond Shakespeare, who released nearly five hundred Russian slaves in Khiva, and conveyed them safely to St Petersburg.

The slave traffic, however, still continues; and in 1842 Danielevsky was sent to Khiva, upon the mission to which I have already alluded, charged with obtaining the release of the captives then in slavery, and securing the inviolability of caravans to Boukhara, together with certain privileges for merchants trading

in Khiva. We have no information as to the secret objects of the expedition, or how far it may have been successful ; but this is certain, that Russia does not need an excuse for invading Khiva, and has been paving the way for an occupation for many years. It is unnecessary now to describe the condition of this country, the most savage of all the states of Central Asia ; but, from the description of English as well as Russian travellers, it cannot be expected to offer any very serious resistance to Russian arms. The army is estimated by Abbott at one hundred and eight thousand men. It consists entirely of cavalry, and is furnished by the settled population at the rate of one horseman for fifty chains of land, and by nomades at the rate of one horseman for four families. The Oozbegs are the bravest of these, and compose nearly half the army ; still, the encounters they have already had with the Russians prove that they are no match for disciplined troops ; and if ten thousand men, in good condition, were landed upon the southern shores of the Sea of Aral, the independence of Khiva would be gone. It remains to be proved whether this is a possibility. The difficulties of marching an army across the Great Borzouk to the embouchure of the Syr have been already noticed, and do not seem altogether insurmountable. The Oxus is too shallow to allow of their being conveyed up its stream, and they would be compelled to disembark in the face of a whole population prepared to receive them. Mouraviev calculates upon a rising among the slaves in the event of any such invasion. But the mode which Russia would most probably employ to possess herself

of Khiva, would be by exciting Persia or Boukhara to hostilities with that state, and then offering it her protection. Spring or autumn are the only seasons of the year at which the expedition could expect to make a successful trajet of the steppes.

Khiva, though a small state, is capable of being made a productive acquisition. Its annual revenue amounts to about £300,000. At present it furnishes scarcely any articles of export, and carries on a comparatively small trade with Russia. Boukhara is the great Eastern emporium ; but the traffic is much intercepted by Turcoman banditti, who are subjects of Khiva. The aspect of Khiva, after a journey over the steppe, which in every direction surrounds it, is most inviting. Canals intersect the country, forming little islands, upon which castellated houses are situated ; tropical produce is abundant and luxuriant : vegetation affords a grateful relief to the eye of the weary traveller. The most fertile portion is about two hundred miles long by sixty broad. The entire population amounts to 2,500,000. In winter the cold is severe ; and though in the latitude of Rome, the Oxus is frozen over.

Having thus attempted to relate the mode by which Russia has extended her influence over those tribes whose furthest wanderings form the uncertain boundary which separates her subjects from the nomades of Khiva, and having described the nature of the country, and of the inhabitants through which a Russian army invading that state would be compelled to march, it is time to consider shortly what the object of such a campaign would be, and what its probable results. It is

evident that, of all European nations, we alone could be directly interested in such a movement on the part of Russia; but it is equally plain that, even should a Muscovite army succeed in occupying Khiva, its farther advance through Cabul and the Hindoo Khoosh would be attended with almost insurmountable difficulties. Bjornstjerna, the Swedish general, in his work on the East Indies, says it will require four campaigns before a Russian army could possibly arrive at the Indies by this route; and, indeed, the slightest acquaintance with the nature of the country to be traversed, will be sufficient to justify our discarding the notion of a Russian army invading India from Orenburg and Khiva. But this consideration does not divest of their importance the designs of Russia upon Khiva, but should rather lead us to discover what those motives really are which induce her to entertain them at all; and a due appreciation of the present position of Russia in the East will quickly enable us to perceive why, while repelling her aggressions in the West, we should not neglect to watch her movements in that part of the world in which our own interests are more nearly affected. The tendency of those movements has not been altogether concealed. Mouraviev says, unreservedly—"Masters of Khiva, many other states would be under our rule. The possession of it would shake to the foundation the enormous commercial superiority of those who now rule the sea." It is, therefore, not the invasion of India which is anticipated, but the acquirement of that influence over the neighbouring states which would have the effect of undermining the power of Great Britain in the East.

The states here alluded to as bordering upon Khiva, are Boukhara, Cabul, and Persia. Supposing Russia to be at Khiva, so long at least as she was confined to that remote and inaccessible country, the possibility of her alliance with Boukhara and Cabul against England can scarcely be entertained. The barbarian rulers of these distant peoples are far too suspicious of so powerful a neighbour, and too ignorant of the relative power of European states, to join in a war between two great Christian empires, the objects of which they would not understand, and which they would conceive might probably lead to the extinction of Mohammedanism.

While allowing that the conquest of Boukhara is possible, its acquisition would not facilitate the designs of Russia against India, for the intercourse between the two countries is unimportant, and the mountain ranges by which they are separated are almost impassable. The deserts which intervene between Khiva and Cabul, the mountainous nature of this latter state, and the bravery of its inhabitants, would render its conquest by a Russian army out of the question, as our own experience may testify. Persia, then, is the only state which would really be placed in imminent peril by the occupation of Khiva by the Russians, and it is the only state whose independence is of vital importance to our Eastern interests. "The independence of Persia," writes the author of the pamphlet we have already quoted, "is the only apparent obstacle to a position by Russia which would enable her to destroy in Asia the power of the Sultan, already shaken in Europe ; to annihilate our commerce in Central Asia ;

to force us to diminish our revenues, and largely to augment our expenditure in India, where our finances are even now embarrassed ; to disturb the whole system of government in that country during peace ; to threaten it with invasion in war ; and to oppose to our maritime and commercial superiority her power to shake our empire in the East."

If, then, we admit the view, here so ably expressed, to be correct, it only remains for us to consider how the taking of Khiva would be instrumental towards the subversion of Persian independence. The frontier of Khiva is conterminous with that of Persia from Herat to Astrabad, for a distance of four hundred miles. If Khiva became a Russian province, the whole northern frontier of Persia, from its most easterly to its most westerly point, from Boukhara to Turkey, would form the southern boundary of the Russian empire. Already has the Czar despoiled Persia of territory equal in extent to the British Islands, but hitherto he has been able to threaten her upon the western shores of the Caspian alone. It was the object of Mouraviev's mission to Turcomania to induce the Turcomans to create a diversion upon the opposite coast, and, crossing the Attruck, to invade the province of Astrabad. That project would be rendered still more feasible by the possession of Khiva, whose influence extends more or less over the whole of Turcomania. The most bitter enmity has ever existed between these tribes and the Persians, fostered by the fanaticism consequent upon their profession of opposite Mohammedan creeds, and they would gladly seize this opportunity of avenging themselves on a power which has incessantly perse-

cuted them, while even Cabul might be incited to join in a crusade against the heretical Sheas. The long-coveted provinces of Ghilan, Mazenderan, and Astrabad alone separate the Transcaucasian provinces of Russia from Turcomania and Khiva. Their ports are at the mercy of the Russian fleet on the Caspian; and if, while the Turks are being conquered at the one end of the frontier, the Khivans are being subjugated at the other, Persia must, in her turn, submit to the omnipotent power from the north, and her most fertile provinces will be added to the catalogue of "All the Russias."

But if, on the other hand, we had during the last war, by a prompt conveyance of troops to the seat of war in Georgia, and a strict blockade of the eastern shores of the Black Sea, in conjunction with the Ottoman and Circassian armies, driven out the Russian forces at present occupying them, we should never again have heard rumours of a Russian army being at Khiva. A Russian army in Khiva, unsupported by an army in Armenia, would find itself in a particularly useless position; and, even in connection with the Affghans and Turcomans, could hope to gain no advantage over a power who, now that the tide of Russian aggression had been stayed, no longer believed in Russian omnipotence, as it saw with amazement that the allied powers of Europe had been able to maintain the tottering independence of plundered and enfeebled Turkey.

The conclusion, then, to which our consideration of the present state of the acquired provinces in Asia has brought us, seems to be, that they have been acquired

only as a necessary prelude to the annexation of another and more important country ;—that, notwithstanding the judicious treatment of the Kirghiz, their internal condition is by no means satisfactory, while the natural obstacles which their country presents to the transport of troops are almost insurmountable ;—that even if the conquest of Khiva were achieved, it would be dangerous only to the British possessions in the East indirectly, or through the influence thus exercised upon Persia ;—that this influence can only exist so long as the Russian arms in Armenia are successful ;—that, in fact, the extension of the frontier line of Russia to the east of the Caspian must be regulated entirely by its progress to the west of that sea ;—and that by transferring the war from the Crimea to the Transcaucasian Provinces, and preserving Circassian independence, it would have been in the power of this country during the last war to have checked that progress at once, and thus nipped in the bud her long-cherished designs upon Persia, and her deeply-laid schemes for the appropriation of those sources of wealth and power in the East, which have so materially contributed to raise this country to her present high position among European nations.

PART II.—FILIBUSTERS.



CHAPTER I.

COULD those whose scientific discoveries have rendered them the greatest benefactors to humanity, have foreseen, in all their varied effects, the results of their inventions, and perceived exactly the extent of that influence which they were destined to exercise over the fortunes of posterity, the satisfaction of having carried their exertions to a successful issue would have doubtless been enhanced tenfold. In what light, under these circumstances, the prophetic eye of honest James Watt would have regarded the flood of light literature with which the world is now deluged may be a matter of speculation, but he would have little difficulty in perceiving in it one of the results of his great discovery, since the performance of journeys in railways and steamers conduces largely not only to the reading but the writing of books.

If you doubt this, and want a practical evidence of its truth, cross the Atlantic, travel three thousand miles by railway, devour in the cars piles of “sensa-

tion novels" at 25 cents each, by eminent American authors, and on your return write "The Englishman in America," being an account of your own sensations in that land of liberty, and you will find, just as your original work appears, that half-a-dozen other Englishmen are advertised as doing precisely the same thing. Still don't be dismayed; if ever there was a country that would bear writing about, it is America. In the first place, you can always take up the cudgels on one side or the other in any of the great social problems which are being resolved there, and which are deeply interesting to the world at large. Its institutions offer a wide field for speculation and criticism. Scarcely any two travellers agree in their general impressions; the consequence is, that they wax warm in support of the cause they espouse, and that always amuses the world at large, far more than descriptions of Alpine scenery, or European capitals, or Italian picture-galleries.

If, then, you do not aspire to be a Barth, a Livingstone, or a Burton, and have not imagination enough for a "sensation novel," let me recommend your visiting the Southern States of America, and espousing enthusiastically the cause of the slave proprietors, like the Hon. Miss M——, garnishing with facetious woodcuts, like her namesake, the Hon. Henry. Or if you have talent enough, take up the opposite side; but it is more hackneyed, and therefore difficult to be original, unless, indeed, you happen to have heard at Brooklyn one of the Rev. Mr Beecher's political sermons, and taken short-hand notes of it:—such a one, for instance, as he preached upon the Sunday following the presidential election of 1856, when he

taunted Mr Preston Brooks with cowardice for not daring to cross the frontier and fight a duel with a chivalrous partisan of Mr Sumner who challenged him. The particular passage in which this announcement was made, would, of course, not have so strikingly original an effect in a book as it had from the pulpit, but some of his expressions would be telling anywhere.

Slavery is only one of many questions of interest in America, and no man of ordinary intelligence or observation will find any lack of material, or much difficulty in handling it differently from his neighbours. Moreover, in so progressive a country there is always something to describe which is altogether new. Towns rising into importance on the borders of civilisation, young emporia of a newly-developed trade; experiments in cultivation, discoveries of minerals, extension of railways, opening of canals, and the formation of new territories, with all the disorders incidental to infancy and childhood: insubordinate youngsters, they early become much troubled with internal commotions, and are perpetually, with much clamour, striving for the privileges of manhood, while still in short-clothes. All this there is to write about, and indeed all this is yearly written about, but still the public of England are in a very gross state of ignorance upon the subject. They seem to owe their knowledge of Georgia to Mr Arrowsmith, and of Alabama to Lucy Neal, it is generally so very vague. In talking of the respective capitals of these States the other day—viz., Augusta and Montgomery—I was asked whether she (Augusta Montgomery) was pretty! Under these circumstances, as long as there is anybody who will read, let all of us who have been in the

United States keep on writing about them: let those who understand the mysteries of a presidential election discourse learnedly upon caucus meetings and Pollywog conventions, and explain how it was that Pennsylvania turned the scale in Buchanan's favour, in '56, and the respective merits of the Union and Republican tickets, and of the rival candidates in the election now pending.

Those who have emigrated to the States should certainly give us the benefit of their experiences, otherwise the world will believe, not that a recent author proved himself utterly unfitted to be a settler on the Wabash, but that the Wabash is a river utterly unfitted for settlement. An interesting book might also be written upon the various phases of theological opinion in the United States. In a country where such creeds as Mormonism and Spiritualism exist, there is evidently a wide scope for freedom of thought on subjects which, in our own country, are generally left to the contemplation of those who are paid to think about them for us. The influence of this liberty, and the extent of its present development, has scarcely been sufficiently noticed by travellers, or its effects upon coming generations considered. For my own part, I shall refrain at present from entering into any such abstruse considerations; and, availing myself of those excuses which I have endeavoured to make for my fellow-scribblers on the same subject, I will jot down a few stray reminiscences of one or two out-of-the-way nooks and corners, which I visited before joining the companions with whom, in December 1856, I afterwards proceeded to Nicaragua.

There is a pleasant land, for instance, which I never

remember to have read about, not far from the seashore of a celebrated Southern State, watered by the Wacamaw, Great Peedee, and Winiaw, noble rivers, whose names were new to me, but upon whose waters steamers actively ply, bearing to the ocean the rich produce of their shores. A land it is of johnny-cakes and waffles, hoe-cakes and hominy, very agreeable to look back upon. A belt of pine-barrens, fifty miles broad, intervenes between it and the nearest railway—a most dreary track to traverse, along deep sandy roads, through an interminable forest of pines, where the only variety is that some are notched for turpentine, and some are not. Turpentine oozes everywhere; even the trees that are not gashed seem to be weeping tears of turpentine for their unhappy comrades, whose gaping wounds are all mortal. The whole of this district is uninhabited, except by a few miserable specimens of white humanity, whose occupation is collecting turpentine, who are said to possess an unnatural craving for a clay diet, and who are popularly known as “crackers,” but whose gaunt aspect and haggard vacant countenances induce one to suppose that they might with greater truth be called “cracked.” A little farther north this region sinks into the Peedee and Great Dismal Swamps,

“Where Will-o’-the-wisps and glow-worms shine
In bulrush and in brake,
Where waving mosses shroud the pine,
And the cedar grows, and the poisonous vine
Is spotted like the snake;
Where hardly a human foot would pass,
Or a human heart would dare;”

but over which now the cars rattle with shrill whistle,

and the trestle on which they run, high above the tops of the highest trees, trembles beneath them ; and as you look out of the window there is nothing between your eye and the morass but the pointed summits of the waving pines. It is at this point that the tourists of our own country listen intently for the bay of blood-hounds, and crane eagerly from the window, expecting to see some equivalent of Dred dashing madly through the fen, and after him the field in full cry. Or if it be at night, they look for "the fire of the midnight camp," and, failing to discover it, call Mrs Stowe an impostor, pull their nightcaps over their eyes, and dream of anything but of getting out, as I did at two o'clock on a pitch-dark morning, at a solitary log-hut, in the midst of that dreary region, where the cars stopped for about five seconds.

In these swamps the above-named rivers rise, and after a winding course approach the sea, and near it fertilise a vast extent of alluvial country, where the rice-fields extend to the distant woods, and on the river-banks neat comfortable mansions of opulent planters are situated, with lawns reaching down to the water, surrounded by well-tended gardens, and sheltered by noble trees ; while, a little way back, a street of negro houses, like a country village, contains their living store of the material wealth of the proprietor. Broad-grinning visages greet you merrily as you pass through it ; and if the occasion of your arrival is that also of the master, after his absence during the summer months, great is the commotion which is created ; all the field-hands come trooping in to welcome him ; the old and decrepid hobble out of their cabins ; and the juvenile

portion of the population, under charge of a stalwart matron, are drawn up, a somewhat mutinous looking assemblage of curly heads; and a shaking of hands commences, beginning with the master, and going through all his own family, and then on to the guest, so that by the time the latter has grasped 300 hands, whose owners are of both sexes, of every age, and are reeking at the moment with the effects of every description of manual labour, he is abundantly satisfied with the evidences of their good-will. That this scene necessarily takes place every autumn is one of the greatest drawbacks to the possession of property in this part of the country. But so it is. Every spring the owners of all these plantations are compelled, by the unhealthiness of the climate during the summer months, to vacate their houses, leaving their rice-fields to the care of a sickly, fever-eaten European overseer, to betake themselves to the gaieties of the Virginia springs, or Newport, or, crossing the Atlantic, to swell the crowd of Continental tourists, until the first frost proclaims the setting-in of the cool weather, and the extinction of those noxious influences which the malaria of the lowlands of South Carolina exercise upon all but the negro.

Even Mr Olmsted, the stanch advocate of white labour in the Southern States, can scarcely deny the necessity here of the African race as cultivators of the soil. If you see a faint tinge of colour in the usually blanched cheek of a European child, and compliment the mother upon its comparatively healthy appearance, she will probably answer, "Yes, sir, he missed fever this season;" and even then the family has been living

either in pine-woods or on the sea-beach, as being more healthy than the plantation, and the overseer has had a long ride to and from his day's work. But when that deadly season is over, families come flocking back, and open the doors of the hospitable houses which have been closed for six months past, and the traveller who has the good fortune to enter them may thank his lucky stars, and find that his lines have fallen in pleasant places. If life on a slave plantation is new to him, and he arrives with the notion popular in England upon the subject, he will find the occupation interesting of becoming practically acquainted with the working of what Americans call "our peculiar institution."

If his host be a good master, he will have an opportunity of seeing it in operation under its most favourable aspect ; and whatever may have been his preconceived notions upon the matter, he will find himself driven to the conclusion, that however indefensible, in a moral point of view, he may conceive slavery to be, it may be made to conduce to a degree of happiness and contentment in the slave, as much beyond the ordinary experience of the peasantry of free countries, as is that opposite extreme of misery and distress which the same system is no less liable to involve. It is its peculiarity, that in its operation it embraces the most widely different results. It is seldom, however, that the traveller has an opportunity of witnessing for himself the more flagrant abuses of slavery ; the probability being that his friend is a gentleman and a humane master, or else he would not have made his acquaintance, and become his guest. I have often regretted that no tyrant, or even commonly cruel master, ever

asked me to stay with him ; but it is not easy to be honoured by an invitation from such a quarter, because, in all likelihood, such a man and the friends whose guest you are, are not intimate, or perhaps, even not on speaking terms.

To stroll, then, through the negro houses, to visit one which is set apart as an hospital, and others which contain curious fossil specimens of negro humanity, whose working days have been past for thirty years, and who have all that time been pensioned and cared for by their master and his wife, upon whose heads they have just strength and sense enough left to mumble blessings as he enters ; to listen to others, not yet so far advanced in dotage, recall reminiscences of three or four generations back of the family to which they have belonged for nearly a century ; to pass on to the other extreme, and inspect the nursery, where the juvenile community are grinning and rioting and driving their elderly guardian to despair ; to extend our walk into rice-fields, and watch all the papas and mammas of these little urchins at work, the former taking it uncommonly easily, and the latter perpetually giggling over jokes known to themselves, and very ready to shake hands upon all occasions, and afterwards to titter and blush unseen !—to go through an experience of this sort on divers plantations, will, to say the least of it, conduce to a certain modification of the idea which possesses most of my countrymen, that misery is the rule, and happiness the exception, with the negro in the Southern States of America. At the period of my visit, in consequence of a series of revivals, the result of perpetual camp-meetings, the negroes had assumed a

certain air of solemn gravity and sobriety, a good deal at variance with the natural vivacity of their dispositions—a characteristic, however, which they never manage effectually to smother.

On some plantations in South Carolina they had given up dancing, held constant prayer-meetings, and never sang anything but their own sacred compositions. These chants break with their pleasant melody the calm stillness of evening, as we glide down the broad bosom of the Wacamaw, and our crew with measured stroke keep time to the music of their own choruses. The words, however, are more original than the music. Here are specimens taken down as they were sung:—

“ Oh, I takes my text in Matthew,
And some in Revelation;
Oh, I know you by your garment—
There's a meeting here to-night.”

This is the entire effusion, and is constantly repeated, the last line being the chorus; some, however, are more elaborate:—

“ In that morning, true believers,
In that morning,
We will sit aside of Jesus
In that morning.
If you should go fore I go,
In that morning,
You will sit aside of Jesus
In that morning.
True believers, where your tickets
In that morning?
Master Jesus got your tickets
In that morning.”

And so on, with a number of variations, often extem-

great vehemence and unction, and from the excitement of tone and manner, the susceptibility of the negro to appeals of this nature to his devotional instincts was evident. The sacred names were generally screamed rather than sung, with an almost ecstatic fervour. The two following were clearly great favourites:—

“ The heavenly bell is ringing loud,
 I wish it was ringing for me ;
 Broders walking to New Jerusalem,
 Sisters walking to New Jerusalem,
 Doubters walking to New Jerusalem.
 Oh, the heavenly bell is ringing loud,
 I wish it was ringing for me ;
 Sarah’s walking to New Jerusalem,
 Elias’ walking to New Jerusalem,
 Heroes walking to New Jerusalem.
 Oh, the heavenly bell,” &c. &c.

And—

“ Broders, don’t you hear the horn ?
 Yes, Lord, I hear the horn ;
 The horn sounds in jubilee.
 Sisters, don’t you hear the horn ?
 Yes, Lord, I hear the horn ;
 The horn sounds from the door.
 Mourners, don’t you hear the horn ?
 Yes, Lord, I hear the horn ;
 The horn sounds like broder Tony’s horn.”

It does not require the last line of the latter composition to prove its originality ; indeed, all of them differ very much from the Nigger Melodies, popularly so called, both in the character of the music and words. Nor does any attempt at rhyme enter into their construction.

The most important consideration, however, connected with the spread of this devotional spirit by

which the negro is apparently so much influenced, is how far it practically affects his daily walk and conversation ; nor have my inquiries on this point, I regret to say, been satisfactory. The exhortation which I once heard proceed from the lips of a negro preacher, when holding forth with great earnestness to his sable congregation in another part of the country, would be as much to the purpose here as it was there : " Oh my deary bredren," he ejaculated, " don't waste your precious lives in drink, or dash dem away in adultery ! "

If, beguiled by these dulcet strains, we push our aquatic expedition farther than usual, we reach at length the little port of Georgetown, to which the tradition alone remains of its former importance, when the first colonists from England made it their seat of government. Now it lives upon the necessities of the neighbouring planters, and is a dull unhealthy place, containing about two thousand inhabitants. It is, however, conveniently situated on the Winiaw for the export of the productions of the surrounding country, about eighteen miles from the sea. Steamers ply to Charleston, which they reach in ten or twelve hours. But it is not necessary to pass through Georgetown to reach the sea ; there is a short cut from most of the plantations through a belt of pine forest to the shore, which differs materially from what is called the beach, inasmuch as the latter consists of a bank of sand separated from the pine-fringed shore by a narrow lagoon, which must be crossed in order to reach the summer-houses of the planters, who find that this strip of water importantly affects the salubrity of the

climate, and whose wooden erections are consequently placed on the sand, with the sea-spray almost beating into the front windows, and the waters of the lagoon washing their back-stairs—the whole arrangement presenting a very desert-island aspect indeed ; and at this season, except for curiosity, there is no object in visiting it.

A more profitable way of spending the declining hours of day is to explore the neighbourhood, driving or riding among the surrounding plantations, or to navigate, under pleasant guidance, the numerous channels which connect the large streams, and which afford a convenient mode of intercommunication ; or, for the sake of variety, to sit with a gun upon the ridge of a rice-field ; and as dense flocks of wild-ducks, of numerous varieties, come winding past in long single-file, or, closing their ranks, settle in dense masses, with noisy quack and flutter, all round you, to provide for the larder, until it becomes so dark that, though you can hear them paddling and scuffling about in a most tantalising proximity, you are compelled to relinquish your occupation with regret.

Meantime we grieve to say that we must allow no attractions of this or any other sort to induce us to prolong our stay : the time has come when we must steel our breasts against all hospitable entreaties, and once more prepare ourselves to undergo afresh the usual experience of American travel—to pass some nights to come in the state-rooms of river steam-boats, and on the uncomfortable seats of crowded cars ; to eat a series of dinners at gaunt hotels, at the risk of dying of indigestion ; to swallow incredible quanti-

ties of boiling-hot oyster-soup at miserable stations ; to be jostled in omnibuses, through large towns, from one terminus to another, and then to find that the connection has been broken, and that we are condemned to pass the six small hours of the cold morning on a platform, waiting to start ; to imbibe innumerable drinks, at divers bars, of infinite variety of composition, with a miscellaneous succession of travelling companions, whom we are continually fraternising and parting with, as we each follow our respective routes ; to run off the rails at one place ; to be nearly burnt in a steamer loaded with cotton in another ; to become reconciled at last to all our miseries, and quite sorry that the journey is over, because we have performed the last half of it with some really charming family, and have laughed in company at what we groaned at alone. All these are, I say, incidents of American travel, more or less of which all who venture upon that species of excitement may be prepared to expect.

CHAPTER II.

“ In the Acadian land, on the shores of the Basin of Minas,
Distant, secluded, still, the little village of Grand Pré
Lay in the fruitful valley.”

RICH though that valley is, and very smiling to look upon, it is not now my intention to wander among its verdant meadows, or tarry with substantial farmers on their well-stocked homesteads, but merely to introduce to the reader the home of Evangeline's youth, ere we follow her footsteps on her distant wanderings ; for it so happened that, storm-stayed on the shores of the Bay of Funday, and unable to cross it, I was once compelled to traverse its eastern margin, and thus visited the scene which Longfellow has invested with a melancholy interest, not then imagining that I was journeying in the track of that band of exiles who,

“ Bound by the bonds of a common belief and a common misfortune,
Sought for their kith and kin among the few-acred farmers
On the Acadian coast and the prairies of fair Opelousas.”

Few, probably, besides ourselves, have ever started from that secluded little valley to visit those distant

prairies ; fortunately, I did not wander on so sad a quest.

“ Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of
Grand Pré.”

It is replaced by a thriving English settlement under another name, and not many miles off. The prosperous town of Windsor is rising into importance, and the terminus of a railway; while through the village that stands on the site of Grand Pré, a coach-road leads to Annapolis, and affords one of the prettiest drives in “Acadie, home of the happy,” for such it is, though they are chiefly British and not French happy. Still a remnant exists of its French population; and here and there an old house, “with frames of oak and of chesnut, such as the peasants of Normandy built in the reigns of the Henries,” bears witness to the nationality of its founder. They are, however, generally replaced by the substantial mansions of the prosperous Nova Scotian farmer, whose fields extend for many a rood in every direction, and evidence an amount of enterprise and industry which, I fear me, the countrymen of Evangeline could never hope to rival. But, happy though the scenes of her childhood were, the maiden in search of her lover was destined to traverse with a heavy heart others still more attractive.

“ On the banks of the Têche are the towns of St Maur and St Martin ;

Beautiful is the land, with its prairies and forests of fruit-trees ;
Under the feet a garden of flowers, and the bluest of heavens
Bending above, and resting its dome on the walls of the forest.
They who dwell there have named it the Eden of Louisiana.”

Thither let us follow her, and judge of it for ourselves,

to reach it we must cross the delta of the Mississippi, and thread the innumerable channels, called Bayous, by which that father of waters, percolating through its own vast alluvial deposits, finds its outlets to the sea. Some idea of the extent of this delta may be formed from the fact, that a railway extends from New Orleans for about seventy miles into the heart of it, passing all the way through a flat and marshy country, where the tangled roots of lofty trees twist themselves into the mud, and a thick underwood renders any attempt to penetrate the gloomy recesses of the forest impossible. Sometimes it crosses a moving prairie, impassable for passengers except by the railway, which is supported on piles. Occasionally a deer, startled by the scream of the engine, dashes through the thicket—an unusual sight from the window of a railway carriage. Few evidences of human habitation are there, nor does the time seem ever likely to come when human enterprise will have overcome the difficulties that nature opposes to the conversion of these swamps into arable land. Here and there a rise of the ground has been taken advantage of, and the neat house of the planter, embowered in orange-trees loaded with golden fruit, and surrounded by a few acres of sugar plantation, show that energy is not wanting to do more, were it possible. And as the country improves, and alters slightly in character, and the bayous become more numerous and important, these plantations occur more frequently upon their banks; and then it is that we begin to discover that the same hospitality which we have already experienced on the rice-lands of South Carolina,

will be cordially extended to us on the sugar plantations of Louisiana.

As we are now beyond railways, we are compelled to pay our visits by water, and explore in a boat the labyrinth of bayous by which we are encompassed. The character of the vegetation is totally different from anything to which we are accustomed; the beautiful live oak fans with its quivering leaves the glassy surface of the bayou; the waving cypress, here the most valuable tree of the forest, fringes its margin; the sweet gum and common oak, smothered in creepers and Spanish moss, raise their lofty summits, and "look like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic—stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms." The yellow hickory and fan-leaved palmetto and graceful cane conceal the sturdy trunks of the larger trees, which, meeting overhead, form an almost impenetrable shade as we glide beneath them: alligators in numbers bask on the banks like stranded logs; bright-plumaged birds glance among the branches, and vie in their plumage with bright-coloured flowers.

These were the bayous which the Acadian exiles threaded, and the description of which I recalled with interest as I paddled in a canoe among them.

"They too swerved from their course; and, entering the Bayou of Plaquemine,

Soon were lost in a maze of sluggish and devious waters,
Which, like a network of steel, extended in every direction,
Over their heads the towering and tenebrous boughs of the
cypress

Met in a dusky arch, and trailing mosses in mid-air
Waved like banners that hung on the walls of ancient cathedrals."

This moss is the most striking feature of the forest scenery. It clothes the whole woods in a garment of sober grey, so that at a distance the absence of vivid colouring almost pains the eye, and gives a sombre tone to the scenery. But I found an additional source of interest in following the windings of these waters; for as the Mississippi loses itself at last by means of these almost countless little channels, so it has its origin in a quantity of rivulets, no less numerous, flowing from the host of small lakes with which that part of Minnesota called the *Hauteurs des Terres* is thickly dotted. Some of these same lakes, and tiny feeders of this mighty river, it had been my lot to explore two years previously in a bark canoe, when, following, not the wanderings of *Evangeline*, but the hunting-trips of *Hiawatha*, I travelled

“ On the shores of Gitche Gumee,
Westward by the big sea water,
Came unto the rocky headlands,
To the pictured rocks of sandstone,
Looking over lake and landscape ; ”

and then, in the track of his

“ Magic moccasins of deerskin, ”

saw the head-waters of the Mississippi glancing between fringes of birch and alder, or shooting over rapids beneath dark pine-woods, until at last I came

“ To the land of the Dacotahs,
Where the falls of Minnehaha
Flash and gleam among the oak-trees,
Laugh and leap into the valley. ”

All these parent streams of the Mississippi, for more than half a year, are bound in fetters of ice; now,

after uniting and bearing for upwards of two thousand miles the rich and varied produce of the longest valley in the world, they approach "the region where reigns perpetual summer," and, once more separating, each offshoot follows with sluggish current its tortuous course to the sea, as though loth to terminate an existence which has been so beneficial to humanity.

Occasionally these lanes of water contract into very narrow limits, and look black beneath the dense shade of interweaving boughs, and we seem to be paddling into some region of mystery and perpetual night; but really these gloomy avenues conduct us to a bright land; and the words of the poem might have been literally applied to us, as the Atchafalaya, partaking more of the character of a lake than a bayou, burst upon our gaze.

"Thus ere another noon they emerged from those shades; and
before them

Lay, in the golden sun, the Lake of the Atchafalaya.

Water-lilies in myriads rocked on the slight undulations

Made by the passing oars, and, resplendent in beauty, the lotus

Lifted her golden crown above the heads of the boatmen.

Faint was the air with the odorous breath of magnolia blossoms,

And with the heat of noon; and numberless sylvan islands,

Fragrant and thickly embowered with blossoming hedges of roses,

Near to whose shores they glided along, invited to slumber."

The shores have doubtless lost much of their wild beauty, now that pleasant cottages and plantations dot their margin, and here and there a thriving village, of which one will ere long be reached by a railway; and already between them, and up many of the neighbouring bayous, steamers ply, and form the great means of communication of the sugar planters.

The branch of its waters noted as the most beautiful is the Bayou Têche: as it is thickly bordered with plantations, numerous steamers pass up and down its gentle stream. We embark in one of them, and observe with astonishment a succession of handsome residences situated in the midst of tastefully laid out grounds, where the extensive collection of negro houses, and the thousands of well-cultivated acres extending far and wide, betoken the opulence of the proprietors. For more than twenty miles we follow the windings of the bayou, and upon either bank, except in the far distance where the forest skirts the horizon, we perceive not a rood of uncultivated ground. It is a scene of comfort and advanced civilisation so unexpected, that we can scarcely persuade ourselves of its reality. We are almost on the borders of Texas, in a region popularly believed to be inhabited by Indians, who ride on mustangs, and are perpetually fighting with surrounding Chicktaws, Chocktaws, Cherokees, or Creeks; but, so far from that being the case, not an Indian is visible; and we perceive evidences of refinement, which, with every revolution of the paddle-wheels, make us more ashamed of our former ignorance, and increase our wonder. Nor is that diminished when, as daylight fades, we reach the private wharf of an opulent planter, to whom I am introduced by my friend, who informs him that he has brought an Englishman to pay him a visit; and without further notice, and in the most natural way in the world, I at once become a partaker of his hospitality, and find myself in the lap of luxury.

The family is large, but there is plenty of room for

strangers besides. I have a charming bedroom, with a pier-glass, an elaborately arranged toilet-table, and a soft bed, with warm curtains and carpets, and a jovial fire crackling, with bubbling kettle near it; for this is the middle of winter, and though the days are warm and genial, fires are pleasant at night: and when I find myself shown into this apartment of luxury, and a sort of Belgravian negro, well got up in a neat livery, informs me when dinner will be ready, and leaves me to dress for it, I am filled with dismay when I remember that my small black bag contains all that I could have supposed necessary for the wilds of Western Louisiana, and that in the category I never dreamt of including a black coat. There is, however, no alternative but boldly to descend to the handsomely furnished drawing-room, where ten or twelve ladies and gentlemen are assembled, and where we enjoy for the rest of the evening all the amenities of society. It is indeed late before we retire, for we have plunged deep into the Kansas question, and I have enough to do to hold my own, for my opponents are temperate, sensible, and liberal men, and Southerners of that kidney are formidable in argument. It is to be regretted, for their own sakes, that the violent language of so many of their number is such as to justify in a great degree the popular opinion entertained of their rabid intolerance, which is not, indeed, greater than that of the North, but which, in the eyes of Englishmen, does not find that excuse which is accorded to the opposite party, from a natural sympathy with the cause which they espouse.

Our kind host, determined to lose no time in doing

the honours of the neighbourhood, has already planned an expedition for the morrow, and immediately after breakfast we start in a carriage, with a good pair of horses, to visit some plantations farther up the bayou. The road is excellent, enclosed by neat fences, on which huge Turkey buzzards perch themselves; now and then passing through belts of wood, and pleasantly shaded, but generally between hedges of Cherokee rose in full bloom, beyond which the extensive plains of turned-up soil are dotted with negroes planting cane. Every mile or so we pass, embowered in orange groves, the house of a planter, whose character I get the negro coachman, a garrulous and willing informer, to furnish, and who is generally favourable, but who now and then inveighs with vehemence against some notorious oppressor, who, he informs you, allows his passion to triumph to such a degree over his pocket that he will give a thousand dollars for you one day and kill you "jes like snake de nex." After we have passed through the neat and pretty little town of Franklyn, the character of the country begins to change: hitherto all the cultivated plains we have crossed were originally forest; now, however, we drive over soft turf, where the flowers form a brightly variegated carpet, or else mingle with the long waving grass.

"Everywhere about us are they glowing,
Some like stars, to tell us Spring is born;
Others, their blue eyes with tears o'erflowing,
Stand like Ruth amid the golden corn,"

for now we have entered the "fair Opelousas;" these are its "prairies and forests of fruit-trees, and under the feet a garden of flowers." Far into Texas, even to

the country of the wild Comanches, these prairies extend without a check. But we are near the towns of St Maur and St Martin; we have speedily accomplished thirty-five miles, and man and beast stand in need of refreshment. In a country of such abundance there is no difficulty in finding it, and we drive up to the door of a house, the construction of which evidences comparative antiquity: it belongs to a fine old Frenchman—a noble specimen of the old school of French noblesse—tottering and feeble in years, but every inch a gentleman. He does the honours of his house with a quiet dignity; his bustling wife, many years his junior, bestirs herself to set before us a sumptuous repast, and negroes and negresses crowd round in anxious attendance. Meantime the old man, with great gusto, having a stranger for a listener, fights the battle of New Orleans over again, in which he bore a distinguished part against the British. Declining his hospitable invitation to prolong our stay, we are once more *en route*, and, as the sun sets, are ferried across the Têche.

We found good quarters that night at the house of a prosperous young planter, and went over his sugar-houses. His good fortune had been somewhat greater than that of others in his neighbourhood, and the process of boiling was going on briskly. Generally the season of '56 had been deplorably bad, and some of the plantations, usually largely productive, did not yield a single hogshead of sugar; so that numbers of planters, with hundreds of acres in bearing, which usually yielded a net profit of from 50 to 75 dollars

an acre, found themselves not only without an income, but seriously out of pocket.

As we passed through sundry plantations on the following day, we stopped to inspect the process of grinding, as well as planting cane; in fact, the mysteries of sugar-manufacturing were fully explained; but I will give my readers credit for a fuller knowledge of the subject than I had at that time, and spare them a repetition of it. Should any one be tempted to investigate for themselves the details of Louisiana sugar-planting, and propose to explore its western bayous, by all means let him have time enough at his disposal to be able to accept all the invitations he receives to stay on plantations, as, if he be a sportsman, he will find plenty of amusement. The waters teem with wild-duck, and the marshes with snipe. I only went out once into the woods, for about an hour, and got a shot at a deer, which it was my own fault I did not kill. Unfortunately, my time did not allow of my vindicating my character as a shot, and my experience was just sufficient to cause me to regret not being able to remain longer.

Returning then down the waters of the Têche and Atchafalaya, I crossed from the Bayou Bœuf to the old French town of Thibodaux, on the Bayou Fourche, where, disappointed of any immediate means of conveyance, I was compelled to pass a night in a miserable public-house, where I was "roomed," or, in other words, put into the same room with, a rising medical practitioner, who, as his business was limited, was allowed to reside in the (so called) hotel at a moderate rate, on condition

of his receiving into it any stray traveller who might want half his bed when all the others were full. It seemed a hard thing in this free country not to be able to call one's bed one's own, but so it was ; and in America it is evidently not the traveller only who becomes acquainted with strange bedfellows.

The permanent occupant was out when I was shown into his room, and took possession of *his* arm-chair, lit *his* pipe, and proceeded to read one of *his* books before *his* fire, preparatory to turning into *his* bed, for much roughing has a good deal blunted the sensibility of my early days of travel on these points, when I used to prefer sleeping on the floor. Still, before putting out the light, I was anxious to see my companion for the night, for it must be admitted that being in bed, in the dark, with a man whom you have never beheld, is not an agreeable sensation. At all events, I was determined not to experience it, and so read steadily away at his well-thumbed Byron, where so many passages had been marked as to prove the volume a favourite with the owner, with whose name I became acquainted by a reference to the fly-leaf. I also amused myself by speculating upon the probable appearance of my unknown friend, by the help of sundry indications which his apartment contained : his clothes, which depended negligently from pegs, were decidedly of the shabby-genteel description ; remnants of chewing-tobacco and broken pipes showed that he was a consumer of the fragrant weed in more ways than one. A couple of badly-executed daguerreotypes of rather pretty faces proved him to be an admirer of the fair sex—a certain lightness in the

character of his books did not belie this suspicion ; and the absence of any work on his own profession accounted to some extent for the smallness of his practice. The want of water in the jug and basin, and the battered stump of a tooth-brush lying in affectionate proximity to a piece of cracked yellow soap, that seemed to have split from extreme dryness, did not tempt me to depart from my usual rule in such cases, of retaining on my person, when I go to bed, some important articles of dress.

At last the door opened, and in bounced my gentleman with a bludgeon in his hand : instead of using it, however, he made me a polite bow, hoped I had made myself at home, of which he had evidently no real doubt, took a chew, sat himself down on the corner of the table—for I occupied his own comfortable arm-chair, which was the only one in the room—and began to expectorate with an abstracted speculative air into the fire. I enveloped myself in clouds of tobacco-smoke, and left the silence undisturbed. Not that either of us was in the least degree shy : he was pre-occupied, and I was enjoying the situation too much to wish to disturb a quiet appreciation of it for a few moments. My companion was a short, dapper young man, more respectable-looking than I expected, and evidently, like Tittlebat Titmouse, accustomed to get himself up on very small means. At last he thought it worth while to ask how long I intended sharing his apartment, and then followed a host of very home questions indeed, to which I replied by gaining from him a short experience of a number of the former fellow-occupants of his room and bed, and he gave me

quite an interesting account of their various habits and characteristics. They were statistics of a most novel description, and I envied him the opportunities of making observations of human nature which his peculiar mode of life afforded him. He became gradually so loquacious and agreeable that I was getting quite reconciled to the idea of having him for a bedfellow, and beginning to enjoy, in anticipation, the sensation of being talked to sleep, when he started up, brandished his bludgeon, which turned out to be a policeman's baton, and informed me that I should have the bed to myself, as it was his night out to patrol the streets. The next morning, a little after daylight, as I walked down to the bayou to embark in a steamer, I met my friend returning to his room, very much as Box meets Cox under somewhat similar circumstances.

Thibodaux contains about two thousand inhabitants, and is interesting as a specimen of one of the early French towns that has scarcely changed for the last century. Along its whole extent the shores of the bayou bear all the evidences of a long-settled, thickly-populated country. There was not the same appearance of wealth as on the Bayou Têche, but a look of great ease and comfort. Creole maidens, with twined arms, strolled beneath the orange-trees on the banks ; patriarchs in summer-houses, in neat gardens, smoked their pipes and gazed on us as we puffed past. Vehicles of divers sorts passed along the well-kept roads between tidy fences, while, behind all, stretched acres of cane-fields. Every few hundred yards we stopped to take in cargo, principally consisting of molasses, sugar, or Spanish moss, which, packed in bales, is sent to be

manufactured into stuffing for mattresses, chairs, &c. It has been found to answer all the purposes of horse-hair, and is becoming quite an important article of commerce.

We proceeded so slowly that the sun was setting over the pretty French town of Napoleon when we reached it, and it was midnight ere we found ourselves hurried along by the broad current of the Mississippi—

“ Where through the golden coast, and groves of orange and citron,
Sweeps with majestic curve the river away to the eastward :
Shaded by China trees in the midst of luxuriant gardens,
Stand houses of planters, with negro cabins and dovecots.”

Now, however, we find ourselves back once more on beaten ground, or rather water, and probably among the many steamers which rush by us are countrymen of our own, gazing at the landscape, and jotting down notes for their future works.

In certain respects the experiences of all those who travel by steamers on the southern rivers must be the same; as they are used more for cargo than passengers, the convenience of the latter is made to give way to the former, and constant delays occur in consequence. Sometimes one is reconciled to these by the picturesque scenes which they involve. On the Alabama river especially, I have remained up nearly all night watching the bales of cotton chasing each other down steep slides from the top of a bank two hundred feet high, while uncouth figures, with huge flaring torches, light them on their headlong course, or, springing through the brushwood, wave firebrands aloft, or scream from above to those engaged in seizing the bales with grap-

pling-irons, as they dash impetuously to the bottom, and pile bale above bale till they reach nearly the top of the funnel—a good forty feet above the water. As there is generally an opposition steamer just behind, despatch is the great object, and the workmen toil furiously: for this they are well paid; and I have seen free negroes and whites working together, and receiving wages at the rate of £120 a-year—a clear proof that at present, at all events, a negro who obtains his freedom need not be afraid of starving.

This high rate of wage rather caused me to doubt the truth of what a negro once told me, who was on a remarkably well-managed plantation—viz., that slaves were fools if they wanted their liberty when they were under a good master. To be sure, he gave me to understand that a slave had in a great degree only himself to blame if he was not well off. “They’m poor ignorant critturs,” he said, “don’t know when ’em well off. Tink liberty make ’em happier—no, *sir*. ’Spose massa offer me my liberty to-morrow, I wouldn’t take it—no, *sir*. More nor fifty people on our plantation wouldn’t take dere liberty, ’spose you was to say to ’em, ‘You free man, you go to debil.’ Wife and I, we makes fifteen dollars a-month clar, one way and noder. ’Spose I say, ‘Massa, I go away for a week,’ massa darn’t stop me; missis would fly at him—missis would—yes, *sir*. Massa more ’fraid of missis dan I am; dodges and hides from her jis like notting. Missis very good to me, missis is.”

“Well, but,” I said, “suppose missis was to die?”

“Lor bress yer, massa very good to me; on’y a little quick sometimes. Massa couldn’t do notting

widout me. I helped to raise him. In some tings I know, massa a baby—mus hab me alongside, dat for sartin."

"Ah; but suppose your master was to die too," I said, "and you became the property of a cruel man?"

"I wouldn't stay wid him; no, *sir*, not tree day—no, *sir*. Dere's no law in dis country for sech as me; dat's fac. We must make our own law. No cruel massa eber catch hold ob me and wife"—and he went on shaking his head, and looking so knowing and serious that he reminded me of a venerable raven; and I became curious to find out how he could help himself, so I asked him. "Well, you see," he said, "I saw tree people hung up by de neck once; I mighty riled; I tell ye dere's no law for such as me, dat's fac. De man you saw in de hotel jis now did it—saw him wid dese eyes. Well, 'spose dat man got hold ob me. I go into B——" (mentioning a neighbouring town), "whar I got friends—plenty gentlemen my friends dere; I wery respec'ble nigger. Not one ob dose gentlemen wouldn't gib 1000 dollars for me and wife—for de two of us. Why, fifteen years ago, massa refused 2000 dollars for us. Dat was when we fus married; now we getting old. But, Lor bress ye, eberybody in B—— knows me and wife, and I got two tree friend. Dey allers says to me, 'Tom, if ever you want to change massas, I got first bid.' Bress ye, you can't get a pair of specable niggers like me and wife ebery day."

"Well, but suppose your new master would not sell you?"

He gave a sly chuckle. "I know how to make him

sell me;" and, like old Weller, he went off into a series of cachinations and explosions at the idea of his plan ; but all my persuasive powers were not sufficient to induce him to disclose the deep-laid plot by which he maintained that he could always insure his own sale.

On the whole, however, I am inclined to think that my friend Tom was wrong in laying down as a rule that a negro was better off even with a good master than free, more particularly with the great demand for free labour which now exists in the South ; and in this I am rather borne out by the more violent pro-slavery party. A New Orleans paper, for instance, says—" An end should also be put to the foolish, inconsistent, and dangerous practice of emancipation, except upon the condition that the free slave is taken into a free State ;"—clearly showing that the free slave, enjoying, as he probably does, large wages, is a cause of envy to his neighbours. Again, " It should be made the interest of our free population in our midst to emigrate." This somewhat contradicts the argument of Southerners, that the slave is happier than the free negro. It is so in numerous instances, as far as a free negro in the North is concerned, and numbers of fugitives, finding it is so, return ; but not as regards one in the South. But perhaps it is hardly fair to the moderate party of the South to quote against them the sentiments of those who push their extreme views into the absurdest inconsistencies. For instance, on the ground of want of moral perception, the negro is not allowed to give evidence against a white man ; but, says a Southern paper,—

“The existing laws should be so modified as to admit of slave testimony (for what it is worth before a committing magistrate or jury) against white Abolition emissaries who may endeavour to stir them up to revolt; and, in certain emergencies, the mode of trial in such cases would better conserve the public safety by being more summary; there should be no more than a brief prayer and a hurried farewell between the detection of a white insurrectionist and the gallows.”

Whatever may be the value of the testimony of the slave, civilised people will generally agree that it would be worth more than the justice of such a law. But the natural way of making that evidence available as against white insurrectionists, or white slave-owners, is to create, by education in the slave, a perception of his moral obligations. If, as is generally alleged, he is so obtuse that this process will never teach him to comprehend them, he must be too obtuse to learn his social rights either, and consequently education will not render him dangerous, while its application would remove one of the strongest arguments of the Abolitionists against slavery. If, on the other hand, he could be made to perceive his moral obligations, it is a sin not to instruct him in them, whatever might be the consequences, while his evidence would be of value against white insurrectionists. The following paragraph contains the views of the paper already quoted on this subject; and we fear the writer is scarcely qualified to instruct the negro, or any one else, on the value of moral obligations:—

“In all cases of incipient or developed instruction, while the negro should be judged with some leniency,

because he is ignorant and deluded, and spared, if possible, *because he is property*, his white leader and instigator should have no mercy and a short shrive at the hands of those whose wives and children, whose lives and fortunes, they would have deliberately and fiendishly sacrificed."

If the effect of a well-conducted system of education, carried out by the slave-owners themselves, would result in their own massacre, no stronger condemnation is required of their system. So far from that, however, being the case, I believe that the more the slaves were educated by their masters, the more valuable property (to adopt the high moral ground taken above) would they become.

Such views as these generally meet the eye of the traveller, because they are ebullitions of the more violent party. Those, however, whose voice is really powerful, and whose moral character is respectable, are less fond of ventilating their opinions to the same extent, and therefore it is that the whole of the South is somewhat hardly judged.

Facts are more satisfactory than words; and during 1856 ten thousand slaves were manumitted, of which five thousand went to Liberia, and five thousand remained in the States. Since then I have not had an opportunity of watching the statistics in this respect. All the more enlightened slave-owners will readily admit that the existence of slavery is in itself an evil much to be deplored; but they argue with great plausibility, that the evils involved by any remedy which has been proposed, are greater than those which attach to that existence. When, however, you avail yourself

of this admission to protest against its extension into new territories such as Kansas, the question of political power is apt to override that of abstract morality, and few are liberal enough to wish to see Kansas a free State, though many know that, in process of time, it must inevitably become one. Indeed, as regards the maintenance of the political equilibrium, the South is in somewhat an unfortunate position. No moderate or far-sighted Southerner desires annexation beyond Texas. A new slave State, containing half a million or so of lawless Mexicans, would be an addition to the citizens of the Southern States not likely to confer any great honour on their population, or become very valuable members of society, either politically or socially; while to the north of Mexico the climate admits of white labour; and where that is the case, slavery in the long-run is out of the question. At the same time—though sooner or later the North must preponderate in political power—no one who knows the spirit of the South, or the magnitude of the interests involved, can suppose that it will ever be coerced into relinquishing its peculiar institution. Some spasmodic effort on the part of the South, such as the Fugitive Slave Law and the Nebraska Bill, to prevent the inevitable extension of Northern influence with Northern territory, will probably precipitate the crisis, unless the North ceases to make use of abolition as a political war-cry. Power in the hands of the South merely affects the patronage of a political party in the North; but power in the hands of the North affects the happiness of almost every individual in the South. The stakes for which the two sections are playing are not equal—the North are

playing for the triumph of a party, the South for all they hold dearest to them.

If the question of slavery were eliminated from American politics, the stakes would be equal ; parties would alternate in power, and the Union might last for ever. It has always appeared to me, however, that the South exaggerates the consequences of Northern predominance, and unduly mistrusts it. I doubt very much, if Mr Lincoln is elected the next President, whether he will venture on any anti-slavery legislation ; the political necessity for the abolition war-cry would have ceased to exist, and the abstract sentiment alone remain to animate the North to prolong a crusade against slavery, and imperil, in doing so, what they deem most important material interests. The South in power, assailed violently by those out of it, may split the Union in frantic endeavours to preserve their entire property ; the North in power would scarcely split it for the sake of a principle. At present the popular opinion, founded a good deal on a traditionary sentiment, is, that such a separation would be disastrous to both sections. I think very differently. The interests of Texas and Maine are too far opposed to be confided to the same Federal Government. When this feeling becomes popular, as I think it must, the North will perhaps find that their interest and their principle united may induce them to force upon the South that crisis for which, when in power, the latter alone would not suffice, and both parties having begun to regard with complacency an event which is now only mentioned with regret, if not actual horror, a separation

might be amicably effected, and two noble republics might be formed, each better able to develop their varied resources, and, by the increase of their commerce, to exchange more abundantly for the wealth of Europe the teeming produce of the West.

CHAPTER III.

THE bar-room of the St Charles Hotel at New Orleans, always a scene of stir and bustle, presented a more than usually excited aspect on the morning of the 28th of December 1856; a degree of unwonted earnestness might have been observed in the countenances of some of the groups collected over cocktails, who, after touching each other's glasses with an air of fierce determination, and disposing of their contents with a defiant toss of the head, separated with so much hearty hand-shaking, and accompanied their parting blessings with so many ejaculations partaking of an exactly opposite character, that their next meeting was clearly, in their opinion, a distant and problematical event. On that eventful morning I myself had gone through an extensive and varied course of beverages, for I was fortunate enough to possess many friends in New Orleans; and as I was about to leave them, a number of parting-cups were necessarily involved. The influence which hotel bars exercise over the lives and fortunes of individuals in America, invests the institution with an importance which the stranger is at first sight apt to overlook. At the bar, many agreeable and profitable acquaintances

may be made, and friendships cemented. Here, too, are hard bargains struck, and good stories told, and insults given and received, which result in duels fought under a wonderful variety of conditions, and reconciliations effected, and political intrigue concocted, and opinions ventilated; here men celebrate their first meeting after a long and eventful interval of years, and here they pledge each other before parting, to join some adventurous expedition, from which they have little chance of returning.

New Orleans is, of all others, the city of the United States where "the bubbling passions of the country" most freely find a vent. It is conveniently situated, in a filibustering point of view, and a favourite point of concentration for the more reckless spirits of the South, who find in the mixed and somewhat rowdy crowd which throng its streets and bars a congenial atmosphere. It is not to be supposed, however, that this constitutes the society of New Orleans. While its fluctuating population is composed of such varied materials, its social attractions are as great, if not greater, than those of any other city in the Union. In its clubs the visitor will find a cordial and hearty welcome; at its opera he will be fascinated by an array of beauty more brilliant than can be found in any other house of the same limited dimensions, and he will only have himself to blame, if he is contented to confine his experiences to the range of his lorgnette; should he extend them beyond it, he will in all probability find himself lingering in the Crescent City, long after the secret conviction has been forced upon him, that, as a resolute and conscientious traveller, he is bound to

prosecute the object, whatever it may be (and we will give him credit for having one), which has induced him to start upon his travels.

But if I would not fall into the very sin against which I am warning others, I must not remain dallying any longer at New Orleans. It was quite inexcusable to diverge from the St Charles Hotel to the opera, seeing that we are on our way to Nicaragua; and so, as Walter Gay said, when he finally tore himself away from the affectionate embraces of Cap'en Cuttle, "now I am off." The departure of the steamer "Texas" for Greytown, with recruits for Walker's army, was the cause of the excitement which prevailed in all the places of public resort in the city, which I have already described—an excitement which derived an additional interest from the fact that it was partly increased by some rumours which had been current for a day or two previously, that the United States Government had determined to lay an embargo upon the departure of the steamer at the last moment—a proceeding to which the free and independent citizens of New Orleans were by no means disposed tamely to submit; and announcements to that effect, in the forcible language peculiar to the country, rendered the moment of the steamboat's departure one of more than ordinary interest.

The good ship "Texas" was moored to the Levée, amidst a host of shipping, and a fleet of Mississippi steamboats, which latter give to the port of New Orleans a character unlike that of any other port in the world. We picked our way across these extensive wharves, between barrels of sugar and molasses, through lanes

formed by bales of cotton, past tobacco from Kentucky and Missouri, amid bags of corn and barrels of pork from Illinois and Iowa—in fact, through all that varied produce which is grown for two thousand miles upon the banks of this mighty river, and which finds its port of export at New Orleans. The raw material, however, which possessed the highest interest in my eyes, was that with which I was to be associated, and which was now crowding the deck of the “Texas,” in the shape of two hundred and fifty “free companions,” bound for certain lands of the sunny South, with the laudable determination of appropriating the same. My own motive for accompanying this expedition did not proceed from any sympathy I felt in its object, but from the prospect which it afforded of visiting an interesting country under novel and peculiar circumstances, and of experiencing sensations which were altogether new to me.

A large crowd was collected upon the Levée to wish us god-speed, and I parted with a number of friends who had come down to see me off, with feelings of a somewhat unusual description. The crowd, generally, seemed to regard us with mingled feelings of compassion (for those who have gone to Nicaragua hitherto have seldom returned), of admiration (for the desperate nature of the adventure commanded this), and of sympathy (for was not the object laudable?). So that we were rather lions, on the whole, more particularly when slightly intoxicated and highly enthusiastic individuals harangued those on shore from the side of the ship, and were responded to by short spasmodic cheers, and observations ironical or genuine, according to the sym-

pathies of the speaker. A number of oblong deal cases, very ominous in appearance, for they looked like unostentatious coffins, immediately preceded me, and I learned afterwards that they contained two hundred rifles, to be used upon an occasion hereinafter to be named. A good deal of delay took place, after we got on board, consequent upon the non-arrival of a certain Colonel Titus, of Kansas notoriety, who was hourly expected from that tranquil territory with one hundred and fifty "boys," who had been helping him to keep the peace there, and who, now that their services were no longer needed, were going to make themselves useful elsewhere. Thick fogs, however, had prevented their coming "to time," and so we were obliged at last to start without them; and once more waving our adieus, we cast off from the wharf, unmolested by the myrmidons of Marcy, and amid the cheers of the populace, who had protected us from them, dropped slowly down the river.

All that night and the following day we were enveloped in fogs so thick that our progress was but slow, and their depressing influence seemed to be felt on board: the men had not shaken down into their berths; the decks were wet and uncomfortable; and it was not until we had crossed the bar, and left the river and its fogs behind us, that we began to feel at home, when it was time to establish regular discipline among the men. Various *contretemps* before starting had reduced our force from 500, the number at which it was originally estimated, to 250. It was only necessary, however, to see these men mustered, to perceive their value as irregular troops, peculiarly fitted for the style of war-

fare in which they were about to be engaged, and in which, to a certain extent, every man would be called upon to rely upon himself. They were divided into five companies, each having a captain and two subalterns; these had all been raised in different States by enterprising young men, who received, as a reward for their exertions, rank proportionate to the number of men whom they enlisted. The inducement held out to them was a grant of land as soon as the country should be settled, and, in the mean time, twenty-five dollars a-month, to be paid in scrip. There was nothing, however, in the aspect of these men, to lead one to suppose that they had embarked in the enterprise from mercenary motives alone. The spirit of adventure was the moving cause with nearly all; some were well off in their own country, others had left from personal motives which had in many cases rendered them reckless; while some were soldiers of fortune—men who were unable to live except under the exciting influence of gunpowder.

It was a never-ending source of interest to me to hear from their own lips the adventures of men whose whole life had been passed in constant exposure to danger in every form. There were men of every nationality, who had fought in every part of the world. One company was composed entirely of Germans. There were Hungarians who had bled at Segedin; Italians who had fought at Novara; Prussians who had gone through the Schleswick-Holstein campaigns; Frenchmen who had fought in Algeria; Englishmen who had been in our own artillery in the Crimea; Americans who had taken part in both the Cuban expeditions,

others fresh from Kansas ; while among the younger ones were those who had not yet fleshed their maiden bowies, and were burning to have some deeds of prowess of their own to relate. Some of the officers had served already in Nicaragua, and were returning from leave of absence ; others had been in the United States army, and were as well-informed, gentlemen-like, and agreeable as the officers in that service usually are.

The commanding officer, Colonel Moncosos, was a thin dark man of Spanish extraction, born in Florida, whose career, according to his own account, had not been devoid of stirring incidents. Among those who served under him were men who could show the scars of wounds received in many a desperate encounter, and one whose legs still bore the traces of a pair of iron anklets which had chained him for a year and a half as a prisoner to the damp walls of a Spanish dungeon at Ceuta. The story of his escape from a more serious fate, was characteristic of many other stirring narratives of a similar description, with which on moonlight nights we used to beguile the evening hours. He had served as an officer on General Lopez's staff during one of the expeditions to Cuba. When that officer, together with many of the more prominent members of the expedition, after a desperate resistance, was captured by the Spanish troops, my friend, who was one of the number, found himself with many of his countrymen thrown into the Havanna jail, and informed that he was to prepare for his execution on the following day. As an act of grace, however, permission was given to all the captives to indite a fare-

well letter to their friends, informing them of their approaching execution. Most of his fellow-victims could think of some one belonging to them to whom such a piece of information might prove interesting; but the poor Captain racked in vain the chambers of his memory for a solitary individual to whom he could impart the melancholy tidings without feeling that his communication would be what in polite society would be called an "unwarrantable intrusion of his personal affairs upon a comparative stranger." He could think of nobody that cared about him; revolving this forlorn state of matters in his mind, and ashamed to form the only exception to the general scribbling that was taking place, he determined to choose a friend, and then it flashed upon him, that as all the letters would probably be opened, he had better choose a good one. Under his present circumstances, who more appropriate than the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at Washington, then Daniel Webster? Not only should he make a friend of him, but an intimate friend, and then the Spanish Governor might shoot him if he chose, and take the risk. He accordingly commenced: "Dan, my dear old boy, how little you thought when we parted at the close of that last agreeable visit of a week, which I paid you the other day, that within a month I should be 'cribbed, cabined, and confined' in the infernal hole of a dungeon from which I indite this. I wish you would send the Spanish minister a case of that very old Madeira of yours, which he professes to prefer to the wines of his own country, and tell him the silly scrape I have got myself into, if indeed it be not too late, for they

talk of sending me to 'the bourne' to-morrow. However, one never can believe a word these rascals say, so I write this in the hope that they are lying as usual, —and am, my dear old schoolmate, your affectionate friend, ——." For once the absence of friends proved a real blessing. Had the Captain been occupied by domestic considerations, he never would have invented so valuable an ally as was thus extemporised, and he was rewarded for his shrewd device on the following morning, by finding himself the only solitary individual of all the party allowed to "stand over." In a couple of hours Lopez and his companions had gone to the bourne, to which our Captain so feelingly alluded; and when, at last, the trick was discovered, the crisis was past, and the Spanish Government finally condemned him to two years' confinement in chains in the dungeon at Ceuta, which was afterwards commuted to eighteen months. He had just returned from this dismal abode in time once more to gratify the adventurous propensities which had already so nearly cost him his life; and it is due to him to say, that even the daring and reckless spirits by whom he was surrounded, agreed in saying that he placed an unusually low estimate on that valuable possession.

With such an incongruous mixture, it might have been anticipated that to keep order would be no easy task. So far, however, from this being the case, nothing could exceed the exemplary behaviour of the men. No spirits of any kind, even on New Year's Day, were allowed to be issued. The roll was called regularly morning and evening, the officers of the day appointed, and a guard of sixteen men told off. Nor

did the fact that no social distinction existed between the men and officers in any way affect the maintenance of discipline ; the men lived forward, the officers aft, and they mixed but rarely together, though now and then the same description of mistakes to which our own volunteer officers are prone would occur at drill, and some of the "gentlemen" were put under arrest because they would laugh at some of the other gentlemen during that process. I am bound to say that the gentlemen behaved themselves as such. They were exercised daily at drill, to which they seemed to take instinctively. The officers of the day wore swords as insignia of rank, otherwise they were guiltless of uniform, while the men presented an extraordinary variety of costume. Some wore red flannel shirts and high jackboots ; others, in seedy black, were clerical in appearance, as though they belonged to a sort of church militant ; some were neat and respectable, others detestably shabby and ragged ; still, for the most part, their countenances were not ill-favoured : and so strong was my confidence in their honesty at last, that I did not take those precautions with regard to my cabin door which I should have done, and all my loose property was abstracted. My only consolation was, that my fellow-sufferer in the same cabin was the colonel himself.

On New Year's Day we passed Point Antonio, the western extremity of Cuba, which immediately became the object of much ardent gazing through telescopes, and many wistful eyes were turned upon its wooded hills, and sighs drawn over the two last fruitless expeditions, while the chances of success of another were

discussed, all tending to the one inevitable conclusion, that some day or other Uncle Sam "is bound to have Cuba." We glided prosperously over the smooth sea, no event of importance disturbing the even tenor of our voyage. On the fourth day we passed Big and Little Corn Island. These islands are inhabited chiefly by free negroes from Jamaica, who rear pigs and poultry, and grow corn, which they take to Greytown. The population of the largest is about five thousand; it is eight miles long by five broad, hilly, but fertile and well cultivated.

In the calm moonlight evenings the men used to collect in groups forward to sing. In the German company there were some excellent voices, and their natural taste for music enabled them to sing beautifully in parts. On the opposite side of the deck a group of Americans were similarly engaged; and as some piece of Beethoven's was being executed with exquisite taste and feeling by the Germans, the boisterous "right tooral lol looral," &c., so dear to the Anglo-Saxon, would strike harshly in—a characteristic indication of our mixed company. Upon such occasions the aspect of our crowded deck was highly suggestive. It was strange to look upon this handful of men, who, confident in their superior energy and courage, were about to throw themselves boldly into a foreign country, and, enrolling themselves under its banner, add to the small but determined force which then formed its army, and in which there was scarce a native of the country. They left New Orleans as emigrants for Nicaragua—they were to arrive there as soldiers in its army; and so long as they continued to

leave the United States in the former capacity, the government could not prevent them from doing so. It was a significant indication of the age to see this magnificent steamer, the product of a high state of civilisation, employed in conveying across those very seas where Kidd and Morgan won immortal renown, men bent upon an enterprise in some respects not very dissimilar in character, but yet differing in this important feature, that buccaneers sacked cities and robbed churches, and stored their plunder away for their own behoof in secluded islets, while filibusters profess to have nobler and higher aspirations, and, seeking to possess themselves, not of gold and silver ornaments, but of a magnificent and fertile country, they desire to replace the inefficient government, which left its resources undeveloped, by one which they would themselves supply, and, regenerating a neglected State, give prosperity to its inhabitants, and a profitable market to the world at large.

These are the motives by which these gentlemen declare themselves animated, and if the process is somewhat rude, the results are desirable. It is one which, when undertaken by governments, is called colonising, when by individuals, is designated as filibustering. It is singular that, while the rest of the world see so clear a distinction, upon moral grounds, between the two forms of the same process, the conquered people can seldom be induced to take a similar view of the case. They are wont to argue that, the country being their own, a foreign government has no more right to appropriate it than a foreign individual, and that, in an abstract point of view, the one course

of proceeding is as entirely immoral as the other—a proposition so totally opposed to the policy and interests of our own country, that we are fairly entitled to reject it as monstrous.

Meantime we were drawing near Greytown, and speculations were rife as to whether the coffin-shaped boxes would have to be opened or not. That such a contingency might occur we were led to expect, from the fact that a report had reached New Orleans, before our departure, to the effect that Vanderbilt had sent one hundred and fifty men to Omoa, in Honduras, but that, in all probability, their real destination was Greytown, where they were intended to arrive before us, so as to obtain possession of the Point, upon which the buildings of the Transit Company were situated, and which were a subject of dispute between Vanderbilt and Morgan, the present proprietor of the line. In the event of this occupation having taken place, we were prepared forcibly to eject the intruders, who probably would not calculate upon our arriving thus thoroughly armed. Great, therefore, was the excitement, as we neared the mouth of the river San Juan, and saw the pilot coming skipping out to us over the bar, under half a gale of wind, in his little cockle-shell of a boat, to hear the news, and greater still was our wonderment and dismay to learn that the Point was in the hands, not of the men sent by Vanderbilt from New York, but of the Costa Ricans, led, however, by a Captain Spencer, an agent of this same man, the most indefatigable enemy of Walker and Morgan.

The San Juan river forms a sort of lagoon before entering the sea. On the northern shore is the town

of Greytown; on the southern a flat spit of land runs out to the bar, and is called Punta Arenas. Upon this are situated the Company's buildings, and thither were all glasses directed as we rounded the Point, and came slowly up to our anchorage in a state of extreme perplexity and indecision, for we could not see the Costa Ricans anywhere. At last we perceived a miserable bit of red bunting—said to be the Costa Rican flag—flying over a hut about two hundred yards off, in front of which was anchored a small river-steamer, and on board this craft, we were assured, was the redoubted Captain Spencer and his three hundred Costa Ricans.

Immediately on this becoming certain, we dropped anchor about a quarter of a mile distant, and preparations were made for taking the said boat, which was in fact the one by which we had been destined to pursue our own voyage up the river. The men, who, from the moment of our crossing the bar, had not been allowed to show themselves on deck for fear of allowing the enemy to perceive the extent of our force, were now all drawn up on the lower deck. The coffin-shaped boxes were opened, arms and ammunition were served out to the men, who were on the tip-toe of expectation. Indeed, we all looked forward to some excitement after the monotony of the voyage. As we looked through our glasses, we could see the Costa Ricans crowding the deck of the little steamer. The day was now drawing to a close, and it was decided that we should wait until the night had sufficiently advanced to conceal our proceedings and lull the enemy into security, and then make a sudden

attack upon them in the boats. These were being got ready for the purpose, and the usual stir and bustle was animating more especially the lower deck, when Captain Cockburn, of H.M.S. Cossack, came on board to learn the state of affairs. He found a few peaceable-looking individuals strolling about on the upper deck, who, nevertheless, expressed a firm determination of availing themselves of the usual transit route to proceed into the interior. Some discussion ensued as to the right of a foreign power to interfere with any forcible attempt to carry this into execution, in the course of which Captain Cockburn expressed the utmost desire on the part of the British naval authorities to maintain a strict neutrality, in so far as the rival claims in the property of the Transit Company were concerned, but at the same time wished it clearly to be understood that, in waters under British protection, no bloodshed, or destruction of life or property, would be allowed.

As the capture of the steamer could scarcely be effected without a struggle, the partisans of Walker would have probably found themselves in a dilemma, had not the difficulty been solved by the prompt departure of Captain Spencer, who had simply waited to inspect our appearance, and not liking the proximity of a large steamer, which he had good reason to suspect contained a strong hostile force, he slipped quietly away up the shallow waters of the river, where it was impossible, without another river-steamer (which we did not possess), to follow him, and was no more seen. To add to the difficulty of the position, we found that all the river and lake steamers, to the

number of seven, were in the possession of the gallant Captain and his Costa Rican associates, and that all possibility, therefore, of proceeding up the river to join Walker was at an end. This disastrous intelligence was communicated to us by various excited personages who had come down from Walker, and been present at one or other of the events of which they were the voluble narrators, and who now found themselves cut off from any possibility of return. Regrets for what might have been done were now idle. The curses heaped upon the head of the devoted Spencer but little affected that acute individual, who was chuckling over his success, and strengthening the defences of the river, and who had the satisfaction of feeling, not long after, that his skilfully-conceived movement was the proximate cause of Walker's downfall, as the permanent interruption of his supplies and reinforcements obliged him at last to abandon the country. The following account of the mode in which this important manœuvre was effected, taken from the *Boletín Oficial* of San José, the capital of Costa Rica, is said to be derived from undoubted authority:—

“ It appears that the Costa Rica Government, in addition to the army it had sent to co-operate with the allied forces against Walker in Nicaragua, resolved upon organising an expeditionary force for the purpose of possessing itself of the river San Juan, wisely judging that the efforts made to dislodge Walker would be prolonged, if not rendered futile, as long as he possessed facilities for receiving supplies and reinforcements by every steamer from the United States. On the 10th of December this force (under the command of Captain Spencer) set out, not by the Serapiquí river, as was publicly reported and believed, but by the San Carlos, another tributary of the San Juan which enters that river about half-way between the lake and Juan del

Norte. This was done for the purpose of misleading a detachment of Walker's forces who were posted at Hipp's Point at the mouth of the Serapiqui.

"As this route is very little if ever used, the Costa Ricans experienced great difficulties in advancing, having to cut their way through the forest along a track where mules could not be used, and along which all the provisions and munitions of war had to be borne on men's shoulders. Six days were spent on the march, during which the rain fell almost incessantly. At last the 'embarcadero' was reached, and a few canoes were hastily constructed, and rafts made of trunks of trees rudely lashed together with vines and twigs.

"Thus these enterprising men, most of whom had never before beheld a boat on a navigable river, boldly embarked on the 16th December, to float down an unknown stream, to its confluence with the river San Juan, and thence to Greytown itself. It was indeed a perilous undertaking. Had these frail rafts, upon which one hundred and twenty men had ventured, met one of Walker's steamers coming up or going down the river, the slightest contact would have been fatal to them.

"On the morning of the 23d, the expedition was hauled into a creek near Hipp's Point, to refresh the men, previous to attacking Walker's post of fifty men and two cannon. At that moment a steamer was heard coming down the river. The men were made to lie down on the rafts. It was a perilous moment. The steamer passed without any one on board having seen or suspected the lurking danger. A road or track was soon cut towards the flank and rear of Walker's post, which they silently reached. The signal (a single shot) was given. The Costa Ricans rushed with the bayonet with horrid yells upon their surprised foes, and in half a minute resistance was at an end. A panic had seized them. Some were bayoneted—the rest sprung off the bank into the deep and rapid river. One brave officer (Captain Thompson) did all that mortal man could do to rally the men, but in vain—the onslaught was too sudden and overpowering to admit of a resistance. Captain Thompson only ceased his exertions after he received a second severe bayonet wound. His very enemies, admiring his signal gallantry, liberated him subsequently at Greytown, where also they did all in their power to alleviate his sufferings. One man besides Captain

T. was saved from the river, and five escaped into the forest. The rest are said to have perished.

“A sufficient force having been left to guard Hipp’s Point, the rest of the adventurous band again committed their lives to the precarious chances of the river upon the same rafts, which had now become rickety and insecure. They arrived close to Greytown about two o’clock on the morning of the 24th. Here again fortune favoured them; for a steamer was just getting up her steam to ascend the river. She was immediately taken, with three others. Had the expedition been delayed an hour later in its descent, it must have perished. It would indeed have been ‘touch and go;’ the slightest touch from the steamer would have separated the slightly-bound pieces of the rafts, and sent the Costa Ricans instantaneously to a watery grave.

“By dawn of day the steamers were taken, without loss, and the Costa Ricans also in possession of Punta Castilla (or Punta Arenas), which they have always claimed as belonging to their country.

“At the same time; the inhabitants of Greytown became aware of the presence of this unexpected invasion. The place was soon in confusion and commotion—one party, the most numerous, threatening violence to the foreigners in the place (mostly Americans), under the cry of ‘Viva Costa Rica!’ However, the officers commanding the expedition discounted any and every hostile attempt against the inhabitants of Greytown, and left the place next morning in the captured vessels.

“In the mean time the U. S. consul made an application to the officer commanding the British squadron at Greytown to protect the property of Captain Joseph N. Scott, agent for Messrs Charles Morgan & Son, of New York, from a forcible seizure by a force of Costa Ricans under the command of Colonel Joaquin Fernandez.

“To this, Captain John C. Erskine, senior officer, replied from on board the *Orion*, dated 24th December 1856, that ‘he had taken steps, by landing a party of marines from one of Her Majesty’s ships, to protect the persons and private property of Captain Joseph Scott, his family, and all citizens of the United States of America; which the officer of the Costa Rica force, now at Punta Arenas, also assured him should be placed in no peril.’

Then, as regards the capture of the steamers, Captain Erskine, in continuation, very judiciously expressed himself as follows :—

“ ‘To prevent all misapprehension, I think it, however, right to state that—the steamers and other property belonging to the accessory Transit Company being at this moment the subject of a dispute between two different companies, the representatives of which are on the spot, and one of them authorising the seizure—I do not feel justified in taking any steps which may affect the interests of either party.

“ ‘With respect to the participation of a force of Costa Ricans in the seizure and transfer of the steamers alluded to, I must observe that, these steamers having been for some months past employed in embarking in this port, and conveying to the parties with whom Costa Rica is now carrying on active hostilities, men and munitions of war, it appears that, as a non-belligerent, I am prohibited by the law of nations from preventing the execution of such an operation by a belligerent party.—I have the honour, &c.,

“ ‘JOHN E. ERSKINE,
Capt. and Sen. Officer.

“ ‘To B. S. COTTRELL, Esq.,
U.S. Consul at Greytown.
Dec. 24, 1856.

“On ascending the river, when off the mouth of the river San Carlos (which, as before stated, is a tributary of the river San Juan), one of the steamers was despatched to ascertain if General Jose Joaquin Mora (brother to the President of Costa Rica) had arrived at the embarcadero with the main body of the expeditionary army ; and if so, to report the success of the expedition to Greytown, so that measures might immediately be taken for carrying promptly into effect the second part of the plan of operations. On proceeding up the San Carlos, five men, placed on a raft as videttes, became so frightened by the noise and appearance of the approaching steamer (never having before seen or imagined the like), that they plunged into the river, and were drowned in the attempt to reach the bank. The steamer then landed two men to cut their way through the forest to the embarcadero, in order that General Mora might receive timely notice that the steamer was no longer an enemy, so that the probability of his firing upon her might be removed. General

Mora was found at his post, with 800 men, followed by a rear-guard of 300, who have since also arrived. In addition to these, two transport corps of 600 men are alternately employed in carrying provisions, ammunition, &c., from the interior to the embarcadero.

“Having now the four river-steamers at command, the Castillo Rapids and the steamers John Ogden and Ruth were soon taken by General Mora. He then moved up to Fort San Carlos, which, with the large steamer and detachment of men there, was also taken by stratagem. Then the two lake-steamers, San Carlos and Virgin, not aware of these occurrences, came across the lake with passengers from California, and were also taken by General Mora, who generously sent the passengers on to Greytown in the captured steamers.”

Such is the Costa Rican account of this very cleverly executed enterprise, which we have no reason to regard as incorrect in its details, as there is no doubt about the truth of its results. It was just at the moment that Captain Spencer had finished politely landing the Californian passengers, to the number of four hundred, above alluded to, that we made our appearance in the Texas ; when, as he had nothing to detain him except a laudable curiosity to inspect us, he vanished as soon as that was satisfied. As there were no means of communicating across Lake Nicaragua now that the steamers hitherto used for the transit were in the hands of the enemy, Walker must have remained for many days in total ignorance of the occurrence ; in all probability, the first authentic intelligence which he received of its details were, some weeks after, from the lips of one of his most tried friends and followers, whom I accompanied as far as Panama on his way to rejoin Walker from the Pacific side, and who, if he ever arrived at all, could not have

done so for a month after the capture of the steamers by Spencer. It is easy to imagine the state of uncertainty and suspense in which General Walker must have been kept by this unexpected, and to him unaccountable, cessation of reinforcements and supplies from the Eastern and Southern States.

While the discussion with Captain Cockburn to which I have above alluded was in progress, that officer discovered my nationality, and I was politely informed that it would be desirable, under any circumstances, that I should return with him to the flag-ship, an order to which I the more willingly submitted as the Commodore of the squadron was a very old friend and relation. Bidding, therefore, adieu to my crest-fallen companions, whose cause was now so utterly hopeless that nobody could be accused of deserting it, more especially as in my own case I had never bargained for fighting my way into the country, I was not sorry to find myself comfortably installed as a guest on board a British man-of-war, from the deck of which I could observe, through a spy-glass, the vain efforts of my quondam companions to patch up the remains of an old river steamer which was stranded on the bank.

CHAPTER IV.

How extended soever may have been the traveller's experience of dreary localities, Greytown must ever take a prominent place among his most doleful and gloomy reminiscences. A mean collection of thatched houses, containing a small population of infinite shades of colour, and a considerable variety or rather poverty of costume, is backed by a heavy rank forest that surrounds a lake teeming with caymans, and exhales noxious vapours. A great expanse of flat wooded country is in rear of all, while in front the river expands into a lagoon, and a bank of sand shuts out the sea, the only redeeming feature in the scene. A very few days exhausted its resources; and I will take the opportunity of the interval afforded by my stay at Greytown to give some account of the principal events which marked the singular invasion of Nicaragua by foreigners, and their two years' occupancy of the country they endeavoured permanently to acquire.

Whether it be ever followed by another similar enterprise or not, this one, which has rendered General Walker's name so notorious, must ever form a page in Nicaraguan history; and as, so far as I am aware, the

public in this country have never been very fully informed upon the subject, the few particulars I have been enabled to collect may not be uninteresting.

The discovery of gold in California produced a rush from all parts of the world towards the western shores of the continent of North America ; the remote position of the country, however, and the slender traffic with which it had heretofore been favoured, made the process of emigration one of considerable difficulty. Various routes were adopted by the hardy gold-seekers : some plunged boldly into the western prairies, and, scaling the Rocky Mountains, arrived half-famished at their destination ; others hazarded the stormy passage round the Horn, and often never arrived at all ; while a third section found their way across some part or other of that neck of land which connects the Northern and Southern continents, and which is now known by the newly-invented appellation of Central America. The facilities for crossing this Isthmus were offered at two points. At one place, between Chagres and Panama, the distance between the Atlantic and Pacific is only forty-eight miles ; while, three hundred miles farther north, and consequently affording a shorter route, the magnificent lake of Nicaragua, which is connected with the Gulf of Mexico by a navigable river, is separated from the Pacific by a neck of land only twelve miles across.

These rival routes have both been largely patronised by Californian passengers : the one by Panama, which was established some years before the other, they now cross by railway ; while in Nicaragua they ascend in steamers to the western shore of the lake, and perform

the remaining twelve miles on mules. Four lines of steamers connect Panama and San Juan del Sur on the one side, and Aspinwall and Greytown on the other, with California and the Eastern States. It was not until 1851 that a company was formed, under the auspices of Mr Vanderbilt, called the Accessory Transit Company, for the conveyance of passengers through Nicaragua; for this purpose a charter was obtained from the Nicaraguan Government for a transit route, in which it was stipulated that a certain annual percentage should be paid by the Company to the Government out of its net profits. In the following year the route was first opened, and every month hundreds of travellers, belonging to the most enterprising and progressive race in the world, passed through this magnificent and fertile country, and wondered no less at the extent and variety of its resources, than at the apathy and incapacity of the inhabitants, calling themselves civilised, who could allow them to remain undeveloped. A corresponding degree of astonishment was doubtless felt among the Nicaraguans themselves, when they found their country turned into a highway, which crowds of impetuous Anglo-Saxons traversed like those gigantic ants whose broad beaten tracks are to be seen in their own forests.

The contact produced results which were only natural under the circumstances. It became evident to the Nicaraguans, who had been for two years engaged in a bloody civil war, that the infusion of a little Anglo-Saxon courage and energy on one side or the other would terminate the struggle in favour of the faction who could secure it; while so tempting an appeal was

not likely to be made in vain, to men who were only longing for an excuse to enter the country as permanent occupants, which they had coveted when transit passengers. But in order to understand the circumstances under which the Nicaraguans applied to the Californians for assistance, it will be necessary to glance summarily at the history of the country for a few years preceding this event.

In 1815, Nicaragua, then a Spanish colony, attempted an insurrection to throw off the dominion of the mother country. The effort, however, proved abortive, and it was not until six years after that Guatemala, Honduras, San Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, declared their independence of Spain. In 1822 they were incorporated with Mexico under the Emperor Iturbide. Upon his overthrow, which happened soon after, a federal republic, similar to that of the United States, was formed, composed of the five central American States, with a national assembly at Guatemala. Upon this occasion the republic only existed two years, the most important feature in its legislation being the abolition of slavery throughout the States, but it was reconstituted in 1829 by General Morazan, and destroyed by Carera; indeed, during a period of twenty years, all these States were a prey to a series of devastating revolutions, sometimes endeavouring to reunite, sometimes at war with one another, nearly always at war within themselves. In 1851, Honduras, San Salvador, and Nicaragua formed a union; in 1852 it was dissolved, and Señor Pineda was elected President of Nicaragua. In the following year he died, and an election taking place to fill the vacancy, Señors Castil-

lon and Chamorro were the candidates. Chamorro by force of arms obtained possession of the polls throughout the State, and, defeating Castillon, banished him from Nicaragua. Castillon, however, who, as the democratic and therefore popular candidate, had a large number of partisans in Nicaragua, was not a man to be thus easily crushed, and, while an exile in Honduras, organised an expedition composed of refugees like himself, and with them marched boldly upon Leon, his native town. Here he was received with acclamation. Joined by crowds of political adherents, who are in these countries accustomed to enforce their views by blows, he was proclaimed by them Provisional Director of the republic; routed Chamorro in a pitched battle, and obliged him to take refuge in Grenada, to which city he forthwith laid siege.

Although commencing under such favourable auspices, success did not crown the efforts of Castillon. For eight months Grenada was besieged, and even after Chamorro's death the war was carried on by his partisans with so much vigour, and there seemed so little chance of peace being restored to the country, that Castillon eagerly listened to the suggestion of some American gold-speculators, that he should apply for the assistance of some Californians, who had already rendered themselves notorious by an unsuccessful expedition into Sonora, from which they had just returned. Of this expedition, which had for its object the conquest of the departments of Sonora in Northern Mexico, General Walker was the leader, and although his daring attempt at establishing an independent republic there had failed, he gained so high a reputa-

tion for military skill and prowess, that Castillon at once perceived the acquisition which such a man, with a few brave followers, would prove to his undisciplined and almost demoralised army. He therefore applied to Walker to know the terms upon which he and his followers were prepared to join the Nicaraguan army. The price demanded by Walker was a grant of land, fifty-two thousand acres in extent, to be selected from any unoccupied lands in the State. These terms were at once complied with by Castillon, and Walker lost no time in organising his expedition. A glance at the personal history of the remarkable man who conducted this daring enterprise may not be uninteresting.

General Walker's father had been a banker in Scotland, and emigrated to the United States in 1820. Walker himself was born in 1824, but manifested a roving disposition. At an early age he graduated successively in law and physic; travelled for a year in Europe; returned to the States, and became the editor of a newspaper in New Orleans; thence proceeded to San Francisco in California in a similar capacity, which he relinquished to take command of the Sonora expedition. On his return from this he entered into the arrangements above stated with Castillon. In stature, General Walker is but little over five feet four. His features are described as coarse and impassible; his square chin and long jaw denote character; his lips are full, but his mouth is not well formed; his eyes are universally spoken of as the striking feature in his face—of a singularly light grey, they are so large and fixed that in a daguerreotype the eyelid is scarcely visible. His manner is remarkably self-

possessed, and some of his most intimate friends, who have been with him throughout the most trying scenes of his Nicaraguan experiences, have assured me that under no circumstances have they ever observed him to change countenance, even to laugh, or to alter in the smallest degree his slow and precise mode of diction. He is at all times taciturn, and when he does speak it is directly to the point. He manifests a contemptuous indifference to danger without being reckless, and altogether seems better qualified to inspire confidence and respect among lawless men than to shine in civilised society.

He is ascetic in his habits, and his career hitherto has shown him to be utterly careless of acquiring wealth. Highly ambitious, it is only due to him to say that his aspirations, however little in accordance they may be with the moral code in vogue at the present day, are entirely political and not mercenary.

In the month of June 1855, Walker and his fifty-six men were enlisted by Castillon in the democratic army of Nicaragua. His first engagement took place at Rivas, where, with a hundred natives and fifty-six Americans, he engaged the aristocratic or servile troops, as they were called, under General Boscha. The natives running away, the fifty-six Americans were left to fight it out, and were defeated, with a loss of twenty-two killed. Their determined resistance, however, produced as salutary an effect upon the enemy as a victory, as General Boscha owned a loss of one hundred and eighty in killed and wounded. This was followed by the battle of Virgin Bay, in which the democratic forces under Walker were victorious, and

the reputation of Americans for prowess established. At this time the death of Castillon by cholera left the conduct of affairs almost altogether in the hands of Walker, whom the democratic leader had just appointed to the command of his army. A considerable number of recruits arriving from California, he now determined to take Grenada, which was captured by one hundred and ten Americans, with the loss of only one man, after having stood a siege of nineteen months against the democratic army under the command of sundry Nicaraguan generals. This decided the war in favour of the democrats; and Castillon being now dead, Walker was proposed by some of the democratic leaders as president. This honour, however, he declined.

On the 23d of October a treaty of peace was signed between General Walker and General Ponciano Corral, the commander-in-chief of the aristocratic army, in which it was stipulated that a certain Patricio Rivas should be named Provisional President of Nicaragua for fourteen months; that he should appoint his ministers of state; that there should be a general oblivion of all that had previously taken place for political faults and opinions; that the army of General Corral should be reduced to one hundred and fifty men, and the army of Walker to the same number; that the united armies should be placed under the command of General Walker, who should be recognised as general-in-chief of the army of the republic, and named such by a decree of the Government. The signing of this treaty took place at Grenada with great eclat. The two armies were drawn up in the Plaza; Generals Walker and Corral embraced one another in their

presence; and the heads of the new Government were announced, of whom four were Nicaraguans, and two, including Walker, Americans. Thus, for the first time after an incessant internecine war of two years' duration, was peace restored to Nicaragua through the instrumentality of the American filibuster. Sixteen days after Walker embraced Corral in the Plaza of Grenada, he was unfortunately obliged to have him shot there, in consequence of an intercepted correspondence, which has since been published, and which affords undoubted evidence of the treachery of Corral, who was in league with Guardiola and two other Nicaraguan generals to destroy Walker, of whom they naturally felt jealous.

The country being now in a state of profound peace, Walker turned his attention to the development both of its mineral and agricultural resources, and to the establishment of his foreign relations upon a satisfactory basis. President Rivas was a timid man, of no mental calibre and very little energy, and acted entirely under the dictation of his war minister. It would be difficult to conceive a more interesting occupation than that to which Walker now devoted himself, in his endeavours to regenerate a magnificent but neglected country. He visited the gold regions of Chontales and Segovia, and circulated reports of their wealth far and wide; numerous decrees were passed guaranteeing life and property, extending immunity to political offenders, and holding out inducements to immigration; a department of colonisation was organised, and every effort made to attract settlers to explore for themselves the mineral and agricultural wealth of a country which only requires an enterprising popula-

tion to enable it to take, when joined with the neighbouring States, an independent position as a Central American Republic — with a constitution doubtless constructed on very different principles from that of the United States, but which, wisely and energetically carried out, would render it a formidable competitor to the Northern Federation.

Secretly entertaining these views, which, however, he had not thought it prudent openly to express, General Walker induced President Rivas to send a minister to the United States, in the hope that his recognition by that Government would prevent the neighbouring Central American republics, who had already shown symptoms of alarm at his progressive tendencies, and the power he had acquired over Rivas, from combining to eject him from Nicaragua. The United States Government, however, did not think that Walker's chances of success were at that time sufficient to warrant a recognition of the Government he had been instrumental in establishing, and therefore refused to receive Colonel French, upon the ground that the condition of political affairs in Nicaragua was not acquiesced in by the citizens of that country. In consequence of this refusal by Mr Marcy, diplomatic relations between the Government of Nicaragua and Mr Wheeler, resident minister of the United States there, were suspended.

The news of the non-recognition of Colonel French at once decided the hesitating republics of Central America ; and Guatemala, Honduras, St Salvador, and Costa Rica assumed a hostile attitude. The insults offered by the latter to a peaceful emissary of General

Walker resulted in an open rupture. On the 20th March 1856, the Costa Rican army met the force which General Walker had detached under Colonel Schlessinger, amounting to 207 men, composed of French, Germans, and Americans, and utterly routed them. Schlessinger himself was accused of being the first to set the example of flight: for this he was tried by a court-martial, and sentenced to be shot; but he avoided his fate by effecting his escape, and was afterwards said to have served in the Costa Rican army. The Costa Ricans followed up this success by a surprise upon Virgin Bay, where they killed a number of shopkeepers, and innocent persons employed by the Transit Company. They then attacked and succeeded in occupying the town of Rivas, with a force of about 2500 men.

One of the most determined struggles which took place during the war now ensued. General Walker, who happened to be marching on Leon, at once turned back, and with a force of only 500 men advanced upon Rivas. The battle commenced early on the morning of the 11th of April, and raged throughout the rest of the day with the greatest fury. General Walker lost the whole of his staff, and the Americans performed prodigies of valour. Their loss in killed and wounded amounted to about 130, that of the Costa Ricans was estimated at over 500. Although remaining masters of the field, the latter evacuated it eighteen days afterwards, and returned precipitately to Costa Rica; the reason assigned in the public proclamation by General Cañas being the alarming outbreak of cholera.

Meantime General Walker determined to make a second attempt, to convince the authorities at Wash-

ington that the Government of Nicaragua had the approval of its citizens; and for this purpose he despatched thither Padre Vijil, a native of the country, who succeeded in inducing the Secretary of State to recognise him as Nicaraguan minister, although the political condition of Nicaragua was precisely the same as when, two months before, he had refused to recognise French.

It may be remembered that, before Walker's arrival at Nicaragua, a Transit Company had been formed by Mr Vanderbilt with the then existing Nicaraguan Government, upon terms which I have above described. Not one farthing, however, of the twenty per cent due to the Nicaraguan Government out of the annual net profits, which were well known to be large, had ever been paid by the Company; and President Rivas at last, at the instigation of General Walker, upon the refusal of the Company to explain matters, or liquidate the large debt due to the State, abrogated the old grant, and regranted the route to fresh American speculators, who undertook, in consideration thereof, the transport of recruits for Walker's army from all parts of the Union. Long and complicated proceedings between Mr Vanderbilt, the Nicaraguan Government, and the new Transit Company, in which Messrs Morgan and Garrison soon became the leading men, now took place—proceedings which it would be tiresome here to detail, and which have already cost the United States Government endless trouble and annoyance. Their most unfortunate result, so far as General Walker was concerned, was to make for him an enemy of so powerful and wealthy a man as Vanderbilt, who allied himself

to the Costa Ricans, and whose daring and energetic agents enabled those bastard Spanish troops to accomplish a feat of strategy in the seizure of the river-boats belonging to the present Transit Company, of which they were otherwise incapable.

When so many events happen concurrently, it is always difficult to maintain a chronological sequence; and in order thoroughly to appreciate General Walker's position at this crisis, it is necessary to recur again to the battle which had just been fought at Rivas. A short time before this event took place, with a view of conciliating the democratic party, the seat of government was moved from Grenada to Leon, which had always been considered their headquarters, and thither the President Rivas went, leaving Walker in the neighbourhood of the town of Rivas. It was here that the weak president in an evil hour listened to the whisperings of Salhazar and General Hæres, influential leaders of the old party, who took this opportunity of inflaming the mind of Rivas with jealousy against Walker, until at last they induced him to enter into a traitorous correspondence with the Costa Rican Government, in which he assured the enemies of his country of his co-operation in any designs that they might entertain against the Nicaraguan army, commanded by General Walker; and as an earnest of his sincerity, he wrote to Walker, urging him to come with all speed to Leon, to defend him from threatened attacks from that quarter, hoping thus to withdraw his attention from the town of Rivas, so as to enable the Costa Ricans to attack it with greater chance of success. General Walker, in compliance with this request, had scarcely accom-

plished half the journey, when he heard of the attack upon the town of Rivas. He instantly returned, fought the Costa Ricans, as above described, discovered the treachery, and proceeded at once to Leon. Here he saw Rivas, but did not tax him with his unworthy conduct. His close connection with that imbecile old man, and a certain regard he entertained for him, prevented his bringing about an open rupture: he simply informed him, that in consequence of what had come to his knowledge, he had determined, upon the expiration of Rivas' presidency, to have himself nominated as a candidate. He then returned to his headquarters, and almost immediately afterwards, Rivas, panic-stricken, fled from Leon with those leaders of the old party who were friendly to him, and ensconced himself in the remote town of Chinandagua, thus isolating himself from the rest of his cabinet, and practically breaking up the Government.

Under these circumstances, Don Firmin Ferrer, one of the late cabinet, and a native of Nicaragua, was appointed president provisionally, until a general election should take place. This was held two weeks afterwards, and General Walker was elected president by the almost unanimous vote of the people. This was not to be wondered at, as the great majority of the inhabitants are Indians, violently opposed to the Spanish rule, and said to be desirous of that of the Anglo-Saxons. However, it is probable that universal suffrage was conducted in Nicaragua very much as it has been in France, Savoy, Nice, and elsewhere.

Walker had scarcely been elected president, when Salhazar was accidentally intercepted crossing the

bay of Fonseca, on his way to carry out his intrigues in Guatemala. He was the bearer of a correspondence deeply implicating Rivas, and was consequently promptly despatched to General Walker's headquarters, who, upon receiving his admission to signatures to letters of a treasonable character, ordered him immediately to be shot—a sentence which was carried into execution without any unnecessary delay. General Walker now sent Mr Oaksmith to Washington as his representative, *Padré Vijil* not having been satisfied with his residence there, but the Government refused to recognise him. He was followed by *Don Firmin Ferrer*, who met with no better success. Shortly after, in October 1856, followed the battles of *Massaya* and *Grenada*, the details of which were fully given at the time.

Though Walker was victorious, he perceived that it was essential to his safety to destroy the old capital *Grenada*, because it was too unhealthy to garrison with his own troops; and he no sooner evacuated it than it became a stronghold of the enemy, from which the transit route, so important to his position both in a military and financial point of view, could at any moment be threatened. This magnificent old Spanish city, which in its palmy days had contained a population of about 30,000 inhabitants, was consequently burnt to the ground. An old church, however, situated about a mile and a half from the lake's side, was spared; and here General *Henningsen* took refuge, with 400 men, some guns, and a large supply of ammunition, when he was surrounded by about 3000 Central Americans. The *Costa Ricans* were now allied

with San Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and the united force succeeded in effecting this operation about the 22d of November 1856.

The gallant little band, hemmed in by an overwhelming force on all sides, unable to escape by the lake, in the absence of means of communication, took refuge in the church, with the determination of protecting their guns and ammunition to the last. The siege lasted for nineteen days. Twenty-nine men, who were holding the pier, so as to keep open the communication with the lake, were betrayed by a Cuban, and cut off to a man. General Walker arrived in a small steamer, but was unable to offer any assistance, as all the men he could spare were engaged protecting the transit route. Meantime a fortnight glided by, and the situation of the garrison was becoming desperate; not only had every horse been eaten, but the most terrible methods were resorted to to sustain life. Day and night an incessant and galling fire was kept up on both sides. Various attacks of the enemy were met with most determined resistance. To add to the horrors of the siege, cholera broke out, which was increased by the impossibility of burying the dead; and the putrid atmosphere, and poisoned water, and scanty food, frightfully diminished the numbers. On the nineteenth day, of the 400 men, 150 only were left, and General Henningsen at last reluctantly determined to abandon his guns, and, with the weak and exhausted remnant of his men, cut his way through the enemy's ranks, or perish in the attempt. Upon that night, however, General Walker had planned his rescue, and Henningsen had the satis-

faction of seeing a force landed in the rear of the enemy. This force, which consisted only of 175 men, forced their way over three successive breastworks, and after a most gallant and daring attack, formed a junction with Henningsen, though with the loss of nearly half their number. The allies, disheartened, drew off in despair, and occupied the following day in quarrelling among themselves, so that Henningsen was enabled to embark his guns without having a shot fired at him. Many of the sick and wounded from the siege of Grenada arrived at Greytown while I was there, and described to me in vivid terms the horrors of that event.

Such was the position of matters at the period of my visit, and it was then said that Walker had altogether 1000 men in good fighting condition. During the two following months, several attacks were made upon General Cañas, whose headquarters were but a few miles from those of Walker, but without any marked result. My absence in China has prevented me from following the various stages of the decline in the fortunes and ultimate expulsion of the filibuster General; and if the account which I have given above of his career in Nicaragua may seem more favourable than that hitherto current in this country, it must be remembered, that I received it entirely from those whose interests were more or less bound up with his. Still I have no reason to question their accuracy; and before long we may expect to have from the General's own pen some authentic details of his extraordinary and chequered life. There can be no doubt that the objects which General Walker and those associated

with him had in view were generally misconceived at home, and the opposition which his proceedings encountered was based not so much upon moral as on political grounds. Considering the intimate relations which have generally subsisted between our policy and our interest, we may fairly suppose that, if it could be clearly shown that Walker's success would have been an advantage to this country, all opposition founded on mere considerations of morality would have vanished. It is not likely that we should have cared more for the liberties of the Nicaraguans, who were generally without any government at all, than we have for the liberties of the people of India or of Savoy, had we not feared that the country itself was likely to be annexed to the United States. This source of alarm, however, was entirely without foundation. Walker never had the slightest intention of adding an additional state to the Confederation, a fact of which the American Government were perfectly aware when it encouraged Vanderbilt to effect his destruction. It may safely be asserted, that had it not been for the assistance rendered to Walker's enemies by Americans themselves, he would never have been expelled from Nicaragua. The ultimate object of the filibuster General was to form a federal union of the Central American republics and Mexico, the government of which was practically to have been administered by himself.

No sensible American ever either hopes or desires to annex to the United States these countries, containing a population of 9,000,000, who have vainly endeavoured to carry out republican institutions, and

who, if infused into the United States, with the rights of citizens, to which they would be entitled by the constitution of that country, would be a source of weakness rather than of strength. Added to this is the opposition which would arise on the part of the North against the annexation of so large a tract of tropical country, involving slave-labour. The question which the American Government had to consider was, whether it was preferable for these States to remain as they were, or be incorporated into a federal government by Anglo-Saxons, under institutions by no means republican in their character, but adapted to the peculiar political condition of the inhabitants, necessarily partaking of the nature of a military dictatorship. It is clear that such a government, springing as it were from a neighbouring republic, but so opposed to it in its institutions, would be highly unpalatable to the United States, but a source of satisfaction to this country, as proving that those vaunted institutions are not suitable to every clime and race; while, at the same time, we should find a counterpoise to the Northern Republic, and hear no more of its aggressive designs.

Politically, then, the success of General Walker, to prevent which we co-operated with the United States, would have been as great an advantage to this country as it must have proved an annoyance to them. Nor can we doubt that commercial as well as political benefits would accrue from the establishment of an Anglo-Saxon government in this region. The magnificent resources of these countries, now neglected, would be developed, markets would be

erected, transit routes innumerable established between the two oceans, and Central American questions, as between this country and the United States, set at rest for ever ; that they have ever existed arises simply from the fact, that Americans generally are as ignorant of questions affecting the future of Central America as we are ourselves, or we both of us would know that it is impossible, from the nature of things, for either country to extend its possessions into a region destined, from its geographical position, to be formed sooner or later into an independent State.

CHAPTER V.

ALTHOUGH, thanks to the kindness and hospitality of Admiral (then Commodore) Erskine, my stay at Greytown was rendered as agreeable as circumstances permitted, the incessant rains, great heat, and intense dreariness of that most melancholy spot, rendered the prospect of a speedy departure cheering; and I was not sorry to find myself, in company with two of Walker's men who had just escaped from the horrors of the siege of Grenada, one hot January morning, in a West India mail-steamer, *en route* from Greytown to Colon; had she been an American, I should have said from San Juan del Nicaragua to Aspinwall, for we have Anglicised the Nicaraguan name, and they have Americanised the New Grenadian; so that with laudable patriotism we each cling to our own nomenclature, and ignore that of the other, thereby creating considerable confusion. As, however, there can be little doubt that Greytown and Aspinwall are the names destined to be used by posterity, I shall make a compromise, and adopt both the Anglo-Saxon appellations. So far, indeed, as the population is concerned, the latter has a much better right to it than the former. The popula-

tion of Greytown, which is not half the size of its neighbour, is almost wholly black; while in Aspinwall the number of whites gives an air of progress and activity to it quite in keeping with its baptism. Still its aspect is anything but inviting. Two rows of substantial-looking houses appear wedged in between a mangrove swamp and the sea. Any extension of the town must either be into one or the other; and the preference of the inhabitants seems to be in favour of the sea. Anything reclaimed in that direction will improve the port and secure for the inhabitants greater health and coolness.

At present the railway passes along the beach in front of the town, and when it is not employed taking passengers across the Isthmus, it carries stones into the sea, with the object of adding to the town in that direction. Meantime a large pond of salt water, full of rotting mangrove roots, has been left in the middle of the town, which is slowly becoming dry land, and will ultimately form valuable building-lots. Near it, and in the principal street, are half-a-dozen hotels upon the American principle, the lounge of sallow Spaniards and unhealthy-looking Americans, gaunt and lantern-jawed, who live in a perpetual state of fever and ague, and imbibe quinine cocktails, sarsaparilla cobbles, and other drinks curiously devised to minister to an insatiable appetite, and correct the effects of malaria. We know these places of public entertainment, as we swelter down the glaring street, by the incessant crack of billiard balls and the pops of bottles containing effervescing drinks, accompanied by languid oaths, which issue from them. The influence

of the climate is so depressing that it almost deprives the energetic Anglo-Saxon of the power of anathematising the nature of things. In the middle of the day, Aspinwall is very hot indeed! Martin Chuzzlewit's Eden transferred to the tropics! The only people who seem really to enjoy themselves are the negroes; they swarm in the balconies of the high two-storey houses, grinning, chattering, quarrelling, or snoring; towards evening they become drunk and uproarious. Negresses, very *décolletées*, and whose light garments, like nightgowns, are so loose that it is a miracle how they maintain their position at all, collect in groups, and, disposing their fat persons in attitudes more natural than graceful, show their white teeth, and grin applaudingly at their intoxicated swains, who cut fantastic capers in the streets for their edification, or expand their capacious lungs in song. Sounds of merriment, proceeding from this sable race, extend far into the night, and do not tend to lull to sleep the unfortunate victim, who has more than sufficient music in the buzz of myriads of mosquitoes, which flock in through his ragged curtains, combined with the croakings of gigantic frogs in the neighbouring mangrove swamp, and who is vainly panting for the air which the rank vegetation choking up his window effectually excludes.

The general cheerfulness of the place was not increased during my stay by the occupation which devolved upon me of helping to nurse one of my companions, a man whose splendid frame and originally iron constitution had not been able to resist the combined effects of wounds and famine endured during the siege of Grenada, to which he ultimately succumbed.

The present population of Aspinwall barely reaches 2000. Though occupying an important geographical position, it has not increased so rapidly as might have been expected. This, no doubt, mainly arises from the fact that it owes its existence entirely to the transit traffic, and does not draw anything from the resources of the district in which it is situated, and which are totally undeveloped. The town itself can never be of any great extent, as the area of the island of Manzanilla, in which it is situated, and which has been ceded to the Transit Company in perpetuity, does not exceed 650 acres. The channel which separates this island from the mainland is about 700 feet wide, but a marsh extending on each side renders the distance, which is impracticable for all transit purposes, much greater. It was in constructing the railway across this channel and swamp that the frightful loss of life occurred, both of Irish and Chinese labourers, which has given rise to the calculation, that every sleeper that was laid down cost the life of a man. In driving the piles into the soft mud, it was impossible to find a bottom; sometimes three piles were driven in one above the other, when the bottom one, slipping out from under its fellows, would gradually rise to the surface of the ooze, to the discomfiture of the engineers.

The indefatigable energy and perseverance of these latter, however, at last triumphed over all obstacles, and although the causeway now shakes as the train passes over it, the grand object of a safe and rapid transit has been achieved. The harbour at Aspinwall is not so good as might be wished, as it is open to the

swell from the north and east, but it is susceptible of great improvement, and where the ingenuity of man has already done so much, we may fairly expect that the inconveniences arising from this source will, in process of time, be removed. Through the liberality of the Company, I was furnished with a free ticket to Panama, and took my place with three or four other passengers for the shores of the Pacific. Did the Company depend for its profit on the daily traffic, it would very soon become bankrupt, but it was originally formed for the conveyance of Californian gold and passengers, and the revenue it derives from this source twice a-month fully justifies the enterprise.

When once the deadly swamp is passed, nothing can exceed the beauty of the vegetation through which the line passes. Palm-trees of many varieties weave their broad leaves into thick screens to shut out the sun—graceful cocoa-nuts and cassavas wave overhead—tufts of bamboo are interspersed with heavy trees, whose branches support gigantic orchids, and whose stems are concealed amid a mass of purple convolvulus and divers brilliant parasites. To one only accustomed to see a thickly populated and highly cultivated country traversed by railways, and familiar with tropical jungles only where they are penetrated by the devious little paths of the woodcutter or the hunter, this dash through the virgin forest at the tail of a locomotive is very imposing, and presents with unusual force to the mind the important change which steam is destined to effect on the face of nature.

Formerly the trajet of the Isthmus involved a laborious journey of two days, the first of which was spent

upon the Chagres river ; now it is usually crossed in as many hours, without the slightest trouble or fatigue. The line impinges upon the Chagres river at a distance of about seven miles from Aspinwall, and more or less follows the right bank to Barbacoas, about half-way across the Isthmus. Here it crosses the river by a bridge 625 feet long, and then follows the left bank of the Ovispo (a tributary) to its head. This is the summit, distant 37 miles from the Atlantic, and 10 from the Pacific. The deepest cutting is only 24 feet. The maximum grade on its descent is 60 feet per mile ; the summit grade is 258 feet above the assumed grade at the Atlantic. There is, in fact, no difference between the mean level of the Pacific and Atlantic ; only the tide in the former rises 18 feet, in the latter 2. The importance of this route in the trade of Western America is evident from the fact that the total amount of export and import trade across the Isthmus and round the Horn, is estimated at a hundred and forty-five millions of dollars ; of that, a hundred million of dollars go by this railway annually in specie. The price of Panama railway shares is now about 135, paying the original shareholders a clear 12 per cent on the capital.

We did not make the traject very rapidly, as we did a little engineering on the way, and loaded some trucks with stones to take to a bridge in the course of construction. In general, the country was neither inhabited nor cultivated ; on the banks of the Chagres river I observed a miserable village or two, the houses built of split bamboo, and thatched with palm leaves, and some villages had sprung up on the line at some of the stations ; they were inhabited almost entirely by

negroes. Our descent into Panama was very rapid, except at one spot, which has never been looked on as a safe part of the line, as it is a cutting on the steep side of a hill, and subject to the action of water. When we passed, the rails were palpably depressed at this point. Near Panama, a glimpse or two of savannah indicate that magnificent rolling open country which the traveller would never suspect to exist if he merely crossed the Isthmus by rail.

In four hours and a half from our bidding adieu to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico we notified our arrival on the opposite coast with a scream, and pulled up at the foot of a jetty built into the Pacific. Here we were surrounded by a crowd of importunate negroes, who, with the utmost effrontery and insolence, squabbled for our baggage, in spite of our remonstrances, and, dividing it between them, walked off into the town, distant upwards of a mile, whither we followed them on foot, in the blazing sun—for cabs have not yet been introduced—in no very amiable humour; this was not improved on our arrival at the hotel by their exorbitant charges for portage. Upon my demurring to these, a large muscular negro waxed violent, and ended by threatening me and drawing his knife. Fortunately I was a step above him on the stairs, and enabled to kick him to the bottom before he had time to carry out his intention. The innkeeper and servants then managed to pacify and dispose of him; but I did not at that time know the thralldom in which the European part of the population were held by the blacks.

Panama is not a lively place; but the dulness is

agreeable when it is united with sufficient novelty to amuse the mind ; and the repose and tranquillity incidental to it may be enjoyable when contrasted with the turmoil of a recent tour in the United States. There, a town which is not progressing is called "a finished town," and it is looked upon as an unnatural phenomenon ; but here, in the New World, was "a decaying town." There was something soothing in its air of antiquity and dilapidation—in its grass-grown plaza, and fine old Spanish cathedral, and ruined monastery, and massive archways leading out through the crumbling fortifications. I liked to saunter about mid-day along its narrow streets, where the high houses shut out the sun, and the balconies almost met overhead, and ragged children and mangy curs slept in shady corners, and women drowsily presided over fruit-stalls, where innumerable flies loved to hive ; and grass hammocks, swinging in the open shops, each contained its sleeping occupant ; and even the game-cocks, tethered by one leg, tucked the other under their wings, and ceased to defy each other with shrill challenges ; and knots of individuals lounged at tobacco-shops waiting for the Poco Tiempo cigars which the vendors were lazily rolling from the pure leaf by their sides. Only where a European store, with its varied assortment of goods ostentatiously displayed, or an hotel with bar-rooms and billiard-tables, collected the stray Americans or foreigners that happened to be staying in the town, were there any signs of life.

In the afternoon most of the inhabitants wake, and negroes and mestizos people the streets. They swagger insolently about, holding whites in extreme contempt,

and take the law into their own hands, whenever it suits them, with the utmost impunity. At periods of political excitement, they plot massacres of those who are not of their own colour; but fortunately they then generally keep one another in check by internal brawls; still, it has been found necessary to land the marines from English men-of-war to protect our own subjects, who are at no time safe from insult.

The governors, judges, and chief officers of the several states, are elected by universal suffrage, and as the majority of the population are of the coloured race, these officers are generally men of colour, the great disgust of the "pure blood" (descendants of the Spanish). The last governors, both of Panama and Carthagena, were brothers, and mestizos. Since my visit to New Grenada, the republic has been divided into eight federal states, as follows: Sitmo, Bolivar, Magdalena, Antioquia, Santander, Boyacá, Cundinamareá, and Cauca. Notwithstanding the precaution adopted by the Central Government at Bogota, which has reserved to itself the power of sending intendants into each of the states to look after the interests of the republic, General Thomas Apriano Mosquera, governor of La Cauca, has lately declared that province independent, and has seized the port and custom-house of Buenaventura, thus stopping all supplies for the authorities of Panama, who are for the time deprived of their salaries, and will have to submit to Mosquera, who, by the last accounts, was at the head of 5000 well-armed troops. Mosquera himself is a man of good family and an aristocrat. His son-in-law, General Herran, is opposed to him,

and this division of parties is fatal to the best interests of the country.

The remains of the old Spanish aristocracy—the only respectable party in the country—have now dwindled down into such insignificance numerically, that it is utterly hopeless for them ever to expect a better order of things without the intervention of some other power. They desire nothing more earnestly than some foreign protectorate, provided it be not American, to insure them not merely safety, but liberty. In the present state of Transatlantic politics, a release from their bondage by such means is impossible. The massacre of the Americans by the blacks of Panama has given the United States a claim against New Grenada, which she is especially desirous to make good at the spot where the insult was perpetrated; and she, naturally, jealously watches the policy of other powers in this quarter. It is due, however, to the American Government to say, that the last Herran treaty was a fair and equitable arrangement of the question arising out of this massacre, but its ratification was refused by the Chamber of Representatives, who have also been foolish enough to withhold their assent from a postal convention with Great Britain, recently signed in London by Lord Elgin and Señor Francisco Martin.

The object of the United States is to insure herself a monopoly of the transit route. Annexation on a large scale she has never contemplated in this direction. If she desires territory, it is only what she thinks sufficient for this purpose, and therefore it is that her Government has, with a wise policy, discountenanced the proceedings of filibusters as the most dangerous enemies to its poli-

tical designs upon Central America. I have already shown how the annexation, in this quarter, of a large territory containing a disorganised and apathetic population, just civilised enough to demand as a right all the privileges of citizenship, and too barbarous to appreciate them, would be disadvantageous to the United States; while, on the other hand, could they obtain exclusive possession of the Panama Railway with its two termini, at one of which (Panama) are islands, the acquisition would give them control over the neighbouring town without the trouble of governing it, and insure them, in fact, the key of the position for commercial purposes.

But if this territory became the object of filibustering enterprise, the adventurers would seek, as Walker has already done in Nicaragua, the establishment of a power independent of the United States, which would then become their most formidable rival; while the filibusters, to secure the support of a European nation, would gladly allow it any terms with regard to transit through the country which they chose to demand. As a general rule, there can be no doubt that, viewing the present disorganised state and retrograde condition of these states, the spread of the Anglo-Saxon race would be desirable; at the same time, it is absolutely essential that the Transit Route should be kept open to the public generally. Sooner or later these countries will be developed, and the present effete population replaced by a more vigorous and enterprising race, and the world at large will benefit by the now latent resources of one of the richest countries in the world. Whether it is destined to be filibustered by a Govern-

ment or an individual, is a matter of speculation; probably by the latter, as his proceedings would excite but little jealousy. The morality of filibusterism has long since resolved itself into a question of the civilisation of the coveted territory, and its powers of resistance in case of invasion. The inhabitants of New Zealand and Borneo were so savage and impotent that it was considered legitimate for a Government to take possession of one country, and for an individual to acquire a large share of the other. Are the inhabitants of New Grenada so much superior in civilisation, and capacity for self-defence, as to render such an appropriation an act of political dishonesty, according to the conventional standard? The impartial observer, visiting New Grenada under the regime of the blacks, will scarcely give it a sufficiently high character in either respect to save it from the aggressive tendencies of Governments or individuals. He might, however, remark this important distinction, that although the governing powers are barbarous, a class of aristocracy exists, as refined and cultivated as that of any European country, upon whom a serious injustice would be inflicted. Unfortunately they have not only allowed the executive power to slip from them, but they have lost their influence, and with it the energy and internal organisation necessary to enable them to wield that power, even if they could regain it. Nor do the other States of Central and South America, with the exception, perhaps, of Chili, lead us to place great faith in the stability or success of Spanish republican rule, whatever political party holds the reins of government. The filibustering

world will argue that it is a greater injustice to society at large to leave so fine a country waste and unoccupied, than to take it from those who cannot develop its resources. This is one of those very nice points which might very fairly be discussed in the same assembly which recently debated upon the propriety of subscribing to revolutionise foreign states, the internal administration of which did not meet with their approval. There are doubtless a great many reforms which, in the interest of civilisation, it would be desirable to see effected in the world. The question is, who is to be the judge of what these reforms should be, and who are entitled to make them? Probably there are Roman Catholic Governments who think they could redress the wrongs of the Papist population of Ireland, just as we redressed the wrongs of the Christian population of Greece.

Again, there are a great many reforms needed in the government of India; but we should be very much astonished if the King of Naples pointed them out to us, and probably deny his right to do so. So Walker thought that reforms were needed in Nicaragua, and went there to carry them out, very much in the same spirit as that which animated a neighbouring potentate during the last French revolution. Had Walker succeeded, his minister would long ere this have been resident at this court; having failed, he has been branded as a felon. After all, except that it is a safer course, the distinction is not very broad between gratifying one's sympathies by subscribing to foreign rebellion, and gratifying one's ambition and love of adventure by taking a personal part in it. This was

Walker's crime: he found Nicaragua in a state of anarchy, and tried to reduce it to order first, and keep it afterwards. On the whole, for a first attempt, it was better devised than that of Strasbourg. The hard names which have recently been applied to him have induced me to make this apology in his behalf upon grounds of conventional, not abstract, morality.

The most important question which the individual or the Government who acquired New Grenada would have to consider would be the description of labour to be employed for the development of its resources. Not only is the present mixed population utterly inadequate, numerically speaking, to be utilised for this purpose, but unless some system of forced labour were introduced, no pecuniary considerations would induce the country people to give up that *dolce far niente* in which the prolific character of their country enables them to indulge. The present state of public feeling in Europe and the Northern States of America would, however, be opposed to anything like a *corvée*; and *a fortiori* the introduction of unmitigated slavery would be out of the question. The importation of coolie labour from China and India is the only alternative; and, now that the women have been induced to emigrate from the former country, holds out to us a more favourable prospect. Meantime, whatever may be the ultimate destiny of New Grenada, its present attractions are not its agricultural or mineral resources, but its geographical position. From that it derives a political significance not accorded to neighbouring states. Already, owing to this cause, the town of Panama, which now contains about 10,000 inhabi-

tants, has experienced sundry fluctuations in its prosperity. Before the railway it flourished, because it was a stage upon the journey, and a rendezvous for travellers in both directions; now they are hurried through without ever entering the town at all.

The arrival of the Californian passengers is one of the most characteristic incidents which the traveller can witness. It was quite an excitement to leave the sleepy streets of the town, and stand at the railway terminus, waiting for the train from Aspinwall, freighted with six or seven hundred adventurers bound for the diggings. To see it disgorge its piratical-looking crew, one is almost tempted to believe that Kidd and Morgan have revisited the scene of their former exploits by the present popular method of locomotion. Men in red flannel shirts, jack-boots, with revolvers and bowies in their girdles, and bundles under their arms, come tumbling out of the cars after one another, with here and there a strong-minded female between them, guiltless of band-boxes or packages. Among them are a few respectably-dressed people, and generally a sprinkling of black-coated and white-tied personages, who look very seedy and disreputable, and ostensibly belong to the learned professions. This miscellaneous crowd goes swarming down to the jetty, a distance of only a few yards, utterly ignorant of the fact that the black multitude who are screaming behind them and helping to carry their bundles, are contemptuously applying the shouts and epithets which they generally reserve only for driving their mules, and that the expressions of mirth which accompany them to the steamer are consequent upon these insulting

cries. They are accustomed in their own country to treat "niggers" as an inferior description of humanity, and consequently bestow oaths and kicks upon them here; while the latter, who return the sentiment with interest, are only restrained from revenge by prudential motives.

At Panama I parted from the last of my fellow-travellers from Greytown under rather peculiar circumstances. Although, more fortunate than his companion, he survived the hardships of the siege of Grenada, his health was considerably shattered by the suffering he had undergone. Under these circumstances I strongly advised his returning to the States, instead of prosecuting his imprudent and desperate design of rejoining Walker by way of San Juan del Sud. He was, however, not to be diverted from it, and one morning informed me of the mode by which he proposed to reach the Nicaraguan port, between five and six hundred miles distant. He had engaged a sailing boat, with two men, ostensibly to cross to the Pearl Islands, about fifty miles distant. His plan consisted in secretly provisioning the little craft, and, when he had got his offing, to inform his boatmen that they had a coasting voyage, not of fifty, but of five hundred miles before them; and he calculated that, with the assistance of a brace of "six-shooters," he would be enabled to enforce obedience to his orders. I suggested the probability of his having to sit up several nights running to watch his crew; but he assured me he had been taking in a large supply of sleep in anticipation of such a contingency, and that, if the worst came to the worst, he could get rid of both his companions by landing them at some

secluded spot, and creep along the coast by himself. I declined his kind proposal that I should accompany him upon this very doubtful cruise, but I could not refuse to go with him to the shore, followed by his portmantau, which ostensibly contained his wardrobe, but really had been converted into a hamper for the occasion, and concealed a goodly supply of meat and drink. Jumping gaily into the boat, his unsuspecting crew shoved her off, and hoisted her sail, while my friend gave a triumphant wave of his hat as a final adieu. I watched the little craft till I saw her shake in the wind as though in hesitation, and I knew well what was passing on board ; in another moment she had changed her course, and was flying along under a strong breeze right out into the broad Pacific. This was the last I ever saw or heard of R——. Probably he has, to use his own expression, “gone under” ere this. The lives of those who follow his calling are never worth many days’ purchase ; but his genial and daring spirit rendered him an attractive companion, while I saw him nurse his dying comrade with a tenderness which proved that a warm heart beat beneath the rough exterior of the last of my acquaintances among the filibusters.

CHAPTER VI.

A STEAM tender conveys the transit passengers from Panama to the Company's establishment on the small islands of Flaminko and Perigo, where the large steamers lie, and which are distant about two miles and a half from the shore. They form the Port of Panama, and are the most important naval position on the coast. Not very long ago they were offered to our Government for sale at a very low price. On every ground they offered advantages far superior to Valparaiso, which is at present used as a naval station ; but, with our usual mistaken economy, we declined the purchase.

The United States, alive to their importance in a political point of view, once threatened to take possession of these islands in the event of the New Grenada Government continuing to refuse its claim for indemnity for the Panama massacre. It is of the utmost importance, as a security for the freedom of the transit route, that this appropriation should not take place. Should the line to Australia be established *viâ* the Isthmus of Panama, as doubtless it will, this route becomes more important to us than to the Americans,

who will find either the Tehuantepec, the Honduras, or the Nicaraguan routes shorter for their purposes. There are conditions in the charter obtained by the Company from the New Grenada Government, which it is not necessary now to explain, which would facilitate the transfer of the entire stock to the hands of British capitalists. In the present state of affairs such a consummation would be most desirable.

About eight miles beyond the islands of Flaminko &c., lies the lovely island of Taboga, a fairy spot, and the favourite resort in summer from the heats of Panama. I spent a charming day here, strolling under the cocoa-nut trees which line the shores of its deep little bay, or climbing up the hill-side among tamarind and orange groves, through which clear streams hurry to the sea, forming tiny cascades, and deep, pellucid pools, inviting a bath. The highest point of the island is about 1000 feet above the sea. There is a small, venerable town, of crooked little streets and crumbling houses, with a picturesque old church in the middle of it, the whole buried in foliage, and commanding a view of the mainland and Panama in the distance. There is a lesser island attached to Taboga, which at low water becomes a peninsula ; and here the Pacific Mail Company have their establishment. The wooden houses of the employés, perched upon the steep hill-sides, are accessible only by ladders. In one of these rickety tenements I experienced one night several shocks of an earthquake. On the water's edge the Company have very complete arrangements for repairing and refitting their ships. Taboga supplies good water, and is a safe harbour ; but its distance from Panama

renders it inferior, both in a commercial and political point of view, to the smaller islands.

The trip to Taboga is only one of sundry small expeditions which may be made in the neighbourhood of Panama, and which the traveller will find interesting, though in my own case the kindness and hospitality of our Consul, Mr Perry, did more than anything else to render my sojourn there agreeable. Society is necessarily small, and principally Spanish. On moonlight evenings, the fashionable and sentimental world promenades on the ramparts, which then become an attractive lounge, and young Panama is to be seen in devoted attendance upon dark-eyed signoritas. When there is no moon, the ladies receive at home, and very pleasant little reunions are the result. There are, moreover, charming rides into the country, which is of a park-like character, pleasantly undulating, and richly diversified with wood and meadow. We galloped one morning, a merry party of ten, to the ruins of Old Panama, and spent the day. A lovely ride of two hours, across savannahs waving with long grass, and through dense woods where the tangled branches and hanging creepers rendered progress on horseback a work of difficulty, brought us to the tall square tower which, rising above the massive foliage on the seaside, indicates the position of the old city, sacked by the buccaneers under Kidd and Morgan some two centuries ago. In consequence of its defenceless position, the Spanish Government removed the town of Panama to its present site, upon a promontory, where ledges of rock, extending far out to sea, would render an attack by boats a difficult operation.

We had reason to be grateful for the change, as most picturesque ruins have been the result of it. They derive their chief interest, not so much from themselves as from the peculiar effects produced by the rankness of the tropical vegetation amid which they are imbedded. Pieces of masonry appear as mere accessories to set off the huge branches by which they are embraced. The enormous roots of trees, eighty or a hundred feet high, which have grown since the town was in ruins, have eaten their way through the crevices of massive walls, and have ultimately almost concealed them in their giant folds. One root alone, about fifty yards in length, and fifteen feet in depth, lay along the top of a wall, like a huge Python, sending down its minor shoots, which overlapped in places so as to hide for many yards the stone-work. There were paved streets leading into dense thickets, where it was impossible to follow them; and an old bridge, from the arch of which orchids hung like monster scorpions to the water below. We could have wandered for hours in every direction, and always come upon fresh ruins, had the forest been penetrable; but we had hard work to climb over prostrate trees and force our way through tangled underwood. Bright-plumaged birds glanced among the leaves overhead, and flaring wild-flowers contrasted with the sober green of the forest.

When we were tired of exploring the forest, we retreated from the mid-day sun into a native hut, tenanted by a venerable couple, who were certainly contented with a very primitive description of habitation. There were no walls; four posts supported a roof of cocoa-nut leaves, beneath which a loft, approached by a notched

log to serve as a ladder, furnished the ancient pair with a connubial couch, and a protection from the beasts of the forest. Beneath it, grass hammocks were swung, affording an agreeable lounge by day, open on all sides to the breeze. Here the ladies reclined after their fatigues; and we concocted refreshing beverages from the fresh juice of the sugar-cane, properly qualified, while the servants were preparing something more substantial. On our way home we varied the amusements by unsuccessfully shooting at alligators as they showed their noses above the muddy waters of a small lagoon.

It is singular that, at a time when the Isthmus of Panama is attracting so much attention, and exploring parties have been lost in their endeavours to discover a practicable line for an inter-oceanic canal, no one should have as yet attempted to cross the Isthmus at its narrowest point. Before ascending the Atrato, and diving into the heart of the South American continent, and proposing to convey ships from thence by a tunnel, it would have been wise to examine that part of the neck of land which nature points to as affording the most probable solution of the difficulty. I heard at Panama accounts of a depression in the Cordilleras at a point where the two seas approximate so closely to one another, that the natives are in the habit of making a portage with their canoes, from the waters flowing into the Gulf of Mexico into those which lose themselves in the Pacific; and I was not sorry, in company with my friend, Mr Gerald Perry, to join a Frenchman, a German, and a Spaniard, who were about to start on a visit to some property one of them had recently pur-

chased in that direction, in the hope that I might gain some information relative to so interesting a subject. The limited time at my disposal unfortunately precluded the possibility of my attempting anything in the shape of regular exploration. About thirty miles to the south-eastward of Panama, the river Bayanos enters the Pacific, almost dividing the Isthmus at a point where the distance from sea to sea does not exceed thirty miles in a direct line. This was the river we proposed ascending, in the hope, at all events, of finding out something from the Darien Indians who inhabit this narrow strip of territory, and whose inveterate hatred to Europeans has operated hitherto as an effectual barrier to any attempt at penetration into their country.

We sailed from Panama in a small half-decked cutter for the mouth of this river, upon a lovely moonlight evening, and found ourselves at daylight vainly attempting to force an entrance against a strong headwind and tide. Finding it hopeless to contend against these adverse influences, we dropped anchor under the lee of the small island of Chepillo, which lies off the mouth of the river, and which forms a protection for small craft. The channel between the island and the main has not been very narrowly surveyed; but I fear that the formation of a port at this point would be one of the most formidable obstacles to be considered in the construction of a canal debouching here. Chepillo is low and well-wooded, inhabited only by four or five families. In the afternoon we crossed the bar, on which there is a good draught of water, and, with the assistance of the tide, beat up the river, here about

three hundred yards wide. The banks were magnificently wooded. The light green mangroves which fringed the water were backed by noble forest trees, in the branches of which troops of monkeys joined their chattering clamour with the screaming and twittering of flocks of gaudy parroquets. Gently we glided up the quiet stream, and passed creeks which lost themselves in the gloomy woods, and looked black and mysterious in the fading light. As we laughed and shouted, and our voices were caught up, as though in mockery, by successive and prolonged echoes, we could almost imagine these sombre recesses were peopled by malignant spirits.

At last we are again obliged to anchor, still within earshot of the distant roar of the surf—

“Where from its rocky caverns the deep-voiced neighbouring ocean
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.”

Our progress was more rapid during the small hours of the following morning, and we reached the mouth of a tributary, the Mammonie, not far from the banks of which is situated the village of Chepo, which we determined to visit. It is the outpost of civilisation in this direction. About ten miles higher up the Bayanos, the Spaniards built the fort of Terabla, as a frontier post. Here a few mestizos are now settled, and it is from this point that an expedition should start with a view of reaching the opposite coast. Hitherto, during our progress into the interior, we had seen no sign of human habitations. After proceeding for two hours up the Mammonie, we reached two or three native huts, where a few canoes were collected. As our own craft was prevented by her draught of

water from proceeding farther, we appropriated three of these, and in them forced our way way for some hours up the rapid current, sometimes obliged to get out and wade, and pull them after us, and always, on account of their rickety character, running considerable risk of an involuntary bath,—one that we took of our own free will, having first carefully chosen a small pool, so clear that a stray alligator would have been visible, was very enjoyable, and rendered our rough meal, partaken under the spreading shade of the Hagiron, or *Ficus Indicus*, doubly grateful.

We needed something to support us during the walk which followed, of three miles from the river, in a blazing sun, through woods and over hills, to the village of Chepo, situated on a swelling knoll in the broad savannah. Chepo contains a population of about 1000 mestizos and negroes. Most of the houses are square huts of split cane, with conical thatched roofs: a few however, are built of bricks, and tiled; one of these belonged to a very fat old negro woman, by profession a schoolmistress, and she, as a friend and old patient of our German doctor, received us with great *empressement*. Grass hammocks were swung up in all available corners. Her handmaidens bustled about under her orders, given in a loud high key, and prepared an elaborate repast. We, meantime, thought seriously over our future movements. We had already been two days in getting to Chepo, and we could not calculate upon reaching Fort Terabla for at least two days more, as our friends would be detained at their hacienda on the way. The uncertainty of boating expeditions, dependent upon wind and tide, and the necessity of my

returning to Panama within the week, determined me to give up the idea of returning to the Bayanos, and to remain for the night at Chepo. Meantime our three foreign friends departed to visit their hacienda. I can only suggest to more fortunate travellers the expediency of making an attempt to cross the Isthmus at this point. From Chepo a depression of the chain was perfectly visible. The distance from Terabla to the Gulf of Mexico cannot be more than fifteen miles; yet, although comparatively so near Panama, no one has attempted to traverse the country. An armed party would be indispensable for the purpose, as the Darien Indians are the most ferocious tribe in the country, and well skilled in the use of poisoned arrows and the blow-pipe. The very circumstance of their so jealously resisting the entrance of a white man into their district, goes far to show that they are conscious of its holding out some unusual inducement to his stay there. It is, indeed, confidently asserted, upon information gained from them, as I have before said, that they constantly transport canoes of some size across this watershed.

The day of our visit to Chepo happened to be Sunday—a fact of which we were constantly reminded by the incessant crowing of game-cocks, which were tethered in the streets and little grass-grown plaza in front of the church, which was to be the scene of their contests. Towards the afternoon, priests in their canonical garments, and sporting young gentlemen in white trousers and shirts, collected there to back their favourites and witness the sport. The excitement seemed to have communicated itself to the birds, and they flapped their wings defiantly as their owners

caressed and admired them. The cockpit was a primitive arrangement: a number of logs of wood ranged round a cleared space about fifty feet square. I was introduced to one of the most fashionable and celebrated of the sporting characters in Chepo, a handsome young gentleman of colour, in spotless white, but without shoes and stockings or coat, who informed me that his cock was to be engaged in the first match; and he secured me a good place in the ring, which was soon crowded with anxious faces. Then two men advanced into the centre of the ring with the cocks, and after re-sharpening the points of their long spurs, and whetting them with lemon-juice, they set them two or three times at one another to get their blood up, then let them go, and the fight fairly began. I never saw anything equal to the excitement of the spectators during the contest, which was as bloody and disgusting as such exhibitions must ever be. Unable to retain their seats, they danced about, swearing and cheering with frantic gesticulations. Every time one of the unfortunate birds tried to escape from his opponent, he was seized by his backer, who, having previously filled his mouth with sugar-cane juice, plunged the head of the cock, streaming with blood, into it, and so succeeded in washing his wounds and refreshing him for a renewal of the conflict. Then disputes arose as to which was winning; and the betting became fast and furious, and the wretched cocks more inveterate, as they almost cut each other's heads off. Twice they were both so exhausted as to be unable to raise themselves to their legs; but their merciless backers pressed them unrelentingly to the contest, until at last the one which, to

my inexperienced eyes, had promised to be the victor, was stretched gasping and bleeding on the ground, and his opponent, getting on his prostrate body, managed to effect a feeble crow, and then tumbled head-over-heels in an effort to give his wings a triumphant flap. He was the property of my friend, who had worked himself up to a pitch of frenzied delight, and who now bore off, amid the cheers of those who had won money by him, the mangled conqueror. This young man dined with us the same evening, and was still so overcome with the effects of his excitement, that he could touch nothing, as he naïvely remarked that he never could eat anything the day a cock of his was to fight.

Not caring to witness a repetition of so disagreeable a spectacle, my friend and I strolled through the village, and, seeing a group of its female inhabitants collected on a grassy knoll, we joined them, and entered into conversation without any more formal introduction, after the custom of the country. One of the amenities of travel in these parts is absence of ceremony in social intercourse. We wander through the quiet little village streets, and look in at the open doors at a snug family circle swinging in hammocks, and without more ado we walk in, and are soon swinging away as well, exchanging cigarettes, mingling our fragrant clouds with theirs, as if our intimacy had been of years' standing. The black eyes of the signoritas are at first modestly cast down, but they soon dance with merriment at the bad Spanish of the *estrangeros Ingleses*. As the night advances, the negro portion of the population begin to amuse themselves with music and dancing. The incessant drumming and strum-

ming on fomtoms and banjos, and noisy shouts as they accompany the melodies with their shrill voices, render sleep impossible. Nor is the absence of rest compensated for by any exhibition worth seeing; the indecent gestures of their dances, their loud choruses, and harsh music, are neither pleasant to eye or ear.

We sought at last the hospitable roof of our old hostess. Alas! we found no peace here. This respectable female's voice was louder and shriller than any negro chorus; her piercing tones nearly drove us distracted, as she stumped about, chattering to us, or scolding everybody else. She was scarcely ever without a lighted cigar in her mouth—by that I mean the lighted end of it, the usual way of smoking here being the reverse of ours, as, by smoking through the lighted end, it is supposed that the precious weed is economised. Sometimes a few puffs were taken in an orthodox way, and the consequence was, that, from constant chewing at both ends, our old lady's cigar was a mass of pulp, which she used sometimes to insert, for the sake of convenience, into the twisted plaits of her greasy grey hair, where it hung by the side of her oily cheek, an especially disgusting appendage. Our dismay was great when this fat old creature announced her intention of shutting up the house: this, as it only consisted of one room, we strongly objected to. Our remonstrances were futile; the doors were firmly barred, and we lay groaning in the heat, by the light of a flickering taper, just bright enough to display the stout proportions of our ebony hostess stretched on a hammock, on each side of which a bare leg gracefully depended. When I thought she was asleep, I attempted

noiselessly to open the door, but a fatal crack revealed me, and, springing in the scantiest of apparel to the rescue, she overwhelmed me with a torrent of invective, and I shrunk back discomfited, to growl in my hammock, or roll uneasily upon a mat on the floor until morning.

As, through the kindness of an extensive landed proprietor in the neighbourhood, we were provided with horses to return across the country to Panama, we started on the following morning on horseback, intending to make our first day's journey to his hacienda. Our way lay chiefly through open savannah country. On the right, the wooded range of the Cordilleras, here depressed to an average altitude of not more than 1200 or 1500 feet above the sea-level, presented an irregular outline; to the left the country stretched away in gentle undulations seaward, the bottoms well wooded and marshy, the hills covered with long waving grass, admirably adapted for grazing purposes: the population is, however, sparse and scattered. During our ride of seven hours, we only passed one insignificant village, and not until we arrived at the haciendas of Paso El Blanco and San Antonio did we see hundreds of head of cattle luxuriating in the rich pasture. At the latter of these we passed a comfortable night, and were off again soon after daylight across a never-ending succession of grassy hills: sometimes broad belts of timber divided the meadows, and looked like the wooded banks of a wide river of verdure; here houses and oxen were to be seen dotting its smooth surface as they waded about, showing little more than their backs above the grass. At San José,

one of the largest cattle-farms in the district, a number of horses were driven into a kraal, and dexterously lassoed for our benefit; we were soon astride of them, and took advantage of our fresh steeds to push on more rapidly, galloping over the turf after our picturesque guide, who despised paths and indulged in short cuts—the result being that we were either bogged in a marsh or involved in an inextricable thicket, where creepers like chain-cables swung between the trees, and swept the unwary passenger from his saddle, to the infinite astonishment of himself and his steed.

After fording a considerable river, we halted upon its banks to breakfast at the large village of Pachora—a collection of reed huts, peopled by the usual mixed race of Negro, Indian, and Spaniard. It happened to be a gala-day, and some of the population were collected under the trees, dancing to the music of a drum, a tomtom, a banjo, and a fiddle; the women were sprucely attired with flowers in their hair, and interrupted their national dances on our arrival to waltz for our benefit, and show the advanced stage of their civilisation.

After leaving Pachora, our way lay through dense woods; and we progressed more slowly, but enjoyed a grateful shade. We were not encouraged at the prospect of fording another river by a huge recently-killed alligator, which lay stretched upon its banks. Snakes now and then glided across our path; and both in birds and plants a tempting field was afforded to the naturalist. This variety, both in animal and vegetable life, beguiled our somewhat fatiguing ride. I only

delayed once, however, to knock over a magnificent bird as large as a turkey, and which was pronounced by our guide to be the King of the Vultures. His magnificent pale-yellow plumage, and head surmounted by a golden comb, and in which black, white, and red were admirably contrasted, rendered him well worthy the respect which his dusky subjects, the common scavenger-bird of the country, pay him, and which has procured him his title of royalty.

It was evening when we spurred our jaded steeds across the bridge, and, entering the old archway, passed through the fortifications, and clattered along the narrow streets of Panama. The whole distance from Chepo is not much above fifty miles; but the villanous state of the road, or rather path, had told upon horse and rider, and made us both glad to see our journey's end; and it was with no little satisfaction that I once more dismounted at the hospitable and ever-open door of my kind host.

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