

Selections from:

Travels in Circassia, Krim Tartary, Etcetera

by Edmund Spencer, Esq. (originally published in 1837)

Part 1

AMONG THE CRIMEAN TARTARS

. . . The shades of night had just set in as we arrived at a considerable Tartar village, called Kokkos, where we were most hospitably entertained by a rich mourza, who slew a young kid for the occasion, and treated us, in addition, with several other eastern delicacies. There were the never-failing pilaff, the chichlik and kefti, together with tarts and preserved fruits of various kinds. Our beds were also those common to the children of the East - mattresses laid on the floor, with cushions and coverlets. The next morning, at day-break, our coffee and tchibouques were ready; and, after making another hearty meal, we recommenced our journey, not a little gratified with the kind reception of our hospitable host, and also with the extreme cleanliness of every object with which we came in contact.

Our route lay through a fertile valley, watered by the Kabarda, a considerable stream; the road was tolerable, and the scenery, if not beautifully picturesque, at least novel, which epithet was also applicable in an especial degree to the costume and manners of the inhabitants. The rocks which skirted the valley, jutting up perpendicularly, and of an equal height, formed a perfect natural fortification! ; appearing, in one place, as if chiselled by the hand of man, and in another resembling piles of gigantic books laid on the shelves of a library. The fields were filled with men, women, and children, either reaping the corn or engaged in some other agricultural pursuit. Here we saw the moullah, with his snow-white turban; the mourza, in his braided coat and cap; together with the peasant, attired in his light jacket, wide trousers, fur cap, and sandals. In the distance might be seen the shepherd, with his long crook, seated on a cliff, surrounded by his bleating flock, and extracting most doleful melody from his pipe.

Then the women were certainly striking objects, wrapped completely in the ample drapery of the white ferredge, which gave them not only a graceful, but a coquettish air. Sometimes a youthful dame condescended to present us with a glimpse of her gazelle eye ; but, finding she was observed, again imprisoned her pretty captives behind the folds of her veil. Camels loaded with heavy packages, and looking most serious and important, silently and slowly paced along the road ; and, that music might not be wanting, we were continually greeted with that most inharmonious of all sounds, the creaking of the Tartar waggons: these, being made entirely of wood, and never greased, formed, when proceeding in trains, a concert of discords which no traveller whose ears have sustained the shock will ever forget.

The appearance of the Tartar villages at a distance is very singular, having much the effect of rabbit-holes. This you will readily believe, when I say that they are generally built on the brow of a hill, or burrowed into its side ; and, owing to the circumstance that they consist only of one story, with a single facade, their flat roofs being level with the earth above. I more than once found myself walking on the top of a range of houses, without perceiving my error.

The interior of these odd-looking dwellings was correspondingly original. Here sat the men and women, in true Asiatic style, on the floor, smoking their long pipes; or, by way of cool variety, on the house-tops, or beneath the little verandas, to catch the few breezes as they passed. The children, with their hair, eye-brows, and finger-nails dyed red according to the most approved notions of Tartar beauty, were playing about without any clothing to impede the freedom of their movements; their little heads often decorated with a profusion of coins, and various amulets to preserve them from sorcery, the evil eye, &c.

Rich Karaite Jews, and Armenians in their peculiarly splendid costume, ambled along on their well-fed mules: these were diversified by considerable numbers of Swabian colonists, in precisely the same close cap, short petticoats of many folds, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, that we find in Swabia in the present day; neither must I forget to insert in my catalogue the gypsies, who, unhappily for the Crimea, are too numerous. They are the musicians, showmen, professors of great and petty larceny; in short, the worst part of the population.

Several of the villages through which we passed were exceedingly rural: a running stream was, almost invariably, the accompaniment; for water, in this parched country, for the purpose of irrigation, is indeed a blessing. Oak, beech, wild pear, cherry, and crab trees, lined the sides of the cliffs, springing out of every fissure in the rocks; and the valley itself teemed with orchards, green meadows, and corn-fields, occasionally interspersed with the mulberry, fig, pomegranate, apricot, poplar, and walnut trees, whose luxuriant foliage not only formed beautiful and fragrant canopies, and protected us from the scorching rays of the sun, but imparted to the little cots a pleasing appearance of great fertility. The walnut-tree is very popular with the Tartars; for, as it grows here to an enormous size, we every where find it throwing the broad shade of its wide-spreading foliage over their humble abodes.

. . . Like all Asiatic people, the Tartars shave the head : this more in compliance with ancient custom than in obedience to any precept found in the Koran. It cannot be to keep the head cool, for they are never without two or three caps, and, even in the midst of summer, wear a hairy one of lamb's-skin or fur. A fine head of hair is much valued by the women, and admired by the men ; consequently, every attention is paid to encourage its growth ; and if they do not like the colour, there are no people better acquainted with the art of changing it to their taste. The young men only wear mustachios, not allowing the beard to grow before they attain the age of forty ; this, when luxuriant, is considered a great ornament : and as the man who aspires to the honour of wearing a full flowing beard must be exemplary in his conduct, zealous in his devotions, and feel conscious that

he is a man of superior judgment, it is not often adopted. The man with the longest beard being, according to Tartar custom, placed by common consent in the highest position in society, his counsel sought, and his decisions bowed to; should he, therefore, be deficient in wisdom and experience, he entails upon himself the ridicule and contempt of his neighbour. He is also liable to have his beard pulled in the event of a quarrel - the greatest disgrace that can befall a Mussulman.

The Russian government have most laudably established schools in every town and village inhabited by the Tartars; but being left in the hands of the moullahs, whose sole object, from selfish motives, is to retain the people in ignorance, fanaticism, and superstition, they have not had the desired effect of improving the people. The language of the Tartars, which is difficult to learn, sounds harsh and unpleasant, and bears a near affinity to the Turkish. When designating the peculiar character of their language, like all Oriental nations, they say that the serpent in tempting Eve made use of the deceitful Arabic; when our first parents told their soft tales of love they adopted the mellifluous Persian; and when the angel expelled the unhappy pair from Paradise, the mandate was given in Turkish.

. . . Their musical instruments consist of a species of lute with only two strings, called a balalaika, and a Turkish drum. Shepherds make their own pipes; but they do not excel in musical performances any more than their brethren. Neither sex dance. The men amuse themselves in riding and hunting; the young, in wrestling and running for a wager, and, during the long winter evenings, in playing chess, or relating traditionary stories.

The greatest delight of the women consists in dressing themselves in all their finery, and paying a visit, for several days, to their neighbours or relatives who reside at a distance. For these ceremonious excursions the madjar (carriage) is put in requisition, generally drawn by buffaloes. The matrons smoke their pipes and discuss scandal, while their daughters amuse themselves in swinging or embroidery, in which latter accomplishment all the Tartar women excel.

Smoking appears indispensable to the existence of the whole Tartar race-men, women, and children. But, according to the idiom of their language, they do not smoke the fragrant herb, but drink it (Tutun-itschmeck); nor is this a figurative expression, for, during the greatest heat and fatigue, the Tartar prefers the pipe to cool his thirst to every kind of drink, however agreeable; and even while suffering from hunger, the most savoury food is, in his estimation, only secondary to tobacco-smoke. The moral influence it has upon his character is not less remarkable: the curling vapour not only cools his anger, but causes him to forget his misfortunes; and to acquire his friendship it is only necessary to offer him a tchibouque; hence the loss of this beloved friend is to a Tartar a calamity almost insupportable. The first word he speaks to any of his family, on entering his home, is, " Ot aket sen " (give me fire); nor are the women much less passionately attached to the indulgence of smoking, particularly those advanced in years, the short pipe being ever in their mouth, in doors and out.

As a substitute for coffee, the Tartar of the steppe drinks a species of tea (tschai) found on the banks of the Don ; but, instead of using sugar and milk, seasons it with butter, pepper, and salt : it is considered very wholesome, and holds a prominent place among their materia medica.

. . . Before leaving Eupatoria, I visited the famous saline lake, with its mud-baths, called the "Boues de Sak.," distant about seventeen wersts. These baths enjoy a very high reputation, attracting numbers of invalids from every part of the Russian empire, and the cures they are said to perform are nearly incredible : but as there are no people in Europe that exaggerate every thing connected with their country more than the Russians, I should not like to recommend them on such testimony. However efficacious they may be in removing rheumatism and cutaneous diseases, they are admirably calculated for giving, in return, the intermittent fever, which really was the case with one of the patients I met here, a German officer in the Russian service, who had come several hundred wersts: he recovered, it is true, the use of his limbs, but carried away with him a fever very likely to destroy a frame already shattered.

Of every other species of bath, they are certainly the most novel. Fancy a stagnant lake, of some extent, the greatest part composed of mud, where you see a multitude of heads (the whole of the bathers are buried to the chin), smoking, eating, drinking, laughing, singing, and moaning; altogether forming a scene the most comic imaginable. They remain in their muddy prison for about an hour, when another scene takes place, which baffles description. We then see the lake give forth its temporary inhabitants, composed of persons of all ages, some running, some hobbling on crutches, on their way to wash themselves in a clearer part of the lake, each carrying on a long pole his wearing apparel. But it is their darkened bodies, covered with mud, and cadaverous countenances, that realize every idea you might form of the resurrection of the dead.

The Tartars, whose occupation is principally pastoral, are exceedingly poor in this part of the Crimea steppe; and, when we regard their houses, it is impossible not to think that they have studied the art of architecture under badgers and rabbits; for, like them, their dwellings are burrowed into the earth. In this, however, a singular instinct of self-preservation is visible, derived, probably, from observation and experience; for, while they are seldom or never attacked by intermittent fevers, the colonists who live above the earth, in fine houses, are frequently its victims ; the miasma being supposed, like every other, only active a few feet from the surface of the earth.

While wandering in the vicinity of the Putrid Sea and the Sea of Azov, the most insalubrious part of the Crimea, I had an opportunity of ascertaining that this opinion was correct, as I invariably observed, before the rising and setting of the sun, a heavy mist hanging over the soil; whereas, it was only necessary to ascend a tumulus about seven feet in height, or descend into one of the Tartar huts, to be completely beyond its influence. This poisonous exhalation is most pernicious during autumn, when it becomes so offensive to the senses, and unpleasant to the feelings, that none can mistake it; for the damp cold penetrates the whole frame. However, by using the necessary remedies, and acting with prudence in avoiding the morning and evening mists (the only time when

danger is to be apprehended), the disease may soon be subdued: not so with dysentery, a very common disease in Krim-Tartary, and too frequently fatal.

In truth, every traveller visiting these countries should, at least, be slightly acquainted with medicine, and provided with a small supply of common drugs, in the event of his falling a victim to some one or other of these diseases.

That part of the Crimea steppe in the neighbourhood of Eupatoria and the baths, is the most barren of any I had hitherto seen ; and, as no rain had fallen since April, and it was now August, there was not the slightest appearance of verdure, the alkaline salsola being almost the only plant that survived the long drought.

A Russian family we met here, just arrived from Ak-Metchet, informed us, that during their journey they observed the steppe on fire. It appears that this evil is one of frequent occurrence; a spark from a pipe being sufficient to set the whole country in a blaze; and as there is neither river, ditch, nor mountain, higher than a tumulus, to check the progress of the flame, it rushes along the ground, consuming the grass and herbage with astonishing rapidity. Sad indeed is the consequence when it reaches the agricultural fields of the colonist; then the produce of a whole year is destroyed in a few hours.

Here I also had an opportunity of witnessing the truth of some of the surprising accounts the natives relate of the locusts, which so often ravage these countries: the whole face of nature seemed covered with them, at one time swarming on the earth, and in the houses; then rising to an immense height, absolutely obscuring the light of the sun. (I escaped, however, more fortunately than poor Pallas, who was once caught in a swarm, and half smothered). When first rising from the earth, or turning upon the wing, I cannot compare their noise to any thing more appropriate than the roaring of the sea when agitated by a storm.

The present swarm were of the *Gryllus migratorius* species, or, as the Tartars call them, Tschigerka, distinguished for the red colour, of their legs and wings; consequently, whenever the rays of the sun shot obliquely over them, they appeared like a vast fiery cloud. They did not, however, finally settle on the steppe; for, on clearing the bay of Eupatoria, we observed them, after two or three attempts to alight, not liking, I suppose, the prospect of starvation on the parched deserts of the Crimea, continue their flight towards Odessa: and so did I; but it is scarcely necessary to say that the wings of the locust are a swifter conveyance than steam.

We had a short but pleasant passage, and, on our arrival, found a fearful battle raging between the inhabitants and the ruthless enemies of vegetation. Every noisy weapon, from a pistol to a mortar, from a kettle-drum to a tin casserole, were rattling like thunder in the hands of the horrified citizens, for the purpose of defending their little domains, while the locusts fought quite as bravely to obtain possession of the luxuriant meal promised by the gardens and neat little shrubberies.

A more comic scene it would be difficult to imagine ; and a stranger, unacquainted with their intentions, would suppose the whole population crazy. The uproar, however, had the desired effect ; for the insect multitude, terrified at the clamour, bent their course towards some other territory less vigorously defended.

In the midst of all this noise and confusion, I entered the house of M-, whose garden is celebrated for being the prettiest in Odessa, when I found him and his whole family labouring hard to scare away the dreaded intruders. My host, a sedate-looking man, somewhat corpulent, streaming with perspiration, was hammering with all his might upon an old tin kettle and greeted my arrival with the salutation, "Oh, those locusts ! those locusts!" at the same time rattling his clanging instrument ten times louder than before: every other consideration being absorbed in the prospect of his gay flowerbeds becoming the prey of the hungry swarm that hovered around.

UPON ENTERING CIRCASSIA PROPER

. . . Presently, several long boats, borne on the shoulders of the men to the beach, were launched, and we were boarded by dozens of stout fellows, singing in chorus their " ka, ri, ra," who commenced unloading the cargo; and, in an incredibly short time, the whole, including our vessel, was ashore: the latter, snugly concealed from view, in a small river, shaded by majestic trees.

This precaution was used in consequence of the destruction of several of their little barks, some days previous, by the Russians, who paid them an unwelcome visit; but, so far as we could understand from the natives, the enemy had suffered considerably in return, which obliged them to make a precipitate retreat to their ships.

The boats of the Circassians were flat-bottomed, lightly built, and narrow, each rowed by from eighteen to twenty-four men; and they must have been most expert at this exercise, for their boats were propelled with great velocity. Near the helm was a species of deck, on which three or four men were seated; and the prow of each was adorned with a figure, rudely carved, representing, it might be, the head of a deer, a goat, or a ram : most probably the latter. For, did not the ancient Greeks carry such a figure at the prow of their vessels ? Sometimes these boats are built large enough to contain from fifty to eighty men, when they are propelled, in addition to rowing, by an angular sail; and were formerly, owing to their quick sailing, much feared by the mariner, who, incautiously, or through stress of weather, approached the Circassian shore, the Caucasian tribes being, at one time, most formidable pirates.

The bay of Pchad is protected by two capes, offers good anchorage, and might be easily defended against any attack by sea. Owing to the heavy sea, and a ridge of rocks, which descends from Cape Tsuoughu, and extends a considerable distance into the sea, at the entrance of the harbour, it is considered imprudent to enter without a pilot; vessels, therefore, usually wait till the boats, with the natives, come alongside, which was the plan pursued by our captain: still, I understand there is no danger to be apprehended in fine weather.

The neighbouring country is extremely beautiful and fertile; and the climate - tempered by the bracing winds from the hills - salubrious, while the valley is just open enough to admit of a free circulation of air, without being weakened in its strength as a defile . . .

. . . I was now about commencing a tour under disadvantages such as I had never before experienced, having always made it a rule to acquaint myself with the history, customs, manners, and, above all, the language, of whatever country I might be about to visit: but here was a country and a people of whom the civilized world know little; and a language, according to the opinion of linguists, without the slightest affinity to any other on the face of the earth a language, not only without literature, but any rule or compass to guide the student, rendering it nearly impossible to convey any correct idea of its sounds by European characters. Not, however, that this is the only difficulty, for every one of its tribes speak a different dialect of the Circassian; and, although I had made myself master of several phrases, through the assistance of my Circassian friends at Constantinople, yet I found them nearly useless, when attempting to convey my wishes and desires to the people by whom I was now surrounded.

An anecdote is related of one of the Sultans of Turkey, famous for his love of letters, who sent a learned Turk to the Caucasus to learn the language of the inhabitants, and reduce it to established rules. After some time he returned to his master hopeless of success in his enterprise, carrying with him a bag of pebbles, which he shook, saying, that he could give no better imitation of the sounds of the language spoken by that people.

Generally speaking, I have found, that by conforming as far as I could with propriety to the manners of the inhabitants of the country through which I happened to be travelling, I, in every respect, facilitated my tour; and, by adopting their costume, not only flattered their vanity, but found it convenient and agreeable. This will be evident when we remember, that the natives of every clime are taught by experience the dress best calculated to protect them against its influence ; and, certainly, the Circassian costume, besides being elegant, is, in every respect, well suited to the country: the lambswool turban preserved my head from the vertical sun; and by enveloping myself in the ample folds of the chlamyde, and covering my head with the capuchin on the approach of evening, I was protected from the nightly dews so pregnant with ills to the frame of man ; for the dysentery, ophthalmia, and intermittent fever, all have their origin in obstructed perspiration and sudden chills. This remark is more particularly applicable to eastern countries, where, if travellers would but exercise a little common prudence, these and similar diseases so generally fatal to foreigners, might in great part be avoided, or at least rendered more harmless in their consequences.

Thus, perfectly equipped as a Circassian warrior, from the rifle slung across my shoulder to the poniard that hung from my girdle, and mounted upon a splendid horse which cost me the trifling sum of about four pounds (which in England would be worth a hundred), I commenced my journey, accompanied by the captain, to the house of Mahmood Indar Oglou, the chief of the district, some few miles distant. As may be supposed, we were objects of great curiosity to the natives ; consequently, our train soon swelled into

hundreds; and by the time we reached the residence of the prince, we could not have been surrounded by less than a thousand armed men, the greater number on horseback, rending the air with their warlike songs.

To a native of well-governed Europe the aspect of such a multitude of fierce-looking armed men, uncontrolled by police, soldiers, or any other system of civilized nations, was indeed a novel spectacle, and a stranger might reasonably entertain fears for his personal safety, imagining he had fallen into the hands of banditti.

Part 2

CIRCASSIAN LIFE AND CUSTOMS

. . . The usual dress of a Circassian warrior of all classes is a tunic resembling a military Polonaise, without a collar, closely fitted to the body, and descending to the knee, secured around the middle by a leather girdle, ornamented, according to the wealth or fancy of the wearer, with gold or silver, in which are stuck a pair of pistols and a poniard : the latter is a most formidable weapon in close combat; during an attack they hold it in the left hand, and from its breadth and length, reaching to the elbow, it serves every purpose of a shield.

In addition to this, the Circassian is armed with a light gun, slung across the shoulder, and a sabre suspended by a silk cord in the Turkish fashion; attached to the belt is a powderflask, and a small metal box containing flints, steel, gun-screws, oil, and, not infrequently, a small hatchet. Hence, a Circassian, whether on foot, or on horseback, is at all times completely armed. Sometimes he carries a javelin, which he uses with singular dexterity and effect, hurling it to a considerable distance with an aim that never errs. The latter weapon is also used as a rest for the rifle, having a groove at the top expressly for that purpose. Bows and arrows are now very rarely used, except in cases where it is necessary to arm the whole population.

On either side of the breast of the coat are the patron pockets, made of morocco leather, usually containing twenty-four rounds of ball cartridge : these not only add to the military appearance of the soldier, but in some measure protect the breast, and are extremely convenient: a round fur cap, with a crown the same colour as the ammunition pocket, is the covering for the head; and cloth trousers, in the eastern fashion, complete the costume. Princes and nobles are alone entitled to the privilege of wearing red; and the Circassian, like the natives of most other eastern countries, shave the head, and are never seen barefoot. When marching, or on a journey, they always add a cloak made from camel or goat's-hair, with a hood which completely envelopes the whole person - this is called a tchaouka - and no Mackintosh was ever more impenetrable to the rain; rolled up in its thick folds, it forms the only bed during their encampments, and serves, besides, to protect them against the scorching rays of the sun.

. . . Here we met a band of Circassians, who informed us that the chief of the Chipakoua tribe, to whom we were journeying, was absent, with his sons, at a general meeting of the

confederate princes ; but that his cousin, who resided some few leagues further, would be most happy to receive us.

We now took a bridle path through a dense forest, following the ascent of a rapid rivulet, which conducted us over a hill, to another valley, called Dtchianogloti, watered by an insignificant stream. This valley was much more diversified and romantic than that through which we had passed, occasionally forming into a tiny plain, and then into a contracted gorge. It was, also, for the most part, diligently cultivated, and, I was told by the captain, thickly inhabited; not, however, that there was a single human habitation visible, the Circassians having the custom of concealing their dwellings by dense foliage, in order to elude the observation of the enemy.

After travelling through this valley some short distance, we passed into a third, called, as near as I can write it, Neapkheupkhi. Indeed, the whole country seemed to be broken into a succession of mountains, glens, gorges, and valleys. This led us to the residence of a Pchi-Khan, or chief of the second class, who received us most hospitably, and conducted us, with much courtesy, into his little dwelling. Here my host of companions left me, apparently much pleased, for their loud shouts of vo-ri, ra, ka, rebounded from hill to hill, from rock to rock. Thus, I had every reason to feel grateful for my reception, and satisfied with the friendly disposition evinced by the inhabitants towards me.

We were ushered into the apartment reserved for the reception of strangers, where the squire of my host divested me of all my arms, except the poniard, and hung them up on the walls of the rooms already adorned with a vast number, consisting of guns, pistols, sabres, poniards, bows and arrows, and one or two coats of mail, all kept in the highest order, and several richly ornamented with gold, silver, and precious stones.

The room differed little in its appointments from those of the Turks. The floor was covered with a brilliant-coloured carpet ; a divan of red leather, stuffed with hair, surrounded the chamber; and several small tablets, inscribed with verses of the Koran, in the Arabic language, were affixed to the walls. From this circumstance, I inferred that my host professed the Mahometan religion, which induced me to present him my firman, when, like a true believer, he kissed it most reverently, evidently regarding me with high respect, as the possessor of a document so sacred as to have affixed to it the seal of the spiritual chief of all the Osmanlis. However, his acquaintance with the Turkish language was merely confined to a few phrases, and his knowledge of Islamism vague and imperfect.

Our refreshment was served in the Turkish style, consisting of a variety of dishes, separately brought in, upon small round tables, about half a foot high. There could not have been less than from twelve to fifteen. Many would have been much better, had they been less seasoned. They were principally made from poultry, mutton, milk, honey, and fruits, with pastry. But all my entreaties were unavailing to induce our host to share the repast with us; who, according to the custom of this people, remained in the room the whole of the time, in the most courteous manner, anticipating every wish.

During the repast, we were waited upon, in addition to our host, by several female slaves. The drink was a species of mead, and the boza of the Tartars, made from millet, in taste not unlike small beer. The bread was a composition of wheat and maize, of excellent flavour; and, in the pilaff, which was not to be despised, buck-wheat formed a very good substitute for rice. Of course, we had a pewter tray for a tablecloth, wooden bowls for glasses, poniards for carving knives, fingers for forks, and the palms of our hands for spoons: but all these inconveniences, common to the East, were to me but as a feather in the balance, compared with being obliged to sit for an hour on a carpet, cross-legged; and, I assure you, I felt not a little pleasure, when the ceremony was over, to take a ramble through the grounds.

The clustered dwellings of my host, which might be said to resemble a little hamlet, were pleasantly situated, on a rising eminence, sloping down to the banks of a rivulet; and, being surrounded by grounds, divided, with no little judgment, into gardens, orchards, paddocks, meadows, and corn-fields, animated, here and there, with flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, altogether formed a very pretty picture. I could not but admire the judicious arrangement of the granary, supported on short stone pillars, each having attached, a few feet from the ground, a broad circular stone, hollowed in the centre, by means of which it effectually preserves the grain, not only from dampness, but from the attack of any vermin whatsoever.

In this pastoral country, like that of the patriarchs of old, the riches of the Circassians consist in the number of their flocks and herds, to which we may add their wives and children. Those of my host, Ghatkhe Atiokhai, were numerous, and remarkably fine, particularly the horses, the greatest attention being paid by every Circassian to their breed, which are highly esteemed in the neighbouring countries, Russia and Turkey; and I remarked, that the character with which the cattle were branded bore some resemblance to the Grecian alphabet.

During our rambles through the grounds, we found the wives and children of my host, with their slaves, employed at agricultural pursuits, or tending their flocks and herds. Some were engaged in reaping, others in milking the cows; and one fine-looking princess, with the force of an Amazon, was repairing a wooden fence with a hatchet. Among the children, there was a remarkably good-looking, curly-headed boy, and a girl, about eight or nine years of age, who seemed, in an especial degree, to possess the affection of the father. I was just in the act of extolling the beauty of the children, when I was fortunately checked in time by the captain; for though, in Europe, you win the heart of a parent by praising his offspring; yet here, for the same compliment, you are accused of intending to extend over them the malign influence of the evil eye.

The young urchins were not inappropriately named the " Look of a Lion," and the " Speed of a Deer," for the one was playing with the halfwild horses as if they were kittens, while the fair young princess displayed the utmost agility in driving her refractory charge of goats, cows, and buffaloes, to water.

The women of Circassia are not, as in other parts of the East, completely confined to the harem, nor are they altogether obliged to conceal their features with the veil from the observation of the stranger, that article of dress being worn more as a shelter from the sun, when taking the air, and, indoors, as a graceful form of headdress. The wives of my host were habited in a species of white garment, made from camel or goat's hair, which enveloped the whole form. To this was added a muslin veil; and you cannot think how picturesque was the effect when viewed from a distance. The sanctum sanctorum, in which were lodged the women and children, in addition to being enclosed within a wooden fence, was completely concealed from view by the thick foliage of groves of trees. Here are also the sheds for the cattle; the remainder of the cots being either set apart for the reception of strangers, or inhabited by the dependents of the chief. There might have, been altogether about six or seven ; the whole built of hurdles, plastered inside and out, and neatly thatched with reeds and Indian corn leaves. Each cot contained two rooms: the one, with a large fireplace in the centre, appropriated to cooking and domestic purposes, somewhat resembled that of an old English farm-house, having pot-hooks and hangers, while the other answered the double purpose of a sitting-room and dormitory. A chequered mat, of variegated colours, covered the floor; and a divan surrounded three sides of the room: the only additional furniture being a few small tables, about a foot in height, and something resembling a chest of drawers; unless, indeed, we include the saddles, bridles, housings, and weapons, that hung suspended against the walls.

Those occupied by the ladies of the chieftain and their slaves, were furnished in a similar manner; the only additional decoration, I presume by way of ornament, were shelves loaded with glass, china, and bright culinary utensils, made of brass, copper, or glazed pottery, intended more for show than use. There was also a grand display, hanging upon lines across the room, of the various specimens of female industry, such as embroidered napkins, handkerchiefs, veils, and costly dresses, glittering with gold and silver. In one corner was a heap of mattresses, and in another, pillows and coverlets covered with a gay muslin quilt of various colours, but most studiously arranged, so as to shew the ends of each, which were decked with satin, sprigged with gold and silver; and it is but justice to the fair dames to say, that every thing was kept remarkably clean and neat.

Of every part of the dwelling of this primitive people, the little verandah, in fine weather, is the greatest favourite; this is generally furnished with a mat and a bench for a divan. Here the visitor is regaled ; here the improvisatore chants the warlike songs of his nation; the story-teller relates the traditionary tale. Its cool shade offers an agreeable retreat from the burning sun, for taking the noon-day siesta, or for indulging in the delights of the darling tchibouque.

It was beneath the shade of that of my hospitable host, towards the close of the evening, while sipping our coffee and smoking our tehibouques, in company with him and his wives, the fair princesses, Nazeek and Djanteen, who whiffed theirs with as much gusto as a German student, that a young warrior arrived, at the head of a train of young men about his own age, all well armed and mounted upon splendid horses. The young prince, who was remarkable for the symmetry of his athletic form and the frankness and sincerity expressed in his countenance, was introduced to me as the cousin of my host, the son of

one of the Khapsoukhe chiefs called Beitzroukou. His visit was for the double purpose of arranging commercial relations with the captain for a supply of powder and salt, and inviting me to the residence of his father, some twenty leagues distant across the mountains. Accordingly, the next morning we commenced our route long before Aurora made her appearance; and, even thus early, the family of my host had breakfast prepared, similar to the repast I have already described.

A stranger in Circassia, who may be introduced to the ladies of his host, is expected, through courtesy, to present them with some trifling articles for their wardrobe. Aware of this custom, I provided myself, before leaving Trebizond with a variety of trinkets, more showy than valuable, together with a plentiful supply of coloured and white muslin shawls, pins, needles, German silver fire-boxes, &c. Several of which I presented, when taking my departure, to my host and his family. I need hardly say that they were objects of universal admiration, and tended to elevate me in no slight degree in the estimation of the people. Here I also bade adieu for the present to my captain, whose friendly attentions I shall ever remember, and committed myself to the care of the young prince, and his gallant troop.

. . . Notwithstanding our ride was one of the most neck-breaking description, yet these daring mountaineers galloped over it with as much nonchalance, as we should through a stubble-field in England; and, however elevated, yet every spot capable of producing vegetation was covered with the most splendid forest trees., and even, in some fertile patches, we found an Alpine cot, with its half-wild inhabitant tending his goats. It was not till after ascending several thousand feet, that the peculiar character of the Caucasian mountains was developed ; for, however precipitous or rocky the ascent may be, each invariably terminated in a fertile plateau, even at a height of between four and five thousand feet above the level of the sea. This is, perhaps, independent of their well-known bravery and patriotism, the principal cause that every attempt to subdue these people has been hitherto found impracticable ; for, when driven from the plains, they ever found a secure retreat on the mountain tops till they recruited their forces, and then descended to annihilate their enemies.

On the summit of one of these plateaux, where we remained. during the noon-day heat, I found a blooming village, surrounded with orchards and agricultural fields, all extremely fertile, and in a high state of cultivation. I soon ascertained that the inhabitants were a colony of Tartars, who having escaped from Russian oppression at the conquest of the Crimea, had here found a secure asylum,. When I told them, in their native language, that I had recently travelled through Krim-Tartary, these simpleminded people lavished upon me a thousand kind attentions; indeed we had every reason to feel grateful for their hospitality.

Like the Circassians, the Tartars conceal their little dwellings behind embankments or clusters of trees; and, were it not for the numerous herds of cattle grazing in the fields, and the men and women employed at the various works of husbandry, it would be impossible for the traveller to discover that he was in the neighbourhood of a human habitation. I found these Alpine cots to be of the same peculiar form as those I had before

observed while wandering in the remote mountain districts of the Crimea. The roof is always flat; being strongly built, and covered with a layer of gravel, they become perfectly impenetrable to, the rain.

During the summer months, the Tartars are accustomed to furnish the tops of their houses with a divan and carpet, when they are used instead of the interior for taking their meals and receiving the visits of their friends; nor are they less valuable in the autumn, when they serve as a granary, on which to dry their grain and fruits. In the centre of each cot is a large chimney, appropriated to the treble purpose of communicating their wishes to their neighbours, a channel for the smoke to escape, and a window to light the apartment. The vestibule in front is frequently the kitchen; the rooms for the harem being on one side, and the stables for the cattle on the other.

However singular these cots may appear when described, they are nevertheless exceedingly well adapted to the climate, being warm in winter, and cool in summer.

During our ride, we shot several kinds of game, such as wild turkeys, pheasants, hares, and deer, to which I may add jackals, wild cats, and an immense boar. And although the Circassians are unrivalled as marksmen at a stationary object, yet I was infinitely more successful when firing at a bird on the wing, or an animal at full speed : this arises from the bad custom I before alluded to, of using the javelin as a rest for the rifle. The forests appeared to abound with animals of every description. In addition to those I have mentioned, there are wolves, bears, foxes, the lynx, &c.; and, if I have been rightly informed, the inhabitants of the Caucasus are sometimes favoured with a visit from the tiger.

On descending the mountains, sufficient light remained for us to obtain an indistinct glance of the little congregated cottages of the highland prince to whom we were repairing; which, from the palisades in front, and the semicircular rivulet that formed a natural moat as it rushed past, appeared fortified. This, however, was not the case; for the numerous flocks and herds that covered the hills, told more of rural life than feudal vassalage.

Several horses were standing under the verandah, ready saddled; when, on our leader firing his musket, we were presently joined by the old chief and a few of his clansmen, who welcomed me in the most friendly manner to Attaghei, (Circassia, in the language of the natives.) The appearance of the prince was in every respect calculated to excite the attention of a stranger. In his person he was tall and erect, with a beard descending half way to his girdle. His features still handsome, but roughened by long exposure to the weather, wore a mingled expression of good nature, ferocity, and cunning, the effect of a long life of warfare and peril.

Although he had attained the age of seventy, yet he managed his steed with as much ease and grace as any one of the athletic youths that surrounded me. Indeed, he is said still to excel in horsemanship, and all the military exercises of his country; he had only returned, a few days previous to my arrival, from the camp near Soudjouk-Kali, where he

performed prodigies of valour in defending the passes against the advance of the Russian army, and was now preparing his clansmen for a second campaign.

The residence of my host was quite as primitive in its construction as that I before described, the only difference being, that there were a few more detached cottages, and two or three, by way of distinction, were plastered outside with a species of mineral clay, found in the environs, which becomes, from exposure to the weather, exceedingly firm, and has not a bad effect. As to comforts and conveniences, none were visible either in the furniture or the arrangements: the windows, open by day, were simply secured at night from the cold damp by an ill-fitting shutter; and, during the severest weather, a piece of parchment is the substitute for glass.

This total absence of domestic comforts was singularly contrasted with the splendid armour of the men, their gemmed weapons, noble horses, and rich housings; together with the magnificent Oriental costume of the women, who, in their dresses of gold brocade and silvered muslin, resembled so many peacocks proudly strutting about a farm-yard. Still, the traveller arriving at the house of a Circassian chief has no reason to complain. The room appropriated to strangers is always furnished with a divan, pillows, and coverlets: the cheer is, by no means, to be despised; and I do not think that any people ever tendered the cup of refreshment to the weary traveller with more genuine hospitality.

On entering the strangers' apartment, to which the, prince had the courtesy to conduct me himself, his squire, according to the general custom of this people, divested me of the whole of my weapons, and hung them up on the walls of the room with those of his master, except the poniard, which a Circassian never parts with, being considered a part of his costume. How like the warriors of ancient Greece!

And now with friendly force his band he grasped,

Then led him in within his palace halls;

His coat of mail, and glittering helm unclasped,

And hung the splendid armour on the walls;

For there, Ulysses' arms, neglected, dim,

Are left, nor more the conqueror's crown will win.

Part 3

Having partaken of an excellent supper, attended with the same ceremony as before described, two female slaves brought in warm water, when my feet were most carefully washed, this being an essential observance in the forms of Circassian politeness.

Sleeping, I soon found, in Circassia, to be by no means a necessary consequence of going to bed; and, assuredly, if Young had been a native of the East, the world would never have been favoured with his "Night Thoughts;" for, amidst such a din and clatter as now greeted my ears, the author, instead of thinking, must be content to listen; and, should they ever be translated into the Circassian language, the natives will certainly deem the poet crazy. Indeed, nothing but being accustomed to the nocturnal choristers will permit even the most weary to slumber.

Besides the chirping of innumerable insects, the croaking of myriads of frogs, whose united din rung far and wide through the forest, there was another species of this noisy reptile that I never met with, except in the mountains of the Caucasus, and whose note, deep-toned, sonorous, and even musical, was so pitched in alto, as ever to render them the principal performers in the concert.

All this was bad enough: still it might have been borne, had it not been that I was favoured with a visit from the jackal, whose cry was so melancholy, shrill, and fearfully wild, that, when numbers howl in concert, which was, unfortunately for my slumbers, the case, it is sufficient to shake the nerves, even of the most stouthearted, who hears them for the first time.

It is singular that the war-cry of the Circassians is an exact imitation of the howl of this animal; and, when screamed at the same moment by thousands, is the most fearful, unnatural, and intimidating yell, ever uttered by a people in presence of an enemy. The Russian officers assured me, that so paralysing is its effect upon troops who hear it for the first time, that they are rendered incapable of defending themselves.

The following morning, owing to my character for generosity in presenting the women with presents, and my profession of hakkim, the young prince introduced me to his mother and sisters; for these people, as I before remarked, unlike other Orientals, do not rigidly seclude their women in the harem; probably they have followed, in this respect, the example of their neighbours, the Tehernemorsky Cossacks: however, from whatever cause it has resulted, I have frequently seen the women at the public assemblies of the men, particularly those who were unmarried. Still, a married man does not appear in public with his wife; neither does he see her during the day, when it can be avoided. This custom does not originate in any feeling of disrespect for the fair sex, but in ancient usage, and a desire to prolong the reign of love. A similar law was established by Lyeurgus among the Lacedemonians.

But, to return to my visit: having been received most courteously by the princess and her daughters, I made them, in compliance with universal custom, a few trifling presents, which they acknowledged, by giving me an embroidered belt to hold my pistols, and a pair of red Morocco patron pockets,-the work of their own fair hands.

The mother of my young companion, probably between forty and fifty years of age, was sumptuously attired in a blue silk robe, open in the front, confined with silver clasps, and a girdle ornamented with silver; her trousers were very beautiful Turkish muslin, of

variegated colours, and red slippers; on her head she wore a light shawl, partly arranged as a turban, and partly falling, in graceful folds, over her neck and shoulders, completely concealing her hair; over this was thrown a large, thin muslin veil, that nearly enveloped her figure; her dress being completed by an abundant display of gold trinkets, evidently extremely ancient, and, from the workmanship, I should think, Venetian. Her person still retained traces of great beauty.

The attire of her daughters was even more splendid; but, in lieu of the turban, each wore a tiara of red Morocco leather, ornamented with a profusion of small Turkish and Persian gold coins. In other respects their dress was similar, except that the hair of the young dames, instead of falling on the neck in curls, like that of the married women, was arranged in a thick plait, confined at the end by a silver cord, which descended below the waist: their features were as beautifully regular and expressive as those of their mother; yet, it must be confessed that their sallow complexions by no means improved their personal appearance. They were, however, young, still encased in the tight leather corset worn by all Circassian girls, of whatever age, which was, no doubt, the principal cause of their unhealthy appearance.

On a signal being made, the young prince, agreeably to custom, left the room, when one of his wives entered, a princess of the Demirghoi tribe, one of the handsomest women I think I ever beheld. She might be about eighteen: with the most regular features of the Grecian cast; eyes, large and dark; complexion, a clear brown; hands and feet delicately small: and her whole figure admirably moulded. She was dressed in a similar style to that of the elder princess, except that it was more tasteful, and studied with no small degree of coquetry: her fine dark hair hung in tresses on her shoulders.

Indeed, the finest women I saw in Circassia, were the young and married; for, being divested of the leather confinement, their forms had expanded into all the luxuriance of womanhood. At first sight, we might be inclined to think there was an undue share of embonpoint in the figure; but this is caused more from the custom of wearing wide Oriental trousers, than any defect of nature. In short, beauty of feature, and symmetry of form, for which this people are celebrated, is no chimera (and some of the finest statues of the ancients do not display, in their proportions, greater perfection); but, it is the singular degree of animation in the eye, so generally observable, that most arrests attention: when this is exhibited in a high degree in the men, it gives an expression of great ferocity to the countenance; and, when we see a warrior, mounted on his fiery steed, armed and equipped for battle, brandishing his scimitar in the air, bending, turning, and stopping at full gallop, with unequalled agility and grace of action, he realizes every idea of Homer's Hector.

The complexion of both sexes is far more ruddy and fresh than might be expected in such, a latitude. In that of the women, delicately so, who, aware, like their sex in Europe, of the advantage, of a pretty person, use every artificial means-, by cosmetics, &c., to improve their beauty. Still, the traveller who may read my account, and expects to find the whole population such as I have described, will be woefully disappointed, should he find himself, on arriving in Circassia, surrounded by a tribe of Nogay Tartars, Calmucks,

Turcomans, or even the Lesghi. The latter, however, a fine warlike race, are nearly equal, in personal appearance, to the Circassians, but more ferocious in character, and less refined in manners. The Caucasian valleys having been, in all ages, the asylum of those who fled from oppression in the neighbouring countries, we everywhere find tribes differing from each other in appearance, customs, and manners. Still, as the Circassian men never intermarry with any other race than their own, they preserve their lineage uncontaminated, a father paying more attention to the beauty of feature and form in a wife for his son, than any other consideration; and, if I have been rightly informed, a prince, or usden, never sells his daughter, except to one of his own nation and rank.

My first impression at Pitzounda, on seeing a number of Caucasians together, was, that they were decidedly of Grecian origin. This, however, I found, did not correspond with the general physical character of the people, as I advanced into the interior of the country, there being a greater proportion with the small aquiline nose, and fine arched eyebrow, than any other. This remark may be more particularly applied to that powerful tribe, called the Nottakhaitzii, celebrated as being the bravest, handsomest, and purest race among the Circassians; and who still preserve the tradition that their ancestors came from beyond the seas. Were it not that we are ascending into the regions of fable, we might almost suppose them to be descended from a remnant of the Trojans.

I found the princess and her daughters employed at embroidery. This refined accomplishment does not, however, occupy a large portion of the time of the women of the Caucasus; and those of my host, like the princesses of old, occasionally employed themselves in spinning wool and flax: their fair hands not only made the clothes for their families, down to the very shoes. but plaited camels' and goats' hair into mantles, made cushions for the saddle, housings for the horse, and sheaths for swords and poniards. Nor were they less expert in the art of cookery or the management of the dairy; and sometimes even displayed their agricultural skill in the fields, the whole wardrobe of finery being reserved for visits of ceremony.

My host was equally industrious; for, besides building, with his own princely hands, the little cottages he occupied, he was his own carpenter, tanner, and weaver, mounted his pistols and guns, manufactured his inimitable bows and arrows; and, like old King Priam, in conjunction with his princely boys, tilled the land, and tended his flocks and herds in the mountains; and, when the wintry snow rendered his occupations in the open air no longer agreeable, he made mats of great beauty, which find a ready sale in Turkey and Persia. Nor was this his only employment: he cast bullets, made gunpowder; and, if these were not sufficient to fill up his time, he smoked his tehibouque.

There is no regular body of artificers and mechanics in Circassia, except the cutlers, armourers, and goldsmiths, who fabricate and mount the weapons with gold, silver, and precious stones; in which they exhibit much elegance and taste. I often admired the beauty of the designs traced on their swords and poniards; while the excellence of the temper they give them cannot be surpassed: nor yet their ingenious method of inlaying their guns and little tables with mother-of-pearl. Their brass chain-armour, and some of their weapons, are obtained from Persia and Turkey.

The art of preparing gunpowder, which, it appears, has been known in the Caucasus from time immemorial, is, with them, extremely simple: they merely boil the efflorescence of nitrate of potass in a strong lye of birch and poplar ashes, when it is left to crystallize, then pulverised with two parts of sulphur, and the same quantity of charcoal. After the mixture has been wetted, it is put into a caldron, and placed over a slow fire, till it begins to granulate.

IN TIME OF WAR

. . . they are the best guerilla soldiers in the world, and, above all, that they have hitherto resisted every attempt to betray their country for gold, or jewelled poniards.

During a campaign, difference of rank seems to cause no distinction between them the chief fares no better than his clansman; a bag of millet, here called adjikha, and a leathern bottle full of skhou, a species of sour milk, forming the stock of provisions ; and the mantle (tehaouko), both tent and bed. A Circassian never complains that he cannot march for want of shoes, nor subsist for want of provisions; for, if the bag of adjikha and bottle of skhou fail, the rifle will procure him a dinner so long as a bird flies in the air, or a wild beast roams in the woods.

Inured to what we call hardships from their infancy, and practising abstinence in a high degree, which is here considered a virtue, they bear all the fatigues of war, not, only without repining, but cheerfulness. To give you an idea of their desperate valour, the Russian officers assured me, that a Circassian warrior never surrenders, combating while a spark of life remains, even with a host of enemies, it being only when powerless from wounds that he can be taken to grace the triumph of the conqueror; and, if my space would allow, I could relate anecdotes of the heroism and valour of this people, perhaps unparalleled in the history of any other. Even during my short stay in the camp, I witnessed exploits that would do no discredit to the pages of romance.

To all this bravery we may add, that they possess quite as much cunning, it being absolutely impossible to overreach them: an enemy can never calculate upon their movements, for, appearing as if endowed with ubiquity, they are found now in one place, and then in another, and even creep, like a snake, in the grass, and surprise the sentinel on duty at the gates of the fortress : in short, every tree, crag, and shrub, serves a Circassian as an ambuscade.

In cases of extreme danger, watch-fires, corresponding with each other, like telegraphs, are lighted upon the hills, which the Circassians no sooner behold, than each man seizes his arms, mounts his horse, always ready saddled at his door, and gallops to the chief of his clan.

Nothing short of actual representation can convey any adequate idea of the impetuosity of a Circassian charge ; to the very bravest European troops it must be absolutely terrific, being executed literally with the rapidity of lightning, accompanied with a frightful war-

cry, resembling, as I before observed, the scream of a jackal : such also is the admirable training of horse and rider, that I daily witness feats of horsemanship, even by the meanest soldier, far superior in dramatic effect to any public equestrian exhibition I ever beheld in Europe, appearing almost impossible for the human body to execute. For instance, a Circassian warrior will spring front his saddle to the earth, plunge his dagger into the breast of the horse of his enemy, again vault into the saddle; then stand erect, strike his adversary, or hit a mark, almost at a hair's breadth, with his light gun: and all this while his horse is proceeding at full gallop.

But the finest exhibition you can possibly imagine of this description of warfare, is a single combat between one of these fine fellows and a Tchernemorsky Cossack, the only cavalry soldier in the Russian army at all capable of maintaining his ground against such a formidable foe, who, nevertheless, in the end almost invariably falls a victim to the superior prowess and agility of the Circassian. These combats are usually conducted with all the forms of a duel, and, to the honour of both armies, the strictest neutrality is observed.

I did not myself see any of these chivalrous duels; but a Russian officer, on whose veracity I could place the strictest reliance, and who had witnessed several, supplied me with the following particulars : -

"The combatants usually commence the attack at full gallop with the light musket; but so well trained are both, that the first fire rarely takes effect, as they either jump from the saddle. or throw themselves on one side in order to avoid it. Sometimes they reserve their charge, till like a snake darting upon its prey, each party watches a favourable moment, while his adversary is off his guard, to fire. At another time, when at full gallop, their swords meet with a tremendous crash, they then turn quickly round, and the death-struggle commences, in which one or other is almost certain to fall."

If a horse is killed it matters not to a Circassian, owing to the admirable custom of having the whole of his weapons attached to his person; and his agility is such, that he generally avoids every attempt to cut him down unless overpowered by numbers. Even the dangerous position of being without his horse he does not fail to turn to advantage, as he frequently springs like a tiger upon the horse of his opponent, and hurls the rider to the dust.

These solitary combatants are gradually followed by their comrades until the whole body is engaged. Generally speaking, the Circassians never follow up an attack. -their mode of fighting being, after a furious onset, to vanish like lightning into the woods, when they carry with them their killed and wounded; and it is only while engaged in this pious office, to which they affix a religious character, that the Russians have a chance of obtaining any material advantage, except, indeed, when cannon-the horror of the mountaineers - can be brought to play against them. On the other hand, however, should the ranks of the Russian troops become disordered, they are literally hewed to pieces in a few minutes.

From the commencement of my introduction to the chiefs, I positively objected taking any part in the warfare, declaring upon every occasion I was a peaceable hakkim, and that my visit was purely one of curiosity. Besides, however much I might condemn the ambitious views of the Russian government, and denounce its selfish policy, I had abundant reason to esteem many of the people individually. Add to this, I was personally acquainted with several of the officers on duty in the neighbouring fortresses. How then could I lift my hand against them, or be in any way instrumental to their destruction ?

Nevertheless, during my short stay at the camp, curiosity induced me more than once to accompany the prince in his reconnoitring expeditions ; but a Circassian reconnoissance is somewhat too daring not to be attended with considerable danger, and in one we found ourselves with merely a few followers in the valley of Soudjouk, completely surrounded by an overwhelming force of Tehernemorsky Cossacks, who had posted themselves, like a regiment of frogs, in the long reeds and sedges on the banks of a river. Fortunately, the vigilance of the clansmen of our chief had not slept ; for, on perceiving our danger at a distance, they flew to our assistance, otherwise we should probably have fared badly; as it was, we had several of our men wounded, and lost three horses. For myself, I was indebted to the admirable custom of wearing the patron pockets on the breast of the coat, for my preservation, at least, from a bad wound, a pistol-shot having completely shattered one of its metal tubes filled with bullets, leaving no other bad effects than a slight contusion.

On our return to the camp, we remained a day or two at the house of another chieftain, Aitek Teherei, one of the princes of a small tribe called Demirghoi. I was received, as usual, into the guest-house, standing, like a little palace, in the midst of a number of small cottages appropriated to the use of the proprietor, his family, and slaves, together with extensive barns and stables for his cattle, corn, &c. These were built, according to their custom, of the most frail materials, that in case of a necessity arising to destroy them, the loss might be trifling; and, as the weather is delightfully genial in these valleys throughout the year, it is hardly necessary that their habitations should be more substantially built. The room I now entered, appropriated to the reception of guests, was much more neat and comfortable than those I have described while travelling in Upper Abasia: the floor was covered with a beautiful chequered matting; the little table ingeniously inlaid with mother-of-pearl; and the cushions and pillows were all that could be wished. In fact, the manner of living of the tribes inhabiting this part of the country very much resembled that of their neighbours, the Cossacks, except that we were obliged to use our poniards for knives, and fingers for forks.

In addition to the bak-siina, a drink not unlike the bouza of the Turks, we had souate (wine) of excellent flavour, resembling Champagne; and if better made, it might rank among the best wines in the world. There was also sooui, a species of mead, and a spirit distilled from corn, which they learned the art of making from the Cossacks; but as they are a most abstemious people, it is never made use of except as a medicine, or when guests are present.

Here I was made acquainted with their manner of procuring sugar, which is derived from the walnut tree, that flourishes here in extraordinary perfection. During spring, just as the sap is rising, the trunk is pierced, and a spigot left in it for some time, when this is withdrawn, a clear sweet liquor flows out, which is left to coagulate; and on some occasions they refine it. For diseases of the lungs, and general debility, they consider it a most valuable medicine. Clarified honey, bleached in the sun, till it becomes quite white, is another substitute for sugar.

Pilaw here, as well as in Turkey, forms the principal article of food; and is preferable to any other for a traveller in the East, not only as being the most palatable and nutritious, but the most easy to digest. Of this I can speak from experience; for I always selected it in preference to every other food made either with rice or buck-wheat. The latter grain is by no means a bad substitute for rice; and I certainly attribute the uninterrupted good health I enjoyed, in countries so generally fatal to Europeans, entirely to my abstemiousness, and to conforming, as much as possible, to the mode of living practised by the natives, particularly while en route . . .

The coup d'oeil exhibited around the house of the prince, was extremely picturesque, and peculiarly characteristic of the warlike habits of this people. The greatest part of the population were, as usual, engaged in every species of military exercise; and when you see a troop of these daring fellows scouring the sides of the hills and valleys on their long-tailed steeds, their gaudy trappings, glittering with silver and glass beads, together with the jewelled ornaments of their weapons, reflected in the sun, you have a picture at once as novel as it is interesting. However much you may offend a Circassian by praising the beauty of his wife or child, for fear of shedding over them the malignity of the evil eye, still, singular as it may appear, you cannot too much praise or admire his horse; and I must say that they sometimes dress out their dumb favourite bizarre enough: besides the tinselled toys that we see hanging down from the red cloth trappings, there is a wreath of many-coloured glass beads and ribands around the neck, and not unfrequently a bunch of flowers attached to each side of the head.

The chief himself mingled among his clansmen with the most perfect familiarity, little or no distinction being observable in his dress and appearance, with the exception of his jewelled poniard; and also that he exhibited, like most of the Circassian chiefs, a decided physical superiority; and from the circumstance that they speak a different dialect of the Circassian, they would appear to be a distinct race. Notwithstanding this familiarity, characteristic of all the chiefs, whenever they preside over any public business, however unimportant, they assume an air of great gravity; and their clansmen stand before them as if in the presence of the most despotic sovereign in Europe. This austerity of manner is however instantly relaxed when the assembly is dissolved, and the multitude render their princes or elders no higher courtesy than they would to the humblest of their brethren.

The most trivial amusements of this people, even dancing, partake of a warlike character; generally representing pantomimic fights: and not only are the mere children habited in military costume, but the fair dames frequently carry a dagger and a brace of pistols in the girdle.

Of the men now present, numbers were armed with Russian muskets, which had been principally taken during the summer's campaign, together with those found in the Russian corvette, captured some months previous, during the terrific gale of July, the effects of which I experienced myself, while coasting off the shores of Mingrelia, in company with Count Worrenzow. It appears, the corvette, having become unmanageable, the captain was obliged to cast anchor near the little bay of Soutcha, in the possession of the Circassians; when, on perceiving it, one of these daring fellows actually swam out, regardless of the boisterous element, and cut the cable, when she imperceptibly drifted ashore: she was then immediately boarded, the whole of the crew made prisoners, and the vessel, after being completely pillaged, burnt. This exploit is referred to with great pleasure by the Circassians: the booty must have been considerable, for, in the hopes of obtaining a similar prize, numbers, on the look-out, have taken up their quarters, day and night, in the clefts of the rocks near the coast.

Having become by this time, through the unremitting kindness of my Konak, more intimately acquainted with the people, I mingled with them more in the character of a native than a stranger. It is inconceivable how far you may gain upon the friendship of a people, however uncivilized, and allay their suspicion, by adopting their costume and conforming to their habits and manners. This proved the means of developing to my observation many little traits in the national character, to which I should otherwise have been a stranger. I enjoyed the cup of hospitality, divested of etiquette; for the Circassians are, perhaps, the most ceremonious people existing in their deportment towards a visitor; and, with the exception of sleeping *al fresco*, with a mat for my bed and a saddle for my pillow, more frequently than was agreeable, I passed my time pleasantly enough.

The Circassians being a lively animated people, they are, as you may suppose, no strangers to music and dancing; albeit, their progress in these arts has been, it must be confessed, rather limited. The most common musical instruments I observed among them, were the two-stringed lyre and a sort of pipe: the latter is sometimes made of silver, or any other metal, and, not unfrequently, from the large canes that grow in the marshes near the Kouban. The form is not less curious than the mode of playing on it, and the sounds it produces. The length is about two feet, with only three finger-holes at the lower extremity; and the mouth-piece, projecting about an inch in length, being open at each side, the performer presses it against the roof of his mouth, when it gives forth sounds similar to those of a bagpipe. Sometimes I have seen them play a sort of march on two of these at the same time, which was by no means disagreeable to the ear.

I have also observed the harp in use, but it is not national, neither is the drum, nor the tambourine; the performers on these instruments being generally wandering Calmucks, or gipsies.

I was much pleased with the originality of the Circassian melodies; and the music, when compared with that of the Tartars and Turks, is harmonious enough. Their *ka-ri-ra*, a boat song, chanted by the whole population, is admirable; also a sort of march, performed on the pipe: but their greatest favourites are the war songs., generally sung in chorus while

marching, when the woods and mountains re-echo the martial strain, and the enthusiasm of the people is excited to a degree only found in an eastern clime. Their songs usually refer to some victory obtained over the Cossacks or the fana Moscov; or are expressive of an animated call to battle . . .

Part 4

ANCIENT TOMBS

In my letters from Circassia, I do not pretend to give you detailed descriptions, but simply such things as I had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with, either from personal observation, or through the information of, now and then, a Pole, a Russian slave, or an Armenian; and, as my notes were taken in haste, and always by stealth, to avoid the imputation of being considered a spy, they are not written with that accuracy, as to names and places, that I could wish.

Notwithstanding I avoided, as much as possible, giving the people any cause to doubt my good intentions towards them and their cause, I did not altogether escape distrust; for, whenever a mouldering ruin, or a tumulus, excited my curiosity, their suspicion was instantly aroused, it being supposed I was in search of hidden treasures; for, in their opinion, what other motive could induce a man to be interested about a few old bricks and broken pillars ?

While wandering through the valleys, I frequently found tumuli, similar to those of Krim Tartary, except that here they are more varied in their form, and of larger dimensions; sometimes composed of earth, resembling beautiful green hills; sometimes girt by a stone wall, and sometimes nothing better than a vast heap of loose stones; and, to give you an idea of their great antiquity, I have generally found them crowned by a majestic oak, which, to judge from the parent stem, must have been at least a descendant of the third or fourth generation. The traditions of the natives give no other explanation, as to their origin and purport, than that they were the burial places of the people who occupied the country previous to themselves, and that it was only distinguished warriors who were entitled to such a sepulchre: however, most certain it is, they have no feature in common with those of the Circassians of the present day, whose mode of interment only differs from that of the Turks in the single circumstance that the grave of the warrior chief is generally covered either with a wooden roof, or a large stone slab, intended to shelter the wanderer alike from the tempest and the burning rays of the sun. The only indication we have of the sort of people that inhabited the Caucasus in days of old, is, now and then, an antique statue of common stone, rudely carved, representing a human figure, of either sex, with a large head, flat breast, short neck, broad face, high cheek bones, and flat nose, exactly like a Calmuck; and the head-dress is precisely similar to that worn by a Calmuck woman of the present day.

Being extremely desirous of opening a tumulus, I at length, after repeated solicitations, obtained the consent of my Konak; but, alas! not a single Circassian could be prevailed upon to assist in so dreadful an enterprise as to invade the rights of the demon that

guarded the treasure, consequently, I was obliged to resign every hope of gratifying my curiosity. To this singular superstition, so prevalent, also, among the Turks and Tartars, we may principally attribute the circumstance that the tumuli of these countries have been left to the present day unmolested.

I had, however, the pleasure of descending into the interior of one, during my rambles on the coast, near Soudjouk Kale. To judge from its appearance, and the age of the trees that had sprung up on the excavated earth in the vicinity, it must have been opened some centuries ago, most probably by the Genoese. On examination, I discovered a few fragments of unglazed terra cotta vases, containing charcoal and earth, remarkable neither for beauty of design nor elegance of form. There were also strewn about several pieces of white sea-weed, of the same species as that I had seen in the tumuli of Krim-Tartary. Nevertheless, the interior of this differed not only from those of that country in the construction-in the vases being less beautiful, but in the circumstance that the entrance was placed due east; probably originating in a superstitious feeling of the people for the glorious luminary of day. Whether this arose from accident or intention, I cannot determine; it may, nevertheless, serve as a guide to future travellers in their research.

The interior consisted of a large arched vault, built of cut stone, united without cement; and, from the skill displayed in the construction, and the admirable turn of the arch, there was sufficient evidence to prove that it must have been the work of a people far advanced in the arts of civilized life. That they were a people wealthy and powerful, is equally apparent; for who can behold one of those mountains, raised to immortalise the memory of the illustrious dead, without being astonished at the prodigious labour and enormous expense that must have been incurred in erecting one? And what monument could any people raise to the memory of their forefathers so simple and enduring? for while the vast and sumptuous edifice, the triumphal arch, even the gigantic pyramid, have crumbled, and continue crumbling, into dust, these alone have remained unchanged for ages, and will continue to the end of time; appearing as if left to mark the path of the first inhabitants of the earth, as they passed onward from the East to people the more distant parts of the globe. Do we not find similar erections in various parts of Europe (although of diminished size and magnificence), particularly in Hungary, Russia, Poland, Germany, and on to the snowy regions of Lapland?

It would appear as if the Caucasus had been occupied for successive ages by a pastoral people, few or no remains existing to prove that it was at any period inhabited by a great and powerful nation: for, with the exception of the tumuli and the ruins of a few churches and monasteries on the coast, erected by the ancient Christians, there is no vestige of antiquity, to guide the traveller as to the history of the country in past ages.

It is true the natives, while tilling the land, frequently discover gold and silver coins, belonging to the kings of the Bosphorus, and other Grecian colonists; still this affords no ground for believing that the country, at any time, belonged to them, for we find the inhabitants of the Caucasus, from the earliest epochs of history, defending the passes of their country against the arms of the most powerful nations with the same obstinacy as they now do against the inroads of the Russians. Here Alexander the Great was arrested

in his progress; and here the march of Mithridates, with his numerous legions, was disputed, with fearful loss; and, at length, it was only by paving his path with gold, in the form of presents to the chiefs, that he was allowed to proceed. Besides, the natives take good care that we should know as little as possible of their country ; for should a coin fall into their hands, they either melt it down, or destroy the effigy: in the latter case, it serves as an ornament for the women and children. This is done with the intention of obliterating every trace of the original inhabitants of the country, whose descendants they fear might come and claim the land if they could trace its possession to their forefathers . . .

From the first moment I entered the valleys of the Caucasus, the aspect of the country and the population far surpassed my most sanguine expectations. Instead of finding it a mountain desert inhabited by hordes of savages, it proved to be, for the most part, a succession of fertile valleys and cultivated hills : the inhabitants every where overwhelmed me with their forms of etiquette, and the observances of Eastern politeness ; while at the same time, their good nature, frankness of manners, open sincerity, and unbounded hospitality, imperceptibly enlisted me in their favour, till, at length, I became as anxious for their future welfare, and final triumph, as if I had been personally interested in their fate: and how little, poor people, were they conscious, while accusing me of being a spy, and writing incantations, that I was penning remarks on their country, every line of which advocated their cause !

CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE

Although I cannot cite the little cots of the mountaineers as models of beauty or taste, nor their skill in agriculture as worthy of imitation, or the arrangements of their farm yards or houses as examples of domestic economy, it was impossible to look on the charming landscape around me without admiration, particularly when we remember the peculiar state of the country, and that nearly the whole of my excursions lay through that part of the Caucasus in the immediate vicinity of the most formidable line of Russian operations. There was hardly an uncultivated spot to be seen; immense herds of goats, sheep, horses, and oxen, as if in the midst of peace, were browsing in every direction among herbage which could not be exceeded in luxuriance. Yet, however lovely it might be, I did not see the country, during my second visit to Circassia, when its charms are most fully developed ; for, it being now the decline of the year, the fields were partially robbed of their beauty, the trees of their fruit, and the leaves of the rich verdure of summer.

In truth, these provinces are so richly favoured by nature, that the inhabitants have abundant reason to be contented. The climate is favourable; the soil, like that of Mingrelia, rich, and adapted to every species of grain, particularly to the cultivation of tobacco, cotton, rice, and even indigo. The saffron, of the same species as the crocus ang., but superior in strength, grows wild in the valleys ; and the plants of the green houses of Europe are the common flowers of the field. The mountains are covered with the finest oak; and that valuable tree, the valonia. is found every where. Besides the usual trees of the forest. beech, ash, elm, &c., all the fruit trees common to Europe attain here the highest perfection; and I never saw the linden, <In no other country is this tree of such general utility : its wide-spreading foliage adorns their hamlets ; its aromatic flowers

provide honey for their bees, and a tisane for themselves when unwell ; its bark is made into sandals, baskets, mats, coverings for their cots :-in short, it serves a hundred purposes> cherry, and chestnut, equalled in magnitude ; which may also be said of the plane, and the yew: the latter grows to an immense size, and from the colour and veins of the timber, might replace mahogany with advantage : and such is the abundance and large dimensions of the box, that it would afford a supply for all the wood engravers of Europe during centuries. Among the most beautiful, and by no means the rarest tree, and for which I am unable to find a European appellation, is that called by the natives, outchelia ; the wood is of a deep rose colour, and the grain being close, variegated, and susceptible of a high polish, it might be rendered available for every species of ornamental furniture.

Owing to the number of plants of every species, that creep from tree to tree, here forming a leafy bower, and there a tangled wall, it is impossible to penetrate these virgin forests, unless a passage is hewn out with the hatchet; for which purpose, every Circassian carries one in his belt. The wide spreading foliage of the alder and willow, with the raspberry, blackberry, and other blooming shrubs, as underwood, adorn the banks of the rivers ; while the variegated blossoms of the pomegranate, and a hundred other beautiful fruit trees, give variety to the many tinted foliage of the forest.

At every step our admiration is excited, on beholding vines of the most incredible size, encircling the highest trees loaded with the clustering grape, the broad leaves so completely enveloping the trees, that we are often unable to divine their species ; nor is this luxuriant vegetation confined to the forest, as cotton is frequently seen growing wild on the prairies, and grain of every kind, with flax and hemp, in the valleys. Here, indeed, the husbandman is certain of being rewarded for his labour; and he has no fear that his crop will suffer from the caprice of the season, as if bounteous nature were determined that every want of man should be supplied . . .

The mountaineers of the Caucasus are perhaps the most original people existing, still preserving many of the customs that distinguished the patriarch of old. In strict accordance with the command of Moses to the Israelites, the husbandman never fails to leave a little uncut corn, for the purpose of feeding the fowls of the air. Their manner of threshing is also still the same as that of the earliest inhabitants of the earth. This process is performed on a little circular paddock, shorn of its grass, and properly hardened ; when half a dozen horses, or more, attached to a pole, are made to perform the circuit in full gallop ; and it is incredible in what a short space of time they get through a heap of corn : the straw, however, is good for nothing, except as fodder for the cattle.

Their mills for grinding corn, usually termed horse-mills, are equally primitive, being situated under the earth, with a wheel at the top, which is turned by a horse : the man who brings corn to grind must also bring a horse to turn the wheel ; and, as there is no money in circulation, they pay the owner for the use of his mill in grain. The lighter seeds, such as millet (the favourite food of a Circassian), is generally ground by the women, at home, with the common hand-mill.

The granary of a Circassian in those districts, most liable to the ravages of war, however singular its form, is, nevertheless, admirably adapted for a country, like this, exposed to the continual devastations of the enemy, independently of the advantages that it preserves the grain for years, both from damp and vermin. For this purpose, a pit is dug in the earth of such a size as may be required, the mouth being only sufficiently wide to allow a man to enter, after a fire has rendered it perfectly dry; hay is placed at the bottom and round the sides, to protect the corn from damp; the top is covered with boards, and finally with earth, over which the grass soon grows; consequently, it is impossible for any one, save the man who buried it, to point out the spot where the treasure lies concealed. Hence an enemy may be encamped on the very ground which contains abundance, and yet be starving for the want of provisions.

The rearing of flocks and herds, particularly horses, is the occupation in which these people take the greatest interest; for a rich Circassian, like a patriarch of old, values himself upon the excellence and number of his flocks and herds; to which we may add, his wives and children. Their oxen are remarkably fine, of the same dun colour and eastern breed as those we see in Hungary ; and their sheep (also eastern) have been, of late years, considerably improved by those of their neighbours, the Cossacks. Numbers of buffaloes wallow in the marshes and rivers, and goats browse on the hills; the latter are some of the largest, with the longest hair, and finest limbs, I ever beheld.

The horse, here termed chii, the special favourite of every Circassian, for strength of limb, beauty of form, and fleetness, cannot be exceeded by that of any other country, not even the far famed Arabian, or English racer; and I doubt much whether any other could, from the force of long habit, and the nature of the country, bear the same fatigue, and scramble with the same sure-footedness up the craggy rocks, and down the steep glens. Nothing can be more simple than their method of breaking in a horse; he is first secured with the lasso, which is itself a feat of no common danger, the herd being generally left to roam half wild through the woods. The Circassian then commences by tying his neck with a halter, so tight that it almost appears as if strangulation were intended : in this state he is pulled about till nearly exhausted, or at least till considered thoroughly subdued ; and after being rode for some time, becomes, in a few days, as tractable and attached to his master as a spaniel dog.

Perhaps in no country in the world is a horse better treated than in this ; neither is there any people who understand better how to manage him. The great secret appears to be kindness; he is never beaten; consequently, his spirit remains unbroken, and affection for his master undiminished. Swimming, together with all the guerilla evolutions, in which he is to be an actor, are among his accomplishments; and in process of time he becomes as cunning and expert in eluding pursuit as a human being. I have frequently seen one lying at the feet of his master, when in ambush, perfectly quiet, or submitting without resistance to have his head adopted as a rest for the rifle.

In short I might fill a letter in describing the various traits exhibited by these interesting animals, and the facility with which they may be taught whatever is desired. To this end, a Circassian horse is tutored to understand every sentence addressed to him; and however

far we may be advanced in the various arts and accomplishments of civilised life, yet we are considerably behind these people, not only in the management of horses, but in humane consideration for them, and from whom our grooms might take a lesson with great advantage. How little, then, are we acquainted with the degree to which this noble animal is capable of being educated and improved! There is none less vicious, none more sensible of good treatment, and none more endearing in its affections. Those that are brought up in the farmyard while young, are so gentle, as to be the playmates of children; and when fit for the saddle, they allow themselves to be broke in, without it being necessary to have recourse to scarcely any violence.

Previous to the war with Russia, the Circassians were accustomed to season the food of their cattle very plentifully with salt; but now, in consequence of the strict blockade maintained on their coasts, they are prevented from receiving the necessary supply of this most valuable article, which they were in the habit of procuring from the Turks. The mutton and beef are excellent; and the lamb, like that of the Crimea, delicious. Every village abounds with dogs, similar in appearance to those of our shepherds; to which we may add greyhounds, coursing being one of the popular amusements of the people: for this, the fine large hares certainly offer a strong temptation, some of them weighing even twenty pounds.

The winged creation are most abundant, including wild turkeys, woodcocks, partridges, quails, and snipes : of the latter I reckoned four different species; but, notwithstanding the vicinity of the Phase, the original country of the pheasant, strange to say, I saw but very few in the Caucasus. Swans, wild geese, and every other description of aquatic bird, haunt, in vast numbers, the rivers and marshes; consequently, he who is supplied with ammunition, and can use a rifle, it is his own fault if he goes to bed without a supper.

The boar and noble deer are also very abundant ; the latter are frequently brought up, tame, when they may be seen Gambolling about in nearly every farmyard in the country. Of the wild animals, the jackal is the most numerous ; he is about the size of a fox hound. with a fine bushy tail reaching to the ground, lank, sharpheaded, and exceeding swift and timid. The suroke, suslik, and jerboa, abound here, as in the Crimea. There are also various species of moles ; that called the slepez, first discovered on the steppe, in Krim-Tartary, is also a native of the low grounds in the Caucasus ; they are, however, here, larger in size, and more ferocious. It is, in every respect, like the common mole, with the exception of the head, which is flat and broad, like that of an otter; and being armed with the most formidable tusks, it is rendered for so small an animal, a dangerous foe ; and its courage is such, that when marching in numbers, they rarely deviate from their path, but bite and tear every thing they encounter. The wolf, vulture, and eagle, may be said to be the only enemies the shepherd has to contend against ; the latter attains a fearful size. Bears are not numerous; and, with the exception of the scolopendra morsitans, various species of the tarantula and scorpion, there are scarcely any venomous reptiles in the country.

The general food of the Circassians differs little from that of the Tartars who inhabit the mountainous parts of the Crimea; mutton, kid, fowls, rice, buck-wheat, millet, dried

fruits, and honey, form the principal ingredients of the cuisine. Fish, notwithstanding it abounds in the Euxine, and in the rivers of the country, I never found served at their tables. Almost every species of game is eaten, except the boar and porcupine; and, like the Turks, they are accustomed to season their meat somewhat too plentifully with capsicums. The quantity of raw cucumbers consumed by the whole population is astonishing: they may be seen eating them during the whole day. Unlike ours, the rind is perfectly white; and although they grow to a prodigious size and length, yet they retain all the crispness and flavour peculiar to a young cucumber. During the summer, quantities are collected and preserved in salt for the winter, in the same manner as the Germans do saur-kraut.

The tendrils and young fruit of the pumpkin are also much in demand. These are boiled and eaten with butter, salt, and capsicums. I frequently partook of this vegetable, when I found it by no means despicable. Wild asparagus, carrot, and the leaves of the dandelion, are held in high estimation. The honey is indebted for its very superior quality and flavour, to the wild thyme, and other aromatic flowers of the mountains, upon which the bees feed; and forms a most important article in the husbandry and cuisine of a Circassian. It is not only eaten in the comb, but used in a great variety of dishes. Their mode of keeping the bees is extremely simple: sometimes a hive is plaited together from the bark of the linden, into a cylinder-like form, of six or seven inches in diameter; but, most generally, the bark of a young tree is preferred, the extremities of which are closed up, and placed horizontally in piles upon each other. When detaching the bees from the hive, they use a little burned straw instead of sulphur.

Wines, spirituous liquors, even the boza of the Tartars and Turks, called here bak-sima, is rarely used by the Circassians, their favourite beverage being the skhou; a species of sour-milk peculiar to the East, and which I found to be a most healthy, refreshing, and agreeable beverage, during my travels in these countries. Fresh milk (sezend) is never used by the Circassians, being considered unwholesome, and certain to originate fevers: hence they are accustomed to boil it every morning and evening after the cows are milked, and, when cool, mixing with it a little of the old skhou. In three or four hours afterwards it becomes thick, and fit for use; and, when flavoured with a little rosewater and sugar, or indeed in any form whatever, it is a most grateful and refreshing drink. Even now, I recall with gratitude the deliciously cool draught, which I frequently drank while suffering from a heat of at least 40 degrees of Reaumur.

It is worthy of remark, that the skbou alone gives to the milk that peculiarly agreeable taste which we find in the East; and preserves it, during the hottest weather, in a fit state for drinking. From whence the skhou had its origin, is a matter of great contention among the people of the East. The Turks and Tartars, who call it yaourte, say, in accordance with their traditions, that the Almighty himself revealed the knowledge of its use to Abraham, who transmitted the art of preparing it to posterity while the Circassians, and, I believe, the Arabs, contend that Hagar, when driven from the house of her lord, and fainting with heat and thirst in the desert, was presented by angels with a cup of the Oriental nectar: from which time it has been preserved to the present day, as a corrective to the milk. however, be this as it may, the skhou constitutes the principal article in the food of a

Circassian : boiled with millet, or maize, it forms his breakfast; while his pilaff, at noon, and evening meal, are alike mixed with it. During winter, that the supply should be unfailling, it is preserved in tubs, with a little salt, when it forms a consistency like curd.

Next to skhou, the article of food most necessary to these primitive people, is millet, without which, and a bottle of their favourite beverage, no Circassian ever leaves home; and, as flint and steel form an indispensable part of his travelling apparatus, he is never at a loss for subsistence, even in the most desolate regions. While bivouacking, it is an interesting sight to see hundreds seated around their fires, each with his little casserole, preparing his slender repast, which, from their temperate habits, they enjoy with as keen a relish as the professed gourmand of Europe would the most recherche viands of the cuisine.

Part 5

GIVING AND TAKING IN MARRIAGE

Owing to the long intercourse maintained between the Circassians and the Tartars of the Crimea before the Russian conquest of that country, both people are distinguished by a great similarity in their customs and manners; and, in common with most eastern people, pursue the same system of purchasing their wives, and selling their daughters to the highest bidders. This is the more to be wondered at, when we remember that a Circassian regards his own liberty as the first of all earthly blessings ; yet a father will sell his daughter, and a brother his sister. However, this is not considered in any other licit than as a most honourable way of providing for them; and the fair lady who has spent her youth in the harem of a rich Persian or Turk, on returning to her native country, decked in all her finery, never fails to create in the minds of her young friends a desire to follow her example; consequently, they jump on board the vessel destined to convey them, perhaps for ever, from home and friends, with as much alacrity as if they were proceeding to take possession of a crown.

The system of selling their females to strangers, has, probably, tended to preserve in some degree the civilization and refinement visible in the inhabitants of the Caucasus, as those of the women who return to their native land, after residing among a people much higher than their own in the scale of civilization, bring with them a degree of knowledge that enables them to effect a variety of improvements and ameliorations in the social condition of their countrymen, who otherwise, from their secluded situation, would probably, ere this, have relapsed into complete barbarism. On the other hand, it has been the cause of many serious wars and petty feuds between the different tribes, who, from their rapacity to procure a supply of beauties for the market, were accustomed to make predatory incursions into the territory of each other, solely for the purpose of carrying off the young women. Happily for humanity, this practice has now nearly disappeared: for which they have been indebted to the late confederation among the tribes; and also to the circumstance that the Russian flag waves supreme over the Black Sea, which has had the effect of suspending nearly every species of intercourse with their neighbours.

It would appear, the petty princes of the Caucasus are quite as sensible of the advantages of powerful family connexions as their brethren in Europe; consequently, they prefer giving their daughters in marriage to some noble or influential chief of the native tribes, to disposing of them to foreigners. Perhaps no people, particularly the princes, are more desirous than the Circassians to preserve their race pure and uncontaminated. From which cause, more regard is paid, in the selection of a wife, to beauty of form and features, than to accomplishments: the number of flocks and herds to be given to the father in the purchase of his daughter varying according to her attractions.

Indeed, a Circassian of the true Atteghai race rarely takes a wife from among the people of any tribe in the Caucasus who do not acknowledge the same lineage as himself; but he is not so exclusive with respect to his daughter, whom he will transfer to the highest bidder, whether Turcoman, Nogay Tartar, or even a Calmuck. The preference is, however, I believe, always accorded to an Atteghai. Although these people estimate the value of a woman in cows, yet they do not think it necessary to adhere literally to these useful animals in the payment, but vary the dowry according to their own wants and inclinations. If the father is a warrior, it is probable he will accept, in lieu of his child, a suit of Persian armour, weapons, &c.; or he may prefer a certain number of horses or the personal services of the suitor for a year or two in his farm.

At present, owing to the limited commerce between the inhabitants of the Caucasus and their old friends, the Turks and Persians, the price of the women has considerably decreased, which is lamented over by those parents who may have a houseful of girls, with the same despair that a merchant mourns over a warehouse full of unsold goods. On the other hand, the poor Circassian is elated with this state of affairs, as, instead of giving his whole labour for a number of years, or surrendering the greater part of his flocks and herds, he may now obtain a wife on very easy terms, the value of the fair merchandise having fallen from the enormous price of a hundred cows, down to twenty or thirty.

When the accepted lover has fulfilled his engagements, or given security for their performance, arrangements are made for the marriage; the girl is decked in all her finery, and completely covered by a Ion, white veil, which, among the wealthy, is flowered with gold or silver. A friend of the bridegroom officiates as bridesman, and gallops away with the girl to the house of some relative where the wedding is to be celebrated.

On arriving at their destination, the bride is received by the matron of the house with all the solemnity observed on such an important occasion. She is then conducted to the apartment destined for the happy pair, where she is left alone, with a bundle of pine torches, or a fire of the same material; the replenishing of which, so as to preserve a continued blaze until the arrival of her destined lord, is an indispensable duty. This is done to prevent the entrance of any supernatural enemy, who might be tempted to run away with the prize.

We must not, however, forget to mention, that an elderly matron, one who usually officiates on such occasions, after the entrance of the bride, performs the mystic ceremony of walking three times round the nuptial-bed, repeating the words of some

charm in Arabic, commencing with the head, and finishing with the feet; after which, she places three earthenware pots, filled with corn, at the head, foot, and side; in each of which a lamp is left burning. The happy moment, midnight, having arrived, the bridegroom mounts his horse, and seeks his friend, who, in the interim, takes up his abode in the neighbouring woods. On being introduced to his bride elect, he draws his poniard, and instantly performs the ceremony, so peculiar to the whole of the Caucasian tribes of cutting open the corset that has confined her form from infancy.

It is owing to this singular custom of wearing the corset, that we so frequently see the countenances of the young girls sallow and unhealthy in Circassia, and their forms often illshaped; for it is not until being divested of the virginal corset, that they expand into what nature had intended them to be. No other ceremony is observed at a Circassian bridal, except feasting and merry-making. At the break of clay the youth departs with his wife, presents her to his parents, and she is installed in the dwelling appropriated for her near their house; but, according to the custom of the people, her husband never visits her except by stealth, a degree of disgrace being attached to the man who devotes his time to the society of his wife. Polygamy is allowed; but a Circassian is generally contented with one wife; or, at most, two.

A Circassian, during the prime of life, appears to avoid every thing that may tend to render him effeminate, even the society of his wife and children. With the same view, he braves not only the inclemency of weather, but hunger and thirst; and, although surrounded by plenty, he will travel for weeks with no better provision than the usual bag of millet and bottle of skhou. Indeed, it is only when accompanied by a stranger, and then, through courtesy, or on days of public festivals, that these most abstemious people indulge in any thing like luxurious living. He, however, throws away this stoicism in declining years, and may be said only then, according to our notion, to enjoy life; for we every where see the man, venerable from age, surrounded by his wife, children, and grandchildren, exhibiting a picture of domestic happiness.

This renunciation of domestic society for the duties of a hardy warrior, might induce the belief that the men of Circassia were incapable of feeling, in any great degree, the gentler affections; for, should a warrior meet his wife unveiled, he will shun her with as much appearance of aversion as if an asp had crossed his path; yet, from all I have been able to learn, they live together in the most perfect domestic harmony, the great object of his life being to provide for their wants, and never neglecting his children till they arrive at maturity. We might, also, suppose, that their wives, left so much without the society of their husbands, would be exposed to seduction, particularly as they are at liberty to receive the visits of both male and female friends and relations. This supposition, I was informed, was equally groundless, being generally characterised for great moral conduct. Still, like every other country, there are here exceptions. On this occasion, however, a Circassian is not quite so relentless as his neighbour, the Turk, contenting himself with giving her a sound beating, and, in extreme cases, of sending her back to her parents - alas! for their gallantry-minus ears and nose; the laws of the land not permitting any severer vengeance, except that of selling her as a slave. The punishment of the paramour is confined to a heavy fine, as a compensation to the man for the loss of his property. It

happens sometimes, however, a Circassian revenges his loss of honour by the destruction of the seducer; but, as this is illegal, he must answer for the deed before the tribunal of elders, who never fail to inflict - no matter how aggravated may have been the provocation - such a fine as will compensate the friends of the deceased.

AND ETCETERA: CRIME, PUNISHMENT AND EDUCATION

I found the method of punishing criminals by fine very general, which appears well adapted to a country like Circassia, where property is ver equally divided: indeed, I do not think a single individual is to be met with destitute of the ability to procure the means of subsistence, owing to their mode of living being so simple, and their wants so few; the only luxuries they appear to indulge in being fine horses and splendid weapons, which perfectly accords with their warlike character.

Their courts of justice are always held in a sacred grove, under the canopy of heaven, and are said to be most equitable in their decisions with regard to the individuals of their own clans; they, however, relax in justice when a stranger is concerned, with whom they have not contracted any engagement. These national assemblies are always presided over by the chief, and the principal elders of the land; and conducted, to the letter, after their ancient code of laws, which are to the Circassians sacred and unalterable. You cannot conceive any thing more interesting and romantic than these discussions, particularly to a European, accustomed as we are to hear the voice of judicial authority in the splendid edifices of our own country, accompanied with all the artificial aids that can render its decisions imposing and venerable. On witnessing them, my imagination was carried back to the days of our own great Alfred. Here I saw a prince, with his mantle for a throne, and the wide-spreading oak for a canopy, surrounded by his clansmen and the elders of the land, all listening to his discourse with the most reverent attention, none presuming to speak until it was his turn to address the assembly: nevertheless, the honour of president, or judge, is not always delegated to a prince merely on account of his rank, but for his known abilities to perform its duties; as, ever since the rebellion of the Khapsoukhi tribes, some ten or fifteen years since, in consequence of the tyranny of their chiefs, all local questions are confided to the judgment of the elders of the land; and the government of nearly all the Atteghei confederated tribes, at the present day, may be said to be more republican than aristocratical. Neither age, rank, nor wealth, has any influence in the election of an elder; virtue, wisdom, and the gift of eloquence, being alone the requisite qualifications. The debates are, it must be confessed, occasionally somewhat noisy, as I have frequently seen a haughty Hotspur, who, finding the discussion not taking a turn favourable to his views, rise from his seat, foaming with rage, to interrupt the orator; notwithstanding, such is the respect paid by this people to judicial authority, it was only necessary for the prince, or one of the elders, to elevate his hand, when silence was immediately obtained.

Their criminal enactments are based upon the principle of retaliation, and by no means distinguished for ferocity. When a man commits murder, the friends of the victim have a right to demand either his life or property; and, so far as I was able to ascertain, the latter was almost invariably preferred; but, as there are no bounds to the extent of the claim, in

cases of great enormity, if the fine is rigidly exacted, it brings down ruin upon the perpetrator and his family; and, should their resources be inadequate to meet the demand, the murderer is sold as a slave, and banished for ever from the country.

In order to give you a clearer insight into the mode of administering justice among this singular people, I shall relate a few instances. A Circassian, having returned from a predatory excursion, sold a horse, part of his booty, to a neighbour, which he warranted perfectly sound; it was, however, subsequently discovered that the animal had received a slight wound in the hoof, but not till after he had fallen and broken the leg of the rider. The wounded man laid his complaint before the elders of the land, when the seller of the horse was held responsible, and a mitigated amercement levied, although he endeavoured to exonerate himself on the plea of ignorance, having taken the horse, only a few days previous, from a Tchernemorsky Cossack, during an attack on the frontier.

Again, a Khapsoukhe warrior, in the service of a chief, having been out on a hunting expedition with his lord, both fired at a bear, who, badly wounded, and pursued by the hunters, took refuge in a farm yard. The aspect of such a fearful visitor put to flight the whole of the tenants : these, in their endeavours to escape, and loudly screaming flew against the riders, when one of the horses, becoming restive, fell, and killed its rider. The friends of the deceased summoned their chief before the elders, praying for retributive justice. The prince endeavoured to exculpate himself, by proving before them the docility of his horse, and threw the whole blame on the winged inhabitants of the poultry yard: the plea was not, however, admitted, the elders assuming that the nerves of a well-educated Circassian horse ought to have withstood the shock of a charge, not only of scared scampering poultry, but even of a whole troop of Cossacks.

This retributive justice has also the effect of preventing many a sanguinary combat between the neighbouring tribes ; for, though each party are to be seen appalled in battle array, exhibiting every symptom of angry feeling, yet their differences are almost always, in the present day, amicably arranged, each party fearing to proceed to extremities, well knowing the endless litigation that would follow, as the friends of the dead and wounded never fail to prosecute their claims before an assembly of the chiefs and elders, who enforce restitution for any injuries committed.

Among the Circassians, like the ancient Spartans, the thief who exercises his profession with dexterity excites universal admiration ; and you cannot insult a Circassian more than to tell him he did not know how to steal an ox. However, the maladroit, who may be detected, is not only condemned to the restitution of the stolen articles, but to a fine of nine times their value. In fact, these people are very clever thieves, and nothing could protect a stranger from their slight-of-hand dexterity, were it not for the religious respect they pay to the rights of hospitality; for, however much a Circassian may be addicted to this vice-here considered a virtue -from the moment a traveller has entered his house, and broken bread with him, he would defend the person and property of the stranger even with life itself.

Diffidence is certainly not one of the traits in the character of a Circassian, for he never loses a benefit from want of asking; and the traveller who may have a large circle of friends, stands a fair chance of being deprived of every article he possesses. I found myself assailed by hundreds of the cousins and near relations of my Konak, who professed for me the greatest friendship, and to whom it was etiquette to present some trifling remembrance ; but, as a stranger is also entitled to a present in return, he may get rid of their importunities by admiring some article of value belonging to themselves, which, in the Circassian code of manners, is tantamount to a request for it.

The education of the youth of Circassia recalls to our recollection the heroic epoch of immortal Greece, for rarely, very rarely, is a male child reared under the parental roof. When born, he is presented with a bow and a case of arrows, as symbols of his future destiny; and an amulette is bound on some part of his body, for the purpose of securing him from witchcraft and the evil eye. After the first few years of helpless infancy have passed over, he is taken from the mother, and consigned to the care of a warrior famous for his skill in the military exercises of his country, who now fulfils to the boy the duties of a parent, bearing the title of attalick (foster-father); and, during the whole of the time the boy remains under his superintendence, he is never permitted to visit his parents, lest he should be spoiled by indulgence, or enervated by excessive affection.

As the Circassians are entirely ignorant of letters, his education is confined to every species of gymnastic exercise that can contribute to give force and agility to the frame. He is taught, in addition to riding and swimming, the most expert method of using every warlike weapon; he also studies eloquence, that he may distinguish himself as an orator in the national assemblies of his country; and, to complete his studies, he is instructed in the art of thieving with adroitness.

When the youth is considered to have attained a sufficient proficiency in these accomplishments, he is conducted to the house of his parents in triumph, and a splendid banquet is given. The friends and relations are invited; the youth rehearses his acquirements ; his attalick is complimented, not only with words, but more substantial offerings of gratitude, and ever after enjoys the highest consideration in the family. A reciprocal affection exists between him and his pupil through life, so that a young Circassian may be said to be doubly guarded with parental care.

Part 6

RELIGION AND FOLKLORE

Since the destruction of the empire of Constantine, in the East, the Turks alone have been on friendly terms with the inhabitants of the Caucasian provinces, to whom they have been indebted for the introduction of Islamism. The doctrines of Mahomet, however, never struck any deep root among these people; for, although a few of the tribes on the coast profess this faith, it is so mixed up with Christianity, as almost to form a separate religion: a circumstance which is often alluded to by the devout Turk with feelings of deep regret.

The Grecian and Italian writers, on the Caucasian provinces, of the middle ages, founding their opinions upon the number of crosses of the St. Andrew form then existing in the country, assert that this saint, or his disciples, converted the inhabitants to Christianity; while others contend that St. Nina, a princess of Georgia, and contemporary with Constantine, had the honour of spreading the light of our holy religion among the mountaineers of the Caucasus. Be this as it may, the fundamental truths of Christianity were never sufficiently established to resist the torrent of ignorance that flowed back again on the land: a consequence of the people being destitute of a written language, or any guide save oral traditions.

Several Armenian and Karaite Jew merchants, accustomed to penetrate into the interior of the country, confirmed the information I received at Bombora, that the inhabitants of some of the remote mountain districts in Upper Abasia actually profess Christianity, unmixed either with Islamism or Pagan superstition; maintain their clergy, and assemble at stated seasons to celebrate divine worship. Might not this open a wide field for the labours of those who are solicitous for the dissemination of Christianity? and is it not highly probable that, with the aid of the native believers, its sacred truths might be again diffused among a people who still respect it?

The principal articles in the faith of the inhabitants of the Western Caucasus are,-a firm belief in one God, supreme and powerful, and in the immortality of the soul, which they feel convinced will be translated to another world, the abode of their fathers. Like the Mahometans, they do not represent the Deity under any visible form, but define him as the Creator of all things, whose spirit is diffused over all space. Besides the one Eternal God, they believe in the existence of several inferior beings, or saints, to whom the Great Spirit, <It is remarkable that, with a slight difference in the pronunciation, this word in the Circassian Language also signifies the sun, tghka.> Thka, has delegated power over such sublunary things as he deems too trivial for his awful superintendence. These saints have each an anniversary, which is celebrated with public rejoicing and prayer, in the same manner as festivals are in Catholic countries. Some of them are represented under a peculiar symbol; but they do not worship them, except as intermediate agents. Upon this subject I made strict inquiry, and found that all my informants agreed as to this point, and which confirmed what I had previously heard from several Russian officers, who had been for many years in communication with the Circassians. Nevertheless, this worship must be regarded as a species of adoration by the strict Protestant and the equally rigid Mahometan.

The most powerful among these saints is Seozeres, to whom the winds and the waters are in subjection. He is regarded with especial reverence by those who reside near the coast ; and equally so by the shepherd, being also the protector of flocks and herds. His f@te is celebrated by the inhabitants of each village or hamlet at the beginning of spring, when his symbol, a dried pear-tree, is adorned with garlands of flowers, and various other ornaments, not unlike a May-pole. A large curd, or cheese, is attached to the summit; and several lamps, according to the number of the guests invited (the feast being usually held at the house of the chief, or one of the elders), are kept burning, here and there, over the

tree. As cleanliness is considered a virtue among these people, the symbol of the saint, preparatory to being clothed in its finery, is most carefully washed in the purest spring water. Every thing being ready, it is solemnly carried into the house by one of the elders; and, as the saint is supposed to be a great navigator and traveller, his emblem is welcomed with acclamations by the whole company. An animal is sacrificed to his honour; a public banquet prepared; and feasting and rejoicing continued for three days, with an occasional supplication to the saint to protect them from the evils which he is supposed to have the power of averting. The feast concludes by the division of the cheese among the guests, which superstition invests with the property of curing numerous diseases. Each Circassian family preserves one of these sacred trees on his premises : the saint is, however, entirely neglected until his anniversary again occurs.

One of the most remarkable features in this festival is, its resemblance to that of St. John, still celebrated by the peasants of the remote districts, in the Carpathian mountains; to which we may add, that the decking of a tree with flowers, ornaments, and lights, during the Christmas holidays, is practised, even to this day, by nearly the whole of the inhabitants of Germany, and other countries in the north of Europe; and one of the prettiest gifts you can present to a child in Germany, at Christmas, is an ornamented fir tree, covered with fruit, flowers, confectionary, and wax lights.

Another of the Circassian saints is Merissa, protector of bees ; and no less important a personage than the mother of God. This is evidently a mixture of Paganism with the adoration paid to the Virgin Mary. In a country like Circassia, where honey forms so important a part of the husbandry of the people, and mingles so extensively with their food, we cannot wonder that they personified a deity of such powerful influence to guard the bee; and, from their traditions, it appears she performed the trust most faithfully; for, on one occasion, when an evil spirit most wilfully attempted to destroy the whole of these industrious insects, she preserved a couple by her miraculous power, and repopulated the woods and forests. This feast is celebrated for three days, about the middle of September, with feasting and rejoicing, like the others; the only difference being, that the dishes and drinks composing the banquet are made entirely from the produce of the bee.

Besides these, there are several other saints, such as Yemikha, Skuskha, Naokhatkha, and Meste, protectors of agriculture, woods, and forests, &c., who are each honoured with a festival. To which we may add the powerful king, Tliebske, a mixture of Mars and Vulcan, protector of armourers. Thunder and lightning, as it emanates immediately from the great Spirit, Thka, is regarded by the Circassians with the greatest veneration; and happy is the man who is so distinguished as to frill a victim to its violence: his body is consigned to the earth with great solemnity, and his family rejoice at the great honour conferred upon them. When they hear the chebli (thunder) rolling in the heavens, they believe it to be an angel of God, travelling in his fiery chariot through the air; and rush forth from their houses, en masse, to thank the celestial messenger who thus irrigates their fields, and refreshes and purifies the air, during the great heats of summer.

The Circassians also reverence, with more than common devotion, three sisters, who preside over and encourage the happiness of domestic life, good fellowship, and

harmony, with their neighbours. These divinities are also supposed to shield the warrior in battle with their protecting wings, and to guard the footsteps of the traveller; consequently, the natives never undertake an expedition, or even change their domicile, without making a propitiatory offering to the fair saints. Perhaps this custom may also be regarded as a remnant of Christianity, and typify the Trinity.

Their clergy do not form a distinct body: the aged, and those highly esteemed among their compatriots for virtue, wisdom, and courage, being always selected as the most holy and fit persons to offer up the prayers and thanksgiving of the people to the throne of the great Thka (God of gods, Lord of lords). Their religious ceremonies are always celebrated in a sacred grove, exclusively appropriated to that purpose, and characterised by some religious emblem, generally a cross, in the Latin or Greek form. Once or twice I observed an emblem, in their sacred groves, in the valley of Ardler, more resembling a T than a cross, said to be extremely ancient : I was not, however, able to obtain any information as to its original purport. When a warrior returns home victorious, or an individual has been rescued from calamity, either real or anticipated, he repairs to the sacred grove to present some offering, as a sacrifice to the Divinity, or as a tribute of gratitude.

These offerings, usually adorned with wreaths of flowers, are generally suspended to a tree, in the vicinity of the cross; and every tribe and class concur in religiously respecting them: hence they are never removed, unless when some hostile tribe makes an incursion into the country, who regard them as legitimate objects of plunder. The grateful worshipper also sacrifices an animal on the occasion of his deliverance, whose head is attached to one of the neighbouring trees.

The beauty of these sacred groves; the highly picturesque country ; the silence that reigned in the forest ; the votive offerings of piety; the cross, the emblem of our religion ; the simple rites of this interesting people, assembled before our Creator in the temple of nature,- never failed to excite in me feelings of respect, awe, and veneration ; for, under whatever form the Almighty is adored, may we not hope the worship will be found acceptable at the throne of mercy ?

The officiating priest who celebrates public worship at a general assembly of the people, is usually a man in the prime of life, with a full-grown beard, nearly reaching his girdle: he is habited in the Tchaouko; and, with his head uncovered, and bowing reverently before the cross, commences the celebration of service by a propitiatory sacrifice to the Divinity, which, on ordinary occasions, consists of a lamb, kid, goat, or sheep: on those of great solemnity, such as a victory, an abundant harvest, or on public fore days, the animal is a full-grown ox, especially selected for its beauty.

Before immolation, the priest takes one of the pine torches that stand blazing near the emblem of their faith, and burns the hair on that part of the body where he intends to strike, and immediately afterward pours over its head a goblet of bak-sima. The dexterity and quickness with which the animal is despatched, is surprising; for it appears to pass in a moment from life to death. After the sacrifice, the priest takes a cup of the bak-sima, in

which is steeped a small cake of barley-bread, and, after blessing and offering it to the supreme God, presents it to the most venerable elder in the assembly, as the highest honour that can be rendered to age and virtue. A similar offering is made to each of the saints, which he blesses in like manner, and presents to the oldest man of the company; and thus the ceremony concludes with prayers, supplications, and thanksgivings; during which, the deepest silence, attention, and devotional piety, is exhibited by the assembled multitude. The head of the animal only is consecrated to the Supreme God : this is suspended to a branch of one of the loftiest trees in the sacred grove. The skin becomes the property of the officiating priest; and, as each member of the congregation contributes something towards a public feast, the flesh of the animals forms a welcome addition ; and the day concludes with eating, drinking, music, dancing, and racing on foot and on horseback, together with every description of warlike exercise.

The day set apart for the celebration of divine service does not occur at stated seasons, being nominated by the officiating elder ; and is seldom oftener than once a-week. Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, considered unlucky, are never selected; Sunday being generally preferred: and I was informed, that by some tribes in the interior of the country, this day is invariably chosen. After the performance of public worship, the elder announces any event either of local or general importance, such as a declaration of war, the approach of the enemy, loss of cattle, &c.

Among the religious festivals, none is regarded with greater reverence than one celebrated about the time of our Easter. The pomp with which this is observed, and the rejoicings that attend it, leave little doubt that this festival is also a relic of Christianity. The March moon begins with a fast, which is rigidly kept till the end when, at the break of day, the sound of firearms from the dwellings of the principal inhabitants of the village announces the commencement of festivities. All classes then hasten to the sacred grove, and the usual religious rites are performed. On this day an additional number of animals is sacrificed ; and the rejoicings terminate with shooting at eggs, &c., when the skins of the animals become the reward of the most skilful marksmen.

The feast of the first-fruits of the harvest is also one of great consideration, and continues for several days, at which time a succession of visiting takes place throughout the whole of the tribes, each family giving a separate entertainment. The favourite dish is wheat, cut before it is perfectly ripe, roasted, and eaten with skhou, : the other species of grain, fruits, &c., follow in succession. Those who are unable, from infirmity, to attend the houses of their friends during the feast, receive a portion at home, it being considered most unlucky not to partake of some part of the blessings the earth has bestowed on their neighbours. The ceremonies conclude with thanksgivings to that merciful Power who has provided so abundantly for all their wants.

While mentioning the religious observances of the Circassians, I must not omit to tell you that the days of the week correspond with those of Christian countries. The new year, unlike that of the Mahometans, commences about the same time as ours; and the first appearance of spring is also celebrated by a feast. Towards the latter end of October, when the leaves begin to fall, typical of the brief existence of man, public prayers are

offered up by the people in commemoration of the dead, to the effect that the celestial Powers would provide for the wants of their friends in Paradise.

The ceremonies that attend the death of a Circassian are simply confined to a few religious songs, and a funeral oration, pronounced by one of the elders over his body, which is enveloped in a white wrapper, and consigned to the earth much in the same way as we see practised in Krim-Tartary. During the space of a year his arms are guarded with the most religious care, and left precisely in the same state as when living: his friends and relatives visit his tomb at stated periods, when they strike their breasts and repeat a few prayers; but his women are obliged to rehearse every evening at sunset, for months, the same poignant display of grief as the Tartars. The anniversary of the death of a distinguished warrior, or chief, is celebrated for years with praying and Feasting; to which we may add horse-racing, and various kinds of martial and athletic exercises.

Part 7

MEDICINE

In relating all I have been able to glean respecting the customs and manners of this simple people, I must not forget to notice their method of curing diseases, the science of medicine being as little known in the Caucasus as in Krim-Tartary. They are, however, not quite such fatalists as their neighbours, the Nogay Tartars; and one hideous malady, so prevalent among that people, is here, according to every inquiry I made, unknown. Generally speaking, the Circassians are not subject to many diseases: for which they have to thank their own temperance, and the bracing air of the mountains; and were it not for the occasional introduction of an epidemic, and the intermittent fevers of the marshes, they would have little to fear beyond the ordinary infirmities of humanity. When an epidemic does occur, then, indeed, owing to their ignorance, the mortality is frightful. The most awful visitation these poor people perhaps ever experienced, and which is still adverted to with horror, was the introduction of the plague by the Turks in 1816. The inhabitants of whole villages were then swept away; and the country became so depopulated, that the corn decayed on the ground for want of reaping, and the flocks and herds ran wild through the woods without owners. Thanks to the solicitude of their kind friends the Russians, in guarding the coast, the plague has not extended this year to the Caucasus. The cholera and influenza, so fatal to the inhabitants of Europe and the East, had not yet paid them a visit. As to the small-pox, I should say it was either not very prevalent here, or generally fatal, if I might be allowed to judge from the circumstance of rarely meeting with a countenance marked with its ravages.

Their doctors, or rather saints, of whom we find one or two in every village, are utterly ignorant of medicine or surgery: a poniard is the substitute for a lance. If they cannot console pain by the application of an amulette, they use a hot iron, like the Arabs; and, in the same manner, if the hemorrhage from a wound does not cease flowing, through the influence of some potent charm, a plaster of scalding pitch is resorted to: hence, as may be supposed, a man, dangerously wounded, has no chance of recovery; and, notwithstanding their incessant wars with Russia, a maimed warrior is never met with in

these countries; which, however, with such surgeons, can be no matter of surprise. Like every half-civilized people, their materia medica is extremely simple: an infusion of wormwood is used in almost every disease; and a tisane, composed of elder flowers, sweet camomile, and honey, for coughs. The vodka of the Cossacks is the universal remedy, when taken internally, for the cholic, intermittent fevers, &c.; and when diluted with water, relieves the ophthalmia, and various cutaneous diseases.

The Calmucks and Turcomans, wandering tribes, are the quacks of the Caucasus; and, if I might credit the details given me, some of their AEsculapian feats are worthy of record; particularly the cure of the epilepsy, which, it appears, they effect by very simple means. Remember, however, that for the correctness of this, I depend upon the accounts of the Circassians, confirmed by my servant Nathan, who declared he had frequently known the treatment to be successful. The medicine used is the root of the artemesia, Lin. <If this medicine, when tried, should not be found to succeed, perhaps it might be advisable to procure the plant direct from the Caucasus, as climate is known materially to affect the properties of every vegetable production.> which is drawn from the earth a few days before or after Michaelmas: the woody part is thrown away, and the other portion of the root, which is brown and juicy, together with the bark, after being dried in the shade, reserved for use. These, when required, are pulverised, and about as much as would fill a tea-spoon, given to the patient in any warm drink half an hour before the fit; who must remain in bed, be kept very warm, and drink plentifully of warm diluting liquors, until profuse perspiration ensues. The dose is to be repeated in the same manner every third day, till the ninth, when he is considered perfectly cured. The patient must, however, avoid, for a few months, strong drinks, and sour, indigestible food, of every description; but, above all, he must be careful not to take cold. In some cases, particularly those of children, one dose has been known to effect a cure.

I was also made acquainted with the Calmuck remedy for hydrophobia, which this people are said completely to cure. It appears, according to their statement, that when a person has been so unfortunate as to have received the poison of a rabid animal into his frame, several white spots or ulcers form under the tongue, and occasion madness; but if these are cut, and the excised parts cauterized, the cure is complete: the operation should, however, be performed the moment they make their appearance. This, also, I give as I received it, without vouching for, or denying, its authenticity. At all events, it would be desirable for some of our medical men to ascertain whether the appearances I have described actually supervene during the presence of hydrophobia, or not.

In my character of stambouli hakkim, I was frequently summoned to visit the sick; when, contrary to our European usages, I invariably found the dwelling of the patient surrounded by a number of young people, making, upon every noisy instrument they could collect, a tremendous clatter, to which they occasionally added loud shouts, for the purpose of frightening away the evil spirit. Generally speaking, I discovered in the chamber one of their saints, seated on the floor, near the pallet of the patient, not administering pills or draughts, but muttering occasionally incantations; between each sentence of which he maintained the most portentous silence.

A YOUNG GIRL SEIZED BY CLAIRVOYANT FITS

In one of my rambles, I met with a very singular instance of somnambulism, in the daughter of a Circassian noble, Noghai Selim Guerrai, near the river Ubin. The girl was, probably, about twelve years of age, and had been suffering from the disease for the last two years. During the prevalence of the fit, which generally lasted from one to three weeks, she was accustomed to employ herself at embroidery, sing to her lute, or deliver extempore poetry in a singing tone, always prophetic of some event that was to occur, of importance to the country; but, except on these occasions, she never uttered a word, nor answered a question, and seemed to address her warnings rather to some invisible spirit, than to the persons around her; she also prescribed for the sick, whom she mentioned by name, gave counsel to the warrior, reproved the wicked, and assured her countrymen, that in their contest with Russia they would be ultimately successful; not one word of which remained in her recollection when she awoke from her magnetic sleep. While this aberration of her faculties continued, her features wore an unnaturally serious expression for such a young girl: her smell, also, was so acute, that she could discover the approach of any person she knew at a considerable distance, to whom she evinced the most capricious dislike or partiality: her health appeared to suffer materially from these attacks, as she invariably awoke from her trance pale, and evidently much fatigued.

These somnambulists, or, as the French call them, clairvoyantes, so peculiar to mountainous countries, seem to form a phenomenon in animal magnetism not yet perfectly understood. I met with a similar case some years since, during a fishing excursion in the neighbourhood of Lindau, on the banks of the lake of Constance in the person of the daughter of the Baron von Rader: she was about the same age as our Circassian Cassandra, and, like her, gifted with prophecy. The duration of the fit, and the symptoms of the patient, were also similar, except that the young German lady frequently remained cataleptic for several hours, which I did not observe in the other.

The Circassians strikingly exemplify the superiority of a farinaceous diet over one composed principally of animal food; active, vigorous, and nearly strangers to disease, they attain a very advanced age; while the Nogay Tartars and Calmucks, who reside among them, and live almost entirely upon meat, particularly horse flesh, are subject to a variety of diseases, especially those of the cutaneous kind. They are also more desponding in their temperament, less courageous and active, and rarely ever reach the great age of their more abstemious neighbours. In addition to the partiality of the Nogay and Calmuck for animal food, they often drink to excess, like their brethren in Krim-Tartary, a spirituous liquor distilled from mare's milk; a vice from which the Circassians may be said to be entirely exempt; and, as far as I was able to learn, they do not consider horse flesh a delicacy.

The respect exhibited towards the aged by the inhabitants of the Caucasus is not less admirable than their hospitality, and deserves to be imitated by Europeans. The counsel of the most venerable man in the village is sought for with reverence; his decisions are bowed to in all cases of petty contentions; when he speaks, the most loquacious man becomes instantly silent; if angry, his denunciations are patiently listened to; should he

strike, the blow is never returned ; wherever he appears, youth makes way for him; the warmest corner near the fire is assigned him, and it is considered an honour to light his tehibouque; when he rides out his horse is caught and saddled, and on his help him down; happy is the mail he blesses, and cursed indeed is the man he curses, for he is shunned by all!

Even poor degraded woman, so generally a stranger to kindnesses and honours in the East, is here treated with the highest consideration.. The minstrels, like the ancient troubadours, sing songs in praise of her charms and virtues. The brave knights of olden time never displayed more respectful gallantry towards the fair sex than these simple mountaineers; and this is the people now menaced with slavery, or extermination!

In summing up the virtues of the Circassians, we must not forget their charity; the poor man never cries at the door of the rich in vain ; the orphan is provided for by the nearest relations as his own children; if a man's house is burnt, his neighbours assist in building it; if he loses his cattle from sickness, or his corn from blight, each gives him assistance, which the obliged party always make it a point of conscience to repay liberally when fortune is kind.

Like all mountaineers, the Circassians are exceedingly superstitious : people whose eyes are of a certain colour and form, lie under the stigma of being afflicted with the evil eye ; consequently, every thing they look upon must wither, unless they have recourse to their amulets - people, also, without any personal attractions, and those born with physical defects, are, in a greater or less degree, objects of aversion, being considered the unconscious agents of evil spirits ; even the wounds or death of the warrior is attributed to the same agency. When a man is wounded and confined to his couch, his friends are accustomed to remove every weapon from his sight, and to place at the door of his chamber a basin of water with an egg in it, and a ploughshare beside it, for the purpose of scaring away the approach of any demon who might be inclined to molest the patient.

If a man is desirous to visit his invalid friend, he must strike three distinct times on the door before entering, and then scatter a little water about the room. Unlike the couch of the sick in civilized countries, where the strictest silence is enforced, we here find the room filled with young people amusing themselves by singing and dancing. This is done partly with the intention of diverting the attention of the patient from his sufferings, and partly to chase away the evil one, who is supposed to be hovering, in the neighbourhood. To the number three some mystic signification appears to be attached by these people; it is referred to in the composition of all their nostrums, when any object of importance is about to be carried into execution, or even in the most trifling act.

Source:

<http://www.iras.ucalgary.ca/~volk/sylvia/Circassia.htm>